

LOCAL CULTURE - A SOURCE OF ATTRACTION FOR TOURISM BASED ON TRADITIONS. CASE STUDY, OLTENIA, ROMANIA

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Abstract. *Local traditions are becoming more and more a tourist attraction. Returning to that tourism-green or more, to the cultural-creative tourist, to the involvement of tourists in processing activities and obtaining some products, using a rudimentary technique acquires an increasing tourist attraction. Oltenia is one of the geographical regions where these "workshops" are still held. They do not only work for tourists, but they exist in many communities, representing a way of life. Precisely this way of life, presented directly, could become a tourist source. Starting from this idea, the authors considered that ethno-creative tourism could represent a viable solution in this case. Thus, the geographic space of the region of Oltenia (the South _ Western part of Romania) has been analysed, having been thus spatially identified small administrative units (villages) in which the ethnicities have been present, as well as their specific creative culture, in the attempt of developing an ethno-creative tourism. The research has been based on an analysis of the ethnicities of this region, on the field study, to which there is added the economic data base at NACE code level-the classification of national economy activities. Following the field study there was obtained data due to the consultation of representative samples: creative artists, tourists and local population, then being processed by specific statistical methods. The cultural tourism based on creativity and traditional values contributes to the emergence of economic multiplier effects. The development of the ethno-creative tourism can mean creating workplaces in a period of economic crisis and a relative social crisis. It can also be considered a de-popularization factor of the cultural identity, which lays an important part in the field of promoting cultural diversity.*

Keywords: *creativity, ethnicity, local economy, development, cultural values*

INTRODUCTION

The tourist activity in Romania, generally speaking, and in Oltenia, in particular, registers a slight increase with each year, so tourism incomes

have an oscillating evolution on a slightly increasing trend. As for the profits made from tourism activity in Romania, they are barely contoured with visible oscillations of the ascending and descending evolution (Greffé, 1990; Herman et al., 2014; Teodorescu et al., 2016; Radoi et al., 2020). The competitiveness of tourism is clearly questionable. In the last century, and especially in the recent decades, the urbanization and, in particular, the globalization trend, have largely "alienated" man from local traditions (Hocaoglu, 2016; Larsen et al., 2016; Teodorescu et al., 2016)). Tourism has offered to the population the recreational formation necessary always in all its forms (Teodorescu, 2009; Guillen, 2015; Barry, 2016). Many authors consider the creative economies as generating functional complexity and, consequently, the growth of local economies (Gascón, 2014; Ilieș et al., 2017; Twining-Ward et al., 2002; Hocaoglu, 2016; Dincă et al., 2015). Resident artists can positively or negatively perceive the tourist flow oriented in this respect, their attitude being often influenced by the creative orientation of artists (Larsen et al., 2007; Teodorescu et al., 2019). Their creative experience is based on several reasons and motivations, some may be internal reflections or others may be external to the interactions of the tourists, so it is the tourist activity that allows adding value to that geographic area (Vasquez, 2016). Creative tourism can be more interesting and appealing if it can provide the specific ethnic elements of a local community. In a geographical area where many ethnic groups live for centuries it is necessary to know their traditions and cultural values (Barrera-Fernandez et al., 2016; Buhalis, 2000; Pintilii et al., 2017; Teodorescu et al., 2017). The culture of each ethnic group must be understood as a symbolic network, in a process of change and intermixing with those with which it has been interacting. It can provide traditional and folklore events, gastronomy, popular festivities and celebrations, music, dance, myths, topical stories, crafts and beliefs, in a direct form so that everyone can understand the lifestyle and culture that is specific to each ethnic group.

METHODOLOGY

The economic impact studies directly target the revenue generated from specific cultural activities. In the present study, the approach aims at the existence of a cultural activity of a given period, carried out by a certain ethnicity, as well as the annual incomes obtained or received, which may have an impact on the respective community and on the local economy (Greffé, 1990; Gascón, 2014; Ducman et al., 2019). Among the studies upon the economic impact which have

been analyzed and followed, there are two referential ones, in this case, consisting of one study accomplished by the National Arts Foundation (1977) concerning the impact of the artistic life in Baltimore (USA), and the other one, a study made by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (1983) regarding the economic importance of the cultural sector in the two metropolitan areas. Such studies are numerous, so that in 1986 Van Puffelen conducted an impact study of the cultural sector in Amsterdam city (Noel, 2018; Guillen et al., 2015; Gursoy et al., 2002).

What follows this study is a differentiated analysis both quantitatively and qualitatively. Thus, by the means of the quantitative analysis, the registered revenues and the impact on the local economy are monitored. From a qualitative point of view, by following an empirical analysis based on questionnaire applied within communities with specific cultural activities, there was followed the evidence of any improvement in the life-style quality of community members.

The most important ethnic communities in the Oltenia Region, Romania are those of the Roma, Bulgarians, as a contact ethnic group, then the Hungarian and Italian ones. The existence of these ethnicities is not a compulsory possibility of economic activity with an ethnic specificity. Not in all the villages or cities in which these ethnicities may live may there be preservers of ethnic traditions, irrespectively of their share. The difficulty of carrying out the study is precisely this one, and for the accuracy of the results, there have been made field studies that may confirm the tradition of cultural activity within the analyzed families or communities (considering only the activities transmitted onto at least 3 generations: grandparents, sons, grandchildren).



Figure 1. Components of ethno-creative tourism

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Tracking the behavior of tourists reveals some peculiarities. Thus, there is an increasing demand for traditional objects, a special attraction for everything that is traditional and authentic. If there are certain areas in which a certain ethnicity is present, tourists acquire their traditional

products, especially those that are created directly in front of them, and in addition, during the accomplishment of the desired product, they receive a story / legend (description). This allows for a merging fusion between cultural tourism and ethnic tourism, which clearly has creation itself as determinant / source. All these are easier to express and understand under the notion of ethno-creative tourism (Figure 1).

From economic data at the level of NEAC / CAEN code - Classification of Activities in the National Economy, there has been observed for some localities, where ethnicities are present (especially Rroma and Bulgarian ethnicity) the fact that they are preservers of some activities, by which they obtain the incomes they need for living.

These activities are declared and taxed by local financial authorities.

Their creative activity is traditional and legal. For these families, it is the only source of income.

Among the ethnicities analyzed by field study within the survey and whose statistical data were measured, there are the Rroma and the Bulgarians (Figure 2). The ethnic Rroma work as licensed natural persons, having as their favourite and traditional areas of work the processing of wood, ceramic clay and braids of vegetable materials.

In the case of the ethnic Bulgarians, the vegetable crops culture is the activity specific to them, the products of which are valued on the local markets. Creative tourism is represented by vegetable canning workshops, where tourists can participate in both their production and, ultimately, their purchasing.

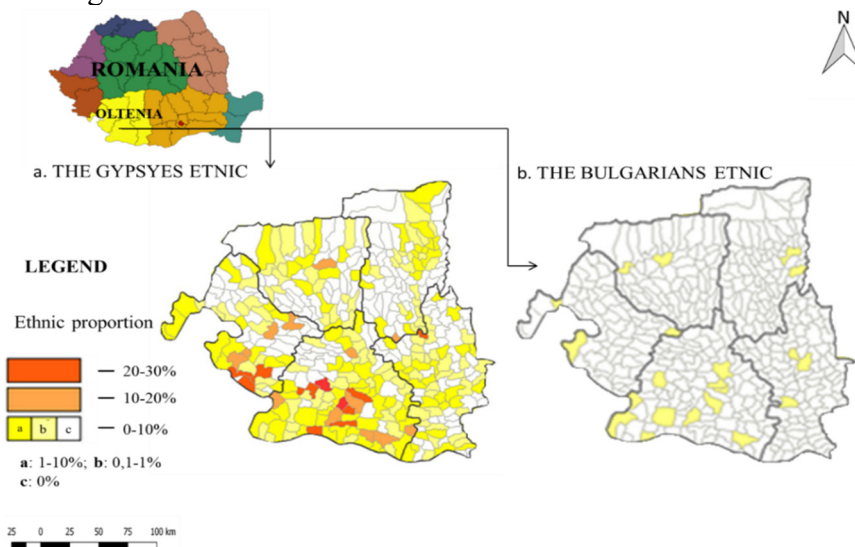


Figure 2. Presence of the Rroma and Bulgarian ethnicities in Oltenia

The study sought to achieve an in-mapping clearer picture of the income of these two important ethnicities, from the sale of traditional objects. Ethnic Romas have been analyzed in three localities, Sirineasa in Valcea County, Oboga in Olt County and Carna in Dolj County (Figure 3). The number of families who are still following the traditions of these artisan craftsmen has a different evolution, depending on their occupation, for the period 2014-2017. In the case of the Romas in Sirineasa, the trend in the number of families carrying on this craft is decreasing. Many families, especially young people, no longer declare themselves as belonging to the Romas and prefer to work in the nearby towns or to go to other European countries.

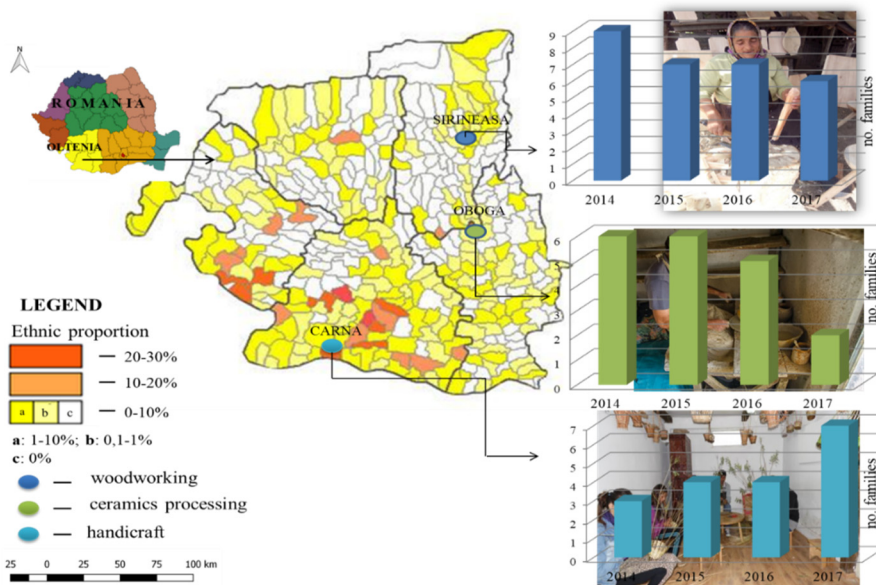


Figure 3. The distribution of the Roma population in Oltenia region and the evolution of the number of families of traditional craftsmen in 3 different localities: Sirineasa – wood processing; Oboga – ceramic clays; Carna - braids

In the commune of Oboga, Olt County, the ceramics made of clays are still authentic, made by hand by respecting the same process since hundreds of years ago.

The tradition of ceramics is continued today by several Romas families, some of them without declaring their affiliation. In a dialogue with a local craftsman, he affirms with a slight regret that "... it is harder to sell or for people to cross your threshold when they know you are a gypsy" (Ion Spanu, potter in Oboga, Olt county).

This also appears in the visible tendency on the chart, the number of keepers and followers of this craft is, unfortunately, the same as the income obtained / year / family (fig. 4). Woven fabrics. It is practiced, but sporadically, where there are streams of water, where there is wicker or willow- tree. It is an increasing requirement for the finished product.

What make local craftsmen discontent is the desire of tourists and, in general, of buyers for less traditional (woven) braids, but the revenue they get seems to compensate these shortcomings. There is an increasing demand for small baskets and other bindings used for flower support. As seen from the graph, incomes are increasing year by year (fig. 4).

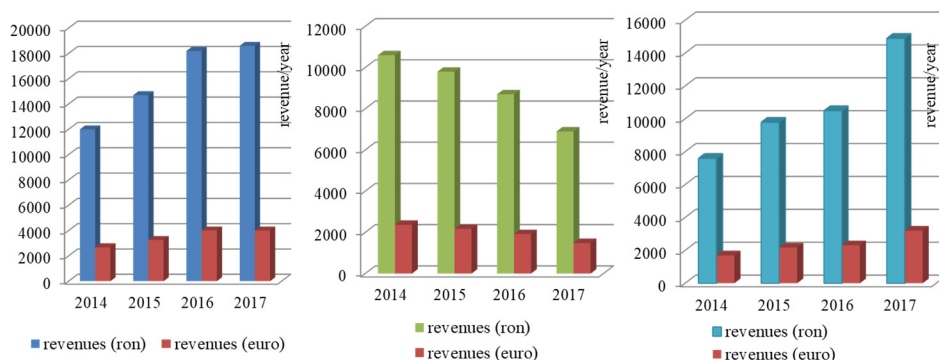


Figure 4. Average incomes received / year / family according to the artisanal activity performed by the ethnic Roma in the three localities: a. Sirineasa; b. Oboga; c. Carna
Source: a. Sirineasa Town Hall, Valcea; b. Oboga Town Hall, Olt; c. Carna Town Hall, Dolj

Regarding the Bulgarian ethnicity, the analysis is more of a qualitative one, the study recording results obtained through empirical analysis, from questionnaires with especially open questions. By having considered the results obtained, we have noticed an improvement in the quality of life by obtaining incomes that are not very high but come in addition to or in the financial support of the family. In the commune of Poiana Mare in Dolj county, the orientation towards such an occupation has therefore been welcome. This is favored by the existence of several factors that can lead to higher incomes and even more, to an increase in the attraction force upon young people towards the processing of vegetables and the production (manufacture) in the household of canned and other food products. Among the factors of favorability there can be considered: the existence of a tradition in the vegetable crops culture, which is the basic raw material, and the ensuring of the product distribution within the urban centres in town (Calafat town, which is located less than 15 Km distance).

The uniqueness of the traditional activity is also due to the presence of some clay devices used to bake bread- the so – called *tzest*, a kind of

pottery clay-made oven. The existence of this device has a simple explanation: for baking bread there is used wood, or some other materials which should allow heating in a very small amount. Its shape like a bell and the material of which it has been made, preserve the heat and release it in a time just sufficient to uniformly bake the bread (fig.5). A peculiarity of Bulgarian influence is that of "baking" the bread after having decorated it with tomatoes.

Another distinctive feature of Poiana Mare's traditional folk creative centre is to bring as many young people as possible (especially girls) to learn this craft. They are not necessarily Bulgarian-natives, but they are also Romanian people or other ethnic groups.

Revenues registered with the local financial administration show that they have an upward trend (fig. 6), which leads to the idea that it could represent an appealing traditional activity. What is less pleasant, however, is the fact that the number of families with traditional occupations among the ethnic Bulgarians is decreasing. Yet in the last two years it is stagnant (fig. 7).

The number of families is reduced due to several factors: first, it is necessary to have a traditional activity; this means to be produced or fulfilled over three generations; another criterion is to be registered with the financial authority in charge, as an activity by which they should obtain a material gain, that is, to enter a tourist circuit; all materials used in the process should be of quality, available in the area and without additives that may destroy its authenticity; the families involved should belong to that respective ethnicity, according to the last census of the population evidence.

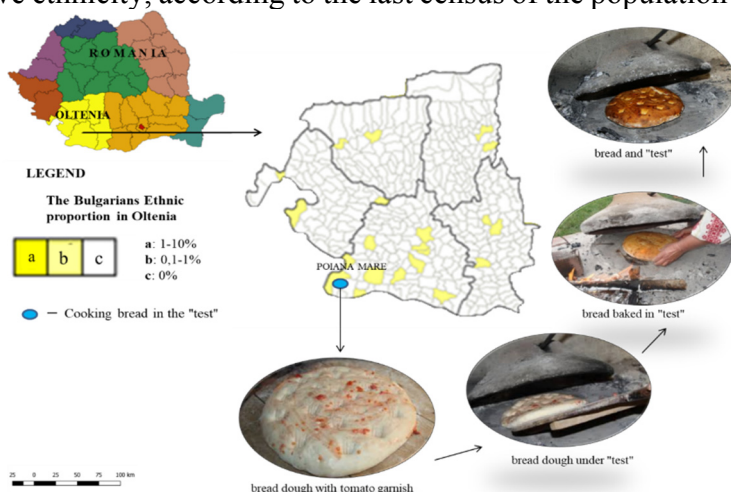


Figure 5. The distribution within the territory of Oltenia of the Bulgarian ethnic group and the traditional process of bread- baking in the pottery clay- oven called *ttest*.

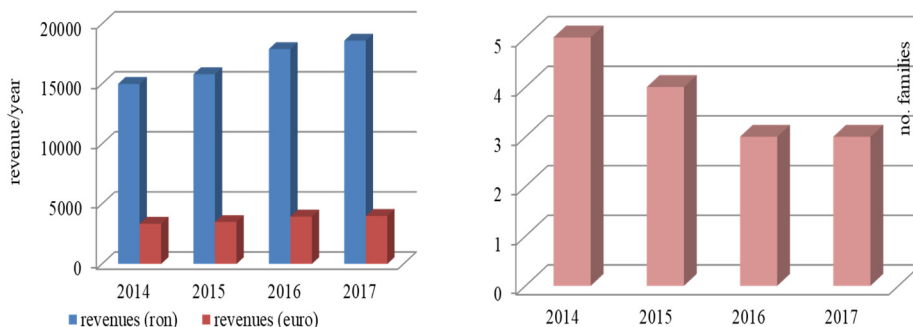


Figure 6. Average of the incomes obtained by the Bulgarian ethnicity

Source: Poiana Mare Town Hall, Dolj county

Figure 7. Evolution of the number of families of Bulgarians performing traditional occupations in Poiana Mare Sursa: Primaria Poiana Mare, Dolj

CONCLUSION

The results outcome from ethno-creative tourism will contribute to increasing the relevance of well-established cultural analysis approaches. It is very important to understand the common approach of creative tourism as / with ethnic tourism. Increasingly, there is a need for knowledge and understanding of the cultural values of each ethnicity, and - why not- for an attempt to develop, by creation, a cultural tourism, not only a creative one. This has been aimed at by this study and, to a great extent, has been done accordingly. It is a first step in approaching it like this, with future trends in the development of work plans, in which the educational tourism is also to be included as a basic component of the education of the younger generations and of the ludic school education as well.

Also, the results of the study show that cultural tourism based on creativity and traditional values contributes to the emergence of economic multiplication effects. In a period in which the mobility of the population in Romania is emphasized, when the phenomena of demographic aging and depopulation of villages in a constant progression is certain, the development of this type of tourism can contribute to the provision of a resource of living satisfactorily. Developing ethno - creative tourism means creating jobs in a period of economic crisis. Tradition and tourism based on the valorisation of traditionally expressed material demand human labor. All procedures are done manually. This stimulates individuals' creativity and skill. These things are not worthy being destroyed. For this reason, the

study has considered the traditional to be clearly expressed only by those families where such products have been made for three generations. The results clearly show that they still exist and, more than that, they work.

The results show that ethno-cultural tourism can be considered as a factor for the popularization of cultural identity, which plays a significant role in promoting cultural diversity, and the creative culture specific to each analyzed ethnicity is an attempt to promote the development of ethno-creative tourism.

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