

DAN MIHAI GHERTOIU, Noi forme de turism dezvoltate după 1990. Turismul de nișă din România (*New Forms of Tourism Developed after 1990. Niche Tourism in Romania*)

SUMMARY

This PhD thesis entitled *New forms of tourism developed after 1990. Niche tourism in Romania* written by the undersigned has fully achieved its objectives, reached the initial aims through its content, themes, analysis, and case study.

We would like to state a few of the results of our thesis: (1) The quantification of the majority of interpretations regarding the term *niche* and the possibilities of applying it to various sciences; (2) The presentation of the main similarities and differences between mass tourism and niche tourism; (3) The analysis of a considerable amount of expert papers that have tackled the main types of niche tourism worldwide, and having gathered them in a unitary material which is easy to consult by everyone who is interested in the subject; (4) The analysis of worldwide evolution of niche tourism and the main vectors that nowadays define its forms; (5) A detailed analysis of the niche tourism's forms that exist in the world and their impact on world economy; (6) The analysis of the evolution of niche tourism in Romania after 1990, the framework that helped its appearance and development; (7) The detailed analysis of the forms of niche tourism that exist at present in Romania, focusing on the present situation, its relevance in the general equation of the touristic sector, and the breakdowns that may appear in every form; (8) The design and presentation of some strategic projects and solutions meant to increase the efficiency of niche tourism worldwide; (9) Taking the pulse of public opinion through concrete case studies regarding the impact of some forms of niche tourism (cyclotourism, landscape or garden tourism); (10) The elaboration of graphic materials like charts, graphs, and maps, which can facilitate interpretation and further analysis.

Certainly, this paper has other strengths, too, but we will be dealing only with these above mentioned, so the reviewers can analyse and filter, through a critic approach, the content of the paper, the results of the analysis, and can draw the appropriate conclusions. We would like to thank them in advance for this!

Key words: niche, niche tourism, Romania, touristic strategies, regional development, touristic brands, opportunities and weaknesses.

PREFACE

In the last decade, the world economy has shown a deep change and development (structural, functional, and typological) in one of the largest branches of activity- tourism.

We can state from the very beginning that the efficient development of this branch, taking into consideration the current economic coordinates generated and irremediably twisted by the economic-financial world crisis, are the only development opportunity for some states. Under these circumstances, tourism tries to surmount the involution (here and there dramatic) of the other branches of activity, especially the industrial, transport, and agricultural ones.

Innovation, which is not typical of tourism, has become a concept to be used in this branch, too, through the development (discovery) and efficient implementation of new touristic types and forms; they are oriented towards certain psychological dimensions of the contemporary tourists. This phenomenon is expressed, at a large scale, both in the traditional touristic states and those that are just at the beginning but with doubtless implementation opportunities.

The transition from mass tourism, which has required, for some decades now, important financial and human energies (standing at the base of the economic pyramid of many states and regions), to niche tourism, which is required by a specific category of tourists, is still hard because it needs new and specialized infrastructures. Some states understood from the beginning the potential benefit and velleity so they embraced the new trend; the result consisted in a massive investment in the development of new resort technologies and infrastructures. Now, after 1990, Romania is trying- like in other branches- to develop a sustainable and complex touristic infrastructure in niche tourism and to train a large number of personnel, who are indispensable for the efficient implementation and benefits.

The Romanian territorial backbone, the unique ethno-cultural valences, the gastronomy, the development of a tender business can represent many potential elements regarding the diversity and implementation of new forms of tourism; these elements can represent niche tourism due to their structural and functional characteristics.

This paper, entitled *New forms of tourism developed after 1990. Niche tourism in Romania* intends (and we hope it will succeed) to cover the entire issue given by the development of these new forms and types of tourism in Romania.

The speciality geographic literature needs this kind of paper that can cover the informational, formative, and methodological gaps in the above mentioned branch. The possibility of writing this paper has derived mostly from the physical-geographical and human-geographical peculiarity of Romania, which offered the appropriate frame of development for the various touristic forms belonging to niche tourism. Obviously, these new forms and types of touristic manifestation rely on the traditional Romanian tourism and they are nothing but new ways of expressing the touristic propensity of the national space.

This paper intends to be an epistemological radiography of niche tourism, of the main forms and types of the niche, a classification of them according to various criteria, a reasoning of their existence and manifestation in Romania, a promotion, and, maybe, an attempt to increase the efficiency of the new touristic forms' functionalities. In other words, this paper tries to cover (at least sequentially) some research gaps.

The new geographical paradigms (typical of the Anglo-Saxon schools that have an indisputable prestige) set off, in their attempt to know and analyse the new research field, from the following idea: any scientific field has its own set up premises, its specific attributes that are responsible for the functionality and some specific "products" (material or spiritual); they all create the personal ethos of the research field. They must be identified, analysed and interconnected and so the content and interrelations are brought into an objective and authentic light. The rest is a discreet mystification of the territorial reality, without being able to reveal the truth.

Starting off from this idea, with scientific connotations, the way in which Romanian niche tourism is analysed and interpreted has become concrete and real; there is the possibility to "see" even the final objective of the paper, that of grasping and explaining the structure, the functionality and the existing connections.

The appearance and setting off of the new niche tourism forms are not very different from those that have contributed to the individualization of mass tourism; but there is specificity, though: there are several elements in its manifestation and development, several infrastructures and "new actors", different from those involved in the traditional tourism, also known as mass tourism.

In order for the initial goals to be fulfilled, the paper is structured on several chapters and subchapters that cover some specific themes: the meaning of the term "niche"; the conceptualization and interpretation of the phrase "niche tourism"; reviewing the importance degree of the phenomenon worldwide, through highlighting some important case studies; the analysis of the main premises that have contributed to the creation and manifestation of niche tourism forms in Romania; the regionalization of these according to the main areas suitable to this profile; the main forms of promotion and increase of efficiency; sketching a strategy in this field on a national level; the SWOT analysis of niche tourism in Romania.

We believe that the thesis's theme covers most parts of the contents and interrelations created between the profile geo-components and it also presents the transforming presence of man in one of the latest branches, niche tourism.

The reviewers and the public are those who have to decide whether this paper has correctly identified the main elements and objectively and inclusively analysed them. If not, they should anathematize it! We believe that an integrated study that focuses on Romanian niche tourism is absolutely necessary, despite the fact that such a subject may imply risks that we have unconditionally taken. Because we do not believe that such subject can ever be exhausted, scientific research is based on a consistent illustrative material that is both demonstrative and analytic, built up by graphics and maps, charts and an impressive number of bibliographical references; they are all a modest attempt to contribute to the continuous research in the touristic field.

Finally, I would like to thank Prof. Nicolae Ciangă for all the support he has given me in this study through various and relevant scientific and methodological observations, which have proved to be essential for the elaboration of the paper, for the generous time he has given, together with me, to the

explanation of delicate issues. I would like to thank the specialty personnel that work in the Romanian institutions, for all the support they have given me in obtaining the necessary data for the various analyzed indicators.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family that have given me support and necessary context to express the cognitive exercise, encouraging me to get through all the inherent difficulties that appear in any authentic scientific research; they are mostly the main responsible for this accomplishment.

MEANINGS OF THE TERM “NICHE”

The term “niche” has various meanings and is specific of various fields. First, it was common for technical science, and then it became famous for cognition fields. Morphologically speaking, *niche* is a feminine noun.

Analysing the meanings, interpretations and usage in various papers, everyday language and etymology, of the term *niche*, we can notice there are two important aspects that are to be taken into consideration in our paper:

1. *The term refers to isolated entities, irrespective of the aspects it makes reference to (people, places, attributes belonging to a place, markets or economy);*
2. *In foreign literature there is no such construction as niche tourism, which makes our paper new and innovating.* This is gladdening but at the same time it implies great responsibility and a vast study of theoretical documentation because this term has to be introduced in a branch in which it is not used at the moment; in order to introduce it we must have a consistent scientific argumentation.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND METHODOLOGY

This paper called *New and forms of tourism developed after 1990. Niche tourism in Romania* intends to analyse the main forms of niche tourism, emerged and developed in Romania after 1990, as an alternative to the already established typical forms of mass tourism.

The main goal of the paper is to *closely scan niche tourism that has developed in Romania after 1990, the frames in which the first forms of niche tourism began and evolved, the evolution of the whole phenomenon, the territorial division of these forms, the indicators of traffic and further development opportunities.*

There are several specific objectives that derive out of the main goal; they are compulsory for the correct and objective scientific and analytic elaboration and ranging.

The main objectives are:

1. *The analysis of the term niche and the collocation niche tourism and their use in defining and characterising the current touristic phenomenon;*
2. *The intervention and evolution of the two collocations in other research fields in order to explain their role in defining and arguing the phenomena and processes in other fields;*
3. *The analysis of the main forms of niche tourism from the point of view of the various specialty papers that exist worldwide and of the perspective of acknowledged models;*
4. *The presentation of the main specialty papers that analyse the evolution and interpretation of niche tourism;*
5. *The present detailed reviewing of the existent niche tourism forms worldwide and of some case studies that prove their impact on the touristic area in the world;*
6. *The analysis of the main niche tourism forms in Romania after 1990;*
7. *The analysis of the main autochthonous specialty papers that deal with the mentioned subject;*
8. *The elaboration of some strategies to make every niche tourism form nationally efficient;*
9. *The presentation of case studies to state and recognize the existence of some efficient models in the field of niche tourism.*

We state from the beginning that this paper has required a substantial effort given by the analysis of many specialty papers and touristic sites, in order to catch the evolution and the actual dynamics of niche tourism phenomenon and be able to explain the existence and development of the forms, on a national level.

From a methodological point of view, I used the entire methodological material that is specific to tourism and geography; most precisely the bibliographical method, field study method, analytical method, questionnaire method, case study method, comparison method and explanation method.

Although the paper deals with multiple themes and operates with dates from totally different touristic areas, its structure is a simple and logical one, to be able to facilitate the understanding of content and tackled interrelations.

The structure of the paper includes a first chapter that deals with the way in which *niche* is interpreted in other scientific fields and we can certainly say that it is a term that derives from technical sciences. The main research fields that have this word in their vocabulary are physics, chemistry, geology, biology, medical optics. Later, it started to be used in geography, history, art history, painting, medicine etc. In this same chapter I explained the way in which, through derivation, the term *niche tourism* appeared; it is well known worldwide and it defines a special side of tourism, that in which tourists are motivated by other elements, compared to mass tourists, in choosing their destinations and holidays.

The second chapter called *Goals, Objectives and Methodology* explains the way in which this paper appeared, by focusing on objectives, goals and the methodological material studied in order to accomplish all the elements mentioned before.

The third chapter is a large one and deals with the worldwide niche tourism evolution, the present relations between mass tourism and niche tourism, the ways in which niche tourism forms are received, analysed and presented in the main worldwide specialty papers (there were 38 specialty papers analysed from all over the world) and it analyses in detail the main existing niche tourism forms. In the case of each niche tourism form I followed the main vectors, form interpretation and its impact on a worldwide level, main destinations and the large number of tourists. Therewith, I analysed for most niche tourism forms some case studies representative worldwide.

The fourth chapter deals with the evolution of niche tourism in Romania after 1990, the liberalization of national touristic marker, the moment in which they emerged or some of them were reorganized and also the advantage of the national territory in generating new touristic forms compared to the mass ones.

In the fifth chapter there is a review of the main national specialty papers which catch, analyse, argument and discuss present scientific issues regarding niche tourism.

The sixth chapter is the most important because it discusses the main niche tourism forms in Romania.

There is a triple perspective in dealing with each form of niche tourism: (1) main present valences and division of locations in the country; (2) the dysfunctionalities and lacks that inhibit development and (3) potential promotion strategies.

This paper ends with a case study, in chapter seven; we intended to highlight public perception regarding the hierarchy of main niche tourism forms in Romania. We elaborated a questionnaire and we applied it on 320 subjects in Sibiu and nearby rural areas. We chose Sibiu because now it has the greatest touristic potential in Romania. A different chapter deals with the results and conclusions we gathered and it is called *Results and Conclusion*.

In order to elaborate this paper, I analysed a large number of specialty scientific papers (over 300 papers); they exist in the national and international literature and on specialized sites.

We finally state the fact that the Romanian specialty literature does not yet have a paper that deals with niche tourism in a complex, exhaustive and integrated manner; there are some papers that briefly deal with this subject or they only analyse some forms (viniculture tourism, gastronomic tourism or ecotourism).

MASS TOURISM AND NICHE TOURISM

Tourism, presently applied in a generalized and organized manner all over the world, has begun in the first years after the end of the Second World War. The rises of living standard, the increase of spare time and development of transport have given an impressive development of touristic demand especially for international tourism. The touristic destinations have supported this demand by expanding a large scale of services and facilities for the tourists.

Relations between mass tourism and niche tourism

Tourism is mostly driven today by a *mass touristic production* (any kind of touristic offer) and a *mass consumption* (with all its aspects- financial, food supply, accommodation, transport infrastructure). All these attributes turn the touristic phenomenon into a vital piece of world economy, thus becoming an essential of the contemporary world.

The special evolution of the touristic phenomenon in the last forty years cannot be precisely measured and quantified; it can be deduced due to some profile indicators, such as: considerable rise of

resorts (of all kinds), the increase of accommodation and food supply; the increase of the elements of touristic attractions (of all categories). In other words, mass tourism has generated an unprecedented expansion of various infrastructures in order to sustain an average number of about 800 million tourists a year.¹ Despite the effect of the world crisis, the forecast indicates that in the near future, the average number of tourists a year will increase up to 20%.

In this context, *mass tourism* is organized as an industrialized process meant to satisfy the needs of a growing market from the point of view of *production, structure and organizing mode*. Thus, tourism is seen as a large scale phenomenon, in which the production, packaging, selling and consumption of leisure facilities are standardized, they have relatively fixed prices and are directed towards mass clients². The development of touristic phenomenon and the possibility for large parts of the population to access the main touristic resources are due to the junction of various factors, such as: the rise of income, the increase of holidays, the world's geopolitical stability; the appearance and development of the chains of tour operators touristic agencies, of air transport and of multinational hotel chains. Despite the fact that there are ideas about the value and quality of services in tourism, the harsh competition has imposed a change of prices; because of this, the only "survivors" were the strong brands and those that have efficient emporium marketing. Due to this fact, the production and service consumption have become inseparable in mass tourism. Today's market is dominated by full service operators. Full services are a major benefit regarding savings, purchasing power, control over prices, the efficient marketing development and competitiveness compared to competition.

Goods and touristic service consumption are highly developed, due to an unprecedented development of touristic offer and production³. Tourism industry today satisfies the needs of a large number of tourists owing to competitive prices. Other elements that contribute to the increase of mass tourists are: the implementation of touristic offers lasting on average one or two weeks⁴; organized trips; Dutch buffet; charters; organized touristic circuits and diverse destinations. Mass tourism has practically favoured the development of other branches like IT industry, commerce, transport, food industry, car industry, textile industry, sport equipment industry.

Mass tourism is still dominant on the world touristic market but more specific forms have emerged. Tourists are becoming more and more specialized, imposing a more concrete adaptation of profile agencies. In the last decades other forms of tourism have become more and more popular; these forms are called non-classic and make up the forms of so-called *niche tourism*. Niche tourism can make reference to natural or atrophic resources of interest in a country or region, to the lifestyle preferences of tourists, to their social status, to their financial resources etc.

Niche tourism, as a concept, has recently stood out as a way to counteract *mass tourism*. In order to do that, it takes a set of more sophisticated practices that can distinguish and differentiate the tourists. In a world in which monotony increases especially because of globalization, *niche tourism defines itself through diversity and new differentiating ways*.

Niche tourism lacks all the pejorative connotations which mass tourism has gained at its development; we refer here to the negative impact it had upon the environment, and upon the socio-cultural relations. For the destination managers and the planners that wish to consider tourism as a mechanism for economic development, niche tourism seems to offer greater opportunities and a long lasting tourism, less harmful and, most important, capable to attract as many willing to spend clients as possible. For the tourists, niche tourism seems to offer a set of experiences much more complex than mass tourism, hoping that it can fulfil the wish and expectations of the tourist and he is fully satisfied.

Niche tourism is a term mostly borrowed from *niche marketing* which derives ecology, a recently new discipline. Hutchinson G.E⁵ is the one that first used the term *niche*, as making reference to a region in a multidimensional space, characterized by environmental factors that disturb the species' welfare. Thus, *niche* refers to an appropriate location in which an organism can exploit the resources before its competitors. It is easy to notice the resemblance of what Hutchinson called as business world, taking the example of a company which tries to find a niche on which to develop an activity and be successful.

¹According to the dates offered by World Tourism Organization in 2012.

²Poon, A. (1993).

³Miller, D. (1987) *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, Oxford: Blackwell.

⁴Lofgren, O. (1999) *On holiday: a history of vacationing*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

⁵Hutchinson, G.E. (1957) *Concluding Remarks*, in Cold Spring Harbor Symposia on Quantitative Biology, Chicago, pp. 415-427.

Indeed, the use of *niche* belongs to a wider expression. In marketing, *niche* refers to two related terms: the first one is induced by the fact that there is a place on the market for a certain product and the second one refers to the existence of a target public for that product where, both the place and the public are seen as specific entities. Moving on, we can state the fact that a product has been specially conceived to satisfy the needs of a certain market share with general needs rather than a set of individual needs strongly connected to the qualities and characteristics of certain products. Thus, we can speak about a *niche market* as a clearly set out group, where the persons in this group can be identified by the same needs and interests and can be defined as having a strong wish for all the products in the offer. The length of a niche market can vary, but it has to be balanced in order to be sufficiently large for the business to develop, and sufficiently small to be overlooked by the contestants. Behind this *niche market* term is the whole knowledge process that involves the producers, who are searching, identifying, and constructing a specific audience, and who maintain a relationship with it before the competitors.

As a notion, *niche tourism* and everything belonging to it has roots in niche marketing. Thus, we hear terms like *niche tourism products* and *niche tourism markets*, which are interconnected. Still, an important aspect about this type of tourism is the result of those who offer this type of product and does not come from those who consume it. Of course there are no rules or standards you can make (or not) reference to when it comes to niche tourism and there are important variation regarding this term. For instance, cultural tourism is often used as a form of niche tourism, where tourists that deal with this type of tourism form a niche market. *Niche tourism* can have both extreme or extravagant forms and bizarre or nonconformist ones, due to the invested amount of money or to the content and specialities of the sites. On a global level, these two general motivations (*amount of money spent and preferences for a series of bizarre and nonconformist touristic sites*) impose and condition the niche tourism typologies and categories.

Niche tourism is a reaction to mass tourism (industrial, FORDIST) and is different from the point of view of *tourists' quality*; they support sustainable development of touristic sites, financing of local communities. This type of tourism is produced and consumed in the same time and it fulfils the consumers' wishes. *Niche tourism* is determined by the *motivation, behaviour and experience of both the production and consumption*. The niche tourism offer directs to a small but consistent number of consumers.

Lately, *niche tourism* has been defined as a branch with a relatively large spectrum. Specialists believe that we can speak, inside the tourism branch, about a *touristic micro-niche* that includes types and forms like *cultural tourism, rural tourism, sports tourism*, each one divided into *micro-touristic niches (geotourism, gastronomical tourism and cyclotourism)*. On the other hand, niche tourism is focused on a very precise and stable market, which will be hard to divide into segments that correspond to the types of niche tourism.

Niche tourism identifies, in comparison to mass tourism, through *what tourists do*, and not through their number in a certain place in a certain period. From this perspective, a central aspect refers to *niche tourists' destination*. Thus, a viniculture region becomes a destination which is preferred by a certain category of tourists who prefer a certain type of wine. In conclusion, the touristic promotion of that destination will elaborate materials meant to motivate that category of tourists.

Niche tourism in the specialty world literature

Niche tourism, through the multitude of forms it proposes has, at present, an impressive number of representatives who practice it, generating a more and more intense circulation.

If, in the literature of specialty in the world, the evolution of mass tourism is sustained, analysed and revealed by numerous scientific papers, with both general and specific character, in the case of niche tourism, thematic papers are few and deal only partially with the subject; there are only certain forms of niche tourism in some chapters in papers of general character.

For Romania, specialty literature is even poorer: there is no paper that integrates all the existent niche tourism forms.

Starting from this premise, with obvious difficult connotations regarding the elaboration of this paper, we have proposed and have hopefully succeeded to radiograph all the main worldwide scientific papers. Thus, we have identified 38 scientific papers that deal with niche tourism and its main forms of manifestation among other characteristics and main vectors of our phenomenon.

The evolution of worldwide niche tourism

Niche tourism must be seen as a branch that opposes mass tourism. Mass tourism emerged in the air travel between 1950-1960 with the so-called *traveller tourist*, who later became a middle aged traveller, very sophisticated and developed in the evolution of the environment⁶.

In other words, niche tourism movement starts from the saying: the economy of modern tourism is very different from the old one; in a profitable manner does not rely on scale economy, but on the exploitation of unidentified mass markets⁷.

Yeoman (2008), like many other authors, believed that niche tourism could be considered an alternative, almost in antithesis, to modern mass tourism. If mass tourism is homogenous by nature, it is a uniform, standardized, unitary product for a large market segment, niche market is defined through its heterogeneous character and it relies on a higher demand for a different and unique product. It can be said that niche tourism becomes more important due to the change of motivational factors of the travels. Lately, the motivation has presented a separation from the old, rigid and standardized activities of the tourists; it goes towards a unique approach, where the needs and wishes are concentrated upon more adventurous and important experiences, for which the tourists are willing to pay more compared to the present activities. Thus, becomes clear that niche tourism is more specific than mass tourism, in concordance to the new motivational factors. Niche tourism can be defined as a service supplier for the needs of the specific market and it focuses on various touristic products. The reasons for this change in motivation and further growth of niche tourism forms vary according to the type of touristic market. Gibson and Connell (2005) associated the development of musical tourism with a general change in the cultural motivation; thus it can be seen as a way of spending the spare time, headed towards mass culture forms (music as mass culture form, but touristic music, a form of niche tourism). A key component regarding the talk around niche tourism is the continuous growth of niche tourism products until they could be considered as mass.

Other components are:

a. The appropriate characteristics of niche tourism products. For example, Swarbrookeetal (2003) described this aspect regarding adventure tourism: appropriate characteristics of ecotourism, distinct qualities of adventure tourism and common features;

b. The need of “specialization” for niche tourism products, giving a way to access new and varied markets. This aspect, suggested by Deuschl (2006), is the key for future development of destinations. “Specialization” helps identifying the competitive advantage, focusing on these types of products and markets;

c. The market is more restricted and specific. The product contains attractions headed only towards a small number of people;

d. Niche tourism is a more lasting approach than mass tourism⁸.

The niche tourism concept emerged in the last years as a reaction to what is commonly known as mass tourism (Robinson and Novelli, 2005). It is an approach that is connected to the product; it focuses on activities, attractions, settings, food supply and other facilities. These are the main components of niche tourism regarding mixed destinations, in accordance to the specific needs of the tourist. The importance of the market focuses on the expectations and needs of the costumers. There is focus on the relationships between demand and supply; the tourists are in a continuous search for a pleasant experience during the holiday⁹. Most ideas about niches are not based on marketing theory. Niche is a specialized space on the market where a company can clear direct competition or can exploit its own special competence.

The implication of this fact is that suppliers clear the existent competition on mass markets when they attempt to search a specific niche which is more appropriate for them than for their competitors. So, marketing niche is “a way to satisfy the clients’ needs by offering goods and services for small markets.” (Stanton et al., 1991). In the rapid division of mass consumption, according to Dalgic and Leeuw (1994, pag.44), companies must be flexible ad develop differentiated products to satisfy the needs of niches: “in the marketing niche the accent is on the client and on the profit; the initiators of marketing niche are specialized in serving them. Instead of going for the entire market (mass

⁶according to Lew, A., 2008.

⁷Poon, P. 1989 and Inlew, G., 2008.

⁸<http://www.scribd.com/doc/88151310/1/From-Mass-Tourism-to-Niche-Tourism>, accessed on May 15.,2014, 10.02.a.m.

⁹http://www.capetown.travel/uploads/legacy/Niche_Market_Study_Cape_Town_City_of_Cape_Town.pdf, accessed on May20,2014, at 13.50 p.m.

marketing), or larger market segments, these companies aim at segments inside segments or for the simplicity's sake, it focuses on niches".

From the providers' point of view, companies must identify and answer the needs of various niche markets. Still, this leads us to the next question: how do niches emerge and how can the suppliers identify them and interact with them?

In social systems, inherent differentiation in creating niches can be connected to the differentiation process. Bourdieu, 1984, underlines the main cultural role and that of symbolic consumption in the differentiated sustenance. For Bourdieu, social classes could develop and maintain their difference through the acquisition of cultural capital, which are connected to the "taste" development and high culture consumption. In the last years, this model has had problems due to "high" and "pop" culture and the emergence of "omnivorous" consumption models (Peterson 2003). Recent sociology papers have noticed the growth of eclectic consumption models (Bellevance, 2008), which rejected the previous relations between specific social groups and products.

The consumer is actively involved in the formation of a specific niche through consumption practices rather than consuming what a market niche has to offer.

Differences between consumers diminish and the borders between producers and consumers are more vague. Consumers are more and more involved in the development and product projection of spending spare time.

Last but not least, it is not only the producers who identify an appropriate market niche to clear competition on mass market because niches are formed and developed by producers and consumers who act in a symbiotic way to get a reciprocal benefit of specific practices¹⁰.

In conclusion, the evolution of niche tourism has become a movement of tourism industry for the diversity of basic products and introduction of new ones with the intention to build a larger consuming base.

The main forms of niche tourism worldwide

There are various forms which can be included in niche tourism category; they can be motivated on the basis of two ideas:

a. They are wanted by the tourists willing to spend large amounts of money (the niche of extravagant and extremely rich tourists) - "niche" comes from the fact that at a global level there is a relatively reduced number of tourists in this category. There are forms like: *casino tourism, safari tourism, cruise tourism* (still), *extreme tourism*;

b. They are wanted by those tourists who are devoted to a certain type of tourism and to specific type of sites. Niche is imposed by restricted categories of tourists who only prefer these forms (*pilgrimage tourism, gastronomic tourism, viticulture tourism*).

In this subchapter we will try to briefly present the main worldwide forms of niche tourism. This approach is meant to highlight their existence (worldwide), to surprise the main features (specific to each form) and to localize them according to their impact (in several areas).

Gastronomic (culinary) tourism

There are various opinions regarding the way in which the new concept revolutionized gastronomy. There have been chefs who have made bad turns to this trend, taking the story of small portions to a ridiculous limit and they got to serve tiny portions of bizarre food in the middle of a large plate, declaring that their restaurant followed the Nouvelle Cuisine principles, so it didn't take long until this whole movement would compromise itself. But if we look more objectively at the inheritance of this movement, we see it appears in *The Declaration on the new cuisine*, recently published by some of the best cooks and chefs of our times. The end of the 20th century brought us *fusion cuisine*. If, until then, a French food was a French food and a Japanese one was Japanese, typical of Japan and completely different of the French one, fusion allows and promises delicious cultural transfers. Fusion cuisine combines elements from various culinary traditions, without identifying itself with a certain one. Since 1970, many restaurants have started to offer fusion menus, starting from *clients' cultural diversity, their passion for travel, the growing sophistication of tastes and beginning of new experiences*. The movement has had various forms, from the inspired combination, in a delightful antithesis, of many local ingredients and methods to cook, to an imaginative unleash whose dominant characteristic is just an innovative

¹⁰http://www.academia.edu/1868914/Rethinking_niche_tourism_in_the_network_society, accessed in May, 20,2014, at 13⁵⁵ p.m.

eclectic, which combines elements of various traditions with new ideas, to create original recipes. Culinary art is the only one which addressed to all senses. The gastronomic experience can turn into real unforgettable moments, especially in a foreign country. That is why *culinary tourism* has become a niche market with great potential. There have been 27 millions of tourists in search of this segment in the last three years, in USA only¹¹.

Hunting and fishing tourism¹²

Hunting and fishing tourism, as a form of niche tourism, refers to hunting and angling. The premises of the debut and evolution of this niche tourism form meant the extension of roads, fields, industrial development, increase of income and the decrease wild animals. The last mentioned component forced the hunters and fishers to travel long distances, in order to satisfy their pleasure.

Hobby hobo (at one's will) tourism

Hobby hobo tourism, also known in the west as *grey nomad tourism* or *at one's will tourism*, means to forget any barrier and adopt a way of life as nonconformist as possible, at least during the *vagrancy* holiday.

Hobo tourism refers to homeless people, to those who practice this kind of tourism because they prefer travelling in trailers and camping. Despite the fact that they all afford another type of holiday, they prefer travelling from one train to another (sometimes even freight trains), without paying for the ticket. This *no worries* lifestyle is often abandoned at the end of the holiday, when they get home, to their jobs.

In western states, this kind of tourism could also take the shape of *grey nomad* because the retired decide to travel, most times by their recreational cars.¹³ The usual pattern of the hobby hobo tourist is the retired person who lives independently and for a longer period in his country, camping in a trailer.¹⁴

Narcotic tourism

Drugs, of different sorts and types have always been part of human experience. All the governments' states in the world closely supervise through judicial system drug traffic and sentence the dealers but the law is restrictive.

Drug tourism (or narcotic tourism) is a journey that has the goal to obtain, use drugs for personal use; these are illegal in the region or state the tourist comes from. This form of niche tourism has impressive judicial risks: these tourists take the risks regarding their traffic, their non-payment of taxes and medical consequences.

Narcotic-tourism is a prosperous activity in some regions of the globe due to the transnational legislative ambiguities and differences regarding their possession, selling and use. Despite this fact, although it is not among the most legal spare time activities, this kind of tourism is very common. Those who travel in a foreign country to try or to buy the local narcotic plants are called *narcotic tourists*.

Business tourism

Business tourism is among the world economy branches that have had a dynamic development, because a successful business needs contacts, technology and information exchange, exhibits, congresses and business trips. That is why many tourism agencies have specialized in these activities.

Business tourism or corporate business is also a bearable activity which offers a greater value with reduced negative effects on the environment, compared to leisure mass tourism.

The experiences of some states reveal the fact that one of the main modernization directions and development of competition for the touristic offer are the diversity of additional services through business tourism. Spatial growth and development of international tourism depends in each country on the distribution and quality of natural factors and anthropic elements that attract the foreign tourists. Thus, the development of business tourism- a process mainly regarded from an economic perspective - is closely tied to volume, diversity and quality of additional services. If basic touristic services are done in the same

¹¹analysed data after being offered by American Tourism Industry Association, 2013.

¹²Bauer, J., and A. Herr (2004) *Hunting and fishing tourism*. In *Wildlife Tourism. Impacts, Management and Planning*, Melbourne: Common Group Publishing PTY Ltd, pp.57-76.

¹³according to the interpretation given by <http://cosminilie92.wordpress.com/turismul-hobby-hobo/>, accessed on 10 February, 2014, at 11³⁵ a.m.

¹⁴http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/grey_nomad, accessed in February 10,2014, at 12⁰⁴ p.m.

manner as in the countries that are considered competition, the services of business tourism can play an important role in confirming the attraction role of a destination¹⁵.

Genealogic tourism

Ancestral tourism or as it is known in specialty literature, as *genealogic tourism*, is a form of cultural tourism; it means visiting places connected to family history (identification of genealogic tree), ancestors and events in their lives. It is a trip of tourists' origins, of discovery, of visiting the birthplaces of the ancestors and sometimes of meeting far-off relatives.

This form of niche tourism appeared in Scotland (where there is also a professional association of promoting it) and spread in all of the UK. Their model was taken over by Germany, Holland, Belgium and other non-European states like the United States of America, Canada, Australia and others.

Casino tourism

Casino tourism represents an important source of income worldwide. According to a 2009 study of Price Waterhouse Coopers, this activity contributes to about 100 billion Dollars worldwide. Despite this, there are intense debates in the touristic business all over the world about the existence of a direct proportional relationship between casino activity and the improvement of these profile units. Most of the time, except for Monte Carlo, Nevada and the Caribbean, there is no direct relation between these two phenomena because casinos, as elements of attraction, are recent.

In the evolution of touristic phenomenon, casinos are associated with luxury resorts like Baden Baden, Monte Carlo or Las Vegas; they are seen as villegiature locations for the rich businessmen and nobles. If in the past casinos were typical of the very rich, having a cosmopolitan touristic character, they are presently suitable for the tourists that come from the urban areas nearby.

Heritage (historic- memorial) tourism

It is a branch of niche tourism in which *tourists visit historic sites* (for example antiques, medieval, locations with a rich history, famous industrial sites, old channels, railways or battlefields). It is also known as *heritage tourism*.

Nowadays, heritage tourism is growing fast and has many opportunities which can be improved (market analysis of potential tourists, the explanation of value and meaning of touristic sites, the involvement of historians and architects in this touristic activity).

In the Australian specialty literature¹⁶ we find the main activity that helps the on-going of heritage tourism: visiting famous theatres, taking part in cultural activities, visiting museums and art galleries, visiting some art galleries and studios, taking part in festivals, concerts and art exhibitions, visiting the aboriginals' communities.

Educational tourism

Educational tourism is *a trip to an educational institute (secondary and higher), so the future pretenders could get used to that institution or other, in the future; they can participate to courses for personal interest (cooking with a famous chef or acquiring some skills like glass painting, jewellery art craft, candle sculpture)*.

It deals mostly with young people who are in search of personal education but there are also other various people of all ages who are eager to learn.

Educational tourism implies some activities: the thorough study (in a concrete place) of notions in the formal educational systems; activities in which team work abilities are developed; social interaction and relaxation; adding practice to the theoretical knowledge.

Garden tourism

Garden tourism is a form of niche tourism that refers to visits to various botanical gardens and some famous places from the gardening perspective¹⁷. The tourists that belong to this niche travel on their own, most of the times in organized groups, in the countries that have these resources. Garden tourism is about visiting famous parks and/or taking part to landscape courses (for example Ikebana or Bonsai).

¹⁵Stănciulescu, Gabriela, Țicu, Gabriela, 2007.

¹⁶the concise paper entitled *Culture and Heritage Tourism. Understanding the Issues and Success Factors*, written by the Research Informing Policy and Planning (2007), Canberra.

¹⁷http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garden_tourism, accessed on March 20, 2014, at 13⁵⁰p.m.

Gay tourism

Gay tourism is known as LGBT in specialty literature. It refers to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual community worldwide.

The world touristic market has identified a correspondence between the number of clients belonging to this niche and the benefits and the permissiveness of the law in each state. We have to make a clear differentiation of the following aspects: according to figure 23, most countries in the world have a permissive law regarding sexual orientation. But few states (I Western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand) have officially accepted marriage with the person of the same sex.

Black tourism

Black tourism is a combination of history, heritage, tragedies and awareness. These trips that tend to experiment the events associated with death or pain, are not a new phenomenon. Tourists have long been attracted to pilgrimage and holy places which generated, out of emotional reasons, a new form of tourism. Ever since old times, there have been pilgrimages to Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem, to the Way of Grief done by Jesus before being crucified, to the famous tombs in Egypt, to the gladiators' arenas in Ancient Rome, to the spots of medieval public executions, to the guided tours of the morgues of Victorian England or to the Horror Chamber in Madame Tussaud's Museum.

Extratropospheric tourism

Extratropospheric¹⁸ tourism is a space trip or (being inside a spaceship) for business or leisure activities¹⁹. There have been some touristic agencies in the last decades that served only this purpose: Virgin Galactic, and it created a space tourism industry. This phenomenon is sort of famous but the high prices and the complexity of the phenomenon discourage for now its development (for example, until now, only the Russian Space Agency has offered space travel).

Vinicultural tourism

Vinicultural tourism, also known as *oenology*, has been in continuous development. That is why the specialty literature offers many definitions. One of the most accepted definitions by the international scientific world is: *visiting of the vineyards, plantations and wine cellars, but also taking part at events and festivals in order to experiment the specific attribute of a vineyard region*²⁰. A second definition reveals the fact that: *vinicultural tourism is a niche tourism form based on the wish to visit wine producing regions in which tourists are determined to visit the wine producing regions especially the cellars and wineries while they travel for other reasons*. The 1998 definition of the Australian Oenology Institute²¹, during the Vinicultural National Strategy is the following: *visiting the cellars, wineries and the vinicultural areas to experiment the unique contemporary Australian lifestyle quality associated to wine tasting from the origin, including the enjoying of wine, food, landscape and cultural activities*²².

Pop cultural tourism²³

Pop cultural tourism is a form of niche tourism that deals with the tourists that visit a specific location they heard about in a book or in a film or those who do pilgrimages at celebrities' graves.

Vacilando tourism

In specialty literature and on several sites, vacilando tourism is a form on niche tourism in which, the way of travelling is more important than the destination itself. It is based on the idea, motivation and neglectedness, to discover new places, cultures and interaction to new people. Vacilando tourism has interesting attributes referring to the discovery of ways of life, mentalities and cultures.

Vacilando is a wandering tourist who is mostly interested in the trip, not in the destination.²⁴ It derives from the Spanish verb *vacilar* and it was first cited in 1962 by the writer John Steinbeck²⁵; in his

¹⁸http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space_tourism, accessed on March 25,2014, at 12²⁵p.m.

¹⁹http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space_tourism, accessed on March 25,2014, at 12²⁵p.m.

²⁰according to Hall, C.M., 2000.

²¹according to Brown, G., 2005.

²²according to Carlsen, J., 2007.

²³this subchapter was written based on analyses, statistical data, and qualitative interpretation made by Lundberg, Christine, and Lexhagen, Maria, in their paper, *PopCulture Tourism: a Research Model* (2014, Ostersung, Sweden).

²⁴http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Introductory_Tourism, accessed in March 28,2014, at 11⁰³a.m.

²⁵Steinbeck, J. (1962), *Travel with Charley: In Search of America*, New York: Viking.

writing he describes the trips he made with Charlie, a friend, on the American continent. He uses *vacilar* to call himself and uses it to define his trip mate, explaining the innovative characteristics of their journey to discover new places, new cultures, and cuisines, sites of lost civilizations, different mentalities or even old American tribes.

Exclusive tourism

Exclusive tourism is considered a niche tourism component, typical of the very rich tourists who prefer exotic or eccentric holidays to places in which the touristic sites are either not typical of that places (skiing in Dubai), or are very expensive (trips to Sapmi, safari in Southern Africa; holidays in Rio de Janeiro, Seychelles, Cancun, Mexico, Cuba, Indochina and/or cruises to Antarctica).

Cruise tourism

Cruise tourism refers to the time spent on a boat; there are more types of cruises: cruises along the rivers, sailing with convertible yachts or a charter with a yacht. Still, this segment is typical of sea cruises.

Cruise tourism belongs to niche tourism because it fulfils both conditions imposed by its definition: it is available only to a certain category of tourists who have the necessary financial resources to offer them this exclusive experience and it is done for them, as a segment, in order to be able to visit some special sites at the highest level of comfort and luxury.

SPA tourism

Spa comes from the Latin expression *sanitas per aquam*, meaning health through water.²⁶ The origin of this term is rather controversial because in another genealogic tree, it is considered the offspring of a small Belgian town in the Liege region, called Spa, a thermal resort which dates back in Roman times. The expression is mostly used in Anglo-Saxon languages and can refer to a recovery centre, a beauty shop, but also a mineral spring or a place in which that kind of spring was discovered.

Spa tourism is also called tourism for health, reinvigoration and relaxation. It does not refer only to body treatment, specialized massages or sport activities, but it refers to revitalizing services at high standards with many procedures and treatments, organized and supervised according to the principles of prevention and curative medicine.

Weather phenomena-observing tourism

Weather phenomena observing tourism is usually done by those people who have the hobby of observing particular or uncommon weather phenomena (tornados, hurricanes, stormy or other extreme phenomena). Tourists especially choose the places in which tornados, hurricanes or other severe weather phenomena were announced and they can see them live, happening.

Empathic tourism

Empathic tourism refers to those tourists who travel to places where tragedies happened; they go there for mourning. In the same niche tourism form are to be placed those tourists that rapidly go to the victims' graves.

Extreme tourism

Extreme tourism is also known as *shock tourism* and it refers to a trip to dangerous places or the participation to this kind of events. It is well called shock tourism because it has a big dose of adrenaline, the tourists expose to real changes that can harm their life and health.

If traditional tourism relies on the comfort given by hotels and resorts, in this case, it is precisely the lack of it is the rule! Those keen on this kind of tourism prefer trips on rugged lands, MIG flights or ice-diving, war zones or places with dangerous phenomena (for example, the Chernobyl disaster, Ukraine), which can affect their health or life.

Hobby tourism

It is an individual or group trip done to take part in activities connected to tourists' hobbies or to meet other tourists with similar interests.

²⁶<http://sanatate.bzi.ro/ce-inseamna-spa-vezi-si-care-sunt-cele-mai-dotate-centre-spa-din-romania-11165>, accessed on March 31, 2014, at 14.00 p.m.

Among other examples are: Zoo visits, radio and TV stations tours, various dancing clubs tours or different sport events.

Perpetual tourism

Perpetual tourism refers to those persons who are always on holiday, some of them for fiscal reasons, to avoid residence in a certain state, whose legislation is less permissive.

There is no inventory of these tourists, which makes it impossible to analyse them. It is impossible also because there is no information regarding their possible destinations.

Pilgrimage tourism

The relationship tourist- pilgrim could be expressed as follows²⁷: people look for something else without knowing that maybe they look for something that does not exist in this world! But there are wise people who do not do with world travels, but they make pilgrimages to holy places where they can feel, only for once, the scent of the other world. Pilgrimage is a trip the faithful make to a holy land. It is both an inside and outside journey. The word comes from the Latin *peregrination* which means exiled and expatriate. A stranger in this world, the pilgrim searches for God. Millions of tourists go to the most famous worship places but they also do touristic activities. The oldest description of Christian pilgrimages dates back in the 4th century. The pilgrims would walk to the holy places, to the places where Virgin Mary showed herself, to relics of saints, to healing and holy springs, to miraculous places. Along European history, pilgrims have had a civilizing role, too. Walking thousands of kilometres they would share culture, information would travel faster and they would wear off fear of others, of strangers and they would help to maintain peace.

Today, pilgrims use modern means of transport on the road, they pray, asking forgiveness for their sins and help to go through the harsh moments in life; but also for the fulfilment of some wishes (health, pain comforting, passing hard exams). They read again the saints' life at their relics. Once they arrive to the pilgrimage place, they bow and they take part at the service together with other pilgrims. Some pilgrims, more emulous, fast, confess and they get the Eucharist with the Holy Sacraments.

Pilgrimage tourism is a niche tourism form that implies pilgrimages to various famous religious places in the world. The harshness of this form of tourism is different, according to the rules of each place and to the characteristics of the religion that place has.

Annually, millions of pilgrims that belong to various religions on the globe go to the most representative places for their religion. In the last decade of the 20th century, world tourism has diversified its worldwide manifestation forms; it has tried to develop the most attractive cultural and religious attractions in the cultural-religious heritage of a country. There are several combinations and interactions between tourism and culture versus religion and tourism based on the relationship between the cultural attraction/ holy place and the tourists' motivation; once this information is received, more aspects could also be analyzed.

Sexual tourism

The only goal of this journey is sexual activity, usually with people who prostitute themselves. In the last years, sexual tourism has become very famous in some countries like Thailand, in the Southern part of the Mediterranean Sea and lately in Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

Shopping tourism

„*We used to build civilizations. Now we build shopping malls*” said Bill Bryson, an American author of humorous books on travel. „*The odds of going to the store for a loaf of bread and coming out with only a loaf of bread are three billion to one*” – stated Erma Bombeck, another American author of humorous books. These quotations reveal the mentality of the whole world of today, who cannot conceive life without shopping. The former explains human concerns since the beginning of civilization, i.e. building, making technological, and infrastructure breakthroughs - concerns expressed today in the building of department stores and malls. The second quotation reflects the current reality and truth about our society in the 21st century. A person may have a certain purpose entering a store, but as soon as he enters he is drawn by countless other items and he almost always ends up breaking the commitment he had made prior to his entering the store.

²⁷<http://www.feminis.ro/calatorii/turismul-de-pelerinaj-16566v>, accessed in January 24, 2011, at 16⁰⁵ p.m.

Shopping is the one activity that dictates our lives. Everybody shops and we have come to depend a lot on it. This sector currently merges with tourism in generating an activity expressed in various forms.

Shopping is a popular activity all around the world, but it is performed with the most intensity on the European continent. However, there are other locations outside it, also, that are important shopping tourist attractions, in countries such as China, Thailand, Brazil, the United States, the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, and so on.

Ecotourism

The term *ecotourism* was coined at the National Ecotourism Seminar, organized by the Canadian Environmental Accreditation Commission (CEAC), in 1991. The event joined government representatives, academia, environmentalists, and tourism operators, who concluded that *ecotourism* was a side of travelling that focused on nature, on preserving the ecosystem and the integrity of the host-community²⁸.

As is widely known, ecotourism implies both tourism-related activities as well as economic activities, in a pleasant and unpolluted environment with comforting unaltered scenery. Practicing ecotourism means protecting touristic areas and their resources, which are destined for the study, admiration, recreation, and mental and physical rejuvenation of tourist, and not for destruction by them.

The relationship between tourism and environment is irrevocable and indestructible, and as such, ecotourism can optimize and ensure appropriate use of touristic resources. Under such conditions, any touristic area develops along without placing its ecologic integrity at risk.

Ecotourism is a field whose importance is increasing every day. A very interesting and metaphorical definition of ecotourism was given by the Talamacan Association for Ecotourism and Conservation in Costa Rica: "*ecotourism means much more than books and albums on fauna, binoculars, more than the popular art present on the walls of hotels and restaurants, and in fact means a constant struggle to defend landscape, and support the cultural tradition of peoples*"²⁹. Ecotourism is based on traditional culture and on nature, which implies thorough knowledge of the natural and anthropic environment, which is to be managed in a sustainable and ecological manner. This type of tourism is still in its beginning in many countries, and it goes by many names, like „*gentle tourism*”, „*green tourism*”, „*ecologic tourism*” or „*ecotourism*”. There are no real differences concerning criteria, implementation areas, or offer, between these phrases.

Ecotourism was born on the North-American continent, in mid 1980s, as a consequence of increased demand for safaris in the more insulated and fragile parts of the planet.

The most popular scientific definition of ecotourism is the following: „*...ecotourism is tourism practiced in wild natural environments with traditional cultures which have been very little interfered with, and which must be treated as sanctuaries of environment protection and preservation of ancient forms of civilization, in order to assist the economic development of local communities*”³⁰.

Speleological tourism (speleotourism)

In world-wide expert literature by *speleotourism* (speleological tourism) is meant a form of niche tourism, which implies visiting, with an expert guide, caves that have not been arranged for human entrance. This type of visit is a form of sport (walking through water, cascades, crawling, rappel, potholes, disorientation issues) in caves that are rich in cave formations such as speleothems (e.g. columns, stalactites, stalagmites, curtains, soda straws, pisolites etc.).

Speleotourism usually has as a purpose the exploration of the unknown, performing under unpredictable and stressful conditions, managing with little or no information and identifying solutions, making decisions and handling crisis situations, overcoming and making smart use of one's or a team's emotions and feelings, and so on.

Cyclotourism (mountain biking)

Cyclotourism (mountain biking) is a branch of tourism that implies riding a bike in recreational, or sporting purposes. Specifically, we call cyclotourists regular people who practice cycling outside their residency area, performing a touristic activity.

²⁸Bran, Florina (2000), *Ecoturism*, Edit. Economică, București, p.12.

²⁹idem, p.15.

³⁰idem, p.17.

Tourism connected to extreme sports

Tourism connected to extreme sports is a form of niche tourism, because it implies taking a trip in order to satisfy a particular need. Therefore, in the case of tourism driven by extreme sports, this need is to visit certain places which offer the opportunity of performing adrenaline-inducing activities which involve a certain degree of risk-taking.

This niche tourism is tightly connected to practicing extreme sports, also known as action sports or adventure sports. Extreme sports involve a high level of danger, and thus require special equipment and a certain physical endurance level. Extreme sports tourism is currently continuously rising in countries such as Russia, Azerbaijan, Peru, Chile, Argentina etc., where some of the most dangerous leaps of the recent years have been performed.

The opportunity of practicing extreme sports and, therefore, this kind of tourism, is given by the forms of relief and by other geographical and physical elements, such as quick waterfalls, ascending air currents, snow, glaciers, scary fields, and so on.

Tourism for extreme sports is mostly for youth, because it requires that the tourist be in very good shape. We can include in this category activities such as ice-climbing, bungee-jumping, moto-cross, mountain climbing, hiking, aggressive ice-skating, extreme skiing, mountain biking, sand-boarding, snow-boarding, free diving, surfing, kayak-canoe etc.

Tourism driven by extreme sports draws more and more adrenaline lovers every year. Extreme sports, also known as action sports, involve a high degree of danger. These types of activities usually involve speed, height, and a well trained psyche. There are three types of extreme sports, namely (1) sports practiced in the open; (2) water sports and (3) ground sports. To date, there are 42 extreme sports known and practiced, each, of course, belonging to one of the types above.

NICHE TOURISM IN ROMANIA AFTER 1990

*General observations. Knowing and optimizing touristic resources*³¹

The beginnings of tourism in Romania are connected to the use of mineral waters for therapeutic purposes; this phenomenon can be traced back to the second half of 16th century. At the time, the Borsec mineral waters, as well as the salty waters from Sovata and Covasna were recommended by physicians for health diets.

Actual capitalization of mineral waters through tourism began in the timeframe between the second half of the 18th century and 1850; the model used as a basis was what Western and Central Europe practiced at the time. During this period, the benefits of mineral water were made official, and so, other mineral springs were sought and found, at, for instance, Șaru Dornei, Vatra Dornei, Poiana Negri, Slănic Moldova, Vâlcele, Zizin, Sângeorz-Băi, Bălătești, etc. The great benefits of Romanian mineral spring waters became known abroad as well, and the first foreigners started to arrive in the same period (from Germany, Russia, Turkey, France, Italy etc.) for treatment in our country, namely at Slănic Moldova and Bălătești.

Between 1850-1916 even other springs were sought, arranged, and capitalized. Several magazines of the time published the results of water analyses from Slănic Moldova, Șaru Dornei, Borca, Hangu, etc. Furthermore, at certain locations, such as Vâlcele (1875), and Slănic Moldova (1914), there were scientific events related to the areas. Also at this time, the first signs of creation of balneary resorts appeared, at Slănic Moldova, Borsec, Vatra Dornei, Sovata, Tușnad, Covasna, Bălătești, Băile Homorod, Băile Chirui, Jigodin Băi, Malnaș Băi, Sinaia, Predeal, etc.

Between the two world wars, touristic activities developed homogenously, due to the creation of the Romanian unified state, on the 1st of December, 1918. Next to the already popular resorts, other, smaller ones, appeared, in locations like Zizin, Vlăhița, Turia, Valea Vinului, Breb, Șuligu, Oglinzi, Biborțeni, Coștiui, Dorna Candrenilor, Puturoasa, Șugag etc.

Romanian tourism developed a lot during 1948-1990, thanks to the centralized communist system. At this time, all tourist resorts were restored by acquiring modern, cable transportation infrastructure, accommodation units, and canteens in complex resorts.

After 1989, when the communist economic system was replaced by the market system, Romanian tourism suffered a profound change - some of it, positive, while a lot of it was negative.

³¹part of the contents of this theme is based on the analyses and research conducted by Ciangă, N. (1997), in his paper *Turismul în Carpații Orientali. Studiu de Geografie Umană*, Cluj University Press, p. 17-36.

Leaving aside the modifications of mass-tourism, we will only describe below the present state of niche tourism in Romania.

The current placement of niche tourism in Romania

„Romania does not know what to do with its tourism. In order to become a mass tourist destination, such as Turkey, Greece, or Egypt, it needs a complex and homogenous long-term strategy. However, through investments in technology and environment, Romania could currently offer tourist attractions at the Black Sea for niche tourism³².

The phrase *niche tourism* is largely borrowed from the field of marketing (niche marketing), which, in turn, took its meaning from a somewhat new topic, namely ecology. Hutchinson (1957) is said to have been the one who first used this phrase, referring to a region in a multidimensional space, in which there are certain factors that alter the well being of the species living within. Therefore, in broad terms, the term niche refers to an optimal location the resources of which can be exploited both by an organism and by its competitors with no clash between them. It is easy to see what Hutchinson meant by giving as example the business world, saying, more specifically, that it is similar to a company that is trying to find a niche in order to be successful in what it does.

The way in which niche tourism has been so often referred to in tourism policy and in recent strategic documents, in opposition with mass tourism, almost endows it with moral legitimacy.

It aims to be a better adapted and customized service, which, even if at a smaller scale, would constantly monitor market needs. Such features would ensure that niche tourism was in accordance with planning and development policies in place for ecological and sustainable social tourism. Therefore, organizations such as the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) consider that niche tourism is better for host communities than traditional mass tourism. Furthermore, niche tourism is seen as a form of attraction of tourists who want to spend a lot, and so it is labelled as a form of elite tourism, as opposed to mass tourism, which usually involves cheaper packages. For tourists, on the other hand, niche tourism is a chance to become cosmopolitan, thus distancing themselves from the rest of tourists. That tourists be labelled - i.e. divided into mass tourists or independent tourists, this way is quite inevitable, but entertains a false notion that a good and responsible behaviour belongs to the latter rather than the former.

Another important association with the concept of niche is that of intimacy of the whole process. There is almost a hue of amateurship in niche tourism. Vacations for those passionate about photography, for steam-engine enthusiasts or for those with other such hobbies tend to be considered somewhat boring by the non-enthusiasts.

If we take a closer look, though, niche tourism is far from being intimate or amateurish. Indeed, it usually has a sophisticated approach to the market, which allows a certain division of the market and building a long-term relationship with its customers. Niche tourism can be unitary; when it comes to the number of potential niches that it can cover, it can almost reach mass-size. Basically, it is represented by small networks and companies (e.g. tour-operators, hotels etc.). On the other hand, niche tourism can be operated also from large, multinational companies, which offer mass-tourism services, as they have very well built systems, which can deliver a wide array of products, in an effective and standardized manner. From the tourist's point of view, the products seem to be built especially for a certain niche, as they meet all their individual criteria; however, these products are delivered to a very large number of individual tourists, who share the same interests and needs. This seems like a step towards a more flexible and developed specialization, using specific technologies, in order to deliver products, brands, and sub-brands that are as diverse as possible.

Components of the evolution of niche tourism in Romania after 1990

It is very difficult to appreciate the quantity of niche tourism in Romania, as no scientific research has yet been conducted in this area. However, niche tourism as a concept is based on adjectival tourism.

The term "niche" is listed in many Romanian dictionaries, but only generally defined and mainly linked to construction, and architecture: a synonym for hole, entrance, crack, and so on; it is sometimes also listed with other less-known technical meanings from the field of medicine and geology.

Its somewhat new meaning, borrowed from the marketing field, of specialized market, strictly-defined target audience, or limited number of receivers, with clear interests, has not yet been listed in our

³²a statement made in 2013, by Miroslav Dragicevic, senior partner at Horwarth Consulting Zagreb.

dictionaries, although it is very often employed and has even already generated new nuances of meaning. The noun niche is borrowed from French, from which it came with its older more general meanings. Its commercial meaning was first used in English, when the French one was enriched with other, metaphorical meanings.

Adjectival tourism is a relatively new concept that comprises several niches or particular forms of tourism. Several of them have reached a common ground both within the tourism industry and among academic papers. Others are perceived as continuously evolving, as they have yet to reach their full potential or gain as much popularity as possible. We have several significant examples of global niche tourism, such as agro tourism, ecotourism, geo-tourism, medical tourism, nautical tourism, religious tourism, archaeological tourism, culinary tourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism and extreme tourism, sympathy tourism, extralegal tourism (narcotics tourism, sexual tourism, etc.), black market tourism, oenological tourism, and sports tourism.

The prestige gained by the international meaning of niche borrowed from marketing and the image created by its metaphorical content have both contributed to the fact that in current Romanian, the word niche is very fashionable.

The complex process of creation and development of Romanian tourism (both niche and mass tourism) was backed by rich and objective expert literature. With making any hierarchies or expressing any preferences for promoters of and experts on tourism (Tourism Geography), we will list the main scientific contributors to Romanian tourism below.

Some of the most well known names of Romanian scientists who published entire or partial works on niche tourism in Romania are Șandru, I. (1966, 1970), Iancu, M.&co. (1967), Mihăilescu, V. (1969), Petrescu, Carmen (1970), Zwizewski, C. (1975, 1980), Caloianu, N. (1968), Panaite, Ludmila (1974), Rădulescu, N.Al. (1846), Giucăneanu, Cl. (1967), Tufescu, V. (1969), Posea, Gr. (1969), Badea, L. (1975), Popovici, I. (1977), Grigore, M. (1977), Bleahu, M. (1978, 1982), Ciangă, N. (1995, 1997, 2002, 2007), Cocean, P. (1984, 1988, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2007, 2010), Cioacă, A. (1999), Dezsi, Șt. (2006), Dinu, Mihaela (2005), Erdeli, Gh. (1996), Gheoghilaș, A. (2005, 2008), Glăvan, V. (1995, 1996, 2000, 2003, 2007), Ielenicz, M. (2006), Ilieș, M. (2007), Irimuș, I.A. (2010), Istrate, I. (1987), Mac, I. (1992), Maier, A. (2001), Matei, Elena (2006), Munteanu, L. (1978), Muntele, I. and Iațu, C. (2003), Mureșianu, M. (2010), Neacșu, N. (2001), Neaguț, S. (2003), Nicoară, L. and Pușcaș, Angelica (2007), Olaru, M. (1996, 2002), Pastor, I. (2006), Păcurar, Al. (2004, 2009), Petrea, Rodica and Petrea, D. (2000), Postelnicu, Gh. (1997), Susan, Aurelia (1980), Teodoreanu, Elena (1984, 2002, 2004) etc.

What we intended to achieve above was to enumerate some of the main experts in tourism who succeeded, in their works, to describe the main issues related to the evolution, analysis and development of tourism in Romania.

THE MAIN FORMS OF NICHE TOURISM AFTER 1990

Following the year 1990, every aspect of life in Romania was gradually placed on its natural path. Therefore, this was the right time for niche tourism to appear and expand - based on the same recipe as everywhere else in the world.

This paper sets out to perform a scan of the most important forms of niche tourism available to this date at a national level. It employs relevant indicators, such as resources and touristic objectives that generate niche tourism, the frequency of niche tourism, the main attractions or locations where it happens, the traffic generated, and the strengths and weaknesses of each form; it also forwards solutions for the optimization, advertising, and future development of such locations.

We will take every form separately, in no specific order. We believe that every form of niche tourism in Romania can have a significant contribution to the development of national tourism and to increasing the value of the Gross Domestic Product, as well as the value of Romania's national identity. The first niche tourism forms after 1990 were quite diverse. However, compared to the amount and diversity of worldwide forms of niche tourism, Romania developed only a few, either because of lack of resources (such as space tourism), or because it has tried to avoid others (like narcotics tourism, sexual tourism, and so on) as they add too much to the crime rate.

SPA tourism in Romania

SPA tourism in Romania has been known and practiced since the times of the Roman Empire; in the beginning it was done solely for medical purposes. The natural healing elements that lie in mineral

waters above all got people's attention even in ancient times. The multiple archaeological discoveries that revealed ancient balneary baths at Herculane, Geoagiu (in Dacian times known as Germisara, and in Roman times as Termae Dodonae), Călan, Săcelu-Gorj, Ocna Sibiului, Moneasa, Buziaș, and Călimănești-Căciulata are enough proof of their great value at the time. In Callatis and Tomis, Romans also used sea water and sulphide springs as alternative treatment sources.

Black tourism in Romania

Romania, a state with an over 2000 years³³ of tourism experience, is currently trying to improve its practices in the field, its dedicated infrastructure, and is confronted with a strategic decision that takes into account both the experience that developed countries have, as well as the scientific papers written in this area in the most prestigious university centres.

Romania proved to have significant tourism capabilities, both due to its high scientific and practical potential, of which there is enough to set solid grounds for a unique strategy, which can be applied in ways specific to the local particularities. Such a direction cannot only be the result of historic experience or of the uniqueness of the geographical and climate features, of traditions, customs, art, or culture. Rather, the criteria that Romanian tourism is based on are getting in line with the demands of current technological and scientific progress, capitalizing on all positive results throughout the country, in every time period, implementation of success models from abroad that can fit the specificities Romania has. Romanian tourism is a national type of tourism, meaning it has a Romanian trade-mark - so to say, and thus can be listed among other types of tourism around the world and be thought as bringing its own contribution to the development of international tourism.

Vinicultural tourism in Romania

Vinitourism is an essential component of both tourism and the wine industry. For many years now the two have been connected, but their official link has only recently been acknowledged by governments, researchers, and other industries. For tourism, wine is a major attraction for any location, which can significantly weigh upon visitors' decision of choosing it. At the same time, vinitourism is for the wine industry an essential way to build a relationship with the clients - who can experience the result of a passion for grapes; for the small and medium producers, direct sale, at the wine-making location, is often essential to their business³⁴. Vinitourism means, for a connoisseur, the search for a certain type of wine or a more particular kind of tasting; it is, of course, different in the case of a beginner in the field. However, they can both visit the same winery at the same time, even though they will come with a different behaviour, different approaches and a different set of values, which is an interesting challenge. Hence, we can say that there is a complex relationship between providers and buyers in the niche-tourism industry, which is all the more important in those regions that depend and thrive on wine production³⁵.

Romania is an important European wine-producing country that has many cultural and historical traditions, a lot of which are related to this type of drink, considered -and justifiably so, a divine beverage. According to legend, Dionysus, the god of grape harvest, winemaking and wine, was born in northern Thracia, in the south-eastern part of what is now Romania, namely in Dobrogea.

The reason why this version of the story of Dionysus is so deeply rooted lies in the fact that Romanian wine fields are over 4,000 years old. The country that influenced Romanian winemakers the most was France, due to the tight connections between Romanian and French winemakers following the rampage produced by the insect known as phylloxera in 1880. The assistance that came from the French consisted of the naturalization of several noble breeds, such as Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, etc.

Romania is also one of the top winemakers of the world. The vineyards here amount to around 243, 000 ha. Vineyards can be cultivated on almost all the territory of Romania, starting with the Danube, and ending with Botoșani and Maramureș counties. There are only a few counties, which are placed at higher altitudes (e.g. Brașov, Covasna, Harghita), and one county in the north (Suceava), that are unfit for viticulture.

³³<http://www.scribd.com/doc/48209690/Evolutia-Turismului-in-Romania>, accessed on 22.05.2014, at 11³⁸.

³⁴Hall, M., Sharples, Liz, Cambourne, B., Macionis, Niki (2000), *Wine tourism around the world: development management and markets*, Butterworth – Heinemann, Oxon, pg.1.

³⁵Thyne, M., Laws, E. (2010), *Hospitality, tourism, and lifestyle concepts. Implications for quality management and customer satisfaction*, Digital Printing, Oxon, pp. 159-160.

The development of viticulture is possible due to the appropriate conditions that vineyards benefit from on most of the country's land, especially in hilly areas in the eastern and southern part of the Carpathian mountainous chain, in Dobrogea, and in the western part of Romania. The beneficial influence of the sun and of humidity on the quality of the products of the vineyard was well known in ancient times, as well. This is why the great vineyards of the world are and have been situated along flows of water, or even at the side of seas or oceans, where water always gets evaporated quicker, temperature is higher, and light shines brighter³⁶.

Gastronomic tourism in Romania

Gastronomic tourism in Romania could become a brand, next to visiting the Bucovina and Moldova monasteries, the Danube Delta and the Black Sea.

Romania holds an annual International Congress of Gastronomy Traditions, where 36 countries from all over Europe, North America, South America, Asia, and Africa come as participants. Along the four days of the event, chefs from France, Israel, Canada, USA, Mexico, China, Macedonia, Greece, and Azerbaijan prepare, next to traditional dishes of the countries they come from, a typically Romanian dish, as well. Romania is the only country to also enrol military cooks to the competitions organized during this event.

Romania has been unable to preserve too much of its past; one of the reasons is that its history is known only starting with the 14th century on, meaning that this aspect is less attractive for Romania than form other countries, from a touristic point of view.

Therefore, Romania has to fully capitalize on its natural beauty, underground resources, diversity of landscape, its mountains, sea, rivers, the Danube Delta, and its balneary resorts, in order to become as attractive as possible for international tourists. It is in the power and ability of the authorities of the State to develop and manage these resources, so that in the future, Romanian (for instance, in Turkey, the contribution of tourism to the national GDP is of 18%, for France it is 17%, for Greece, 11%, etc.).

If we make a brief analysis of the development of Romanian tourism in recent years, we have to notice the improvements that hotel infrastructure, touristic services, restaurants, inns, and the services related to them, have suffered lately. Even though the road infrastructure is still behind compared to the requirements of foreign tourists, prices are still reasonable, and the wild in some areas is an incomparable advantage to other tourist attractions in other countries. This is the reason why gastronomic tourism would fit so well in the picture, and could be easily turned into a brand, next to the popular religious sites in Bucovina and Moldova, the stupendous Danube Delta and the old German fortified churches. There are several types of food that have gained popularity over the years, such as sarmale, mici, mămăliga cu brânză și smântână, tochtura or different types of smoked meat, especially around religious holidays, as well as ciolanul cu fasole uscată, together with the customs in Maramureș and other traditional locations in Oltenia, Moldova, Banat etc.

Hunting and fishing tourism in Romania

Thanks to the diversity of its landscapes and of its natural ecosystems, Romania plays an important part on the European market of hunting and fishing for sports. Both its cynegetic resources and its numerous aquatic species place it among the top tourist attractions in these areas in Europe. Unfortunately, this advantage is not supported by an adequate infrastructure, that can allow it to be fully capitalized on both the European and the world market (of fishing and hunting). There are very few such resorts, and therefore, incomes from this niche sector are, for now, irrelevant.

Hobby-hobo tourism in Romania

From the data we managed to collect about Romania regarding the frequency and coordinates preferred by these types of tourists, we were able to learn only that there isn't much of it going on in Romania, and that other specific relevant indicators are otherwise missing. Hence, our analysis relied mostly on information gotten from housing or accommodation units where hobby-hobo would be likely to go. That means that what we are able to do is approximate the number of tourists using these facilities, knowing full-well that this is neither the total number of such tourists, nor is it the type of tourism that our paper tackles.

Business tourism in Romania

Business tourism goes on in Romania all year long, at specifically designed locations, where housing, security, transaction and communication opportunities, transfer, food, press and graphic services, and so on, are all available or become available very quickly etc.

³⁶Teodorescu, I.C. (1966), *Vița de vie și vinul de-a lungul veacurilor*, Edit. Agro-Silvică, Bucharest, p. 261.

The main features of business tourism in Romania are its high quality; its significant contribution to the income gained through tourism; its long duration - it peaks in spring and autumn, but also lasts through summer and winter; it pushed forward investments in many urban areas, thus rejuvenating them; it brought about a lot of investments aimed particularly at this type of tourism (such as hotels, restaurants, transportation and communication facilities); it requires high-quality service, and so, it influences service towards higher quality; it brings back around 40% of business tourists, with their families, for personal trips, according to research; it impacts the environment much less than regular tourism, and so on.

Historical tourism in Romania

This paper will argue that the first human dwellings, also traceable on Romanian territory, could become tourist attractions and even a form of niche tourism. Our plea will be based on three pillars: Munții Orăștiei, Munții Banatului and the Romanian seaside to the Black Sea. Our analysis forwards the suggestion that the Dacian-Roman fortresses that were discovered in these three regions be included in tour circuits particular to this type of tourism, so that anyone who is interested may find the relevant information about the ancestors of the Romanian people and about the history of the country through this means. Our suggestion would be suitable, first of all, to the Romanian Diaspora, as we assume it is valuable for them to learn more about their home country's past and ancestors.

Casino tourism in Romania

Romania is one of the most popular places on the European market of gambling tourism, as it has a long tradition in this respect. The first Romanian casinos opened before World War 1 and then between the two world wars, at resorts like Vatra Dornei, Slănic Moldova, Sinaia, and Constanța.

Casino tourism has had a great impact on Romanian tourism in general, as the main component of this type of tourism is the rich, foreign tourist and the Romanian tourist with above-average income. The old Romanian casinos are in an advanced degradation state (such as the one at Vatra Dornei) or have been given another (such as the one at Sinaia). Their place has been taken by other, modern ones, built either in luxury hotels, in the country's largest cities (București, Cluj-Napoca, Timișoara, Iași), or as separate businesses, also in the most populous cities of Romania.

At this time, the online gambling business is rising very fast in Romania, and consequently, the economic importance of this sector is also rising. In 2013, this type of services made hundreds of million euro, which accounts for a significant part of the gambling business altogether. At the end of 2013, a forecast predicted that over the following five years online gambling incomes would double.

Patrimony tourism in Romania

In Romania, the memorials that attract the highest number of tourists are the Mărășești Mausoleum, the Alba Iulia Citadel, the Oituz Mausoleum, and the Mărăști Mausoleum. There are over 50,000 tourists yearly visiting these four locations alone³⁷.

The main issue about this type of tourism are related to access infrastructure for reaching the archaeological sites and monuments, the lack of parking spaces and the information points regarding the cultural objectives visited, the lack of observatories for the fortifications, medieval citadels, churches, historical monuments and monasteries, and the lack of dedicated camping points for pilgrimage tourism.

Therefore, in order to start with pointing out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to this form of niche tourism in Romania, we suggest the following S.W.O.T. analysis of archaeological tourism.

a) *Strengths*: a rich cultural and historic Romanian patrimony, a multicultural environment, a network of housing units of 3* și 4* both in important Romanian cities, and in the main areas of historical and memorial value;

b) *Weaknesses*: the low level of training of guides; scarce knowledge of the values of the important historical sites; lack of cultural events that can attract even more visitors; lack of relevant knowledge and education on what patrimony tourism really means and on how important it is; low access to several archaeological sites; lack of parking spaces;

c) *Opportunities*: the creation and development of cultural events financed by the Ministry of Culture; the existence of financing programs such as LEADER and INTERREG for culture and tourism; the existence of the financing program CULTURA 2000;

³⁷according to information provided by several tour operators.

d) *Threats*: international competition; migration of rural dwellers to urban areas, which will have a direct influence on the loss of cultural patrimony.

Garden tourism in Romania

Garden tourism in Romania is based on two important resources, namely *botanical gardens*, which are present in major cities, and which preserve the most particular flower and vegetation elements of the world, and *parks*, which can be found both in urban and in certain rural areas.

This paper analyses garden tourism on the bases of the potential of the main botanical gardens in Romania, meaning those in Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Craiova, Galați, Iași, Arad, Târgu Mureș, Tulcea and Jibou for tourism; it also presents the results of a case study conducted to learn the touristic impact of the Cluj-Napoca parks.

From a financial point of view, only botanical gardens matter, as the entrance is fee-based; the entrance to all other parks is free, meaning that their impact on incomes is zero. Moreover, botanical gardens draw both local, as well as foreign tourists, while other parks are visited mostly by Romanian tourists.

Cruise tourism in Romania

Even after 14 years since the first offers from tour operators in Romania, *cruise tourism* still only belongs to the specialized sector³⁸. Cruise ships are rated into different categories, much like hotel facilities, but the categories are different. A cruise ship can be rated at between two and five stars, according to MEG (Maritime Evaluation Group), an international body that certifies all types of maritime ships.

According to the reports of the National Port Administration Agency Constanța, 80 passenger cruise ships stopped in the Constanța port in 2012. Aboard these ships were over 30,000 foreign tourists. This means a 20% increase in passenger number from the previous year. The positive trend continued also throughout 2014, as the same agency has already registered 20 ship stops. The first among them was in March 2014.

Getting back to the 2012 statistics, around half the cruise ships that set anchor in Romanian ports were maritime ships (at Constanța), while the other half were river ships.

The year 2012 was also encouraging from the point of view of the number of Romanian tourists who chose cruise tourism. Tour operator reports showed that a number of 2,500 Romanian tourists chose luxury cruises - 500 more than the previous year.

Cyclotourism in Romania

Cyclotourism in Romania is a rather unfamiliar topic, and it is tightly connected with the popularity of cycling in this area - which is not very high, but not below the national average of any sport in Romania, either. The subjective estimations of cycling organizations indicated that there were approximately 1,000 passionate cyclotourists, who regularly organize longer cycling trips, and around 10,000 people who go on shorter cycling trips. The president of the Cycling Federation in Romania, Radu Mititean, stated that, according to several tour operators who organize cycling holidays, there were around 5,000 foreign tourists who came every year to Romania as cyclotourists, and another 20,000 who only chose cyclotourism as a secondary activity, during their holiday in Romania. Most tourists come from countries that are considered developed from a cyclotourism point of view, such as Germany, Austria, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, etc. Cycling tourism could become a lucrative business in Romania as well, by opening bike shops and by organizing events that are specific to this area, such as cyclo-hiking, cycling marathons, camps, and other similar competitions.

Ecotourism in Romania

The sustainable development of tourism is often associated with a specific branch of tourism; however, all forms of tourism should have lucrative and social advantages for the local community, and should encourage environment protection. Ecotourism includes certain elements like the touristic product - which should be based on the environment, and ecologic management - which should contribute to the preservation of biodiversity and wellbeing of communities located in touristic areas, and should also

³⁸Cruise Travel launched the first cruise offers on the Danube in the year 2000.

educate both tourists and the local communities in ecology. These are the elements that the definition of ecotourism was based on, and which were unanimously accepted at the meeting in Quebec, in 2002.³⁹

Romania holds around 800 protected areas, which currently cover approximately 5% of the country's territory. Most ecotouristic destinations are located within or next to these areas. Moreover, in our country there are still whole forests, as well as a third of the European population of bears, wolves, and lynxes; it is also the home of the unique paradise of the Danube Delta birds, of over 12,000 caves, and of countless authentic local traditions. Ecotourism allows both the reaping of benefits from this natural capital and its preservation, at the same time.

The development and advertising of ecotourism are instruments for environment preservation, through⁴⁰ the direct financing of environment protection projects; the creation of alternate means of income for the local communities, by increasing their ability to offer high quality services in order to reduce the pressure off nature; through the encouragement of sustainable rural community development in protected areas; through the advertising of the most environmentally friendly practices of tour-operators and housing entities; through raising the awareness of both locals and tourists on environment protection, on low energy consumption, and on ecological rubbish gathering etc.

Pilgrimage tourism in Romania

The Romanian people appeared as a Christian people. An ancient tradition, kept to our days, states that the holy apostle Andrew, "the first summoned as apostle", spoke the word of the Gospel in the south-eastern parts of Romania, especially in the lands next to the Black Sea, where the first local church and the first Episcopalian centre were created in the 4th century, at Tomis.

It is generally accepted that the beginnings of Christianity in the northern part of the Danube did not happen by a coordinated mission of a specific Christian centre, but by random sermon delivery of people who had accidentally arrived here because of either their occupation (e.g. soldiers, merchants), or their social status (slaves) of Christian refugees from the southern part of the Danube, where they were persecuted by the Roman authorities⁴¹.

The Romanian Christian terminology, of *Latin origin*, regarding the fundamental concepts of faith and religious life (e.g. Dumnezeu-Domine Deus; Duminică-Dies Dominica; Crăciun-Calatio; biserică-bazilica, etc.) is the main argument sustaining the idea of the ancient existence of Romanian Christianity. Professor Fiedrich Heyer, of Heidelberg University, explained the phenomenon of the unity of the Romanian people throughout history by the fact that Romanians, of all the peoples of south-east Europe, were the only ones not to experience a pagan period. The creation of the Romanian people coincided with its Christianization, so that both happened at the same time, in a natural and spontaneous manner. The Christian faith was the engine of ethnic individuality, as it was deeply involved in the act of creation of this people and brought about strong moral values.

The large number of churches, convents and monasteries built all over the country are living proof of an old and powerful Christian faith.

For a religious person, the church represents an escape from the profane environment, same as the sermon delivered within it is an escape from the profane time, as it is a piece of history from the times of Jesus Christ⁴². This is the inner meaning of the church.

There is also an outer meaning of the religious construction, given by the fact that it belongs to the cultural patrimony of a certain country. Thus, the church becomes an architectural, artistic, and historical asset. It was around the grater churches and monasteries that the first painting schools (such as Horezu, Căldărușani) emerged, that crafts developed (e.g. silvering, embroidery, miniature art), and that printing presses were created, for the release of the first Romanian books.

There are around 3,000 religious historical monuments in Romania, out of which 300 are of significant artistic value. Most of them date back from feudal and pre-modern times; they also have oriental and byzantine (Armenian, Syrian, and Turkish) influences. Transylvania, which was for a long period of time under foreign domination, and the population of which came from different areas of Europe, with a more powerful Catholic influence, assimilated and adapted Western (Roman, Gothic,

³⁹Candrea, Adina Nicoleta (2010), *Politici și strategii de marketing pentru dezvoltarea ecoturismului în România*, Edit. Universității „Transilvania”, Brașov, pg. 26.

⁴⁰idem, pag. 26.

⁴¹***(1992), *Revista Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, Buletinul Oficial al Patriarhiei Române, anul CX, Nr. 1-3, București, pg. 49.

⁴²Eliade, M., (1995), *Sacral și profanul*, Edit. Humanitas, București, pg. 64.

Renaissance, Baroque) art styles. During the modern period, civil architecture developed more, and the buildings erected at this time are of lesser artistic and architectural value, as they are representative of Neoclassicism and Romanticism.

Medical tourism in Romania

The main resources of medical tourism in Romania are given by the university hospitals in Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Iași, Timișoara, Târgu-Mureș, Constanța. These medical locations generate a touristic traffic with double meaning: (1) an internal traffic which generates the number of internal medical tourists, and (2) an international traffic which has two types of medical tourists: both Romanian citizens working abroad who prefer the Romanian medical services because they are cheaper and foreign citizens with lower income who prefer the Romanian medical treatment because of the same financial reasons.

In 2012, according to the National Institute of Statistics, there were about 718,000 internal medical tourists from all the country who came in the university hospitals to cure their various conditions (for example cardiology in Targu Mures, Cluj-Napoca and Bucharest; neurosurgery in Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca; kidney transplant in Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca, liver transplant in Bucharest; ophthalmology in Iasi, Timisoara and Cluj-Napoca). In the same year there were also 542,671 foreign medical tourists who chose the Romanian medical services; they came from various European countries: Germany, France, Austria, Italy, Serbia, Moldavian Republic and Bulgaria.

Regardless of the type of traffic, the patients of the hospitals in Romania and their attendants become medical tourists require accommodation in the cities in which the hospitals are. According to the Ministry of Tourism, in 2012 the income from the accommodation of the internal and foreign medical tourists was of 13,8 million Euros. It is still a modest turnover for Romania, as compared to its potential.

Recently, there has been an increasing demand for medical tourism in the western cities of Romania, especially for dental medicine; those who demanded it came from Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Austria. The Romanian costs are lower compared to the country they came from. A first step for the rejuvenation of the Romanian medical tourism might be the development of a network of modern dental clinics in Timisoara, Oradea, Arad, Satu-Mare that could take over the majority of the foreign demand and contribute to Romania's increase of medical income.

Sports tourism in Romania

Although Romania is part of the EU, extreme sports tourism is still lagging behind the other Western European countries. The lack of national strategy isolated extreme sports tourism, developing only due to the private sector.

The main Romanian organization is the Romanian Federation of Sport Tourism, created in 1996; it was first called Nord-East Foundation, then it became the East-European Federation of Professional Tourism and from 22nd June 1999 it is called the Romanian Federation of Sport Tourism. This non- governmental organization, which is apolitical, youth green alpine, scientific, with the right to print, informational and cultural; it intends to support the Romanian tourism and sports associations and clubs. The Romanian Federation of Sport Tourism wants to support and develop the alpine touristic national movement throughout the educational phenomenon, diversity and competition.

The goal of the federation is to educate, to make the participants respect the rules of civilized behaviour, develop the moral ability and power, promote environmental activities, create job opportunities and active entertainments through permanent and organized tourism.

The main goals of RTST are: *promoting and developing the alpine tourism, raising the awareness of tourists on environment protection, taking part in sports-cultural programs and environmental actions; raising the interest for organized tourism; encouraging competitiveness, fair-play, creativity, value, communication and collaboration with other non- governmental organizations.*⁴³

THE OPINION OF THE INHABITANTS OF SIBIU AND NEIGHBOURING PLACES REGARDING THE HIERARCHY OF THE MAIN FORMS ON NICHE TOURISM IN ROMANIA

In this chapter we tried to present the opinion of the inhabitants of Sibiu regarding the hierarchy of the main forms of niche tourism that developed in Romania after 1990. This approach is a link

⁴³***http://www.gradinamea.ro/Federatia_Romana_de_Turism_Sportiv_4660_646_1.html, accessed on 26.05.2013, at 13⁴⁸.

between the national strategies regarding the development of these forms of niche tourism in Romania and the opinion of the city's inhabitants, who are representative for our country.

Thus, we designed a questionnaire (see below the model of questionnaire) whose content intends exactly to highlight the importance and hierarchy of the main forms of niche tourism in Romania which generate, together with mass tourism, the most important touristic traffic and contribute to the raising of touristic income, for both the operators and the state budget.

The questionnaire included 320 subjects from Sibiu city and county. The selection of the subjects was random.

In order to respect the standards in sociology and to make the sample as representative as possible, I took into consideration the following factors: sex (160 women and 160 men), age (0-19 years old had 106 questionnaires; 20-59 years old had 106 questionnaires, 60 years and older had 108 questionnaires), education (106 questionnaires for the subjects who graduated secondary school, 106 questionnaires for the subjects who graduated high-school and 108 questionnaires for the subjects who graduated university).

The data was gathered during holidays (in the month of August) and in weekends because we did not want to affect the daily routine of the subjects.

We found it useful to question the population of Sibiu county regarding the hierarchy of the main forms of niche tourism in Romania after 1990 and the comparison of the results we got with those of the national authorities; it was useful because we could correlate the public opinion of the inhabitants of Romania's most important touristic city and the national authorities dealing with tourism.

The implementation of the questionnaire on the representative sample population of Sibiu was done in accordance with all the above mentioned sampling criteria; thus the results and methodology were correct. In interpreting the questionnaire and the results it was important to directly correlate the answers to the resident area of the subjects. This correlation was dominant because our endeavour referred to the identification and classification of the main forms of niche tourism in Romania after 1990.

One can draw important conclusions regarding the importance of niche tourism forms: an urban citizen is more interested in the urban niche tourism forms (medical tourism, SPA tourism, black tourism) and a rural citizen prefers pilgrimage tourism, ecotourism, fishing and hunting tourism, gastronomic tourism.

Thus, after having resolved the relationship between answers and the residence of the subjects, we considered also the other criteria: sex, age and education; they helped complete and optimize the main results and conclusions.

Our study shows that the citizens of Sibiu city and county (320 subjects) are able to classify the main forms of Romanian niche tourism after 1990 in an interesting manner which does not necessarily respect the national priorities regarding the intention to make the touristic phenomenon more efficient. We state the fact that the division of questionnaires followed to the letter the rigours we imposed ourselves in the methodological part of the study.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

This PhD paper entitled *New Forms of tourism developed after 1990. Niche tourism in Romania*, has reached its goals through its contents, themes, analysis and case studies.

The elaboration of this paper implied a vast bibliographical research- 315 scientific papers and 422 sites were accessed. The necessity to study and analyse so many bibliographical resources was due to the theme of the paper, the initial goals and the vast documentation in order to demonstrate the existence of all forms of tourism, both on national and international level, existent in this paper. The bibliographical and web site study was necessary to connect the divergent worldwide opinions to the naming of some forms of niche tourism, to place them in different conceptual categories, different opinions regarding the impact of each of the forms in the equation of income from an economic point of view.

This paper has seven chapters and 346 pages in which there is the presentation of each form of niche tourism that exists on the national and international level.

Of all the main results of the paper, we would like to mention the following:

1. The quantification of most interpretations referring to *niche* and the possibility to implement them in various sciences;
2. The presentation of the main resemblance and differentiating forms between mass tourism and niche tourism;

3. The analysis of a large number of specialty papers that have dealt with niche tourism worldwide; the result was a unitary and easy to consult material;
4. The analysis of niche tourism evolution worldwide and of the main vectors that define its forms today;
5. The detailed analysis of niche tourism forms that exist today worldwide and their impact on world economy;
6. The analysis of niche tourism in Romania after 1990, of the frame that facilitated its development;
7. The detailed analysis of niche tourism forms in Romania with a focus on the present situation, its relevance in the equation of touristic sector, of the potential dysfunctionalities;
8. the setting up and presentation of some strategic projects and even presenting some solutions to make the Romanian niche tourism more efficient;
9. Surveying the public through concrete case studies on the impact of some niche tourism forms (cyclotourism, garden tourism);
10. Surveying the public on the importance and hierarchy of the main forms of niche tourism in Romania;
11. Setting up a set of graphic materials (charts, graphics, and maps) that would facilitate the interpretation and further analysis.

Of course, the paper has also other strengths, but we refer only to those mentioned above because we would like the referees to analyse and filter in a critical manner the idea of the paper, its contents, the results we got and to draw the most appropriate conclusions. We would like to thank them, a priori! In conclusion we can state the fact that there are many forms of tourism worldwide related to niche tourism; they developed both individually or complementary in many states and they generate each year a large number of important vectors regarding the touristic traffic and the level of income; thus, those states and regions develop economically.

Romania has only few forms of niche tourism that exist worldwide because until 1990, the Communist economy hindered their development. After 1990 new touristic forms emerged that today contribute to the national economic development. As far as we know, there are premises for new forms that are not yet existent or well represented like *extratropospheric tourism*, *sexual tourism*, *narcotic tourism*, *gay tourism*, but the results are very uncertain.

The previous statement is based on the 320 subjects from Sibiu and nearby rural areas, who participated in the survey we conducted. The analysis of their answers reveals the fact that public opinion is reluctant to new forms of niche tourism, especially to those based on a certain type of perceived dysfunctionality (behaviour anomalies) and to those harmful for the national specificities (hunting and fishing tourism, black tourism, gay tourism). Authorities should take into consideration that Romanians are conservative when trying to devise strategies of development and optimization of national tourism.

Due to the niche tourism forms that it already has, Romania is starting to appear on the touristic map of Europe and of the world; lately there has been a continuous increase in the number of both foreign tourists visiting the country and Romanians. By advertising the resources of niche tourism, Romania's chances of economical development increase, in a certain manner.

Lastly, we will dare state an opinion regarding the contents of this paper: each form of niche tourism that we analyzed could, by itself, become a subject of scientific analysis, and, why not, the topic of a PhD thesis.

We would like to express our gratitude to all those who contributed to the writing of this paper, most of all to Prof. Univ. Dr. Nicolae Ciangă, the scientific coordinator of the paper, without the help and advice of whom it would not have had the scientific value it has now.

Otherwise, we are looking forward to receiving objective criticism, suggestions, analyses, and conclusions from all those who are interested in this topic, so that this paper may, in the future, gain further scientific value, which will enable its publication.

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