

"BABEŞ-BOLYAI" UNIVERSITY, CLUJ-NAPOCA
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SUMMARY OF THE PhD. THESIS

INBOUND TOURISM IN CLUJ-NAPOCA MUNICIPALITY GEOGRAPHY STUDY

Scientific coordinator:

Professor, PhD Benedek József

PhD student:

Talpoş Loredana Maria

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Summary

Inbound tourism has become a topic of interest for both the research world and for stakeholders in the field, public or private. Also, tourism in urban destinations is receiving increased attention. In this century, travel motivations have changed and diversified and a number of trends have emerged.

In Romania, there are tourist destinations with high potential to attract significant flows of foreign tourists, the municipality of Cluj-Napoca being among them. This city represents one of the main urban centers in Transylvania and Romania. It is a travel destination recording growth in popularity for inbound tourism. Also, this urban settlement has recently undergone a series of transformations and developments. Nevertheless, there has been noticed the lack of data and the existence of some summary or incomplete information regarding the incoming tourism in this locality as well as the reduced number of researches that approaches this topic. Thus, in this context it is important to know the features of a subcategory of tourists, namely foreign tourists.

The purpose of this research is to increase the level of knowledge regarding inbound tourism in Cluj-Napoca and to elaborate suggestions for the development of the tourist offer according to the features of the demand. Thus, the city of Cluj-Napoca was chosen as the analysis area. Places from outside this locality were analysed too. Also, the population approached in this research is made up of foreign tourists visiting this travel destination.

The main objective of the research is to elaborate recommendations for the improvement of the incoming tourist offer in Cluj-Napoca. The research has the following secondary objectives: to identify the context in which the incoming tourism in Cluj-Napoca takes place; to analyse the tourist offer in Cluj-Napoca for the inbound tourism; to identify the features of the incoming tourist demand in Cluj-Napoca; to identify the features of tourist products and services offered to foreign tourists visiting the city of Cluj-Napoca.

In the following lines, the methodology of the thesis will be presented. The research started with the bibliographic study, for an in-depth understanding of the concepts and identification of the current state of knowledge regarding the chosen topic. Documents and other sources were consulted throughout the research. The field activity consisted of: using the survey method by applying questionnaires, photography and the observation procedure. In addition, the office activity consisted of: content analysis of various texts using analysis grids,

creating graphs based on existing statistical data from various sources or obtained by realizing this research, statistical analysis and cartographic method. Thus, data used in this research comes from various sources. The year 2019 was the most recent one with available information for all months, at the moment this study was finished.

This doctoral thesis has the structure of a geography of tourism research. Thus, it is structured in chapters and subchapters, with six chapters framed by introduction and conclusions, and it has also lists of figures, tables and photographs, as well as bibliography and annexes.

In first chapter, the stage of knowledge - the history of research, the essential concepts, information presented in previous studies - and the methodological support are presented.

The research started with the consultation of the specialized literature, especially the one related to the main concepts of interest for the thesis: “international tourism”, “international tourist”, “urban tourism”, “tourist destination”, “tourist profile”. Also, the main concepts for the chosen theme were presented in detail, special attention being paid to the concept of "tourist profile". Then information presented in previous studies on the features of tourists who visited Cluj-Napoca was mentioned.

An important aspect of this chapter is the identification of the lack of an extensive and recently conducted research on the characteristics of foreign tourists in Cluj-Napoca, on a large sample of tourists and over a period of several months. Starting from the information presented in the previously conducted studies, there has been identified the need for a new research, in which to be used the survey method by applying the questionnaire to a larger number of tourists over a longer period of time.

The aim of the second chapter was to identify the context in which incoming tourism in Cluj-Napoca takes place. Thus, there were presented the features of international tourism at the global and regional levels, the characteristics of tourism in Romania and its directions from territorial units where Cluj-Napoca belongs, as well as those of the municipality.

In order to obtain the necessary information, there were consulted documents and other materials such as: *The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Reports* from the years 2017 and 2019, data from the website of the national central authority in the field of tourism (www.turism.gov.ro) and from the website of the Romanian National Institute of Statistics, strategic documents, other official documents, online information and other sources. A content analysis of the information from the website of the London International Tourism Market - World Tourism Market (www.london.wtm.com) was also carried out. The event

took place in November 2019. The purpose of this analysis was to find out information about the promoted travel destinations, forms of tourism and tourism products.

The main aspects resulting from this chapter are presented below.

In the following lines, there are presented some of the identified characteristics and trends regarding international tourism. Growth in the number of international tourist arrivals in various territorial units where Cluj-Napoca belongs was identified as well as the existence of 6 main groups of tourists of the 2030s - simplicity searchers, cultural purists, reward hunters, social capital seekers, obligation meeters and ethical travellers. Also, the classic tourist products where tourists visit the main attractions, the travel packages with creative and experiential cultural activities and the luxury ones with “must have” activities stand out. Increase in accessibility, interest in air transportation and low-cost flights, interest in accommodation in classic units, in types of units that have recently appeared or at relatives or friends as well as growth in the level of technology use and of the importance given to online reviews characterize the international tourism.

Related with trends in international tourism, in general Romania is following most of the tendencies and has recorded growth in competitiveness in the T&T field in recent years, with improvement in various categories and the need to improve the situation in others.

There are three principal challenges for Romanian tourism: improving the infrastructure used by tourists and the services offered to them, better coordination between public and private tourism stakeholders and better marketing and promotion of travel destinations and experiences.

The main markets for incoming tourism, according to the National Institute of Statistics from Romania, are the following ones: the neighboring countries - mainly Hungary, the Republic of Moldova and Bulgaria; other European countries - Germany, Spain, Italy, Austria, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland, Greece, the United Kingdom, Albania; some countries located outside the European continent - the United States, Israel, Turkey, Japan, China.

Analysing the main markets for incoming travel agencies in Romania, according to information provided by the same institute, the following were identified: high increase in demand for this country by the German, Spanish, Italian, Austrian, British and American markets; moderate growth in demand from the French, Belgian, Dutch, Albanian, Japanese and Chinese markets, and interest remained constant in the Hungarian and Israeli markets.

The priority types and forms of tourism to be practiced in Romania belong to the following categories: nature and adventure, cultural, health and wellness, m.i.c.e. (meetings,

incentives, conferences and exhibitions), city-breaks, winter sports and seaside. Also, the main priority tourist destinations are: Bucharest, Transylvania, Maramureș, Bucovina, the Black Sea coast, the Danube Delta and the Carpathian Mountains.

An important part of the types and forms of tourism, the types of tourist products and the directions of tourism development in Romania were present also at the levels of smaller territorial units where Cluj-Napoca belongs, as well as in this municipality.

In the third chapter, the tourist offer from Cluj-Napoca for the incoming tourism was analysed. The following aspects were addressed: the primary and secondary tourist offer from this travel destination, the tourist offer from the surroundings of Cluj-Napoca and the promoted aspects. Scientific documents, official materials, promotion documents or other sources were consulted, field trips were made for observation, photographs were taken. The tourist offer was presented with cartographic, photographic and graphic visual representations.

The main conclusions of this chapter are presented below.

Cluj-Napoca has a material-cultural heritage without UNESCO or internationally very popular travel attractions. Nevertheless, the historic center is like an open-air museum, where tourists can see elements of the medieval fortification, palaces or religious buildings made in various historical periods and in various architectural styles. Most buildings can only be seen from the outside, and their story can be discovered by either reading the materials from Cluj-Napoca Tourist Information Center or Cluj National Center for Tourist Information and Promotion, either from tourist guides or by being accompanied by a tour guide.

For centuries, Cluj-Napoca has been a multicultural urban settlement and a center with an academic tradition. Due to this fact, the city is the place where ancestors (parents, grandparents) of some foreign tourists lived or the place where members of a share of foreign tourists are studying. A category of attractions in the tourist offer from Cluj-Napoca is represented by the cultural, sports or leisure events. They have registered a strong diversification and development, especially since Cluj-Napoca was chosen to be European Capital of Youth in 2015. The economic development of the municipality, the research area and the large number of students and graduates of the universities from Cluj-Napoca have determined that an important number of m.i.c.e. events be organized in the city and that tourism for business and other professional purposes be practiced here.

Cluj-Napoca has good air accesibility. Most of the places in the classified accommodation units in Cluj County are located in Cluj-Napoca. The city's public food infrastructure is specific to the student, business and tourism aspects. This travel destination

also has the potential for the development of health tourism. A large number of doctors and dental offices and a wide range of medical treatments that can be performed at lower prices than in Western European countries are here. Spa infrastructure also exists in the city, especially within the accommodation units, but it is underdeveloped so far.

In Cluj-Napoca, the following attraction factors ("pull factors") can be noticed: good accessibility; cheap flights; cultural and lively city; the tourists or their families lived here; relatives or friends of tourists live here or members from their families study in this locality; recreational or cultural events take place in the city; the existence of places or persons related to the tourists' workplace; trainings, workshops or conferences from the municipality; good and cheap medical services provided here. These factors can determine the tourists to choose the city as their travel destination.

The next chapter is dedicated to the incoming tourist circulation and demand in Cluj-Napoca. Thus, the features of the tourist circulation, the general travel features of the foreign tourists in the municipality and the profile of foreign tourists focusing the trip in this travel destination are approached.

The main sources of information were the following: scientific documents, databasis of the National Institute of Statistics in Romania (www.insse.ro), the representative of the International Airport "Avram Iancu" Cluj and questionnaires applied to foreign tourists.

The information of both a study regarding the general travel features of foreign tourists in Cluj-Napoca and realized in 2017 and a research conducted in 2019, in which questionnaires were applied in order to obtain information about the behavioral features of foreign tourists regarding their trip to Cluj-Napoca and about their geographical and socio-demographic characteristics was used.

In the following lines, there will be presented the main aspects of this chapter.

There is little information about the incoming tourist circulation in Cluj-Napoca. Information about the number of tourist arrivals and overnight stays, in total (domestic plus foreign tourists), was identified. The average length of stay in Cluj-Napoca is typical of a transit city. In the last years with available statistical information, there was registered an annual increase in the number of passengers on international flights arriving at "Avram Iancu" International Airport in Cluj. The main countries where passengers came from are the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Germany, France. Most international flights to Cluj-Napoca are low-cost, and most international flights to this destination are between April and September.

Before presenting the features of the profile of foreign tourists regarding their trip to Cluj-Napoca, the general travel characteristics of international tourists visiting the city were mentioned.

There resulted that tourists have the possibility to allocate a significant number of days to travel because they dedicate many days/year for this purpose (mostly 22-60 days / year) and the biggest share of these persons are multi-vacationers. They travel mostly between May and September which are months with a favorable climate in Cluj-Napoca and with events taking place in this city.

Most tourists opt for urban travel destinations, but also show great interest in mountain and rural destinations and travel with friends or small family, alone or with their boyfriend / girlfriend. The majority share of tourists prefer sejours, then circuits and city-breaks. Most persons choose to organize themselves their trips, but there are also tourists who opt for travel agencies or that other persons arrange their travel. Regarding travel services, tourists opt for the plane to arrive in the destination and use public urban transportation within the destination, prefer hotels or rented apartments, include only breakfast in the price of the accommodation and choose the following activities: cultural visits, spending time in clubs or bars, participating in cultural, musical or sporting events, shopping, participating in guided tours or excursions. For most tourists, the main purpose of the trip is visiting the tourist attractions and discovering the local lifestyle. Also, escaping from the daily routine, interacting with people from other places, visiting tourist attractions from another place, fulfilling responsibilities from work, participating in events in the family or in a group of friends, visiting relatives or friends are the most frequently mentioned reasons for travel.

Next, the profile of the foreign tourists visiting the city of Cluj-Napoca, focusing on their behavioral features regarding their trip to this locality, was identified. Data presented provides answers to key questions about the incoming tourist demand in Cluj-Napoca: "Who?" (socio-demographic and geographical features of tourists), "Why" (travel motivations) and "How" (behavioral characteristics) is travelling in this destination.

In terms of geographical features, most tourists come from Hungary, Germany, Italy, France, Great Britain, Spain, the United States of America, Poland and Israel and most of them do not have Romanian citizenship. Also, regarding the socio-demographic features, most tourists: are young, unmarried and living in households of 2-4 people, without children, have university studies and are professionally active or students.

The most frequently mentioned main travel purposes are, in this order: to discover the local culture, to have fun, to visit relatives and/or friends, for business/related to job. The

reasons for making this trip (the "push" factors), most commonly encountered, are: the desire to improve their culture, to have fun, to relax, to do something new/to discover new places, to see a another way of life, to improve/maintain relationships with family/friends or the need to fulfill responsibilities at work. Also, the reasons for choosing Cluj-Napoca as their tourist destination (the "pull" factors) most often specified are the following: the fact that it is a cultural and lively city, that accessibility is good, there are cheap flights, tourists' family or friends live in this destination or that there are places or people related to the workplace of tourists. Thus, there resulted that the main typologies of foreign tourists in Cluj-Napoca are those who: practise cultural tourism, travel for leisure, have a trip to visit relatives and friends or travel for business or for other professional reasons.

In terms of behavioral characteristics, there will be mentioned the following aspects.

Most tourists have not been to Cluj-Napoca or have been in the city only a few times (1-2 times) and the duration of the trip was extended (4-5 days, 7-8 days or 10 days), but tourists spent little time in Cluj-Napoca (1-4 nights, most often just one night). Tourists opt for both electronic information sources (TripAdvisor or other sites) and classic ones (family / friends, tourist guides, tourist information centers) to find out information about Cluj-Napoca. Most persons offered increased importance to online evaluation when choosing accommodation and medium importance when choosing places to eat / drink, activities to do and places to visit. The largest share of tourists preferred to plan their trip by themselves, but there were also tourists whose trip was organized by travel agents or by someone else and most tourists traveled with other 1-3 persons.

Most tourists preferred to arrive in Cluj-Napoca by plane, opted for a low-cost airline, chose to stay in hotels (3*-4*) or in rented rooms; ate in public catering establishments outside the accommodation units and inside them; made/were going to make the following activities: cultural visits, shopping, spending time in clubs or bars and participating in guided tours.

Most foreign tourists agreed that Cluj-Napoca was a safe place to visit, that the locals were friendly and hospitable, that the destination was a clean city, with good tourist attractions and events and a place where many activities could be done. The biggest share of persons did not consider that the municipality was an expensive destination. Tourists are most satisfied with food/drinks, accommodation and entertainment services. They rated 7 - 8 out of 10 (maximum) the general evaluation of this visit to Cluj-Napoca; they believe or are sure that they will revisit and recommend the destination Cluj-Napoca, being more frequent the

intention to recommend. Last but not least, tourists write online reviews, but only sometimes, especially on the TripAdvisor platform.

In chapter number five, the features of tourist products and services offered to foreign tourists visiting the city of Cluj-Napoca were identified.

The main sources for obtaining data were scientific documents and information present in the online environment. In order to find out information regarding the tourist products created for foreign tourists and offered to them by the incoming travel agencies in Romania, two content analysis were performed. One of these content analysis was regarding information about the tour type travel packages lasting one or more days and including Cluj-Napoca on their route, created and promoted for foreign tourists and present on the websites of incoming travel agencies from Romania and the other one was created using data about the tourist packages present on the TripAdvisor platform. For both actions, analysis grids, containing relevant variable, were created. In addition, other types of tourist services, available to be purchased by foreign tourists, such as those present on the Airbnb platform, were analysed.

The main conclusions of the chapter are: in the analysed tours, besides the basic tourist services (transportation, accommodation, food) other services, facilities or activities are also included, but their number and variety are limited; a small number of destinations from Cluj County are included in the routes of the analysed tours; the tourist potential of Cluj-Napoca municipality and Cluj county is insufficiently exploited by being included in tourist products and services.

The last chapter of this doctoral thesis is dedicated to recommendations.

Aspects to be taken into account for the capitalization and development of the tourist offer in Cluj-Napoca for foreign tourists were suggested. These recommendations relate to the types of tourist products, travel destinations and tourist segments.

Regarding tourist products, the city can be better exploited for incoming tourism by quantitative and qualitative development of the circuits in Transylvania, of the star shaped circuits starting from Cluj-Napoca, of the city-breaks and of the excursions, mainly in Cluj-Napoca metropolitan area or in Cluj County. These aspects can lead to an increase in the length of stay in Cluj-Napoca, the short length of stay being a problem faced by this tourist destination.

Regarding travel destinations, a suggestion is to continue to focus on the popular destinations (eg. the places with UNESCO elements or those in the priority areas mentioned in existing documents) and also to increased the level of inclusion in travel packages and the

promotion of localities and areas in Cluj County and, especially in the Cluj-Napoca metropolitan area, especially since there are concrete initiatives and actions to capitalize certain localities through tourism. A better capitalization and promotion to foreign tourists of mountain and rural destinations in Cluj County would have beneficial effects.

Analysing the results of the applied questionnaires, it turned out that the main typologies of tourists visiting Cluj-Napoca are those who practice cultural tourism, travel for leisure, have a trip to visit relatives and friends or travel for business or for other professional reasons and that attention can be paid to 5 of the 6 tourist tribes mentioned in the *Future Traveler Tribes 2030 Report* as being in global trends, namely: simplicity searchers, cultural purists, social capital seekers, reward hunters and obligation meeters. Thus, it is beneficial to focus attention on the identified types of tourists.

In conclusion, the present study achieved its goal by fulfilling the main and the secondary objectives. In this doctoral thesis the international context and trends influencing incoming tourism in Cluj-Napoca were identified, the features of tourist supply and demand were analysed, tourism products and services offered to foreign tourists visiting the city were approached and proposals were formulated.

Elements of novelty and originality are presented below. The chosen topic is an insufficiently researched field, with gaps in terms of various types of useful statistical information. The present study reveals new aspects and data through the information obtained from empirical research. Through the elaboration of the study, a complex and updated image of incoming tourism in Cluj-Napoca was provided. Also, both the general travel features of foreign tourists and those related to their trip to this city were approached. Last but not least, proposals were developed in order to exploit and develop the tourist offer in Cluj-Napoca for foreign tourists.

The paper has prospects for further development, this study representing a starting point for new research. Temporal analysis can be realized. It would be interesting to see how the aspects analysed in this study, such as the characteristics of foreign tourists or the features of tourist products, evolve over time. These studies can be realized in several years, using the methodology chosen in this research.