

## STUDENT'S CORNER

### Defining and practicing etnotourism

**Florina Apostol**

Master student, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania

---

#### ABSTRACT

In the current context of globalization, folklore is the most affected part of the culture of a nation. But Folklore proved to be the best item by which a nation can individualize itself in this millennium .

Romania has a great historical and cultural heritage, and an impressive ethnic heritage of a great value that can be used as a tourist attraction. There are over 700 cultural heritage sites of national and international interest which constituted the values of the World Heritage of UNESCO

The 2006 country report based on a field research conducted by WTTC recommends that Romania should focus on the developing of wellness and spa tourism, and cultural tourism to the detriment of mountain tourism and winter sports and seaside tourism , especially in the offer for foreign tourists .

**Keywords:** etnotourism, traditions, festival, folklore

---

#### Introduction

Cultural tourism , within rural areas is now considered as the main type of tourism that Romania can provide at European level. Cultural tourism is recognized as an engine for development and promotion of local cultural identities, offering local communities a chance to use the cultural heritage as a resource for local socio-economic development. However in order to understand the depth of these two forms of tourism it is necessary to define concepts such as heritage, folklore, traditions and ethnography.

The term "folklore" is of English origin and was used by archaeologist WJ Thoms in 1846, deriving from folk "people" lore "science, wisdom," so "the science and wisdom of the people". It was adopted gradually by all European nations except the Germans using *Volskunde* and *Völkerkunde*, *Naturvölkerkunde* "science peoples [primitives]"<sup>1</sup>.

In Romanian, the word folklore was accepted at the end of sec. 19 (Haşdeu - 1885 G. Ionescu- Gion - 1883, Iorga - 1893) in the written form folklore. Today, the term defines all works of art created by people with a specific content and is considered an integral part of our national culture.<sup>2</sup>

Sustained interest in folklore and popular culture is illustrated by the new mission, new message it across Europe and throughout the world today. It is the representation through the folk culture of the national image in international contacts of various forms. It is a new field of manifestation of the national culture. Folklore has also seen numerous mutations in its evolution A great example is the opening and closing of the Olympic Games. They are magnificent folk performances. The Olympics opening show in Sydney (2000) was designed from elements of the Aboriginal Australian folklore. The ice arena closing ceremony of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Green T. A., *Folklore: an encyclopedia of beliefs, customs, tales, music and art*, Volumul 2, Editura ABC-CLIO, SUA, 1997, p. 3

<sup>2</sup> Dicţionar de termeni muzicali, Editura Enciclopedica, 2010

Winter Olympics in Norway (1988) figures Norwegian fairy tales and mythology characters were introduced with the most modern technical means.<sup>3</sup>

### **Defining and practicing etnotourism**

The problem of defining is etnotourismului more complicated as the tourism industry because certain activities are included in the purview of several forms of turism. In the case of etnotourism the forms of tourism with similar traits are "eco" "cultural tourism", "community -based tourism" "poor tourism "and" sustainable tourism".

Etnoturismul describes any vacation or trip that focuses on human activity rather than on the natural space; tourists are trying to understand the lifestyle and habits of the local communities. The local cuisine and customs pertaining to the local communities are considered the defining expressions of the national or local culture. Gastronomy may itself constitute a form of implicit motivation - gastronomic tourism - for example, Oktoberfest in Germany - often can be an important component of etnotourism<sup>4</sup>.

Etnoturismul is centered around the values of a group of indigenous people and the culture around them. Etnoturists search experiences in other cultures by participating in activities that people in the communities conduct in their daily routine. It is important that what is seen and experienced to be genuine. The negative part is the fact that visitors can destroy those values through standardization and commercialization of authentic folklore. As a fact, the communities in which they practice etnotourismul must find a balance between growth opportunities obtained by selling items of folklore (shows for tourists, objects and ornaments) and excessive standardization of folklore and even promoting kitch.

Etnoturismul plays an important role in the preservation of the cultural values and the identification of traditions. It also offers the possibility of creating jobs and thus increase the standard of living and economic welfare of local communities.

Etnoturismul takes many different forms:

- Tours and stays in traditional villages on their own or held by agencies voiaiaj;
- Circuits that include visits to several villages or towns bearing authentic folklore villages organized by tour operators renovated.

In what concerns etnotourism, folklore becomes the primary motivation of the trip and the most targeted areas are the one that are affected to a very small extent of globalization and industrialization.

One particular way of capitalization of folklore and to attract tourists is the folk festivals.

Folk shows consist in purposes other than that for which genuine folklore is created. No confusion should be made between genuine folklore, which has some features, and a folk festival that use other creative means and a different kind of "artists". The European Association of Folklore Festivals (EAFF) was established in 2001 in the old capital of Bulgaria - Veliko Tarnovo. Its main purpose is to preserve, develop and make known the folklore of various European nations by organizing festivals and the use of television, computer and other technologies. The European Association of Folklore Festivals achieves its goals primarily through music festivals "Euro Folk", and television on the Internet with global coverage "Euro Folk TV". Festivals "Euro Folk" came together gathering more than 80,000 participants from 17 European countries folklore.

<sup>3</sup> B. Lajos, *Folclor. Notiuni generale de folclor si poetica populara*, Cluj-Napoca: Scientia, 2003, p. 33

<sup>4</sup> S. Bolnik, *Promoting the Culture Sector through Job Creation and Small Enterprise Development in SADC Countries: The Ethno-tourism Industry*, ILO Seed working paper No. 50

Another way of capitalization of folklore is by transforming it into a tourist attraction using the construction and promotion of ethnography and folklore museums.

In the early nineteenth century, most countries in Europe reveal the existence of distinct cultures of the elites –this was promoted under the English term of "folklore" (knowledge of people, knowledge about people), collecting oral literature (stories) and songs.

Founded in 1891 by Swedish Artur Hazelius, Skansen is reputed to be the first ethnographic outdoor museum in the world. Not far from central Stockholm and there is an impressive museum -Nordiska Museet (Nordic Museum), built by the same romantic scientist, anxious to preserve for posterity Scandinavian identity in terms of industrialization growing faster in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In the 30s, in Europe, there were only two open-air museums: Skansen Museum, Stockholm (Sweden, 1891), and Bigdo Museum in Lillehammer (Norway). In our country, at the time, the Ethnographic Museum in the Park "Hoia" from Cluj, founded in 1929 by Professor Rumulus Vuia was opening its doors to the public,

In Romania, the idea of an outdoor museum is taking shape since the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1867 Odobescu, proposed the submission within The Universal Exhibition in Paris in a special pavilion, of some monuments of folk architecture. All these initiatives were founding premises of the first outdoor museums in Romania: the Ethnographic Museum Hoia in Cluj, and The National Village Museum - "Dimitrie Gusti", Bucharest. The creation of the National Village Museum "Dimitrie Gusti" is the result of extensive research and supported, theoretical and field experiments as well as the work of curators, for over a decade, coordinated by Professor Dimitrie Gusti, founder of the Sociological School of Bucharest.

In the current context of globalization, folklore is the most affected part of the culture. But also folklore turned out to be the best elements by which a nation can individualize in this millennium.

### **Etnotourism in Romania**

In Romania folklore constitutes an important component of the national culture. This component is manifested especially within folk music festivals. Enotourism and implicitly Romanian etnotourism assumes, however, more than the presentation of popular culture as a type of show. Enotourismul involves the discovery of the local culture by tourists who come from different cultural backgrounds. This means obtaining accomplished through personal contact with the local population and, therefore, facilitates intercultural exchange and therefore can reach a better understanding and tolerance between cultures.

In the following we will try to identify all major Romanian tourism products in which folklore plays an important role.

Not yet established in Romania as a well defined form of tourism, etnotourism appears as part of other forms of tourism better developed and promoted. Therefore our study will focus on the following forms of tourism in which folklore has or may have an important role :

- Cultural tourism;
- Rural tourism;
- Agrotourismul.

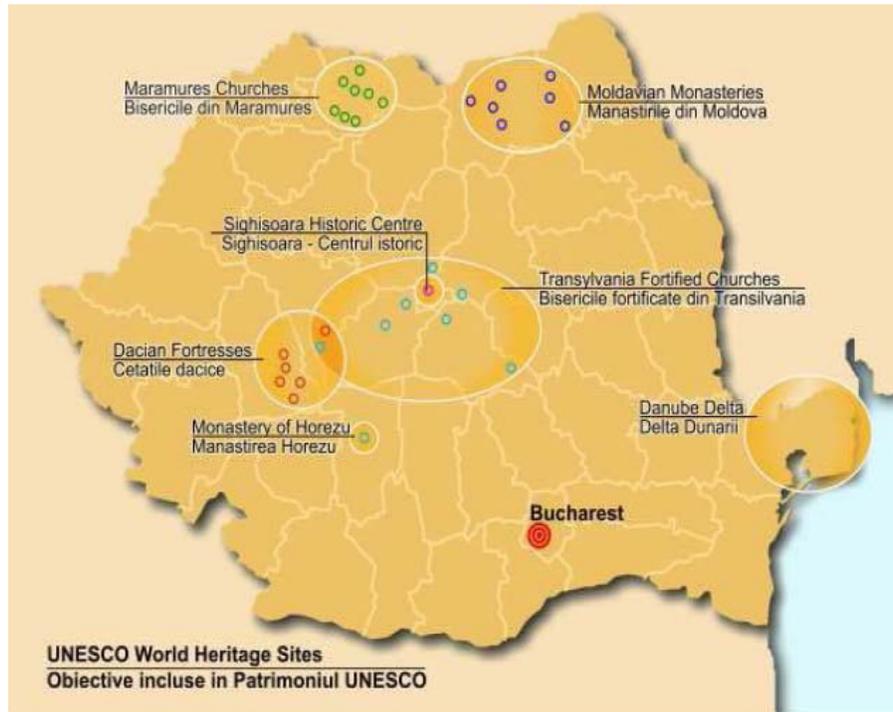
The 2006 country report based on a field research conducted by WTTC recommends that Romania should focus on the developing of wellness and spa tourism, and cultural tourism to the detriment of mountain tourism and winter sports and seaside tourism, especially in the offer for foreign tourists. Basically, cultural tourism in Romania is concentrated in four areas: Bucovina with the painted monasteries, the churches and wooden

houses in Maramures, Transylvania with its castles, and museums and galleries in cities like Bucharest, Brasov and Sighisoara.

Since 2007 when Siubiu was elected Cultural Capital of Europe, our country has the opportunity to develop and promote a variety of cultural and ethnic tourism products.

The best way for Romania to attract tourists through folklore and folk art is by making the best of the items includes in the UNESCO World Heritage list

**Fig.1: Sights in Romania included** in the UNESCO World Heritage list



Source: Negrusa Adina, Cosma Smaranda, Gică Oana, *Analysis of the Main Romanian Cultural Tourism Products*, Proceedings of the 2nd WSEAS International Conference on Cultural Heritage and Tourism, p. 51-52

Romania is present on the Intangible Cultural Heritage List of UNESCO with -Calusul -included on 25 November 2005, and -Doina- accepted on 2 October 2009.

Another way to exploit the folk heritage is by organizing exhibitions with ethnographic themes and folklore and folk art museums. Below tables presents the number of visitors in museums in Romania and the number of museums.

Regarding the evolution of the number of tourists who visited museums in Romania, it has a downward trend which states that we need a greater promotion of these goals and to modernize the infrastructure of these museums.

**Table1: Number of tourists in Romanian museums in 2008-2013**

Year	2008	2009	2011	2012	2013
Number of museums	666	679	688	694	687
Number of tourists	10.135.396	12.255.182	10.687.056	10.169.087	8.900.425

Source: National Institute of Statistics

**Table 2: Number of museums in Romania by theme**

<b>Year</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Natural science</b>	6.9	6.9	7.2	6.6	6.5
<b>History</b>	17.8	18.4	16.4	17.9	16.5
<b>Etnography</b>	11.2	12.2	12.4	13.2	17
<b>Art</b>	23.1	21.8	22	24	21.9

Source: National Institute of Statistics

In terms of number of ethnographic museums, they increased in the period from 11% percent of all museums in 2008 to 17% in 2013. This indicates a growing increase tourists interest folklore.

### **Conclusions**

1. Globalization, excessive industrialization in the last century and excessive promotion of forms of tourism that are aggressive to the environment led to the emergence of new forms of tourism generally centered on the concept of sustainable development.
2. Folklore and folk culture are the best ways in which a nation can individualize itself and create a strong country brand that can be promoted on the international tourist market.
3. In Romania we have a strong background and great new initiatives for promoting this type of tourism.

### **References**

- Green T. A., *Folklore: an encyclopedia of beliefs, customs, tales, music and art, Volumul 2*, Editura ABC-CLIO, SUA, 1997.
- S. Bolnik, *Promoting the Culture Sector through Job Creation and Small Enterprise Development in SADC Countries: The Ethno-tourism Industry*, ILO Seed working paper No. 50
- Negrusa Adina, Cosma Smaranda, Gică Oana, *Analysis of the Main Romanian Cultural Tourism Products*, Proceedings of the 2nd WSEAS International Conference on Cultural Heritage and Tourism,