

BRIEF ANALYSIS ON RELATIONSHIP Non-formal education - youth tourism CASE STUDY – ROMÂNIA

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Abstract

Youth tourism has a long tradition in Europe and is no stranger to Romania, being practiced here since 1968, two of the most important resorts are Costinești and Izvorul Mureșului.

This paper aims to be the first who bring attention about the significant role in the development of youth tourism by the non-formal education and by her methods of activity.

The future of the Romanian youth tourism in the national and international market consists in the cooperation of all stakeholders in creating a system for the Millennial Generation.

The Romanian youth tourism is an extremely important segment of tourism industry able to generate long term profit.

Keywords: *youth Romanian tourism, non-formal education, development, boot camp*

JEL: *I28, M14, O13, Z13.*

1. Introduction

This paper aims to draw attention to non-formal learning in our country, which regardless of age or sector it can lead to the development of Romanian tourism both national and international.

Throughout the human history, travel motivations are beginning to diversify, resulting in shaping the tourism activity, which was determined by religious action at the beginning, followed by the need of curative treatments, followed by journeymen and students travelling to academic centers for the practice and developing new knowledge and professions, and also traveling to discover new worlds. Parallel with the growth of passenger traffic, the hospitality, communications, transportation and all sort of activities for tourism had developed. Tourism became a mass phenomenon in the late nineteenth century being strongly grounded in the environment (Cristureanu, 2004).

In Romania, the tourism, as a socio - economic phenomenon is integrated in the complex country's economy, being a major landmark for our society. Considering the conditions necessary for the organic development of domestic and international tourism, the focus has to be on the optimization of the tourism fund, on the intensification of existing facilities and access routes, as the entire territory to be included in national and international tourist circuit. Referring to the local tourism sector, each county share their travel fund, to provide opportunities for full use of all tourism resources.

In the following lines the paper will focus on the analysis of non-formal education conducted by nongovernmental environment especially for the potential of the development of the national youth tourism.

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2.1 Historical Description of Potential Non-Formal Education for Youth Tourism

This concept appeared first in 1960 and came as a complement to formal education, namely it was taught in educational institutes. A universally accepted definition of formal education does not yet exist, but it was defined by J. Kleis as “any educational activity, willful and systematic, usually held outside the traditional school, whose content is adapted to individual needs and special situations in the aim of maximizing learning and knowledge and minimize the problems it faces in the formal system (stress of grading in the catalog, the discipline imposed, homework etc.)”, (Fulop-Birsan, 2014).

Thus, through this kind of education, we enter into a new learning approach, implemented through enjoyable and motivating activities. Non-formal education offers the possibility of different methods, interactive and diversified to obtain knowledge and new skills as well as their implementation. Some examples of non-formal methods could be:

- Animation
- Thematic and national camps
- Team building
- Summer schools
- Role play
- Debates
- Brainstorming
- Games improvisation. (National Organization, Creativ. Romanian Scouts, 2010).

In the following lines I will analyze some methods of non-formal education which represent a potential tourism development through youth activities.

2.2 Animation

In our country, after joining the European Union, it has been implemented and developed the non-formal education through the animation method, which is usually done by young volunteers from non-governmental associations or foundations. The animation is a method, a public relations tool, using social, cultural, physical and sports activities. The main functions of animation are:

- Socialization
- Amusement and recreation
- Leisure organization
- Education and enlightenment
- Innovation
- Social adjustment.

The animation appears as an alternative to the current embodiment of education that complements school education and potential weaknesses, representing at the same time a tool of culture transmission. It also offers the possibility of discovering new styles, ways of life. The animator is the one to greet and inform the public about the activities to be carried out. For this he must know the various practices and group animation techniques, without neglecting individual relationship. Animator's work involves working with communities and also individual, regardless the type of activity. (National Organization Creativ, Romanian Scouts, 2010).

The Youth and Sport Ministry organizes youth animator's courses, certificate to assist young people who want to engage in summer activities of non-governmental organizations or institutions. These courses are free for persons aged between 14-35 years.

2.3 Thematic and National Camps

The Youth and Sports Ministry is the institution that finances and organizes this type of extra-curricular programs for students and young people through subordinated institutions, the Sports and Youth County across the country. It's necessary to be mentioned that before each summer holiday, the Youth and Sports Ministry announces, on its website, the thematic and country camps calendar

(County Department for Sport and Youth / Recreation Center / period / topic). These camps are in fact organized after a project contest between departments in the country, so there is no county that does not organize at least a camp during the summer. The responsibility for ensuring an organizational framework, standard, material and for achieving the success of each side, is attributed to the: camp director, accompanying teachers, entertainers and camp manager (Nicholas, L., Scarlat, E., 2004).

The main activity of the camp is the non-formal education, which develops skills and competencies through various themes that the school curricula do not approach. Thus, through a simple budget analysis and occupancy in the leisure centers subordinated to MTS, but also at private agents, accredited in the Black Sea or Prahova Valley area, we notice a large amount of money invested in accommodation, transport, meals and training / animation. Only in 2014, specifically during the summer season, we have a budget of about 900.000 Ron, allocated to thematic camps of the ministry for an estimated 2.000 young people across the country. The theme of these camps ranges from general culture to solidarity, painting, entrepreneurship, sports, competitions, team games (strategy, imagination, thinking) music and dancing, treasure hunts, arts, workshops, dances, theater shows, karaoke, hiking, public speaking and healthy nutrition among the younger generation.

For the national camp contest between the departments in the country, was allocated a budget of one billion Ron, for year 2015, for about 2.050 young people who will go to leisure centers of the ministry. These budgets, allocated to non-formal education and indirectly to tourism services, lead yearly to the development of the services and modernization at European standards.

2.4 Summer Schools for Students

A great way to spend time as constructive as possible during the holiday is attending to summer schools, to projects for students, which consist in applying to non-formal education courses sustained by representative trainers of a particular field of study. The summer school structure consists in training sessions or workshops on certain school themes, plus animation adapted to the location, sea or mountains. The summer schools financiers are either public institutions, universities, cultural houses for students, ministries, schools or different companies willing to support students in their CSR actions. Summer schools abroad are a very good exercise for young people to become familiar with the courses development abroad, the culture and customs of that specific country. Young people may join either as a participant or as a trainer / animator, there are many examples of young people from different parts of the world that have traveled in almost every country of the world, with help of non-formal education, developing themselves and also the young people who have been in contact with them, forming thus a multicultural society and developing youth tourism (Nomiku, 2007).

During the summer school there are excellent opportunities for networking and familiarizing with people from the interest domain of each participant. For the summer of 2014, MTS has granted a budget of around 480.000 Ron, for eight summer schools for students, out of which seven take place at the seaside and one at the mountain, for a total of 480 young people aged between 18-25 years, the costs of training/animation, accommodation, meals and transport being sustained by the ministry budget (60 Ron accommodation, 40 Ron meal/participant). These were organized in private locations of travel agencies.

2.5 Other forms of non-formal education

Any means of learning through which a young man can develop abilities or can access other cultures, are part of non-formal education. From this point of view we could analyse folk traditional festivals, the music, traditional dance, handicrafts, national costumes specific to each area, but also team buildings, debates, conferences on different subjects and domains, or events and international denominations. For example the city Cluj-Napoca has been denominated this year as the European Youth Capital, this being the most important distinction a Romanian city has ever obtained after the city of Sibiu, titled European Capital of Culture in 2007. This way, tourists and over 100,000 students, master students and doctor post-graduates from Cluj will be able to benefit from non-formal educational programs along with other young Europeans. Moreover, the 5.7 million Euro budget allocated for this project is meant to attract tourists of all ages and nationalities.

3. History of youth tourism in Romania

For those who don't know, and I'm sure there are many, it is good to remember that youth tourism in Romania was until 1990 one of the richest economic infrastructure: the existence solely to the youth of three resorts (Costinești, Pârâul Rece and Izvorul Mureșului), an important recreational heritage of the Herestrău Lake, national ski center in Parâng, numerous houses and holiday camps for youth in almost all counties, and in the mountains and at the sea.

This infrastructure was for the communist regime a national priority. It started from scratch and reached a heritage which placed Romania among Europe's leaders in this field. Sadly, what happened after 1989 with that heritage, because of bad management of BTT's, a leadership that hadn't ever heard about holiday's industry, privatization of the sector, had led to the loss of a substantial part of the heritage and purpose change overnight. As the privatization process is designed everywhere as a solution designed to bring to life and modernize a sector or assets; only that almost all privatizations of Youth Tourism Bureau - YTB were based on a single principle, the rapid sales for a price below the market which led to the death of a valuable tourism heritage.

We stop attention and we analyze the only dedicated youth tourism resort in Romania, Costinești, where tourism started in the 1920s, with fishing amateurs and archaeological research (erosion cliffs in the area unearthed shards, coins, pieces of inscriptions) but developed in 1949, with the inauguration of the first camp for pioneers. Ten years later was opened the international students' camp, formed from some hundred blue tents placed along the cliff. After 1966, Costinești was massive built, Nicu Ceaușescu having an important role in the development of the resort. Including today Costinești is representative for the students holiday camps organized by the Ministry of Youth and Sport directly or through subordinate institutions, the County Departments for Youth and Students' associations (Wikipedia, website, 2015).

4. History of Youth Tourism Bureau – "YTB"

In 1968 was founded "Youth Tourism Bureau", an economic unit specialized in travel programs for youth. In 1990 the former YTB is dissolved and the "Independent Company for Youth Travel" was created, a state unit, later reorganized as a private company. The company changed its name to SC BTT S.A. in 2001. Its objective was to guide young people in choosing the location for a holiday. BTT has 12 branches in the country (Bacau, Botosani, Braila, Cluj, Costinești, Giurgiu, Hunedoara, Olt, Teleorman, Neamt, Salaj and Bucharest), nowadays only the headquarter is still having the obligation to work as a travel agency (Youth Tourism Bureau, website, 2015).

There is a reception capacity for the youth in the former infrastructure of Youth Travel Bureau (YTB), a kind of field ministry, which could provide holidays for 2.5 million annual tourists. Well, just in the revolutionary "style", some naive and noisy managers, who arrived in YTB's leadership in the early years after 1990, succeeded, in three years, to erase from the memory of statistics everything that was once the patrimony of youth tourism. As it happened with many other areas after the revolution in our country.

5. Research over the influence of non-formal education programs

After studying how non-formal education programs are being applied, it has been observed that these are not enough promoted as a potential for the Romanian youth tourism. And so, a quality research was necessary, a deep structured interview to reveal on what level the non-formal education programs can influence touristic behavior of young Romanians, as beneficiaries or suppliers of non-formal education programs.

For this scientific propose, the following objectives have been established:

1. To identify the main sources of non-formal education;
2. To determine young people's motivation to access non-formal education programs;
3. To identify the most important information's regarding touristic services obtained during youth programs through non-formal education;
4. To determine a capitalization pattern of touristic information;
5. The perception on the relevance and credibility of such information.

In order to realize the research that we wanted we had to identify a small group, carefully selected, with a structure as similar as possible to the aimed community. We have selected young people aged between 18 and 35, males and females superior studies graduates or currently outgoing any kind of superior studies. And so we have obtained a number of 20 beneficiaries and 10 suppliers of non-formal education between 2014-2015. The classification of the respondents is the following: 30 persons (20 women/ 5 suppliers and 15 beneficiaries) and (10 men / 5 suppliers and 5 beneficiaries). The interview has covered all the regions of the country and was addressed to people whose professions have something to common with non-formal education: young people formatter, worker, trainer, youth counselor, non-governmental organization, volunteer, student, PhD student and others.

Gathering the information was possible with the help of a conversation guide, structured on sections, ordered from general to particular topics with open questions. The interview contained two sections aiming> the perception over non-formal education and non-formal education programs perception over tourism types (touristic objectives) regarding young people's touristic behavior, both analyzed from the perspective of the perspective of two factors – beneficiary and supplier. Each selection contained five, respectively eight open questions adapted according to the respondent's role in non-formal education programs.

After putting down the answers from the interviews we have defined the analysis unit and calculated the frequencies of each unit. As the role of this research was to see highlight this type of education, for the beginning our interview was meant to see if the respondents are familiar with the term of non-formal education and what do they understand by it. And so, all the respondents showed that they understood the meaning and, most important, that they are promoters of non-formal education: “non-formal education is a type of education that complies the traditional education system” it offers “innovative teaching methods”, it encourages “team work” and “voluntary works with cultural diversity among populations.”

The respondents identify as main sources of non-formal education the following entities: non-governmental organizations, public institutions such as Youth and Sports Ministry and its' national youth divisions, but also programs like Young People in action, Erasmus +, “Different week”. The suppliers have mentioned something more than the beneficiaries, that is the role of specialized private companies or of teambuilding specialized companies that organize activities in touristic areas aiming to create a friendly environment for developing creativity. The suppliers are also organizing non-formal education programs for young people in domains' like sales, communication, entrepreneurship, public speaking, leadership, by combining theoretical and practical methods like classes, theme trips or summer camps.

Young people's motivation to participate in the non-formal education process is simple, it offers everyone, regardless of age, the possibility to enlarge their views and to express freely: “it opens a wide range of learning opportunities and it helps you rediscover your creative side, many times limited by formal education; moreover, it gives you freedom of speech”. Similar answers given by the respondents come to sustain the potential of non-formal education in the youth tourism, a potential that helps developing cultural and touristic knowledge: “volunteer activity and the opportunity of meeting new people and new places, of interacting with different cultures and customs”.

The most important information about touristic services obtained from the youth non-formal education programs were restricted to visiting touristic landmarks and customs' and traditions specific to the regions and the result was a lack of promotion of the touristic services, motivated by the fact that the organizers were in charge with accommodation and transport: “During the projects we have been given information about the city, the touristic sites to visit and possible activities for entertainment.

The beneficiaries have capitalized the information by optimizing entertainment methods, financial resources, but also by the feeling of safety and protection given by the organizer: “They have been helping me to do a better management of the resources, but also to exploit not very well known places and incredibly beautiful ones”. Some suppliers have capitalized touristic information by putting them in practice and organizing touristic workshops, with the purpose of making known the districts on the country's treasures. ”This way they promoter touristic stress like: Natural Reservation of Danube Boilers, Natural Reservation of Iron Gates, Prahova Valley, Maramures, The Mures fountain, Paraul Rece and Black Sea Seaside.

The respondents had a good perception on the relevance and credibility of such information, especially that some of them have participated also in non-formal education programs outside the country and so they were able to make a comparison: "Considering that the non-formal education programs that I attended were held abroad, I can state that youth international tourism strengthens the relation between nations – the young generation, and it helps promoting better communication, enabling us to be more open". From the point of view of a non-formal education activities beneficiary from our country, the relevance of the touristic information is given by the acknowledgment of the touristic potential not enough or not at all promoted until that moment. "The information was very useful, us. I discover every day what a beautiful country we have." Another important perspective was that the young people are the promoters of each nation by getting involved in many activities, and the better they are informed on Romanian's youth tourism potential, the more they will attract young people in promoting our country: "once they start getting involve in non-formal educational activities and once they receive touristic information, young people will become information multipliers, by sharing the experiences and making tourist areas popular among friends, family or among their social circle."

The conclusions of our research entitled: "Brief analysis on relationship - Non-formal education - youth tourism - Case Study - Romania" come from the majority of the respondents and they all highlight the necessity to capitalize it in the future. "Yes, non-formal education has the role of promoting tourism, but, unfortunately, it isn't exploited to its' maximum capacity. It just needs to be promoted especially in the social media." Today's marketing efficiency is given by the new promotion methods adopted both for the youth tourism and for the non-formal education of the young generation, for which the internet is playing a vital role in choosing educational and entertaining activities.

Conclusions

As a final conclusion, we could say that non-formal education is accessible to everyone and its' main characteristics are adaptability, it doesn't impose restrictions or conditions, but in the same time it doesn't offer the kind of rewards formal education does (grades, rewards, scholarships etc.). It simply offers new perspectives and opportunities of personal and professional development for the individual and for the society. It is usefull in many domanins and it helps filling the gaps the schollar curricullum has. For the Romanian youth tourism it represents a great potential everyone should consider, from the stakeholders involved in the tourism business, to hotel services (accommodation facilities, restaurants, conference rooms, entertainment clubs, gyms etc.) and all means of transport, but also the public authorities.

Today's tourism is represented by the Millennials Generation (Wikipedia, website, 2015), and those who have adopted their life style are not seaking for the experiences and for the hotels their parents used to prefer, and they are very carefull about the costs they asume. In the same time, the are more focused on the experiences they are living, no matter if they are taking a business or a touristic trip. From this perspective, Romania has the potential of being an attractive tourism destination for tourist who are looking for authentic experiences, surrounded by a traditional community. For these tourists the lack of infrastructure doesn't represent an impediment, but more likely an attraction, as they are looking for isolated destinations far from the urban crowds. But this kind of tourists are usually the most connected to means of digital information. For this reason, a key aspect in fulfilling the new requirements will be represented by the capacity of the Romanian tourism services suppliers to have a strong presence online.

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