

## ADDRESSING OF LOCAL MUSEUM TOURISM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF APPLIED RESEARCH FOR LOCAL MUSEUMS

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### ABSTRACT

*The National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism, Bucharest elaborated, between March and September 2015, a research study regarding cultural tourism development at national level through the local museums and memorial houses. Within this research it was tried to emphasize the way in which the Romanian local museums and memorial houses are prepared to participate in the Romanian cultural tourism development and to find solutions to integrate the local museums and the memorials houses in the tourist circuit. It was also observed that there exist the needs to create an image of the localities through the existence of these cultural institutions.*

*The aim of this research study is to demonstrate the need of inter museum exchange at the local, national and international level, regarding mobility and heritage specialists; promoting partnerships with: education, research, academic, affiliated or linked cultural and creative industries, media trusts, and construction companies involved in urban regeneration projects, or community development.*

*The general objectives were connected particularly to two major issues that define local museums, namely:*

- Conservation, exposure, collecting, keeping track of exhibits, documentation, their restoration, scientific research;*
- Protection, development of owned heritage through exhibitions, publications and other forms of direct and indirect communication by visitors.*

### Keywords

Local museums, cultural tourism, sustainable local economy, cultural heritage tourism

### JEL Classification

Z320

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### Introduction

Through its mission, "the museum is a non-profit and permanent institution, serving the society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the heritage material and immaterial of humanity and its environment for the purpose of education, study and enjoyment" (International Council of Museums, ICOM, 2007).

From the mission, objectives and strategies applied by museums institutions, must follow one relationship between the quality of the museum and the level of satisfaction of the public and only to the extent that there is a balance of these components may be considered that these cultural units their mission for which they exist.

Over the time, heritage and cultural tourism studies have covered a wide range of analysis and focused topics such as:

- Romanian museums situation compared to the rest of Europe in terms of number of visitors, inter-regional differences (in the country) and most visited museums in Romania;
- promote heritage conservation and identification of the target audience to raise awareness of the national cultural heritage;
- analysis concerning of: the availability of urban population visiting the museums of contemporary art; museums visit's behavior in Romania and social, demographic, cultural and economic profiling of those interested in contemporary art;

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- key actors identifying in the field of contemporary art, the description of the contemporary art market, cultural potential of localities in Romania through analysis of four categories of the cultural sector: historical monuments of national interest, museums and public collections, art and popular traditions and institutions of shows and concerts;
- Romanian cultural centers' situation assessment (subject to infrastructure, institutional issues, compliance with legislation).

Essentially these studies have brought to the fore issues related to: identify the structure of cultural consumption in the country or of counties, determining people's expectations regarding cultural consumption, evaluation of cultural offer available to consumers in contemporary society. In Romania, most local museums are divided into two distinct areas: the work of museology and the administrative function.

Together with these approaches in starting sociological research undertaken by National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism (INCDT) have been user data and information provided by museums and collections made by CIMEC (source: <http://ghidulmuzeelor.cimec.ro/>). This to make the selection at the local museum institutions, which have been applied research model used: questionnaire. To have an image as close to the current situation, two questionnaires were designed local museums and collections, memorials, whatever category they belong and profile.

The beneficiary of this paper was the National Authority for Scientific Research and Innovation. In Romania, local museums can be administered by municipalities or might be, as appropriate, under the authority of central government, local or other public authorities or institutions and operate according to their own organization and operation regulations.

Some of these museums are registered in the database of CIMEC (Institute for Cultural Memory), some enjoy a certain measure of support from the County Departments or Centers for the traditions conservation and valorification.

Museums bring attention to contemporary pages of history, civilization, religion, culture, literature, art, occupations, hobbies, innovations etc., all together totaling culture and civilization of human society. The more varied thematically, they even manage to reflect a more realistic appearance of Romanian society, constituting both the seal of a distinct level of progress of its inhabitants. Visiting them is a permanent exercise of knowledge, preservation and cultivation of identity values.

### **Methodology**

The methodology used in this research study was the questionnaire which was based on issues of local museums, which was meant to investigate the current state of institutions and to identify the range of services offered to the public as to: the nature, size and location of each cultural institutions addressed. The questionnaire was submitted online to the leadership of the local museums. The research was conducted from March to May, 2015, covering 55 cultural institutions<sup>4</sup>.

The questionnaire included 33 questions, which reflect current aspects of the operation of local museums. This evaluation model includes closed-ended questions with two possible answers: yes / no (10); questions with direct answers (10) which covers some historical data and information, spatial deployment and exposure of the objects; selected questions (12) by the fact that from a range of issues, respondents can choose one or several answers, depending on the existing situation in the local museum for which the questionnaire is applied. These questionnaires focused on presenting by the respondents of some examples of their work related to participation in exhibitions, publications and creative interpretation. The questionnaire concludes with an open question, which leaves the respondent to provide those ideas and solutions for a better functioning of the local museum.

The information collected through the questionnaires are quantitative and qualitative, some going so far as to obtain details on museum management. Some of these are presented bellow.

### **Results and discussion**

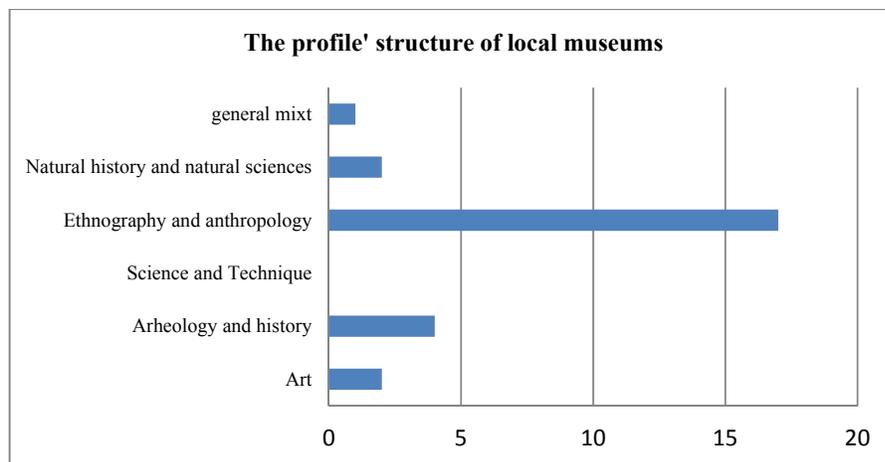
At the territorial level, Neamț County occupies first place with the biggest number of local museums (16 units), second place is occupied, with the same number of units (3), by the counties: Caraș-Severin,

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<sup>4</sup> According to the National Institute of Heritage, in 2014 (12.10.2014), there were 55 local museums and 158 collections / memorials houses.

Dâmbovița, Hunedoara, Sibiu, Vrancea. In third place are the following counties (with 2 units): Bihor, Covasna, Maramureș, Suceava.

In terms of the type of units, the most dynamic category is the Ethnography (17 units), followed by the History with a number of 11 museums, and the third place is occupied by two profiles: Memorial and Ethnography and local History (7 units).



**Figure 1 The profile' structure of local museums**

Source: *Cultural Tourism Development through local museums and memorial houses, Phase II: Actual situation of Cultural Tourism Development, 2015, INCDT, p. 77*

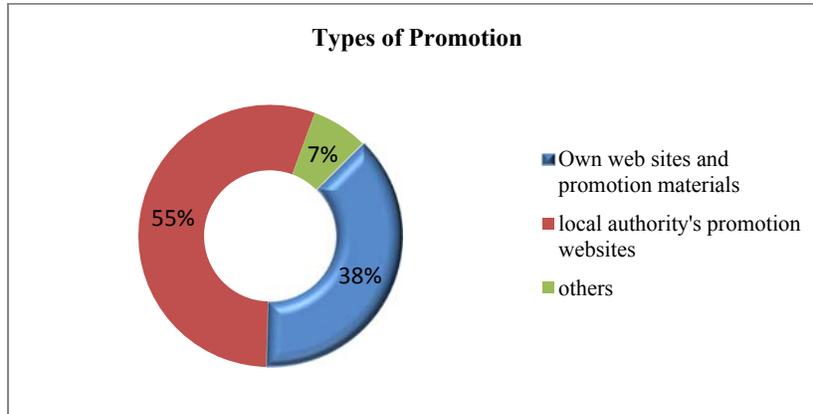
Analyzing the way of exposure and presentation of the exhibits to visitors, the existence of partnerships with similar profile cultural institutions from Romania and abroad, cultural projects attended in recent years, the following issues have been noted: 50% of the analyzed units have a normal schedule and is open to the public throughout the year, 45% of the analyzed museums are open only by appointment and 5% of the local units are open only four months in a year, without programming.

According to the collected data, 69% of cultural units are coordinated by local government, 17% are sections/departments of other museums, 4% is managed by a church or a religious institution and 8% are another form of management, namely private.

In terms of financing the museum, the main way is the allocation of funds by the local authority for 73% of cultural units; 39% are self-financed; 17% of donations and sponsorships, 13% are financed from external funds, other funds: 26%. One cultural unit can have two different financial resources in the same time.

The implication level of the municipalities in supporting the museums' activities consists of: direct involvement 48%; providing annual subsidies 21%; promoting the museums by the local community and tourists 21%; non-interference/lack of involvement in the work of museums 8%.

The affiliation to a network or a national association it was regarded as an asset/advantage of the respective institution in terms of promoting cultural activity only by 23% of respondents, while 77% have not used this way of promotion. Examples of associations to which have acceded the cultural units: Zestrea Museum - Network of Private Collections and Ethnographic Rural Museums in Romania (RECOMESPAR); Maramures Village Museum – NGO; the National Network of Romanian Museums; Floci City Museum - Helis Cultural Association Ialomita; the Romanian Peasant Museum - National Network of Romanian Museums Association.



**Figure 2 Types of Promotion**

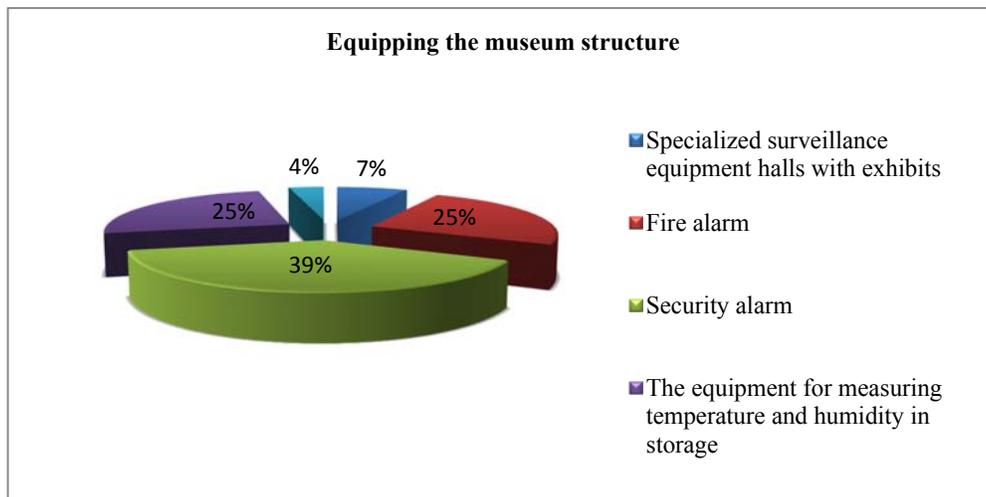
Source: *Cultural Tourism Development through local museums and memorial houses, Phase II: Actual situation of Cultural Tourism Development, 2015, INCDT, p. 78*

As can be seen from the above chart, the main method used to promote local museums is the local authorities' websites (55%); 38% of units are promoted through own sources, website, etc., and only 7% have another ways of promotion.

Among the pursued objectives by local museums using current exhibitions and guidelines offered, can be mentioned: the promotion of local heritage values (91%); development of aesthetic sense and sensitivity (78%); stimulating curiosity, imagination, spirit of observation (39%); gaining experience in a particular area by presenting some details on the exhibits (30%); visitors awareness on a particular issue (26%); cultivating respect for Romanian people's past (8%).

The development of social cohesion at the local level has been supported by the local institutions through: visiting and spending leisure time in the museum (95%); conducting some social events (69%); transmitting and forming of common ethical and artistic values, (56%); realization of small workshops for amateurs (39%); acceptance and participation of disadvantaged people (17%).

The ways of ensuring the collections consists of: burglary alarm (47% of the units), fire alarm (25% of the units), storage and measuring equipment for temperature and humidity (25% of units).



**Figure 3 Equipping the museum structure**

Source: *Cultural Tourism Development through local museums and memorial houses, Phase II: Actual situation of Cultural Tourism Development, 2015, INCDT, p. 79*

As can be seen in the figure number 3, the most commonly used equipment is for burglary (39%), at the opposite being the endowment for interpreting the exhibits (4%). Management of units is interested in protection for fire (25%) and in the same time also for assuring the proper conditions for the exhibits.

This is supported by the fact that funds for cultural facilities are insufficient to cover this lack, and that local governments are not interested in supporting and developing local cultural activity.

Regarding the structure of the employees in this cultural units, the highest percentage of the staff in the museums is full-time employee (60,6%), followed by the unpaid staff (20,5%) and finally part-time staff (18,9%).

The department with most full time employees or partially is the management of exhibits, conservation, research and documentation (58,4%), followed by the department of maintenance and security (17,8%); technical staff (9,5%); staff management (7,3%); staff from the public relations, marketing, information technology (5%) and the last position is held by the commercial activity (2%). Therefore, the main concern of the organizations management is the management, conservation and documentation of the exhibits, which sometimes it is not enough to create a new image of local museums among visitors. For the future it is necessary to invest in marketing, to help creating a better image among the visitors, to reinvent the museum with a new image.

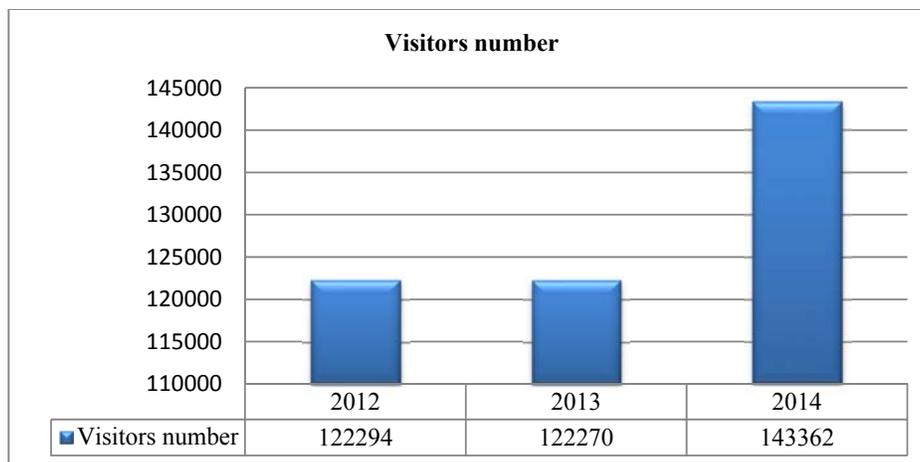
The continuous professional training of employees is ensured by at least 27% of staff employed in the system. Using the volunteer service is supported by cultural units with the same percentage, namely 27%. A proposal to increase the percentage of volunteering is that after completion of the activity, the cultural unit to provide volunteers a letter of recommendation, which could be an important advantage in their CV.

86% of local museums surveyed have worked in collaboration with other cultural institutions and organizations at national and international level, activity materialized into scientific and cultural projects and programs, which had as main theme: researching and valorization of tangible and intangible heritage in Romania.

The organization of temporary exhibitions with different themes had an educational role only for 30% of cultural institutions; however, a percent of 36% of institutions have participated with their own exponents at exhibitions organized by other institutions in the county / country / abroad.

The offered services' analysis showed that diversification of services offered by these museums is supported by the following related activities: organizing cultural events (86%); organizing thematic workshops for children (39%); commercialization of souvenirs (30%); guide in the museum (26%); renting conference rooms (8%); catering spaces (4%) and other activities (4%).

The disability services are provided only by 18% of the participating units, the remaining 82% did not consider these facilities usefully for the visitors. Assuring these kinds of facilities, the image of the museum could be changed into a better one, counting on the people.



**Figure 4 Visitors number**

Source: *Cultural Tourism Development through local museums and memorial houses, Phase II: Actual situation of Cultural Tourism Development*, 2015, INCDT, p. 81

In the analyzed period, the number of visitors had an oscillating evolution, if in 2013 there is a minor decrease about 1%, in the next year there is an increase of 17,2%, resulting in an overall positive development. This growth may be determined by launching knowledge activities of the visitors in museums. Also, this increase was determinate by involving many persons in the programme “A

Different School” implemented at the national level by the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research. Every year, in April, both students and pupils are involved in different type of activities, museums being also included in this kind of activity.

Another important program which helped to increase the visitor’s number is the “Night of the Museums”. This program was implemented in Romania from 2009, and every year many visitors were implicated in it.

The relevant visitors’ category were: the students and preschoolers with a rate of over 90%; organized groups of students had a 59%; families with children accounted for 77%; instead, the families without children had a percent of 31%; organized groups of adults 27%; retirees accounted for 40%. Main visitors categories were: local community: 43,58%; Romanian tourists: 37,90%; foreign tourists: 9,41%.

Concerning the way of promoting, each cultural unit offers certain discounts, most important and used discounts being: free entrance for visitors: 59%; discounts for children, students, senior citizens, people with special needs: 31%; discounts for organized groups: 22%; other categories: 4%.

The questionnaire ends with an open question regarding the recommendations of the local museums about their intention to support the cultural work. The most representative aspects concerning local cultural activity are: increasing the number of specialized personnel employed in local museums, salary increases, increasing the budget assigned to their activities; carrying out research work; legislating access to schools with compulsory attendance, local / regional history classes mandatory, tax reductions for museums sponsors; funds for promotion.

Typology of museums participating in the conducted research is a diverse one, as follows:

- Rural memorial museums: even if they don’t have a large number of visitors per year, their presence is important for our identity (for example, Avram Iancu Museum). In these museums are preserved objects who “talk” about an endangered world, the experts claiming that some of them belong to the national heritage;
- The unique peasant museums – Horticulture and Viticulture Museum: Ștefănești, Golești Village, Argeș County;
- Ethnographic and traditional museum – presents some aspects of culture and history of the localities, traditions and customs, farmhouses and tools;
- Private village museums – who are slightly known, and tourists find them accidentally. Currently, these museums are not fully valorized in tourism; they are forgotten and attract fewer visitors who typically arrive in the area. In many places there are village museums (ethnographic) made at the initiative of passionate individuals or some local institutions, hosted by schools, community centers or located in places provided by municipalities, and organized according to some criteria, more or less scientific, or so called "museum corner", organized with modest financial means in some educational institutions.

## **Conclusions**

This research study reaffirms some of the challenges facing the management of Romanian cultural organizations in the current competitive context: conceptual mutation from the cultural institution to the cultural organization, coupled with by the emergence of a competition between these organizations; management (focused on organizational effectiveness and efficiency) and basic profession of the manager (which aims to maintain the professional quality) form a strong pressure field in which many contradictions may arise in the managerial decision; management realities of the organization cultural certified as necessary for the manager to be a specialist in its field.

The effective management of these challenges is needed to increase the competitiveness of this type of organization in Romania. In this context, analyzing the perception of the local museum’s visitors offers some possible ways to follow: applying an aggressive promotion policy focused on traditional values adapted to contemporary realities, improving related services, prospecting opportunities for diversification to attract other market segments, developing cumulated skills (the professional competence of human resource, the quality of "offer" exhibition, a good price-quality ratio).

To include the museums in the life of localities can become an expression of the concept of „total museum”. Thus, what at first seemed a utopia of total communication (related to the possibility of viewing all museums in the world through the Internet - in fact the virtual museum), it becomes a reality

of the contemporary world. In Romania, there is a trend towards to revive the activity of museums and memorial houses based on an ongoing reform and far from being complete. Self-financing, managerial projects, efficiency, marketing, public relations, are concepts with whom the museums representatives should not only be familiar with, but they will have also to apply them.

In this perspective, the local museums can become a place of knowledge, enjoyment, leisure, or creative forum and linking/connecting them to town / village may take different relationships. It is obvious that the constant presence of culture in urban and rural areas is an aspect of quality of life. If greater diversification opportunities are the same as in the cities, rural communities can create associations consisting of small museums and memorial houses, which present different collections (traditions, crafts, traditional cuisine, folk art events, etc.).

Supporting the local museums is made by the management applied, based on the exhibits that they hold, museums being able to create stories or events which attract visitors. Furthermore, can also be used digital promotional tools.

The possibility to increase the level of communication between visitors and curators is challenging through the Internet and online communication channels. In the future, museums will be able to function as some media organizations. This challenge is important for local museums (and memorial houses) from the perspective of making them increasingly popular.

Currently, it feels the acute need of modernization, reshaping and reforming of the museums. This process is in progress with uneven rhythms, losses and achievements. The repositioning of the local museum in contemporary society as the main cultural institution of treasuring, accumulation, research and education materialized through heritage is a reality.

Also, museums are considered to have a strong contribution to the development of tourism and thus to the economic growth and development of an area. Most museums promote both educational and fun experience and have, primarily, a role of cultural knowledge of the place visited.

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