

EDITORIAL

Tourism: Technology and Innovation, Tradition and Singularity

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The Economic Summer University titled “Tourism: Technology and Innovation, Tradition and Singularity” took place in the city of Brasov, during the 2nd and 7th of September. This event is a part of a broader endeavour initiated by CACTUS association, which is on the one hand to contribute to the identification of the tourism problems in Romania, and on the other hand to find solutions in the areas of expertise of its members.

The event has been organised by the Tourism and Geography Department (Faculty of Commerce - ASE Bucharest) represented by CACTUS (The Academic Association for Research in Tourism and Services) in partnership with the Marketing, Tourism and International Relations Department within the Transilvania University in Brasov.

The agenda included lectures, photographic and video workshops, games, competitions, a practical application regarding the survival techniques in woods, camp fire and folk music night, the city tour of Brasov, attending the Oktoberfest and, not lastly, the team project aiming at making a promotion video of Brasov as a tourism destination on the basis of diverse themes. Concurrently, the agenda included a trip to Sighisoara with stops at Viscri and Rupea.

The welcome speech was delivered by the hosts, represented by: Adina Candrea – lecturer within the Faculty of Economic Sciences and Business Management from the Transilvania University as well as by Cristian Macedonschi – the president of the Association for the Promotion and Development of Tourism from the county of Brasov and Ionut Gliga – manager of the same association.

Due to the subjects approached during this event, the importance of traditional values was emphasised as an element of national identity, as well as their promotion for the purpose of tourism with the help of advanced and high-end technologies: starting from tourism blogs and the impact of mobile technologies on tourism, to the use of intelligent computer vision systems as the premises for the tourism of the future.

The subject presented by Florin Arjocu – blogger and founder of Drum Liber was aimed at identifying the methods of promoting tourism on blogs starting from the necessity and advantages of being present within Social Media. This presentation brought to the discussion particularities of the Romanian travelling blogosphere, trends in presenting tourism attractions as well as the differences between the tourism bloggers and traditional journalists.

Gabriela Brasoveanu – responsible for the relationship with the mass media on behalf of the Brasov Metropolitan Agency has shared with everyone the experiences related with the project “The Legends of Țara Bârsei. Promoting the tourism potential of Țara Bârsei”, project mainly aimed at promoting the historic and cultural identity and the natural resources specific to the Țara Bârsei area with the purpose of developing and enhancing tourism in the region. The project has been implemented in the Metropolitan Area of Brasov, in 15 member localities, a part of the activities being supported by tourists and

locals who participated to events organised on the basis of a unique concept, including dances and music that are traditional in Țara Bârsei, craft and culinary demonstrations, the scenic presentation of a local legend.

Passionate for electronic tourism in all its forms, Petrus Lungu – blogger and founder of Turism 2.0. and Digital Tourism Guide 2.0. – has argued that there is no field of activity which has not felt the impact of technology, whether we are referring to online technologies or gadgets. Perhaps more than any other industry, the tourism industry is one of the industries in which technology has made its mark in the most visible manner, from websites for reservations or information to tourist information points and mobile applications. “Mobile technologies have a huge impact on the tourism activity, making possible its organisation before the event, during the event, but also after the event – Petrus Lungu stated and continued by saying “Whether we are talking about smartphones or mobile technologies, or about other types of technology, which can leniently be called mobile technologies, such as tourist information points and digital furniture, all this enhances the tourists’ access to information, no matter where they are. Furthermore, the information provided can be geolocalised, thus offering more time to the tourist in order to carry out the desired activity and less time for research.” In Romania, although 1/4 of the number of mobile phones are smartphones, only 1 of 10 tourism websites are optimised for mobile browsing, according to Google’s Our Mobile Planet research, meant to provide assistance to tourists throughout their journey. “The main problem is related to the volume of information and the compatibility of sources with the mobile devices. According to the studies, a smartphone user spends in average 18 minutes per day surfing the internet on the smartphone, which has a direct impact on the volume of information, which has to be brief and to the point, in order to capture the user’s attention and to convince the users of the app’s usefulness” Petrus has concluded.

Senior Research Scientist in Computer Vision at the Romanian Academy, Marius Leordeanu gave a talk on how computer vision applications could enhance the tourists’ experience, from virtual reality to automatic object recognition. Virtual or augmented reality could help users “visit” and learn about different places on the globe through virtual 3D models of cities, cultural heritage sites and museums. Object recognition could be used for localisation by having the smartphones automatically recognise the visited places through an image to GPS-like localisation system.

In the context of an increasing competition on the international tourism market, asserting and promoting the national identity constitutes an opportunity to enhance the competitiveness of Romanian tourism, said Cristian Ditoiu, tourism marketing consultant, founder of Traieste Romaneste, the first online platform intended for marketing Romania as a destination and for country branding, starting from the sensorial experiences of the area in the sense of developing and supporting the following pillars: Tourism, Local Brands and Products, Policies, Investments, Culture and People.

Another subject discussed at the Economic Summer University was related to volunteering, which was presented by Maria Brandusa Balan – student at the Faculty of Arts, Film and TV production, founder of MotionArthoughts, who, after sharing personal projects, has argued for its importance and objectives, based on the passion and responsibility for the community.

The event has reunited guests – professionals of the business environment, bloggers, and professors from the university environment, scientific researchers, tourism and ecology association, representatives of public local authorities along with participants – students, master’s degree students and PhD students from various university centres: Suceava, Sibiu, Brasov and Bucharest.