

## ASPECTS REGARDING THE NATURAL AND ANTHROPICAL TOURIST OBJECTIVES OF ZLATNA AREA, ALBA COUNTY

SICOE-MURG OANA MARIA<sup>1</sup>, DINCU ANA-MARIANA\*<sup>1</sup>,  
CONSTANTINESCU SIMONA<sup>1</sup>, MĂNESCU CAMELIA<sup>1</sup>,  
GHEORGHESCU IONUȚ-COSMIN<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Life Sciences "King Mihai I" from Timisoara,  
Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism, Romania

\*Corresponding author's e-mail: maridincu2004@yahoo.com

**Abstract:** The town is located on the upper course of the Ampoi Valley, it is extremely rich and diversified on a relatively small surface, being concentrated many natural and man-made tourist attractions. The beginnings of the history of Zlatna in the written sources are placed in the Daco-Roman era, when it was called Ampelum. The town of Zlatna wants to be a possible attractive tourist destination. Zlatna, through the development strategies, aims to develop a diversified tourist offer, based on a modern tourist and cultural infrastructure, which includes a multifunctional center, diversified accommodation units, a tourist information and promotion center. The locality could thus offer quality services to Romanian and foreign tourists of all ages, interested in cultural, monastic and leisure tourism, services that respect, preserve and capitalize on local resources, services developed through collaboration between all interested agencies, public authorities, but also economic agents.

**Key words:** Zlatna area, natural, anthropic, tourist routes, accommodation

### INTRODUCTION

Zlatna is located in the western part of Alba County, 36 km west of Alba Iulia municipality. The locality occupies an area of 26,683 hectares (4.27 % of the total area of Alba County), of which the largest area (54.51%) is forests and other wooded lands - 14,545 ha. [9]



**Figure 1. Satellite view of Zlatna; location in the county of Zlatna**

Source: Authors' own processing after <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Zlatna> [16]

The administrative territory of the locality consists of the town of Zlatna and 18 villages (Feneș, Galați, Valea Mică, Pătrîngeni, Podu lui Paul, Pîrîu Gruiului, Pirita, Trîmpoiele, Dealu Roatei, Izvoru Ampoiului, Botești, Budeni, Dumbravă, Dobrot, Ruși, Vîltori, Runc, Suseni) [7].

To date, several archaeological testimonies have been discovered in the present territory of Zlatna, proving the presence of human communities in these places since prehistoric times[7].

The oldest find is a Neolithic cup, from an unspecified point on the territory of Zlatna. Other finds belonging to the Late Bronze Age (Șoimuș group) have been found at the northern limit of the village, on Vf. "Măgura Dudașului", on the occasion of the chimney's erection. Also from unspecified points on the territory of the locality, the provenance of two bronze celts is mentioned, one of which is of the "Transylvanian" type and a copper hammer[6].

The Zlatna Depression stretches from east to west, being drained longitudinally for a distance of over 15 km by the Ampoi River. The maximum width of the depression is about 8 km in the central area. Morphographically, there are two well-defined areas: the first, which forms the depression's belly, made up of meadows, dejection cones and river terraces; the second, with hilly aspects, making the transition to the mountainous area proper. [6,7]

**The predominant mountainous area** in the territory has altitudes between 600-1300 m. The main mountain peaks are:

- to the north-east: Dambau Peak 1369 m, Pleșa Peak 1285 m, Măgulița Peak 1252 m
- to the north: Devii Hill 1226 m, Mlaca Hill 1214 m, Budenilor Hill 1041 m
- to the west: Măciuca Hill 1014 m, Breaza Peak 1121 m
- in the central area: Rușeților Hill 1014 m, Vârful Rudelor 654 m
- in the south-eastern area: Jidovului Hill 952 m, Bulbucului Hill 872 m. [10]

**The depression area** (Zlatna-Almașu Mare depression) is located on the middle course of the Ampoi River, where we find:

- Dejection cones - accumulations of Quaternary deposits, with cross-stratification, deposited at the confluence of the main tributaries with the Ampoi River.
- meadow area - is located along the Ampoi River, with a greater extension on its left bank, and is made up of alluvial deposits.
- the terrace zone - is prominent on the left bank of the Ampoi River, occupying a narrow strip to the north of the meadow zone and, to a lesser extent, on both banks of the Morilor Valley [1,8].



**Figure 2. Landscapes from the Zlatna area**

*Source: Personal archive of the authors*

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methods and materials used in this paper are aimed at the analysis of the natural and anthropical tourist attractions of Zlatna. The aim is to highlight all the resources of this area, which is less promoted. Zlatna has the potential to become a dynamic, competitive and prosperous community, but also attractive for investors and able to ensure a high quality of life for its inhabitants. [2,9,17]

The data and information used for this study come from the Zlatna City Hall, numerous monographic works and also the study of the Development Strategies of the area. For the realization of this paper, we went through an extensive process of documentation, analysis of information, sorting, graphical representation and interpretation of the obtained results. [9,18]

## RESEARCH RESULTS

The spectacular landscape is enhanced by the alternation of wooded or mossy hills with rocky outcrops where the action of water on the rock has led over millions of years to the formation of numerous karst forms and phenomena, gorges, caves, karst plateaus, outbursts and a series of isolated olistoliths, the unique characteristic of Ampoi Vally. [3]

**Tourist attractions are divided into two categories: natural resources and anthropical resources.**

**The natural resource and tourist attractions are** Cheile Fenesului, the Poiana Narciselor from Negruleasa, the Bulbuci Stone, and the limestones of Valea Mica.

**Natural Reserve "Piatra Bulbuci".** Piatra Bulbuci is a protected area of national interest corresponding to IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) category IV (natural, geological and geomorphological reserve), located in Alba County, on the administrative territory of Zlatna, Feneș village. The nature reserve Piatra Bulbuci (3 ha.) is situated at an altitude of 540 m, and represents an area with mesophilic meadows on whose surface, consisting of a massive limestone block (0.32 ha.) with the appearance of a fortress tower, 78 m high, is the most imposing isolated rock in the basin of the Ampoiului Valley. Access roads - on the DN 74 Alba Iulia Abrud, up to km 31, located to the north-west of the village of Galați, from the signpost to the village of Valea Mică, turn right onto a path that climbs about 800m to Piatra Bulbuci. [4,11]



**Figure 3. Natural Reserve "Piatra Bulbuci"**

Source: Personal archive of the authors, <https://romaniatravel.guide> [11]

There are many mountaineering and sport climbing routes, mostly at beginner to intermediate level, where sports lovers can learn or practice their climbing skills. The scenery, seen from the vantage point that can be reached on a path behind the rock, is quite special [5].

**The Nature Reserve "Poiana Narciselor" (with access from Valea Feneșului)** is located in the Metaliferi Mountains, east of Vâlcoi Peak 1,348 m, between Valea Negrulesei and Valea Grozei. Daffodil meadows occupy the ridge and the north-western slope of the Buciumanilor Hill, at altitudes between 1,150 and 1,250 metres. After a short break, they continue on the southeastern slope of the Vâlcoi mountain. The reserve covers an area of about 45 hectares. In addition to *Narcissus stellaris* species, the reserve contains pastures and meadows, meadows, spruce and juniper forests. [7,11]

Among the most common plant species are crayfish tail, white clover, red fescue, rooster's foot, windweed and others (popular names used by the locals). Access from the DN 74 Alba Iulia - Abrud, on the modernised DJ 107 leading to Bucium. From here follow the communal road to the village of Valea Negrulesei, from which a forest road branches off to the reserve boundary. You can also reach it by following the DN 74 Alba Iulia - Abrud to the village of Feneș, then on the Feneș Valley you pass after 10 km through the "Cheile Feneșului" Reserve and after another 15 km on a forest road, you reach Poiana Narciselor. Unfortunately, due to grazing, the number of daffodils blooming in spring decreases from year to year [11].



**Figure 4. “Poiana Narciselor” from Negrileasa**

Source: <https://romaniatravel.guide>, Personal archive of the authors [11]

**Nature Reserve "Cheile Caprei".** Cheile Caprei is a protected area of national interest, also known as Cheile Feneșului, corresponding to IUCN category IV (botanical and geological nature reserve), located in Alba county, on the administrative territory of Zlatna. The nature reserve is located in the southern part of the Trascăului Mountains, on the northern territory of the village of Feneș, crossed by the Feneș Valley and has an area of 15 ha. The protected area has at its entrance two high grey limestone columns (cliffs), and steep-walled gorges covered with woody vegetation, mostly beech, in association with hornbeam[13].



**Figure 5. Nature Reserve “Cheile Caprei”**

Source: <https://romaniatravel.guide/rezervatia-poiana-cu-narcise-de-la-negrileasa>, Personal archive of the authors [11]

**The Valea Mică Limestone Reservation,** administratively located in the locality of Zlatna, village Valea Mică, is a geological reservation, consisting of two limestone blocks, the eastern one being 20m high and the western one 12m high, majestically dominating the intensely eroded felsic deposits. The area of the reserve is 1 ha. The main purpose of the Valea Mica Limestone Reserve is the conservation of geological diversity. It also aims to exclude and prevent exploitation activities or use of natural resources that are contrary to the conservation objective, as well as to provide conditions for educational, recreational and scientific research activities. [18]



**Figure 6. Limestone Reservation from Valea Mică or “The Finger of God”**

Source: <http://romanianturism.com/cheile-caprei/>, Primaria Zlatna [9], [11]

**Tourist attractions with anthropic resources include** the Orthodox Church Zlatna I, the Orthodox Church Zlatna II, the Roman Catholic Church, the Reformed Church, the Monastery Buna Vestire Pătrîngeni or the Monastery Negraia, the Orthodox Church Feneș, the Administrative Palace of the City of Zlatna (the seat of the mayor's office), the beach [9].

**Reformed Church in Zlatna.** Thus, at the beginning of the 17th century, a large number of Hungarians and Saxons from Zlatna embraced the new faith, building a Lutheran church in 1624. The church, built in Gothic style, was located in the central part of the town and is supposed to be on a property donated for this purpose. During the events of 23 Oct. 1848, the Reformed church also burned to the ground and was rebuilt in 1850. The 1850 church is built of stone and brick masonry, covered with tiles, in an eclectic style, against the background of the medieval church. It has the shape of a nave and a surface area of 230 square metres with an east-west orientation and can accommodate 250 people. The interior is very simple, with a pulpit on the east wall at the front, from which the sermon is preached (the pulpit symbolises the stone that closed the tomb of Jesus).[9,17]

**Avram Iancu and Petru Dobra.** Avram Iancu was a Transylvanian lawyer and a Romanian revolutionary and a Pasoptist who played an important role in the 1848 Revolution in Transylvania. He was the de facto leader of the Moti Land in 1849, commanding the army of Transylvanian Romanians in alliance with the Austrian army against the Hungarian revolutionary troops under Lajos Kossuth. Petru Dobra (b. 1817, Zlatna) was a Romanian Pasoptist revolutionary from Transylvania, a close collaborator of Avram Iancu during the 1848 Revolution in Transylvania. He was a prefect, and jurisconsult during the 1848 revolution. Petru Dobra is also the author of *Regula Legis*. [9,18]



**Figure 7. Avram Iancu and Petru Dobra; Reformed Church**

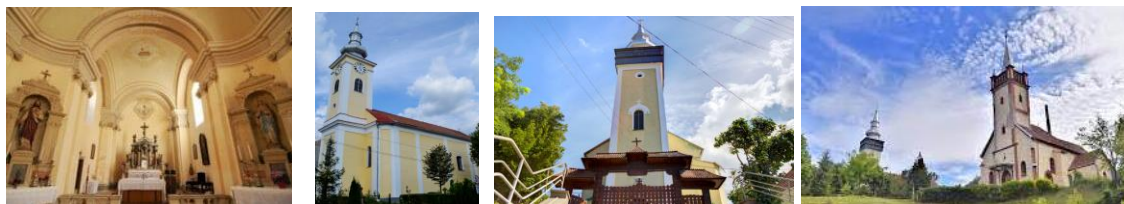
*Source: Personal archive of the authors*

**The Roman Catholic Church from Zlatna was founded in 1722** after strong Hungarian and Saxon communities settled in Zlatna to exploit gold deposits. These Roman Catholic communities built in the 17th century a new church in Zlatna. It is one of the oldest Roman Catholic churches in the region. In 1752 the construction of the church began, which can be seen today in the centre of the town. The church has three altars, the main one carved in alabaster, dominated by the statue of Jesus Christ crucified on the cross, surrounded by four angels. On either side of it are two smaller altars. The church also houses one of the finest organs in Transylvania, which still functions today. The church tower also houses a clock mechanism, with four dials, which still works today, marking the units of time with bell strikes. [7,12]

**Zlatna Orthodox Church I.** It is dedicated to the Nativity of the Mother of God and St. Nicholas. It dates from the cent. XVIII century, i.e. in 1774, when it was built to compensate for the church passed to the "Uniates". The church is situated on a terrace at the foot of the Dudaș Mountain, from where there is a beautiful view over the village. It is built of stone and brick, with a very high roof and tower, in the style of Transylvanian churches [2,8].

**Zlatna Orthodox Church II.** It is dedicated to "The Assumption of the Virgin Mary" and "Saints Emperors Constantine and Helena". It is situated on the same terrace at the foot of the Dudaș Mountain. It was founded in 1424 and is believed to have stood on the site of a Roman temple. Among the valuable objects in the church-a historical

monument - are a Venetian crystal chandelier donated by Empress Maria Theresia, two icons painted on wood, one of "St. Nicholas" and the other of "St. Michael the Archangel", two large wooden candlesticks with the coat of arms of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and a cross carved in wood. There are also many old cult books. The church has four bells weighing together about 1000 kg [18].



**Figure 8. The Roman Catholic Church, Zlatna Orthodox Church I and II**

*Source: Personal archive of the authors*

**Kendeffy–Horvath Manor.** The Lukács Béla Mansion or "Horea Popescu" Zlatna House of Culture was located in a heritage building - the Kendeffi - Hortvath Mansion, whose foundation stone was laid at the end of the 18th century, which was later rebuilt by the Hungarian dignitary Lukács Béla. The house of culture also housed an archaeological collection from Zlatna, established in 1978: pieces from the Roman period, from the ancient Ampelum, from a period when the Romans exploited the gold deposits in the area. At the same time, the town library was founded here in 1953, now named after the painter "Sava Albescu", son of Feneș [7,9].



**Figure 9. Kendeffy – Horvath Manor**

*Source: <https://primaria-zlatna.ro/obiective-turistice/>; Personal archive [9]*

**Agreement and relaxation activities.** The beauty of the mountains and the geographical position of the area make it a fairly well 'walked' tourist attraction. The area is often frequented by tourists who prefer weekend mountain hikes. Both the Trascău Mountains and the Metaliferi Mountains offer a multitude of tourist trails, one more spectacular than the other. [17]

**Climbing areas.** Mountaineering and sport climbing are some of the mountain activities for which the Ampoi Valley offers particularly attractive areas. The main objectives, appreciated by the practitioners of these mountain sports, are the limestone cliffs, which mark the entire course of the Ampoiului Valley downstream from the town of Zlatna. Geologically different, but with ample opportunities for sport climbing and mountaineering, are the gorges of the left tributaries of the Ampoiului, the Ampoiței Gorge and the Feneș Gorge, as well as some isolated peaks - Colțul lui Blaj and high walls - Dâmbău, Corabia. [18]

**The tourist routes starting from Zlatna are the following below:**



**Figure 10. Tourist routes in the Zlatna area**

*Source: authors' own presentation*

**Săruni Refuge.** For ten years, tourists who climb the summit of Dâmbău have known that in case of bad weather or danger, they can take shelter, either winter or summer, at the refuge with a library, bread oven and solar panels. The construction of the Săruni refuge started in 2008, at the initiative of the Trascău Corp Association, with the help of volunteers and with its funds and has gradually become a second home for many tourists passionate about the Trascău Mountains. The Săruni Refuge is located in the Dâmbău Massif at an altitude of 1250 meters. The refuge also has a winter charm, when the snow almost covers it. On the ground floor, the building has a room that doubles as a kitchen, where there is a bunk bed, table, chairs, stove with hob and a bookcase. The upstairs space comprises two lofts equipped with comfortable mattresses and sleeping bags, and a photovoltaic panel is installed on the roof to provide light inside the refuge. The shelter can accommodate 20 people, but in emergencies when tourists need to spend the night there, it can accommodate up to 30 people. [11]



**Figure 11. Săruni Refuge**

*Source: <https://romaniatravel.guide/saruni-refugiul-montan-cu-biblioteca-panouri-solare> ; Personal archive[11]*

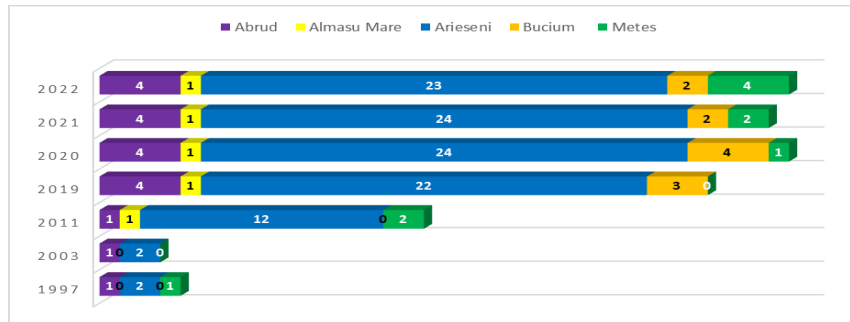
**The abandoned castle in the Apuseni.** The castle was built between 1936 and 1939 by Ion Gigurtu, a former Romanian engineer and far-right, pro-German politician. The castle is located on a plot of land of 8.800 square meters and has a built surface of 1358 square meters. Zlatna Castle witnessed the glory period of the place, linked to gold mining in the area, then it was used as a school and school camp, and in the 80s it was offered to a military unit. The castle's fame is linked to the fact that an important part of the film "We, the first line", directed by Sergiu Nicolaescu, was filmed here. During the filming, the castle was seriously damaged, being later abandoned, and after the Revolution, it became the property of the Alba County Council. [12,14]



**Figura 12. The Castle from Zlatna**

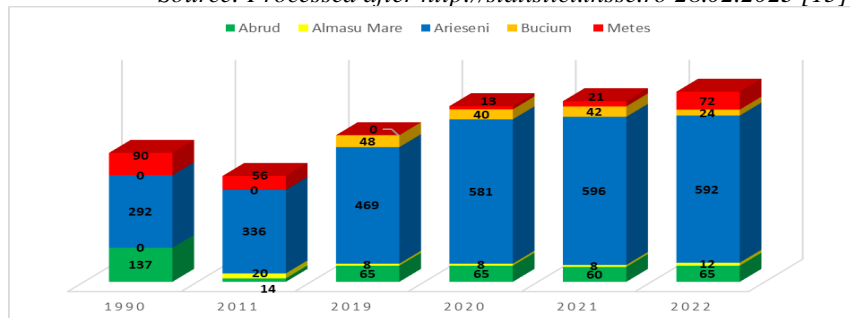
Source: <https://www.g4media.ro/povestea-castelului-din-apuseni>; Arhiva personala [14]

In the studied locality, even if it has a rich tourist potential, there is a lack of accommodation facilities. Unfortunately, this aspect has not been emphasized. But if tourists still want to stay overnight, they can stay in the villages or hamlets in the vicinity of Zlatna. The nearest villages with accommodation structures are Abrud, Almasu Mare, Arieseni, Bucium and Metes. Below we present the situation of accommodation facilities in this area where tourists can stay when they are visiting the area. Figure 13. shows a total situation of the structures in the area, from which it can be seen that Zlatna does not appear.



**Figure 13. The situation of accommodation structures in the analyzed area (number)**

Source: Processed after <http://statistici.insse.ro> 28.02.2023 [15]

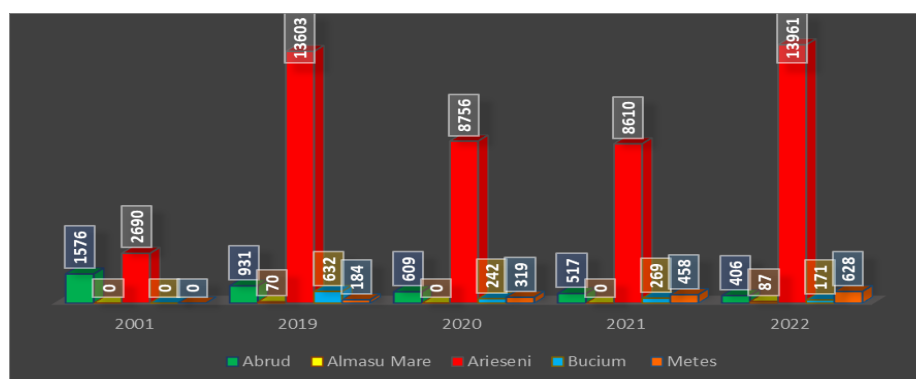


**Figura 14. Accommodation capacity in the analyzed area (places)**

Source: Processed after <http://statistici.insse.ro> 07.03.2023 [15]

Figure 14. shows the evolution of the number of places in the accommodation facilities. It can be seen that there are a large number of accommodation places available for tourists who want to visit and stay in the area.

Even though it has been a difficult period in the last few years due to the pandemic, it can be seen in Figure 15. that, tourist arrivals in the area have been quite frequent and in 2022 tourist arrivals reached the level of 2019 or even exceeded their number.



**Figure 15. Tourist arrivals in the area**

Source: Processed after <http://statistici.insse.ro> 07.03.2023 [15]

## CONCLUSIONS

As can be seen from the presentation of the area we can conclude that this area has a high tourism potential, not used its full potential. In the presented area advantage is the existence of NGOs in the field of tourism and environmental protection, the existence of cultural events (International Ethnographic Film Festival, Romance Contest), marked tourist routes, an agreement centre and an integrated sanitation system of the locality.

Besides these advantages, the area has disadvantages that should be taken into account by the local authorities.

Among these weaknesses, we mention: insufficient use of public-private partnerships, poorly developed tourist accommodation infrastructure, lack of a local brand, insufficiently developed tourist leisure infrastructure and the need to develop the capacity of promotion and information in the field of tourism through leaflets, brochures, billboards and signs.

A very important aspect that is not developed in the area concerns agrotourism, which would help a lot of the inhabitants of the area.

As opportunities in the area should be considered the transition to the public domain of cultural, sports and recreational spaces, increased tourism promotion through the Information Center and high interest in biodiversity conservation.

A very important aspect is the possibility of accessing non-reimbursable funds through external funding programmes specific to the tourism sector and the existence of structural funds supplied by the Union budget for the development of rural areas and the protection of biodiversity.

The biggest threat to the area is depopulation, the distant attitude of business towards culture and the arts, the low level of awareness of environmental issues and the risks of global warming. On top of this, the area is facing a strong economic decline due to the closure of large industrial units in the area.

An important aspect that should attract the attention of the local authorities would be the opening of accommodation units in Zlatna. The inhabitants should be encouraged to consider opening tourist or agro-touristic pensions. The potential is especially towards the opening of agro-touristic pensions. In this way, the inhabitants could increase their incomes and in time expand and modernize these accommodation structures. Unfortunately, the authorities do not adequately inform them about the possibility of accessing funds through European projects.

REFERENCES

- [1]. **BĂLTĂREȚU ANDREEA-MIHAELA**, 2016, Economia industriei turistice, Editura Universitară, București
- [2]. **BOGAN ELENA, SIMON TAMARA**, 2019, Turism rural, Editura Universitară, București
- [3]. **CAMARDA ADINA LIANA, BÎRSAN IOAN OVIDIU**, 2010, Dezvoltarea durabilă a turismului regional-Strategii și modele economico-matematice, Editura Uranus, București
- [4]. **CRISTEA ADRINA ANCA**, 2018, Industria agrementului în turism, Editura Pro Universitaria, București
- [5]. **DINCU ANA-MARIANA, BRAD IOAN, SÎRBULESCU CLAUDIA, GHERMAN REMUS, GAVRUTA ADRIAN**, 2017, Study regarding the rural tourism activity from Romania, 4th International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on Social Sciences and Arts SGEM, Book 1, vol. 4, pp 743-750
- [6]. **SICOE-MURG OANA MARIA, TEODOR MATEOC, NICOLETA MATEOC-SIRB, ANA-MARIANA DINCU, BOGDAN ȘONCA**, 2022, Study on the development of Făget area, Timiș county, Romania, based on area-specific resources, 22nd International Multidisciplinary Scientific GeoConference SGEM
- [7]. **SICOE CAIUS, VASS HUNOR, DINCU ANA-MARIANA, OANA MARIA SICOE-MURG**, 2021, Prospects regarding the dynamics of the tourist activity in Alba county, Lucrari Stiintifice - Management Agricol, ISSN 1453-1410, vol 23, No 3 (2021)
- [8]. **STĂNCIULESCU GABRIELA, MICU CRISTINA**, 2009, Economie și gestiune în turism, Editura C. H. Beck, București
- [9]. \*\*\*<https://primaria-zlatna.ro/obiective-turistice/>
- [10]. \*\*\*<https://primaria-zlatna.ro/rezervatia-naturala-poiana-narciselor>
- [11]. \*\*\*<https://romaniatravel.guide>
- [12]. \*\*\*<https://ziare.com/hilton-romania-a-achizi-ionat-castelul-de-la-zlatna>
- [13]. \*\*\*<https://atratur.ro/cheile-caprei>
- [14]. \*\*\*<https://www.g4media.ro/povestea-castelului-din-apuseni>
- [15]. \*\*\*<http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>
- [16]. \*\*\*<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Zlatna>
- [17]. \*\*\*Strategia de dezvoltare durabilă a orașului Zlatna 2015 – 2020
- [18]. \*\*\*Strategia de dezvoltare a orașului Zlatna, județul Alba, perioada 2021-2027