

RESEARCH REGARDING THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE ECUMENICAL AND ETHNIC TOURIST PROFILE AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

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Abstract: Regarding the establishment of Europe's ecumenical and ethnic tourism profile, keep in mind the fact that Europe is an almost exclusively Christian continent, and most tourists interested in ecumenical and ethnic tourism aim at: shaping the profile of important religious and ethnic tourist markets from Europe and analysis of tourist flows from Europe. Establishing Europe's tourism profile is based on: the dominant religion of the tourist market and the socio-economic environment of tourists, in this regard we can talk about the interest in ecumenical and ethnic tourism, the health level, but also the income of people who are paying attention to these forms of tourism.

Key words: *tourism, ecumenical, ethnic, profiles, Europe*

INTRODUCTION

Concerning the determination of Europe's ecumenical and ethnic tourism profile, we limited ourselves to this area in Europe only because it is an almost exclusively Christian continent and the vast majority of tourists interested in ecumenical and ethnic tourism in Romania could come from Europe [2,7,9,11].

Establishing Europe's tourism profile is based on:

- the dominant religion of the tourist market;
- the socio-economic environment of tourists, which depends on:
 - interest in ecumenical and ethnic tourism;
 - health level;
 - income.

Through ecumenical tourism or tourism for faith is understood the form of tourism through which believers travel individually or in groups as pilgrims, missionaries or to spend their free time [3,5,8].

Specialists from the field also talk about Christian tourism - which is a subcategory of religious tourism - but given the large number of believers from other confessions than the Christian one from Romania, and because we do not want to limit the possibility of developing tourist products with a religious mosaic or Islamic character, we will use the term ecumenical tourism in the following [6,10, 14].

Ethnic tourism can be defined as the form of tourism where the main motivation of the tourist involves a desire to interact with ethnic (exotic) peoples. In this context, exotic has the meaning of being in a very distant region and impressing with unusual, strange aspects; which originates in such a region, which belongs, which is the property of these countries [1,4, 13].

If the above definition represents the point of view of the tourist, a wider acceptance of the concept of "ethnic tourism" includes, besides tourists, "exotic" local suppliers and "cultural brokers" facilitating the interaction between tourists and suppliers of local tourist products and services [12,15].

The term cultural broker refers to the person who mediates or intermediates the culture of the destination and the culture of the tourist. He assumes the role of explaining or selling indigenous culture to those who visit the destination. A guide, for example, is a

cultural broker because he accompanies tourists to different villages and places along the itinerary, interpreting or explaining what they see.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In order to draw up this scientific approach regarding the ecumenical and ethnic tourism profile at European level, we have undertaken studies on the factors that make it possible for tourists to visit the ecumenical and ethnic tourism objectives at European level.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Some prestigious authors from this area have reproduced the list of types of sites and attractions that are particularly interesting for their cultural tourists, so we have highlighted those related to ecumenical and ethnic tourism, among which we mention:

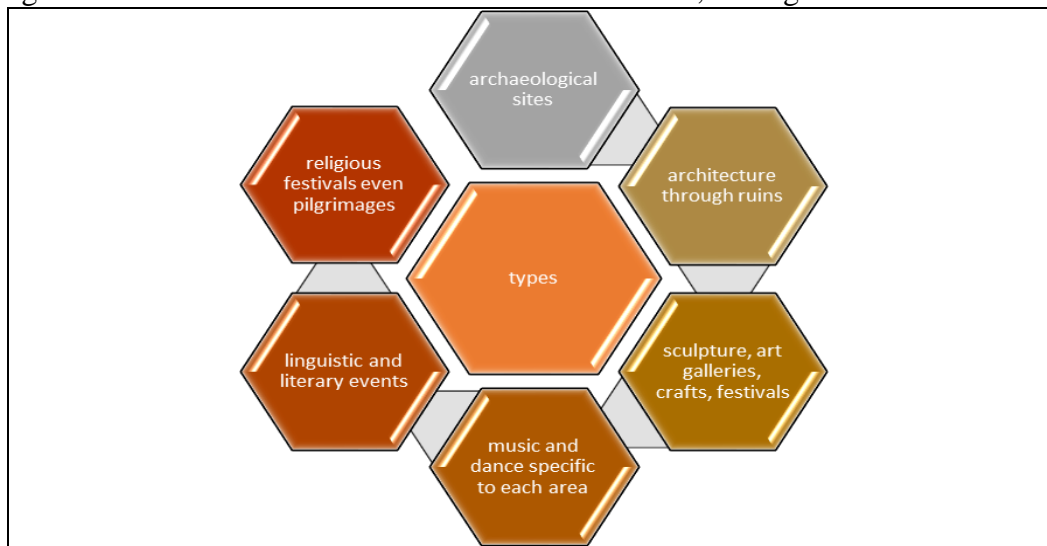


Figure 1. Types of sites and attractions

In Figure 2 were presented the reasons for tourists interested in ecumenical tourism to visit these places:

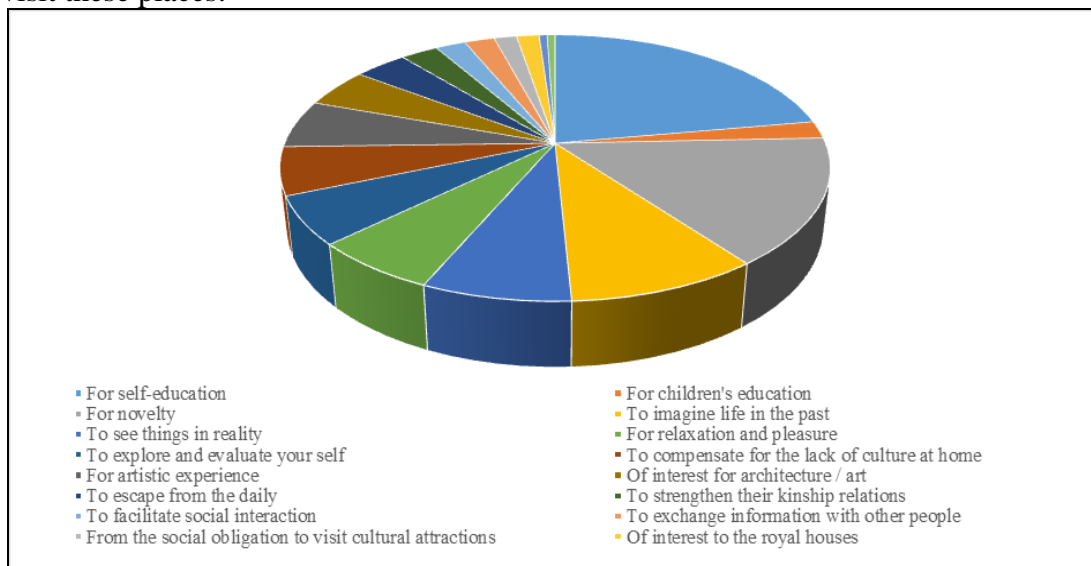


Figure 2. The reasons for visiting the European ecumenical tourist objectives

Analyzing Figure 2, it can be seen that the main reason for practicing ecumenical tourism is self-education, being followed by the observation of new places, but also in order to see things in reality, not only in virtual.

By monitoring European cultural tourism has found that religious objectives are among the favorites of European tourists (Figure 3).

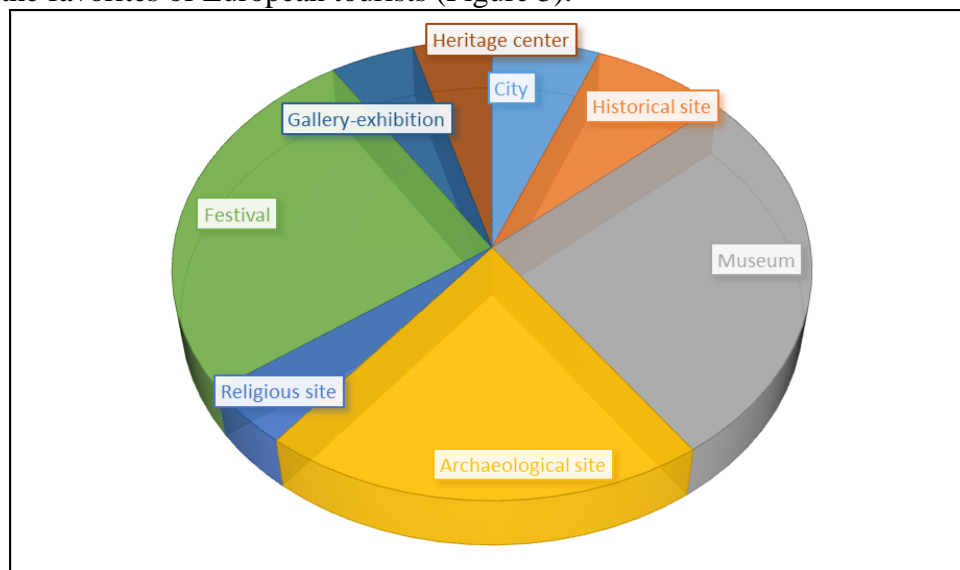


Figure 3. Types of locations preferred by European tourists

This study shows that rural religious sites are located after museums, historical sites and monuments, but before art galleries, heritage values, theaters, traditions, cinema, classical music, dance, music in general and pop concerts.

The structure of ecumenical tourism from the point of view of travel agencies, associations and institutional bodies (national tour operator, tourist associations), of government authorities (national tourism associations, national tourism organizations) and tour-operators (their offer) shows that ecumenical tourism is considered in Europe to be a pilgrimage tour of hundreds of years and almost exclusively to destinations such as Santiago de Compostella in Spain or Mount Saint Michel in France, or Kalabaka (Meteora) in Greece, etc.

The pilgrimage tourism or the tourism of faith is, at his turn, of three types:

- Traditional pilgrimage
- Missionary or humanitarian journey
- Confessional journey.

The structure of the hospitality industry is common to all types of cultural tourism, with the indication that, in the case of traditional pilgrimage, there are specially arranged places for pilgrims who, in most cases, fall into the category of modest incomes:

- transport is, in whole or in part, of all types - air, water, road, rail - although at least on certain parts of the route, walking is predominant; the type of cost falls, rather, in the normal and low cost category for the same reasons set out above; finally, transport agreements are rather charter or bilateral;
- tourism trade is controlled by tour operators, travel agencies and tourist associations.

The most common type of accommodation in tourism is the hotel, used by almost half of European tourists followed by family and friends, bed and breakfast hostels, hostels, tourists' house, self-catering, caravan or tent, as a second residence.

There is no specific statistical data either internationally or nationally regarding ecumenical tourism. However, we can mention that about 27% of tourists in 2018 were religious tourists.

Cultural and religious values (pilgrimage centers, religious sites, etc.) of the destination (with an emphasis on infrastructure capacity to handle tourist traffic) prevailing in Europe are those already mentioned above.

The safety and security factors of ecumenical tourism are the safety and security factors of any type of cultural tourism practiced in Europe, a safe continent from the point of view of terrorism, if we let go the attacks that have taken place over the last years across Europe.

Instead of looking for historical monuments, wonders of nature or even a local "cultural environment", the ethnic tourist comes to see some people whose lifestyle differs considerably from home. Thus, ethnic tourism depends mainly on the relationship between the tourist and the locals, a mediated meeting by a third party that is part of the tourism industry.

There are two aspects of this relationship of great importance from the perspective of the tourist:

- the idea of an exotic encounter presupposes that the relationship between the tourist and the locals is based on a considerable socio-economic difference, meaning:
 - the ethnic tourism comes from highly urbanized and industrialized areas, while locals tend to be representatives of "fourth world" minorities who occupy a marginal economic, political, cultural and geographic position in their countries of origin;
 - the ethnic tourist is often considered an elite traveler who avoids mass resorts that only tourists can afford in developed countries;
 - ethnicity seeks the exotic difference with the risk of a limited budget to mask precisely the socio-economic gap;
- the success of the relationship between the guest (the ethnic tourist) and the host (local) often depends on keeping the authenticity in the eyes of the tourist, in the sense that the relationship must seem to the tourist unmediated and spontaneous.

Completely and paradoxically, such an experience cannot be organized as a "tourist attraction." Many ethnic tourists do not even consider themselves tourists, although their first impulse is to move towards standardized ethnic attractions located in certain locations, for which cultural brokers are needed to facilitate the interaction between tourists and natives. Cultural brokers play a crucial role where the inhabitant of modern urban and/or industrialized space encounters the opposite, the authentic, exotic native. Cultural brokers have a leading role in packing and marketing local ethnic groups so as to attract ethnic tourists.

It is important to underline that ethnic groups themselves actively collaborate on ethnic tourist experience—simply because it is directly interested (material) that ethnic tourism experience to be a successful one. Locals do this encouraged by the state and hoping to increase their tourism revenues. Ethnic tourism is often promoted by the state as a catalyst for economic integration and the "modernization" of populations living in subsistence activities, but contributes very little to the increase of state revenues. In addition to the (fairly low) economic benefits of ethnic tourism, ethnic groups are also experiencing changes that facilitate their tourist experience but also affect them:

- behavior;
- clothing;
- production methods;

- traditional practices.

Because ethnic tourism can generate income for host groups, it should be considered as a process of ethnic relations. Recent studies have shown that ethnic tourism - along with other forms of ethnic tourism - should be conceptualized not as an external force with an impact on an ethnic or cultural local group but as an important component of the local group itself.

Most of the time, ethnic tourists prefer to stay and eat in the homes of locals so their ethnic tourist experience is as authentic one as possible. Accommodation and dining facilities are, in this case, also accessible to all types of income.

In ethnic tourism, the existence of restaurants with a commercial vocation (including specific restaurants or ethnic restaurants) - public catering establishments in which "the culture and tradition of any people are respected, adapted to the international trends and developments" and in which "The customs of every people, the culinary art, the order of serving the dishes and the association with beverages, the decor and the dishes for the meal" is essential and is emphasized.

CONCLUSIONS

Simply accessing the Internet in search of ecumenical cultural tourism activities shows that this type of tourism is not, except for the pilgrim tourism, promoted as it deserves. The communication technology and the information channels in the field are identified, at least in Romania, with the initiatives of parish priests who organize religious tours for their parishioners without a substantive involvement of tourism specialists.

Ethnic tourism is not only a form of interaction between "guests" and "hosts," but a complex process of ethnic relations with significant implications for the ethnic identity of locals. The distinction between ethnic tourism and rural cultural tourism, although unclear at a first look, can be clarified by two key elements: ethnic tourism tends to focus on a particular group of people whose exoticism is clearly the main attraction for tourists and ethnic tourism and makes from locals interpreters on a "scene" specially designed for tourists than some background players that make it easier for tourists the "exotic living." The communication technology and the information channels from the field are identified, at least in Romania, with the initiatives of tourists who organize ethnic tours for German or Jewish tourists (Day of the Dead, Hanuca), for example, without a substantive involvement of specialists from tourism.

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