

Valorization by Tourism of Gypsy Culture in Romania

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Abstract: - This study is an attempt to present the genuine values of Gypsy culture on the Romanian territory, an ethnic group that seems to be quite controversial in terms of its way of life or interests. However, what is known is that each ethnic group has its own culture which deserves to be analyzed and exploited or at least highlighted by tourism. Starting from this idea, this study captures the cultural particularities related to residential architecture, occupations, clothing, food and family traditions of some Gypsy communities located in various geographical areas in Romania. Gypsies' way of life, regardless of the geographic area they live in, has its specificity and can be easily observed, which this does not coincide with being famous. Their culture is very little known because of poor cooperation and cultural exteriorization. Ethnic tourism could be implemented as an opportunity for these persons for communication, externalization and presentation of authentic cultural values, thus raising their educational and professional level. Finally, they can reach material gains that may influence the quality of their lives.

Key words: - Gypsy, culture, tourism, customs, architecture, food, ethnic, jobs, occupation, income

1 Introduction. Gypsies and their culture in literature

There are few research outcomes involving the gypsy ethnicity. The analyses and study of the architecture of Buzescu Gypsy homes resulted in a complex study [10], that includes all monumental buildings made by this ethnic group. Studies on the valorisation through tourism activities of the communities' specific cultural elements highlight the cultural potential of the communities [1]. Gypsies' history is complex and influenced by historical events they have experienced directly or indirectly, by the process of acculturation and their

adaptability. Gypsies' presence on the Romanian territory in the Middle Ages is reported in written documents as the craftsmen of the towns in particular out of the Carpathian geographic area [2]. In addition to these groups of Gypsy population, settled on domains and become sedentary, there were groups of nomadic gypsies who move from one city to the other, settling in outlying and retrace places. Gypsies' emancipation occurred in the nineteenth century when Romanian Gypsies had a different regime of obligations compared to the rest of the population, so that the term "gypsy" had rather a social and ethnic connotation. Today, most of them live in communities located around major cities in plain farming areas and less in depression areas between mountains. Their occupations have remained within the craftsmanship area, without sophisticated technical equipment, based rather on talent and skills. Their economic orientation, especially for the individuals oriented towards modernity, seems to be on communication and integration.

This study is looking at opportunities of valorisation by tourism services of the speciality potential of three Gypsy communities in Romania. There are people attracted to the habits of other groups of population; there are studied for other groups of population [3]. Such considerations were taken into consideration when starting up this study. The criteria to choose such communities are related to some places with various geographical peculiarities, as well as various occupations of the subjects who pursue touristic activities [4].

2 Location of units under study

The analyzed Gypsy communities live in Southern Romania towns (Fig. 1): Valea lui Stan, Iancu Jianu and Buzescu.

Valea lui Stan is located in a land of mountain depression, in a quite narrow and relatively stormy valley descending from Căpățanii Mountains and flowing into Loviște Depression. Iancu Jianu is located in NV Olt County. The gypsy community here is widespread in a land of plains and low plateau in the SE of Oltenia Province. Buzescu, located near Alexandria town spreads in a land of alluvial plains in South-Western Wallachia.



Fig.1 Localization of Gypsy communities in the three Romanian counties in study

3 Purpose and methodology of research

The in-depth analysis of Gypsy communities highlights several cultural elements that deserve to be enhanced and made public. However this is more difficult to achieve due to several factors, including the level of education, school educational and vocational training where employment and communication skills are the most important. The aim of this study is the increase of professional training and boost of employment on two categories of jobs that could be created: those that do not require special qualifications (there are included traditional activities without presentation only execution) and those that require special training and qualification (presentation and implementation of touristic programs)

In order to get the best results of the study it was envisaged the completion of several steps summarized in Fig. 2: a) contacting gypsy communities leaders and representative bodies in Romania in order to obtain the Gypsies' permission to carry out tourist activity and their involvement in many ways; b) inventory of authentic Gypsy group and individual cultural values (e.g. specific architecture of houses, traditional outfit, family habits, household occupations etc., including the way of arranging the housing area in their own way which will be made available to tourists) c) analysis of moments when tourists and ethnics are involved in tandem (tourists in daily activities of a Gypsy household or attending cultural soirees when Gypsies, for example, prove their musical talent).



Fig. 2 Habitat, living and Gypsies from Valea lui Stan

4 Cultural peculiarities of Gypsy communities and implementing the type of tourism

Carefully analyzing the cultural particularities of each community of gypsies and their position relative to the rural settlements with major Romanian inhabitants they are legally or administratively related to, there are some differences. Starting from these differences there must be enhanced the cultural elements that may be valorised in terms of tourism. Their habits and age in that specific geographic area and each community's habits are different from others.

4.1 Cultural values of Valea lui Stan community and their tourism valorisation

This community is mentioned in documents as early as the fifteenth century, as slaves. Their location today is relatively isolated from the Romanian community in the same village (about 300-400 m) or Brezoi Town (5 km) they belong to administratively and keep the values of their culture unchanged, having today a nineteenth century way of life.

It is not precisely specified the exact date when they were brought in or the purpose of their presence here. Most of them, however, recommend themselves as descendants "*of those who worked the wood*". Their lives go on in common, as a feature derived from their former nomadic life, despite the current sedentary (Fig. 2). Analyzing this Gypsy (called "rudari") population's patterns and occupations, tourism may come as a source of income from the economic occupation of this population. They are good hardwood workers making household and decorative vases, hazel twigs woven baskets, objects made of bark, and metal cold and hot processing (quite skilled jewellers). All these occupations may be placed in the tourist activities as subject of observation and discovery, and direct tourists' involvement in the making of the objects.

4.2 Cultural values and valorisation opportunities for Iancu Jianu community

For this community it is necessary to determine the approximate period when they settled here. The documents held by the Metropolitan Diocese of Slatina and Craiova testify the presence in this area ever since the sixteenth

century of the "Gypsy slaves" on the property of Olteni Boyars and of Calui Convent as well as "kin fiddlers". The only reference to nomad Gypsy in this area is to brick Gypsies.



Fig. 3 Gypsy fiddlers group from Iancu Jianu at a wedding

Iancu Jianu Gypsy community is culturally interesting by what it can offer. Ethnic Gypsies are notable by the archaic methods of producing burned pottery necessary for the construction of houses and mansions. There are 14 families that still knead clay and burn bricks in handmade kilns. They are also interesting by their family life specific elements plus their musical life and talent. They are recognized as musicians without musical education.

For them it is a way of life which came in perfect harmony with the majority Romanian population (Fig. 3). They are the musicians at any party or important event involving music for any ethnic group [5]. Their fiddler music went far beyond Romanian borders, becoming famous for their playing skills. Including these habits in the tourism industry seems to be quite simple, but a travel package should be created that includes previous instruction of the

tourists related to ceramics production, family habits and fiddler music [6].

4.3 Cultural values of Buzescu Gypsy community and tourism

Their presence in this geographic area is relatively new. Historical documents refer to the presence of Gypsy families on the outskirts of Alexandria and in Teleorman villages. Most of them are referred to as farmers, farriers and coppersmiths (making copper cauldrons and brandy boilers).

This community has a particular note through its members' occupations, but it attracts most people by the architecture of their houses shared by several generations. Each building bears the mark of the person who lives in it. Certain colours are used in combination with lines or elements of oriental architecture (Fig. 4). The building dimensions are impressive according to the owner's position in the community (local "legend" refers to Finuțu Dan and his palace, a copy of the courthouse in Caracal).



Fig. 4 Architecture of Gypsy houses from Buzescu

Today's main occupation of the Gypsies in Buzescu is metal processing; they are coppersmiths. The authentic gypsy outfit is perhaps best represented here rather than in the other two analyzed communities. Each costume has certain significance. The colours of the costume worn by women and girls, the number of skirts, the colour and ornamentation of the shirts all have certain significance. Tourists have the opportunity to understand the significance of each colour and age of the person wearing a particular object and their moment in life when they can wear that object plus the knowledge about Gypsies' family life and customs [7]. Jewellery, especially made of

gold, accompany the traditional outfit, individualizing each person.

4.4 Socio-economic effects of the proposed study

4.4.1 Socio-economic benefits after developing activities among Gypsies

The effects of tourism activities must be analyzed from several points of view, due to their influence on several segments of the population. On the one hand it seeks the *duration of the effects* – they can be short term or

long-term effects. Equally important, it will require thorough analysis of the *results effect on those involved*: Gypsy communities and tourists.

The development of economic activities in a Gypsy community takes into consideration the involvement of the persons without activity in a productive area. This seems to be one of the great achievements of the implementation of this study. Gypsy population faces mostly the shortage of jobs. This activity enables their involvement in a productive activity in the mere environment where they live and they are used to. Long-term observations of Gypsy communities in order to implement this study lead to better knowledge and understanding of what they can achieve, with good results. For this reason, it is considered that the development of jobs within the community is welcome and they can get occupied without being "removed" from the environment they are familiar with [8].

Another factor underlying the analysis of the effects resulting from the development of tourism in Gypsy communities is the increase of the level of preparation for this type of activity. From the statistical data it is easy to see that education and schooling of gypsy population does not have high values, being below the national average level. Development of tourism in Gypsy communities requires people's preparation, especially youth. Persons' preparation and the emergence of jobs have a rather important effect on migration and raising the Gypsy population's income. This is one of the most delicate issues for the analysis of the general socio-economic situation in Gypsy communities. Their revenues are obtained nowadays mainly from the work presented in each community. For the Gypsy community in Valea Lui Stan, revenues are generally low in relation to the number of people in the community, coming mainly from selling timber or wood derived products. This is not constant income; it depends on the sales opportunities from one season to the other.

The highest incomes in the community are obtained by the Gypsy musicians of Iancu Jianu, following many requests for fiddler music and relatively high prices. Following statistical calculations and the analysis conducted, the community incomes per capita here are not very high, below the average national income. Together with the Gypsies from Iancu Jianu tourists may get to know the woodworking techniques for making musical instruments. A novelty for most of the tourists may be the primary processing of clay and the ceramic building materials, manufacturing of burning stoves, and storage of materials. It is "an art" that has disappeared from the Romanian population's activities. Tourists are definitely attracted to this work of kneading the clay and manufacturing ceramic.

	Effects on community	Effects on tourists
On short term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergence of additional jobs; • increase of income from touristic services. • adapting the community landscape to touristic activity requirements; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opportunity to understand a new culture and the nomad or sedentary way of life of a nomad mentality population; • acquiring skills of processing various materials in the Gypsy community;
On long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase of touristic education level • valorization of local resources; • presentation of authentic cultural values; • reduction of Gypsy migration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enriching cultural knowledge; • enriching local geography notions and knowledge; • understanding authentic cultural values regarding Gypsy family life, food, music and architecture;

Fig. 5 Social and economic effects of Gypsy culture valorisation

What should not be neglected in analyzing the effects (Fig. 5) on the Gypsy community is the phenomenon of organization of the interior area of the houses, in order to create optimal conditions for tourism. This requires accommodation infrastructure of the exhibition areas related to individual and common work with

tourists, in the dining and communication areas. This must be done carefully in order to avoid damage to the authentic values of the community and cultural gypsy values in their entirety. The valorisation of local resources is to be made without any negative interference in the gypsy authentic culture.

4.4.2 Advantages of the tourists benefiting from touristic services within Gypsy communities

The advantages of this type of tourism do not appear to be unilateral, targeted only to the benefit of Gypsy communities, but they are designed to satisfy the curiosity of those who wish to complete their picture of cultural knowledge with new elements that belong to groups of population with different characteristics.

Gypsy culture is for most people a relatively new category that is not closely explored from the tourist perspective. Gypsy world is old and new at the same time. Their presence, at least in Romania, is quite old, as mentioned in the analysis of each community. Written documents also prove their presence on certain territories long before those dates, but they are often able to surprise even more by their facts and culture. It is precisely with these features that the group of tourists have to come into contact, regardless of their origin. By discovering the authentic cultural Gypsy values, tourists may get the full picture of this ethnic group integration in certain geographic areas of Romania, understanding its adaptation to the environmental and demographic conditions [9].

5 Conclusions

Discovering elements of Gypsy culture in Romania through tourism activities can be an effective and enjoyable form of knowledge - knowledge through discovery. Tourism is one of the activities that do not involve large sums at the beginning, the tourism infrastructure is sufficient, or it could be developed in conjunction with increasing the activity. The increase of employment, income and education levels is an advantage for the Romanian Gypsy communities. The gain among tourists is significant by enriching their cultural knowledge. This proposal to develop an area of activity that enables the knowledge of the culture and genuine values is the beginning of the economic integration of this ethnic group. The Gypsy communities covered by this study are driven to exploit what they have available and valued in terms of culture: the rhythm of living in homogenous families with 2-3 generations with almost exotic outfit, with dishes and behaviours that reflect their former nomadic condition, crafts on wood, metal and clay, the way they build their houses, their music and performing talent. It may be the filling of a knowledge gap at the cost of activating some individuals focused on economic and communication openness. It occurs naturally, a result of satisfying the tourists' demand for novelty, for "exotic" in an area of certain European civilization.

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