

# Traditions, Adaptability and Trends

## A Review of Higher Education and Research Tendencies in Tourism Geography in Romania

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### Introduction and general aspects

**T**OURISM WAS a slowly increasing phenomenon until the 19<sup>th</sup> century and became an activity with a major impact in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For the first time, tourism became a global issue in terms of tourism facilities and circulation. There was an increasing tourism demand and supply as well as increasing standards required by the tourists.

Tourism has risen to such magnitude and complexity based on the capitalization of the existing natural components and elements of culture and civilization which resulted from the millennia-long evolution of human society. Throughout time, there was a need of acknowledging it, from its incipient forms, empirically approached, to its detailed fundamental, applicative, spatial, causal and typological research. Several fields of study were involved, among which Geography had and still has a significant input.

Genuine geographical Schools of Tourism have developed, having as precursors and models the countries with a centuries-old tourism tradition. In the space of several decades, some schools of geographical research in tourism emerged, such as the French, British, German, American, Russian and Polish ones, as well as the Romanian school, even if the latter was not especially noticed abroad. Within these schools, different currents and research directions with a major impact on the orientation and development of tourism have been identified. Therefore Tourism emerged as an essential and extremely dynamic field of study, part of Human Geography, as well as a specialization with an increasing impact within the geographical higher educational system. These were analyzed in detail in a series of papers written by authors from different countries. They approached the traditions and research trends in the field of Tourism Geography as well as the specificities of the higher education system, developing visions and approaches which provided inspirational models for educational systems in different countries and ages (Bianchi 2009; Carlson 1980; Che 2010; Coles 2009; Dornan and Truly 2009; Fair 2015; Han and Guo 2015; Kreisel 2004; Lazzarotti 2002; Meyer-Arendt 2002; Nepal 2009; Pearce 1999; Wilson and Anton Clavé 2013.). According to the subjects approached, the research

methodology and the involvement of Romanian geographers in the investigation of Tourism, one may recognize several stages that outline a suggestive picture of the specific Romanian research related to the object, methodology and knowledge in the field of Tourism Geography.

## The beginnings of tourism and its research in Romania

THE MOST ancient form of capitalization of a natural resource, for bathing and recreational purposes, concerned the thermal and mineral waters, which were known and harnessed as far back as the inclusion of Dacia in the Roman Empire, 106-271 AD. The Romans built thermal spas, such as Ad Aqua Herculi Sacras, Ad Mediam—located in the town of Băile Herculane, Germisara (Thermae Dodonae)—at Geoagiu Băi, Aquae—located in the town of Călan. The archaeological artifacts discovered after the year 1750 stand as a proof of their knowledge concerning the curative values of the thermal waters and of their use for curative purposes. Thus, the votive tabula no.1 is significant because it contains the following text: “Aesculapio et Hygiae pro salute Juniae Cyriacae quo a longa infirmitate virtute aquarum numinis sui revocaverunt TBA, Pius votum solvit libeius merito,” a text which can be translated as follows: “To the gods Aesculap and Hygea for the health of Julia Cyriac who, after a long suffering, by the virtue of the waters and of the divine powers was cured, and Titus B.A. (the husband) joyfully fulfilled the promise he had made” (Berlescu 1982). As a matter of fact, the water civilization represented the basis of the Roman Empire, within the metropolis and the provinces, as well as in Dacia Felix, as proved by the slogan—S.P.A. (Salus per Aquam)—still often used nowadays.

The process of bathing organization and capitalization of the thermal and mineral resources was resumed in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as new incipient resorts emerged, 150 years after similar developments in Western and Central Europe. To that effect, Băile Herculane resort became the first spa of its kind, even in modern times. The phenomenon manifested itself in different ways according to the historical conditions of each region before the great union between Moldavia and Wallachia in 1859 which led to the formation of the Romanian state, followed by the addition of Transylvania in 1918. The development process was stimulated by the presence of a remarkable diversity of mineral waters, varied from a hydro-chemical and thermal point of view. For instance, Romania possesses the largest reserves of sparkling and bi-carbonatate ( $\text{HCO}_3$ ) waters in Europe. The hydro-mineral waters were intensely studied in terms of their spatial distribution and quality, and the results were published in scientific bulletins and guide books, developed by doctors, chemists and geologists who contributed to the founding and development of numerous resorts, most of them located within the Carpathian region as well as within its bordering areas. Their bathing and tourism features depended on the quality of the mineral waters while their models of development were based on some great Swiss, Austrian, German or French resorts.

Consequently, the Carpathian Mountains gradually became a tourist destination. An important role in the establishment and research of tourism activities was played by the mountain tourism associations, which were organized according to the already existing models of associations from France or Great Britain.<sup>1</sup>

The members of these types of associations belonged to different socio-professional categories. They were actively involved in the organizational processes, financially supported the associations and participated in different research activities or projects. Also, they published various articles, many of them having informative or descriptive features.<sup>2</sup>

The early stage of the research work is represented by two promoters. In 1821, V. Pop published the first Romanian work of balneology "*On the minerals waters of Arpătaș, Băilești and Covasna.*" Nearly a century later, Al. Saabner-Tuduri published in a double edition, in 1900 and 1906, the paper "*Mineral waters and the climatic resorts from Romania*" that comprised numerous geographical aspects related to topography, climatology, flora and fauna.

Between the two world wars the activity of these mountain tourism associations reached its maximum intensity, thus contributing to the setting of some major guidelines for Romanian tourism.

The resulting scientific tourism literature was the outcome of the knowledge and research of the regions and existing tourist attractions. Studies were published in different volumes and travel books, guides and tourism maps, as well as in various books which comprised the characteristics and use of mineral waters. One of the main scientific studies regarding mineral waters was the "Treatise on therapeutics" written by the father of the Romanian balneology, A. Teohari, in 1934, simultaneously published in Bucharest and Paris (Ciangă 2006.).

The main effect was the emergence in less than 20 years of over 20 small locally important resorts with bathing facilities and positive climatic characteristics. Most of them were located in the Carpathian region.

In line with the tendencies of tourism in other European countries, mass tourism emerged due to the enactment of holidays. In Romania, the demand for a diverse and organized tourism has grown significantly, thus emphasizing the need for studying this phenomenon. The involvement of the Romanian geographers in this matter was remarkable, resulting in the publication for the first time of a monograph of the Romanian bathing resorts called "*Bathing and tourism in Romania*" authored by two geographers (Țeposu and Pușcariu 1932.). This can be considered as a reference work and model of analysis for the interwar literature and even for the subsequent papers in the field.

The popular science works with a real informative value were also interesting in a literary sense, like "*The Book of Mountains,*" by Bucura Dumbravă, and the series: "*Through our Mountains,*" by I. Simionescu. A distinct category was the presentation of the most important mountain units as a topic (from the point of view of the landscape): Bucegi Mountains and Retezat (Mihai Haret), Apuseni Mountains (Valeriu Pușcariu and Robert Ficheaux), Moldova Mountains (Nicolae Macarovici). Then, the representative Carpathian valleys were described: Olt (Valeriu Pușcariu) and Bistrița (N. Pop). The elements of material and spiritual culture, customs and traditional occupations were also a subject for T. Morariu, Mara N. Popp, Valeriu Pușcariu and again Robert Ficheaux.

In this context, the role played by Geography in the research of tourism increased significantly, marked by the contributions in the field of fundamental research. At the Warsaw World Congress of Geography in 1934, Tourism Geography was universally accepted as a field of study and became a subject in universities worldwide. This contributed to

the enhancement of research in the field of Tourism Geography and to the training of specialists in this field of research by means of higher education. Since then, one can notice an intensification of research in this field, in Europe, North America, Japan, with more complex problems, in which an ever increasing number of geographers are involved (Che 2010; Dornan and Truly 2009; Nepal 2009; Wilson and Anton Clavé 2013).

## **Research and contemporary higher education in the field of tourism geography in Romania**

**T**HE MODERN period comprises the postwar decades and is marked by the general social and economic evolution, which had a clear effect upon research and geographical higher education. Tourism Geography had a significant position in the frame of Geography and within the framework of Human Geography, defining its fields of research in a more diverse manner. Tourism has become part of a distinct geographical science which seeks its own identity.

### **The scientific research**

a) Within this context, theoretical aspects regarding the object of study of Tourism Geography were approached in a deeper and more modern manner (Rădulescu 1946; Șandru 1966; Petrescu 1978).

b) Between 1960 and 1970 there was a qualitative increase reflected by the gradual publication of various geographical journals. They included valuable scientific contributions, which comprised varied problems, such as the object of study and place of Tourism Geography within Geography (Șandru 1966; Iancu 1966.); models of geographical and tourism research in a representative region (Glăvan and Schmidt 1975; Grigore 1989; Popovici and Glăvan 1977; Glăvan and Stoian 1978; Ciangă 1998.); the implementation of the quantitative models and quantification of some parameters such as the mobility coefficient, the tourism potential and especially the tourism flows (Șandru 1970). Also, the issue of the role played by Tourism Geography in the educational system was taken into consideration, as well as the possibilities of further specialization for those involved in tourism activities (Petrescu 1974). In this regard, one needs to stress that Romanian tourism cannot be individually studied but has to be included in the European and international one (Berbecaru and Botez 1977; Petrescu 1978; Ciangă 1998; Cocean et. al. 2002).

c) Another stage in the scientific research of Tourism Geography was represented by the period between 1968 and 1978 when a series of national scientific events took place, among which the four Tourism Geography Workshops. These national scientific events took place in 1968, 1970, 1974 and 1977. In this regard, the articles presented at the first, second and fourth workshops debated a series of problems and issues regarding Tourism Geography and were published as proceedings. Many of those papers involved specialists from different fields, as a result of the collaboration among geographers, economists, urban planners, sociologists, doctors, designing engineers and architects. The papers had a real impact in the tourism planning of the national territory, which was achieved at a pace and at some parameters unattained before or after that.

After the four national workshops, topic-specific symposia were organized. They tried and managed to look deeper into some fields: “Bathing tourism,” 1976; “Tourism zoning,” 1977; “Mountain tourism,” 1978. The results of these three symposia were published shortly in the proceedings volumes. Therefore, valuable materials became available for those interested in continuing their research.

d) For a decade and a half the collection “The Counties of Romania” was drawn up and published under the aegis of the Romanian Academy Publishing House. The monographs of the counties comprised a distinct chapter regarding the analysis of the tourism potential and its capitalization.

e) Tourism Geography was also present in two important publications in the geographical literature, published by the Academy at the Romanian Academy Publishing House. These are: “The Romanian Atlas,” where some of the maps were dedicated to tourism, as well as the “Geography of Romania” a publication in five volumes, in which tourism is thoroughly analyzed within the second volume “Human and Economic Geography,” as well as in the regional approaches of the third, fourth and fifth volumes.

f) During the last decades, the tourism geographical literature was enriched with prestigious publications that approached aspects of special interest such as The Bioclimate of Romania and the Resorts (Teodoreanu 1984). Morphological components that have a special tourism value, such as gorges or caves and their tourism potential, were also analyzed (Grigore 1974 and 1989; Cocean 1988, 1995). There were many tourism guides in the “Our Mountains” (“Munții noștri”) collection, tourism monographs of the counties, of some natural regions or valleys, to which geographers substantially contributed.

h) One also needs to mention the 1988 issuing of the first Tourism Monograph of the Carpathians, in English, at Krakow, to which geographers and sociologists from three representative university centers (Cluj, Iași and Bucharest) contributed.<sup>3</sup>

i) All the geographical journals included and still frequently include Tourism Geography contributions.

j) A special category is represented by the *Doctoral Theses*. After 1975, they also approached different topics of Tourism Geography or in which tourism aspects represented an important part of the thesis. Within these papers, one finds an accurate methodology for the complex analysis of some natural units from a geographical and tourism point of view: Mont Blanc–Chamonix (Carmen Petrescu, 1975), the Apuseni Mountains (Cocean, P., 1980), the western part of Romania (Truți S., 1985), the Banat Mountains (Olaru M., 1985), and the Eastern Carpathians (Ciangă, N., 1991). All these theses were subsequently published, providing models of analysis in the field of Tourism Geography.

After 1990, scientific research and higher education proliferated. The contributions in the field of Tourism Geography became more diverse as academic relations intensified and new universities emerged or some were re-established, already having a tradition in the field of Tourism Geography. There were more doctoral studies in the field of Tourism Geography and new PhD supervisors in the field of Human Geography and Tourism Geography. Therefore more doctoral theses were written and defended. They approached tourism issues at the level of natural regions, large centers (such as the city capital of Romania–Bucharest) or natural elements found in Romania, like the mineral waters.

Another category of PhD theses analyze regions where tourism is important or comprise chapters on Tourism Geography, such as the Regional Geography theses on the

so-called Lands: Oaş (Ilieş M. 2005), Lăpus (Dezsi 2004), Maramureş (Ilieş G. 2006), Chioar (Puscaş 2007), etc. Recently, some theses also approached regions like Dobrudja, Transylvania, the Western Carpathians, the Curvature Subcarpathians etc. During the same period, academic staff and researchers published different courses and monographs regarding Romanian tourism. Also, there were various papers concerning the organization of geographical space or projects regarding sustainable development, eco-tourism and development strategies.

## The geographical higher education

**T**HE GEOGRAPHICAL higher education diversified with the introduction of a new subject, namely Tourism Geography. Initially it was an elective subject and then it became mandatory and even a fundamental subject after 1990. Moreover, we witness the development of a distinct specialization of Tourism Geography within geographical sciences. Initially, three-year undergraduate colleges of tourism were set up. The Cluj-Napoca Faculty of Geography was the first to develop this type of colleges in different parts of the country (Gheorgheni, Sighetu Marmaţiei, Zalău, Bistriţa). Following this trend, the Bucharest Faculty of Geography founded its own tourism colleges at Călimăneşti and Predeal.

Another step was represented by the founding of new full-time Tourism Geography degree programs within Geography faculties and departments in Bucharest, Iaşi, Cluj-Napoca, Suceava, Oradea and Timişoara. Even private faculties and departments of Tourism Geography were established, like those in Târgu Mureş or Sibiu.

In the meantime, various specialized courses which summarize the existing research in the field of Tourism Geography were developed. These courses comprised issues regarding the object of study, the research methods, the tourism development coefficient, tourism regionalization and the modalities of its capitalization. At first, they were merely courses for the students, only to be subsequently completed, adapted and published at prestigious publishing houses. These publications pointed out general theoretical aspects of Tourism Geography, emphasizing the global tourism phenomenon as well as different aspects regarding Romanian tourism, modern tendencies in tourism management, the concept of image or quality in tourism, and tourism regionalization and organization.

## The Geographical School of Tourism at the Faculty of Geography, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

**T**OURISM, AS a phenomenon, grew into a field of study as part of Human Geography. However, it also uses the basic information of Physical Geography, strongly correlated with the primary tourism supply provided by the natural elements. Moreover, the used methodology is characteristic for geographical research.

Gradually, a distinct direction of research came to attention by means of Tourism Geography. As a geographical subject it was unsubstantial and less attractive at its beginnings but it became much more appealing after 1990. Nowadays this field of

study reached a dominant position within the geographical higher education in terms of the number of students enrolled and the quality of the educational process. Both aspects essentially contributed and still contribute to financial stability, in a difficult period of the higher education system.

Didactically, Tourism Geography was included as an elective subject in the curriculum of the Geography degree even since 1970 and in that of Geography–Foreign Language degree after 1975 and until the 1990s. In both situations, Tourism Geography represented a peripheral subject with a low number of students who opted for it, and only very few of them wrote bachelor degree papers related to this field.

A revival of this subject occurred only in 1992, with the founding of the first College of Tourism within the Romanian geographical higher educational system: the College of Tourism Geo-information and Research was founded with a full-time duration of studies of three years and a deeply applied character. This initiative had a major impact, the entrance exams attracting a large number of candidates on a limited number of places. As such, the opportunity for a real and accurate selection of the best and most prepared students was possible, thus offering the prospects for a solid and complex education which comprised subjects from different areas of research, such as Geography, Economy, Computer Science (GIS) and two foreign languages for the entire duration of the three years of study.

The twelve classes of graduates from the College of Tourism from Cluj-Napoca were provided internship programs and an effective practice during the last semester (the sixth semester of study) in various tourism units such as hotels or travel agencies.

Very important in the development of Tourism Geography education in Cluj-Napoca was a European Tempus-Jet research grant regarding different matters pertaining to Tourism Geography (the first of its kind within Babeş-Bolyai University), developed in collaboration with the Bognor Regis College of Tourism, Chichester University, Great Britain. The grant supplied generous funding and was extremely well organized and managed by its director, Prof. Pop P. Grigor, Ph.D., the head of the Human Geography Department at that time. During the three years of development of this research grant, an exchange of students and academic staff took place, along with the development of various educational and practical activities. During three months of mobility, both the students and the academic staff had the chance to substantially enrich their knowledge. The effect of this mutual exchange was very positive and long lasting, most of the graduates finding different jobs in tourism-related activities.

The impact of the Cluj-Napoca initiative was deep and on multiple levels. Since 1997 colleges of tourism have been founded in towns where there was tourism development potential and where the demand for well-trained specialists was high. Thus, colleges of tourism were established in Gheorgheni (Harghita County), where learning is possible in both Romanian and Hungarian, then in Sighetu Marmăției (Maramureş County), Bistriţa and Zalău. In these colleges, classes are given in modern buildings which meet the highest requirements. The activities are coordinated scientifically and didactically by the Cluj-Napoca Faculty of Geography.

Since 2003, after accomplishing the required steps for temporary accreditation, the four-year Tourism Geography specialization was set into place. The implementation of the Bologna educational process determined the reduction of studies to three years, beginning with 2005.

As a consequence, two classes of graduates existed in 2008, one with four years and another one with three years of study, for a total number of 500 graduates in Cluj-Napoca alone.

Another important aspect is the high demand for this specialization. The candidates considered it extremely appealing, and in order to be able to enroll larger numbers of candidates, a supplementation of the available non-budgetary places was needed. In this manner, the Faculty of Geography secured extra-budgetary financial resources which offered stability and the possibility to start up several investments in order to ensure the development of the scientific and research activities and to apply for the LLP Erasmus programs supported by the University and by the Faculty of Geography. Also, as a result of the large number of students, it was possible to open the competition for new academic positions to cover new teaching workloads. At present, the Tourism Geography specialization belonging to the Faculty of Geography is one of the most searched for within Babeş-Bolyai University, amounting to over 1500 students, including the academic extensions.

After 2004 a one-year master degree program was founded and since 2008 a two-year master degree program of Tourism Geography has been developed. This master degree does not address only Tourism Geography graduates, but also other specialists from different fields of study such as economists, linguists, planners and so on. The master program was initially called "Tourism Research and Organization" while the two-year program is called "Tourism Organization and Development." The functioning of these master programs depended on the preparation of a well-reasoned accreditation file thoroughly analyzed by the C.N.A.A. (National Council for Academic Accreditation) and by ARACIS (Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education). The Centre for Tourism Training was also established within the Faculty of Geography as a result of a Leonardo program.

The Faculty of Geography had the possibility to continue with the third academic step in the field of Tourism Geography by means of doctoral theses based on various topics pertaining to Tourism Geography. The first doctoral thesis on Tourism Geography was successfully defended in February 2008.

This evolution was possible due to a team of academic staff comprising geographers, environmentalists, philologists, mathematicians with an exclusive workload in or partially connected to Tourism Geography. There was stability in supporting the 30 different subjects which allowed them to develop as scientists. A large part of their courses, guides and textbooks were published, starting with the drawing up and multiplication in 1980 of the first complete and extremely valued course in Tourism Geography within the Romanian geographical higher education, authored by Aurelia Susan. Afterwards there were many books and courses of General Tourism Geography authored by the academic staff of the Faculty of Geography of Cluj-Napoca, and volumes such as the Economic and Tourism Geography, Geography of the Romanian Tourism, Tourism Geography in Romania, Tourism Research, International Tourism Geography, Regionalization and Tourism Regions etc. Also, practical Tourism courses were drawn up and published in foreign languages such as French or English. This was a manner of ensuring the basis for the learning of Tourism Geography as well as the necessary bibliographical references for the development of the educational process and for the writing of the bachelor and master degree theses.

Scientific research played a major contribution to the strengthening of Tourism Geography as a subject. The research materialized in an increasing amount of information materials, from tourism-ethnographic information published in magazines like the



*Weekly Journal of the Romanian Touring Club* (which existed in the interwar period), to articles featured in geographical journals and volumes dedicated to major national or international scientific events such the five National Workshops on Tourism Geography which took place between 1968 and 1976. The volumes of these workshops were edited and published under the aegis of the Romanian Academy Publishing House. The volumes I, II, III, IV and V along with other doctoral theses and scientific papers received the Simion Mehedinți Award of the Romanian Academy.

The Cluj-Napoca Faculty of Geography organized in 2001, 2007, 2008 and 2011 national and international scientific events, exclusively devoted to Tourism Geography.

The elements presented in this paper can be considered as strong arguments in showing the relevance and development of this relatively new and extremely dynamic field of geographical research, strongly related to the present-day labor market.

## Conclusions

**T**OURISM GEOGRAPHY became one of the most dynamic subjects and specializations in the last half a century. Initially it started as an elective subject, continued as an undergraduate applied college (first in 1992 at the Faculty of Geography, Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca) and finally it became a full time degree, offered by all geographical departments and faculties in Romania. Based on a pragmatic curriculum including subjects needed for a complex preparation in the field, it became one of the most visible and attractive specializations. Tourism Geography is now represented at all levels: bachelor degree, master degree and PhD studies. In the meantime, the number of academic staff involved in this field increased and specialist groups therefore emerged within the larger departments. They combine the fundamental and theoretical approach with the applied studies. The natural consequence of this trend has been the ever more consistent and complex research in the field of Tourism Geography, on different levels, from doctoral theses to national and international grants and scientific events. Institutional international cooperation allowed for the alignment to the current trends in European Geography, which was also the result of exchange programs, participations to prestigious international scientific events and mutual cooperation within European programs. □

## Notes

1. The geographical and tourism knowledge was stimulated at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the activity of some prestigious tourism societies: Brașov—1873, Caransebeș—1876, Sibiu—1880, Sinaia—1895 and then by the activity of the Romanian Touring Club.
2. Their active members, among whom some geographers and geologists of great prestige (Simion Mehedinți, Ludovic Mrazec, Constantin Munteanu Murgoci, Mihai Haret, Bucura Dumbravă) contributed to the tourism knowledge of many regions and objectives with books and materials published in the magazines of these societies.
3. The Romanian version was published twenty year later: Surd, V. (coord.), 2008. *Monografia turistică a carpaților românești*, Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

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## Abstract

### Traditions, Adaptability and Trends: A Review of Higher Education and Research Tendencies in Tourism Geography in Romania

This paper provides an overview of the tourism supply in Romania, the research on the phenomenon of tourism, as well as the development of the higher education system in the field of Tourism Geography. Also, the paper presents the main development stages of this field of study starting with the research and capitalization of the natural resources (the research and capitalization of the mineral and thermal waters can provide an accurate example in this case) and of some existing anthropogenic elements. The research includes different thematic studies, based on thorough documentation. The resulting contributions were presented in different national and international scientific events. A special part is dedicated to the research and higher education developed in the field of tourism within Babeș-Bolyai University, at the Faculty of Geography in Cluj-Napoca. The vast and diverse bibliographical references include theoretical and applicative articles and studies, as well as monographic studies and doctoral theses.

## Keywords

Tourism, Tourism Geography, tourism geographical research, geographical school of tourism