ROMANIAN HERITAGE FOR DARK TOURISM AS ALTERNATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: According to the latest report carried-out by the World Economic Forum (WEF) regarding Tourism and Travel Competitiveness, in 2013 Romania was on position 68 of the 139 assessed countries, better placed with two positions than in 2009. Of criteria targeted by WEF, cultural resources place Romania best, on position 41, respectively. International acknowledgement of Romania's natural and cultural heritage is also sustained by many natural and cultural sites in Romania, that are protected by UNESCO, these being most often looked for by foreign tourists visiting Romania. Concerning this aspect, according to the World Bank statistics in 2003 -2011, international arrivals in Romania has an upward trend but international tourism – receipts weight in total exports has a downward trend (from 5.5 in 2005 to 3.07 in 2011). In the past years, innovative products have been developed in tourism, with a fast growth, for instance dark tourism. In this paper we would like to carry-out an analysis and especially, to reason scientifically the need of sustaining this type of tourism within the Romanian consumers and especially the foreign ones, by the government, one of the reasons being that, dark tourism is an effective way for both promoting the Romanian heritage internationally (having the economic capability to produce competitive advantage on the tourist market) and particularly being a way of sustainable development..

Keywords: Dark tourism, Romanian heritage, tourist market, sustainable development.

Touristic and cultural heritage of Romania – an international overview

Social and cultural implications of tourism over a community are closely connected with the resources a certain country has. The 2013 Report carried-out by the World Economic Forum (focused on competitiveness in tourism for 139 countries comprised in the report, including Romania)comprises 14 pillars of competitiveness indices in the tourism sector, the pilar14 being related to cultural resources, columns 6 and 7 withintabel1, comprising comparative data concerning ranks held by former communist countries, including Romania. Elements taken into consideration for the pillar 14 (Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report, 2013:24) are: *number world heritage cultural sites* (position 33 for Romania), *sports stadiums, seats/million pop* (position 49), *number of international fairs and exhibitions* (position46), *creative industries exports*, *% of world total* (position 34).

Table 1 – International overview of the Romanian touristic and heritage competitiveness among other ex- communist countries

Country	Number of museums according to type of	Visits per 100.000 inhabitants including	Number of total UNESCO heritage[2]/	Existing of the communist museum[3]	Number of victims of communism	TTCI in 2013[5] (overall	Rank of cultural resources accordin

	collection[1]/art, archaeology and history museums	free entries	TTCI rank	(year of opening)	[4]	index)	g to TTCI[6]
0	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*
Bulgaria	188/138	56,210	9/59	NS	222,000	50	40
Czech Republic	482/104	91,131	16/18	yes (2001)	65,000	31	17
Estonia	245/73	235,537	5/52	NS	NS	30	63
Germany	6335/1139	NS	34/5	NS	70,000	2	4
Hungary	734/NS	NS	9/29	yes (2002)	27,000	39	30
Latvia	141/NS	122,234	4/63	NS	NS	48	73
Lithuania	NS	NS	7/39	yes (1992)	NS	49	51
Poland	777/241	64,722	12/23	yes (1999)	2,000,000	42	18
Romania	748/446	16,803	8/33	yes (1997)	435,000	68	41
Slovakia			6/45			54	54

(Source: made by the authors based on: [1] European Group on Museum Statistics; [2]UNESCO and World economic forum -The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2013; [3] Global Museum Communism; [4]Global Museum Communism; [5]Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2013; [6]Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 201; [7]World Bank Report; TTCI = Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index, NS = unknown)

Compared with positions, TTCI ranks held by the other former communist countries, Romania is on the last position, compared to Estonia that occupies the first position among the former European countries that however, paradoxically occupies the last position as regards cultural resources, compared to Romania that occupies a very good position, position 41, respectively. In other words, though Romania has natural and cultural resources that provide an advantage to it, there are indicators that place it in the second half of the top.

Providing details on Romania's cultural opportunities, according to data within Table 1, column 3, we notice that Romania has much more UNESCO world heritage sites (8) compared to many of the former communist countries, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia having a much lower number of such heritage sites.

Regarding statistical indicators in tourism, according to data shown in Table 2 and provided by the World Bank, the number of international arrivals in Romania in 2000 – 2013 is in 2013 with nearly 52.3 % higher than in 2000, having an upward trend over the entire period, *the number of international arrivals in Romania to increase by 18% within 2014, up*

to 9.6 mil. visitors, estimates Euromonitor International, market research company, Romania maintaining its fifth position among the Eastern Europe countries, following Russia, Ukraine, Poland and Croatia.

Table 2 - International arrivals in Romania from 2000 – 2013 (thousand)

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
International arrivals	5264	4938	4794	5595	6600	5839	6037	7722	8862	7575	7498	7611	7937	8019

(Source: http://data.worldbank.org)

Relating strictly to indicators concerning Romania's museum heritage (compared with the other former communist countries in Europe), in Table 1, columns 1 and 2 are shown the *number of museums according to the type of collection and the number of art, archaeology and history museums* (column 1) and the v*isits per 100.000 inhabitants including free entries* (column 2). Hence it may be noticed that, based on data in column 1 that Bulgaria and Romania have the highest weight of *art, archaeology and history museums*, 73.4% - Bulgaria and 59.6% - Romania, respectively the lowest weight having Germany and the Czech Republic.

Providing further details related to the tourist activity of museum heritage in Romania, in figure 1, we present comparatively for the former communist countries, based on statistical data and the reports carried-out by the European Groups of Museums Statistics, a comparison of statistical indicators regarding tourist activity in museums. It is thus noticed that, of the former communist countries, Romania has the lowest indicator concerning the *number of museum visits per 100.000 inhabitants, by country* compared to Estonia that stands out undeniably compared to the other countries, followed by Latvia and Hungary. Regarding the p*ercentage of museum visits of foreign tourists* Romania occupies a much better position, compared to for instance the Czech Republic that occupies the last position with a percentage of only 1%, the first position being taken again by Estonia, followed by Hungary. The third indicator, *number of museums per 100000 inhabitants* places again Estonia on the first position, followed by Hungary as well, Romania ranking the penultimate position, followed by Poland.
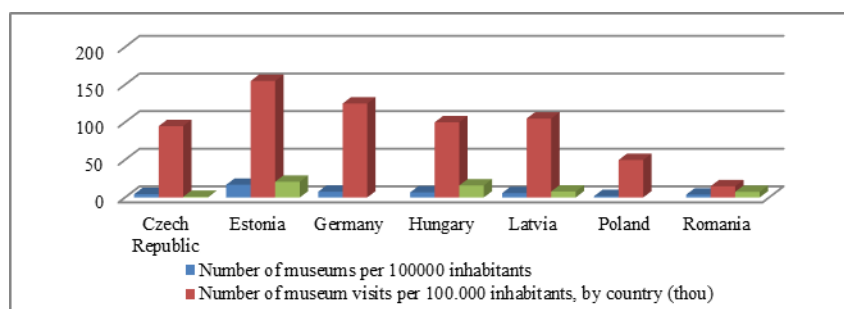
Figure 1 – Comparison of activity regarding museums in various former communist countries

(Source: processing carried-out by authors based on data available on

http://www.egmus.eu/fileadmin/intern/Museum_statistics_and_cultural_policy_Jos_de_Haan_v3_incl_CV.pdf, p. 6, p. 9, p. 10)

According to the *European Group on Museum Statistics* for Romania (in 2007) the most visited museums were: Bran Castle Museum (540000), Peles Castle Museum (361000), ASTRA National Museum (349000), Brukenthal National Museum (245000) and Dimitrie Gusti' National Village Museum (208000).

We have shown comparatively these indicators for the former communist countries in Europe as the topic of this paper is related to a relatively new type of tourism, *dark tourism* respectively, that gained an increasingly magnitude worldwide both scientifically and especially typology of touristic sites and sites arising interest of *dark tourism* consumers. Among these sites there are deeds against humanity that must not repeat, for example: totalitarian communist regime, Holocaust, nuclear accidents like that occurred in Chernobyl, atomic bomb explosions as in Hiroshima, terrorist attacks like those at the World Trade Center etc. Most former communist countries have opened new museums having as topic the deeds of the totalitarian communist regime against humanity–for example: *House of Terror - Budapest* (Hungary), *The Museum of Communism - Prague* (Czech Republic), *Museum of Genocide Victims* – Lithuania, *Museum of Communism at Hódmezővásárhely* (Hungary) etc. In Table 1, columns 4 and 5 data are structured with regard to the existence of such a museum (column 4) and the number of communism victims according to *Global Museum on Communism* (column 5) thus noticing that after Poland with 2 million victims, Romania occupies position 2 for the number of communism victims, other sources standing for that their number is up to nearly 1 million.

Dark tourism – concepts, international top destinations and other research

According to Stone and Sharpley (2008) *the term „dark tourism" was first coined by* Foley *and* Lennon*,* sites associated with war and atrocities have long been considered within a

broader heritage tourism context, particularly from an interpretative perspective. The same authors also mention that, in 1993 Rojek introduced for the first time the term *dark attractions with the concept of „Black Spots", or „the commercial (touristic) developments of grave sites and sites in which celebrities or large numbers of people have met with sudden and violent death"* (Stone and Sharpley, 2008). There are also authors that use the term *thanatourism* (Seaton, 1996, 2009quoted by B. Knudsen (2011)) with significance of dark tourism.

In considering a dark tourism site, there is an underlying assumption that the place is a cultural or heritage site, dark tourism is a „segment" of cultural tourism conforming Lennon and Foley cited by Bortwich in her thesis (2013).

In *dark tourism*, interpretation provides the link between an attraction and its visitors; it is the process by which a place, an event, a history, a building, a collection of items or, more generally, what may be referred to as "heritage" is accorded meaning which is then communicated by one means or another to the visitor (Sharpley and Stone, 2009, p. 113).Stone and Sharpley (2008) proposed a *model of dark tourism consumption within a thanatological framework as a basis for further theoretical and empirical analysis of dark tourism.*

Stone develops a *typology of „dark" destination*, taking into account the existing supply in the „dark" tourism (Stone, 2006, pp. 153 – 157):

- *Dark Fun Factories* - Stone brings out „Dracula Park" in Romania as an example (Stone, 2010);
- *Dark exhibitions* offering products related to death, often with commemorative, educational and reflective message (i.e. the world-wide „Body Worlds" exhibition)
- *Dark dungeons*- presented the former prison sentences and restoring judicial systems in the history back through tours and settings that await visitors (i.e. the Galleries of Justice in Nottingham, UK, promoted as the „Family Attraction of the Year")
- *Cemeteries as* sites of „dark" tourism destination (i.e. Pierre Lachaise with almost two million visitors a year).
- *Dark Shrines* - Stone mentions the gates of Kensington Palace which became a focal point for millions of people at the time Diana, Princess of Wales was killed in 1997
- *Dark Conflict Sites* are history-centric, connected with the theme of war and in fact are not recommended to be placed in the context of „dark" tourism.
- Dark Camps of Genocide - Sites like Auschwitz- Birkenau, known as a symbol of evil,

which tell the terrible tales of human suffering. (Stone 2006, p.157.)

Concerning the most common destinations for dark tourism, according to the tops carried-out in the past years, these are: *Dharavi Slum-* Mumbai (India), *Cu Chi Tunnels –* Sajagon (Vietnam), *Devil's Island* (French Guyana), *The River Kwai Bridge* (Thailand), *Ground Zero-* New York (USA), **Pere Lachaise Cemetery – Paris (France), World War One Battlefields –** Ypres (Belgium), **Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp –** Oswiecim (Poland), **Old Melbourne Gaol – Melbourne (Australia), Titanic Museum – Belfast (Ireland),** *Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum*- Phnom Penh (Cambodia), **Hiroshima Peace Museum – Hiroshima (Japan),***Children's Memorial Yad Vashem* (Jerusalem), *The Zone of Alienation – Chernobyl* (Ukraine), *Pont de l'Alma Road Tunnel –* Paris (France).

Many of the former communist countries have shown a great opening to sustaining this type of tourism. For instance, Mukashev and Ussenova mention in their work some of the most important "dark tourism" sites in Kazakhstan ca: The Karagandy Corrective Labour Camp, Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site, Akmola camp for the wives of country traitors, the Aral Sea. Moreover in the past years an increasingly amount of research have investigated new sites for dark tourism, one of them being Falmouth, Jamaica in West Indies that is researched by Stupart in his doctoral thesis in 2012.

The space for the development of the „dark" tourism countries is characterized by a significant *cultural - historical heritage* from the past which must be evaluated and tourist valorized, to get their offerings to be found in the global tourism market (Minić, 2012).According to D. M. Buda (2012) *media, movies and accounts of breaking news events all help stimulate dark tourism and the global-local juxtaposition represents a drive to this phenomenon.*

Concerning dark tourism motivations, Chiles (2010, p. 19)*the basic premise is the fact that there is no understood answer as to why people are motivated to visit sites that bring out this large amount of emotions and feelings*. The authors study The Bonfire Memorial and Alamo and his conclusions regarding *the main motivation stated for tourists at the Alamo was the fact that it is a historical site and it makes history come alive*(Chiles, 2010, p. 56-57) and, a *final conclusion can be made that like dark tourism, memorials themselves differ in what they provide to tourists*.

Having as case study the *House of Terror – Budapest*, Niemelä (2010) studies *motivation factors in dark tourism* and finds that the strongest motivating factor was educational: people visit the museum in order to get information about the Second World War and the site's

background.

Other reasons to practice dark tourism are, according to Dunkley (2005) quoted by T. Hovi (2013): remembrance and empathy, contemplation, special interest, thrill/risk seeking, validation, authenticity, self-discovery, iconic sites, convenience, morbid curiosity, pilgrimage. Podoshen (2013) has also identified the following aspects– using nethnography and content analysis as research methods:

- dark tourism can be motivated by processes related to simulation and the emotional contagion;
- dark tourism, similar to media tourism can be motivated by a desire to make comparisons between real and imagined landscapes,
- dark tourism can closely relate to affect and feed from it.

According to *The Guardianmagazine*(2013) *there's an increasing demand from tourists to visit the locations of some of the world's most horrific events,* places such as *Auschwitz-Birkenau*, the *Cambodian killing fields* and *Ground Zero* are some of the best known destinations that fall under the dark tourism category.

The promotion forms of this form of tourism and related tourist services are diversified, for example in Latvia, the Karosta Prison invites guests to be a prisoner for the day and before being shown to your cell, guests must sign an agreement allowing them to be insulted and treated like a prisoner (*The Guardian*, 2013).

S.M. Yuill suggests a conceptual method for media as a mediator for visiting dark tourism site (figure 2), author's explanation being that *media acts as a mediator between push factors, visitors and the destinations* (Yuill, 2003, p. 131).
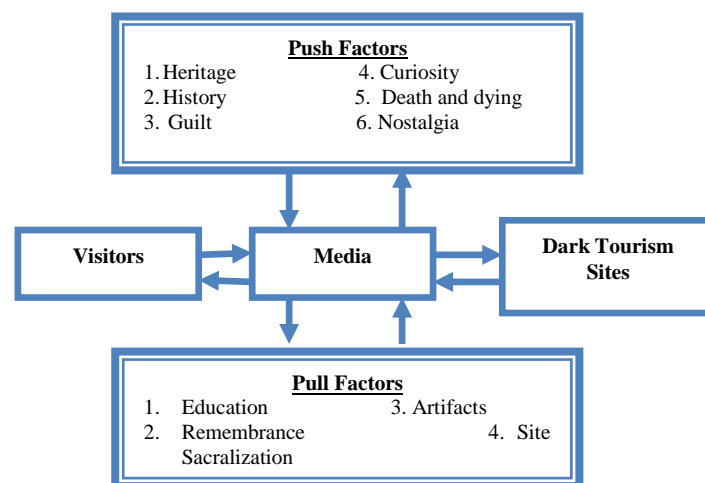
Figure 2 - The Media as a Mediator for Visitation to Dark Tourism Sites

(Source**:** S.M. Yuill - *Dark Tourism:Understanding Visitor Motivation at Sites of Death and Disaster* (master

thesis) 2003, University of Waterloo, USA, p. 132)

The magnitude taken by this new type of tourism has urged important researchers in the field of tourism to establish the *Institute for Dark Tourism Research*(IDTR), sustained by the *University of Central Lancashire* UK (that also has academic and industry partners), that is currently managed by two of the most important researchers in the field, respectively: P. Stone and **R. Sharpley, the motivation of establishing such kind of institute is that** *dark tourism is now a recognizable field of academic study, which include interdisciplinary perspectives of the 'darker side of travel' in sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, geography, thanatology, and business management.* IDTR *also promotes ethical research into the social scientific understanding of tourist sites of death, disaster, and atrocities, and the tourist experience at these places.*

According to IDTR, examples of dark tourism include, but are not limited to, visits to World War One battlefield sites in France or Belgium, Elimina slavery fort in Ghana, Melbourne Gaol in Australia, Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris, a Body Worlds exhibition in London or Berlin, Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland, or Ground Zero in New York. Local dark tourism sites to UCLan include Lancaster Castle, the Pendle Hill Witches, Sambo's Grave at Sunderland Point, slavery exhibitions in Liverpool, or the Dungeon visitor attraction at Blackpool Tower.

Dark tourism in Romania – perspectives, historic and promotions

The only promotion forms of Romanian dark tourism are Facebook page with the name *Dark tourism in Romania* and also a site (www.acasa.ro) containing some gossip information in Romanian language about developing this type of tourism worldwide. However, Romanian dark tourism is included in many scientific works worldwide, being the topic of many doctoral dissertations, articles, books etc.

Minić (2012) includes in her paper a reference to the promotion of dark tourism in Romania, as a destination that has largely failed to impose itself on the world tourism market because this type of tourism promotion and agrees that, *With promotion of the destination, country would gain much, but many of them do not make efforts in this field and the result is missing* (Minić, 2012).Related to the field of „dark" tourism Romania especially has made progress, with a good marketing presented the story of Vlad Tepes Dracula, the Romanian prince from the Middle Ages. According to the author (Minić, 2012) The „Count"Dracula project has strongly positioned Romania as a „dark" tourism destination in the minds of European and world nations. Transylvanian Society of Dracula is a cultural and historical organization that is established in 1991 in Bucharest, with the aim to connect people around the world who are interested in the historical and mythical Dracula, and to promote the development of Dracula tourism.

Related to the same topic as an objective for dark tourism Hovi (2013, p. 42) considers that in Dracula tourism these two characters are often conflated, or sometimes even melted together, into one Dracula figure and this linkage is artificial and vague at best, but still very much the basis or the core of Dracula Tourism in Romania. According to the same sources, Dracula-related tourism stands at about 10,000 – 100,000 visitors a year whereas the whole amount of tourists coming to Romania (2007) was closer to 6 000,000and in 2005, over 20 Romanian travel companies and also many foreign companies offered packages based on Dracula's myth. Also, Jahnke (2013) quoting Gröblacher (Die Presse, 2009) the park was planned to be located near his birthplace, but since this area is part of the UNESCO world heritage, the park was never built.

In Romania, the Sighet Prison is such a destination(dark tourism). The prison located in Sighetul Marmatiei is a symbol of communist power repression against the opponents of the system. Tourists may visit the rooms of the former prison, where they will see torture tools, clothes of political prisoners and information about that period in Romania's history. According to Light (2000) quoted by Jahnke (2003, p.35) like other Eastern and Central European nations, Romania has little desire to commemorate and interpret their communist past for, "…the physical legacy of Ceausescu's rule is an unwelcome reminder of a period of history which Romania is attempting to forget". Concerning the same topic, Light (2000) *examines how Romanian cultural organizations, such as history museums in Bucharest, go about in dealing with the history of the Communist period and the cultural artifacts associated with it; he demonstrates that there is a lack of consensus in Romanian society*

about the ways that 'communist heritage' can be integrated in the country's culture and history.

4. International examples of good practice. Auschwitz – Birkenau Memorial Museum

In this paragraph we will make some references to one of the most important dark tourism destination, respectively *Auschwitz – Birkenau Memorial Museum*(Poland), information being taken as a whole from *Sprawozdanie Report 2013- Memorial Auschwitz Birkenau*(2014). Therefore, in line with this report and with statistical data on the museum site, the tourism traffic based on „dark" tourism comparison of the number of visitors from 1960 to 2013 (figure 3) is one with an increasing trend even from its establishment, counting over 25 million visitors from the year 1947 (Miles, 2002).

The Museum can be considered a good practice model for world museums and implicitly in Romania as important parts of it have been introduced in tourist circuit being co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund within the Operational Programme: Infrastructure and Environment 2007-2013 (*Sprawozdanie Report 2013,* p. 29), weight of financial sources used by the museum being the following *Report 2013,* p. 53: 50% - income generated by the Museum, 29% appropriations from the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, 11% - European programmes, 6% - Earmarket appropriations from the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, 4% - Auschwitz – Birkenau Foundation.
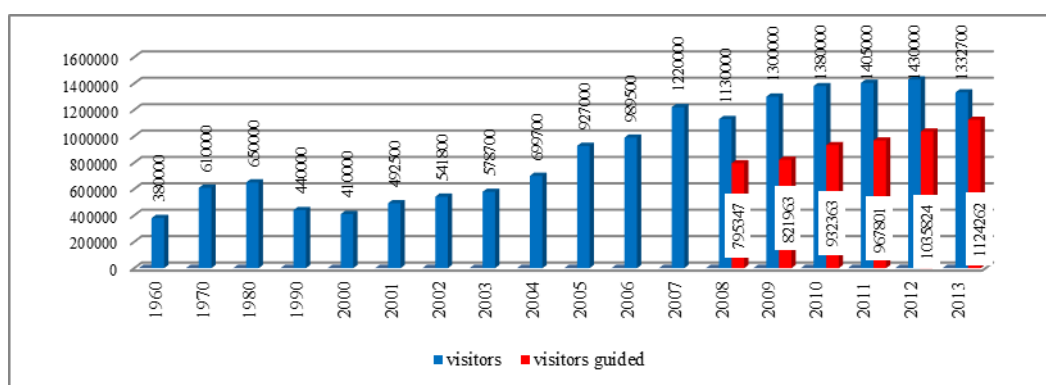
Figure 3 - Number of visitors and visitors guided at Auschwitz – Birkenau memorial in 1960 – 2013

(Source**:** data processed by author based on *Sprawozdanie Report 2013- Memorial Auschwitz Birkenau,* 2014, p. 20 -23

and http://en.auschwitz.org/z/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=56&Itemid=24)

The Museum has the *International Center for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust* (Report, 2014, p. 43) where more than 100 teachers, educators and diplomats participated in international seminars organized as part of the permanent cooperation of the

Center and the European Council, the Yad Vashem Institute, and the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation. The Center was the only institution of its type to be invited by the UN to join the United Nations Academic Impact, an association of universities and higher education institutions. The project is aimed at showing its participant show to teach about the history of the Second World War and totalitarian regimes and how to use the knowledge acquired as part of the project inteaching about human rights.The promotion forms of Museum is one the most diversified, including those type social media (Report, 2014, p. 49): Museum on Facebook, Museum on Twitter, The Memorial Site in Photographs, volunteers. The Auschwitz‑ Birkenau Memorial and State Museum represents a duty to remembrance and the education of future generations throughout the world.

Significant research related to this tourist site, Biran, Poria and Oren (2011) respectively, suggest that *Auschwitz hosts a heritage experience rather than a merely dark tourism one, and that alongside site attributes, tourists' perceptions of the site should be considered in the conceptualization of the tourist experience. The findings challenge the current understanding of dark tourism as a distinct phenomenon to heritage tourism*.

Another example to sustain the increased interest of foreign tourists for such sites (war and dark tourism) is that of the Vulkovar Museum in Slovenia, where the number of foreign tourists rose from 1855 in 2006 to 2460 in 2011. Another former prison that became a museum, is Robben Island, that meanwhile has become UNESCO heritage according to Strange and Kempa (2003).Bittner (2011) also investigated the thanatourism and dark tourism in *Croatia* and included the cultural and historical heritage of the former Jugoslavia in the international dark tourism circuit.

5. Conclusions

New, innovative products have appeared –in a fast pace- internationally with targeted names, for example: *war tourism, Dracula tourism, slum tourism, disaster tourism, red tourism in China* (Takayama)*, thanatourism, danger zone tourism, Holocaust tourism, mystery and thriller tourism*, *ghost tours as a dark tourism activity* (Garcia, 2012) etc. Therefore we may conclude some important aspects, taking into account all scientifically and practical aspects mentioned above:

- These innovative products (and implicitly dark tourism), comply with some new requests of tourist products and services consumers
- Sustain durable development of tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the countries that

sustain development of these types of tourism, and implicitly of Romania

- Can be supported financially within European projects with European funds (such as the case of Auschwitz Birkenau Memorial Museum)
- Are a real tool of educating the new generations
- Are a real tool of promoting cultural heritage of a country
- Are a real tool of social responsibility
- Are a real tool of getting some competitive advantages on the international tourist market with major benefits for the cultural export of these countries and therefore of Romania.
- Have a major potential in economic development of a country by increasing the number of foreign visitors.

Dark tourism as an academic concept ascription, rarely enjoys support from governing bodies, official tourism associations and local communities in each specific society (Lynch & Causevic, 2008), the authors referring to Belfast as a dark tourism destination. With the same topic, Williams (2012) refers to two Russian dark tourism destinations, Perm-36 and the Gulag Museum, respectively, providing reasons and solutions in this respect.

We consider all this reasons are taken into consideration jointly by the institutions involved directly in Romania's economic development, in promoting the Romanian cultural heritage, in educating youth, developing this new type of tourism- dark tourism - in Romania. Taking into account the novelty of this type of tourism, Romania has to take its own share in the world dark tourism destination Urbain (2003, p. 6) cited by Naef (2013) ''The tourism of memory is to time what ecological tourism is to space; it is to the past what humanitarian tourism is to the present.''

As a future academic and scientifically research direction, we sustain Stone's suggestions Stone (2011) that should include the following aspects: e*thical/moral issues, media/promotional issues, interpretation/political issues, management/governance issues, socio-cultural/thanatological issues.*

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