The Role of Romanian Communities in the Diaspora to Promote Romanian International Tourism

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ABSTRACT  Due to its natural and antropic tourist resources – cultural, historical, religious, technical, economic and socio – demographic – Romania can answer a large scale of travel motivations and accordingly, it may attract more and more tourist circulation. An important resource to increase tourist circulation to Romania is the Romanian community all over the world, in the way in which the national authorities, the travel agents, the professional associations etc will be able to influence the leadership of the Romanian Diaspora Associations to make active and permanent links and to offer tourist programs and interests for the Romanians outside the border lines.

KEY WORDS  Tourist resources, motivations, information, promotion, ethnic communities, Diaspora, communication, cultural league, conventions of Romanian spirituality, department of Romanians all over the world.

JEL CODES  L83, Q56, J00

Introduction
Romania is endowed with various natural and anthropic tourist resources conferring it a great tourist availability. Thus, the Transylvanian Depression, in the center of the country, surrounded by the Carpathians, a beautiful citadel, covered with snow from November – December till April-May. Mineral and thermo mineral water springs come out from them, which, together with other natural cure factors, represent the ground for some spas. The Black Sea, the Danube and the Danube Delta enriches the exceptional natural resources of Romania, which are both used and usable in the domestic and international tourism.

Similarly, Romania is very reach in historical places, such as sites and Dacian and Roman fortresses, as well as churches, monasteries, medieval palaces and castles, many towns and villages which preserve the old traditions.

A part from the natural and historical attractions, there are many economic and social achievements, nowadays buildings, all of great interest for any visitor, in the well-known hospitality of the Romanian people.

Given the structure and the quality of the tourists’ resources we can state that Romania can satisfy numerous travel motivations as well as demands of the different segments of both domestic and foreign tourists, due to its mountain, spa, seacoast, cultural, religious, Danube Delta opportunities etc.
• In 2010, Romania had 7.5 million visitors, of which about 95% came from Europe, 2.3% from America, 2.6% from Asia, and 0.1% from Australia, the Pacific Area and other countries.

The “top 10” countries in terms of arrivals in Romania represent 80.8% of the total and 19.2% from other countries of the world.

“Top 10” goes like that: Hungary 23.14%, the Republic of Moldavia 16.22%, Bulgaria 10.49%, Ukraine 8.96%, Germany 5.26%, Italy 4.41%, Turkey 3.53%, Poland 3.17%, Australia 2.37%, Serbia 3.25%. ¹

One should notice that 62.1% of the arrivals of foreign tourists in Romania is represented by the neighbor countries tourists - from Hungary, the Republic of Moldavia, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Serbia - where there live an important number of Romanians (3.8 million people).

With a view to the European Union (in which Romania was admitted on the 1st January 2007), of the European total arrivals (94.66%), about 59% come from the EU countries while 35% from other European countries.

• As Prof. Victor Crăciun, Phd, President of the Cultural League of the Union for the Romanians all over the World and of the Association of the Romanian Convention Spirituality, there are about 35 million Romanians, of which about 13 million people live abroad.²

More numerous Romanian communities in the Diaspora can be met in the Republic of Moldavia (2,867,000), Spain and Portugal (1,450,000), Italy (950,000), Germany (750,000), France (875,000), U.S.A, Canada and South America (1,350,000), Israel (400,000), Turkey (310,000), Greece, Mount Athos and Cyprus (400,000), Bulgaria (62,000), Macedonia (45,000), Albania (15,000), Hungary (28,000), Austria (35,000), the Czech Republic and Slovakia (16,000), UK and Northern countries (130,000), Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China and Korea (140,000), the Arabic countries, South Africa and Africa (150,000), Serbia and Montenegro (590,000), Russia (470,000), other ex Soviet countries (595,000) etc.³

The evolution of the Romanian spirit at the north and south from the Danube, considering the situation of the Romanians in Serbia, Macedonia, Albania, Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey was the topic of several Romanian and foreign research studies.

The first who dealt with the situation in the area was Mihai Eminescu, who, in the papers of the time, bravely defended the social and cultural life aspects of the immense number of Romanians living on the right side of the Danube. He used to write: “There are no states in Eastern Europe and no countries from the Adriatic to the Black Sea which do not embrace parts of our nationality”. Starting from the Histria shepherds and from the Bosnia and Herzegovina “morlachs”, one finds, at every step, fragments of this great ethnic unity in the Albanian Mountains, in Macedonia and Tesalia, in Pind as well as in the Balkan areas, in Serbia, in Bulgaria, in Greece, up to over the river Nistru, near Odessa and Kiev.”

The conclusion was clear: “WE ARE ROMANIANS AND PUNCTUM!” ⁴

• An extremely important part in our country international tourism promotion among the Romanians in the Diaspora is played by the Tourists Information and Promotion Offices of

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¹ Andreea Mihaela Baltărețu, *Economia Turismului*, Ed. Pro-Universitară, București, 2012, pag. 77-78;
⁴ Victor Crăciun, quoted paper work, pag. 28.
Romania abroad, mostly in countries with important Romanian communities, such as the Republic of Moldavia, Israel, Spain, Italy, France, Greece, USA etc.

In 2004, Romania had 20 offices promote the tourists image of our country abroad, as follows: Austria (Wien), Belgium (Bruxelles), the Czech Republic (Prague), China (Beijing), France (Paris), Germany (Berlin and Munchen), Israel (Tel Aviv), Italy (Rome), Japan (Tokyo), UK (London), Holland (Amsterdam), Poland (Warsaw), the Republic of Moldavia (Chisinau), Russia (Moscow), Spain (Madrid), USA (New York), Sweden (Stockholm), Turkey (Istanbul), Hungary (Budapest).

Lately, the offices in the Czech Republic and Hungary, than those in Denmark, Greece, Holland, Switzerland and Turkey were dissolved.

Prior to the reorganization of the Ministry of Tourism, there were 17 tourists’ promotion offices. After the reorganization, due to the settlement of the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism, seven of these were dissolved, that is those from Bruxelles, Berlin, Tel Aviv, Tokyo, Chisinau, Stockholm and Budapest as, according to the Ministry report they had become inefficient. At present the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism has got 10 offices in Wien, Beijing, Paris, Munchen, Rome, London, Warsaw, Moscow, Madrid and New York. So, it is notable that from 12 offices abroad, Romania has got only 10 (Hungary having 23 offices), affect that in our opinion decreases they capacity of the above mentioned ministry to promote our tourists supply abroad. Surprisingly, the Chisinau office was dissolved, although its important part played in the mutual Romanian-Moldavian relationships, the place where there lives the most numerous Romanian communities outside the country, as well as the offices in Berlin, Tel Aviv, Bruxelles and Budapest, which held an important role from the economic and relational point of view.

- Close to Tourists Information and Promotion Offices, the Department for Romanians All Over the World subordinated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Cultural League and the Conventions of the Romanian Spirituality played an important part in the process of communicating, growing awareness and attracting Romanians in Diaspora to programs, tourism including, towards Romania.

The cultural league has always been the initiator and organizer of the Conventions of the Romanian Spirituality which, in December 1, 2011, in Alba-Iulia, reached its 15th edition, a real approach to the Romanian soul.

Starting 1993, from its very beginning the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been directly involved in organizing events, with the logistic, and material support, with the participation of personalities of the political and administrative leadership of the country, cultural institutions, the Romanian Academy, various universities etc., important people who debated over very useful issues to understanding the real problems of the almost 13 million Romanians abroad and to settling strategic directions with a view to support, promote and develop our national specific characteristics, expressed through language, belief, culture, greatly interested to educate and train the new generation, most of which born in the states these Romanians live.

The Conventions of Spirituality is regularly taking place in three days with plenary and section works.

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5 Eugen Tomac – Secretary of State – The Department of Romanians Abroad - the Cultural League for the Unity of Romanians All Over the World, Ed. SEMNE, Bucureşti, 2011, pag. 9.
Each time, an important section of convention was dedicated to Romanian tourism and to tourism from the countries with delegates of the Romanian communities.

On these occasions, papers presented large business opportunities for the Romanian tourism, programs and offers of great interests for various categories of Romanians from the countries represented in the conventions.

- During an official visit paid to IRELAND, one of the authors of the present paper found out that such a small country with 4.3 million people inside the border lines nowadays is yet a big country, with its 34 million American citizens of Irish origin, with 6-7 million American - Irish tourists per year who spend about 4.8-6.3 million $.

To achieve such significant amounts of money, Ireland has exceptional links with the Diaspora, offering tourist programs “For the soul” for its members, to get aware of and visit the birth places of their great-grand parents, to look after their graves, to participate in real shows inspired by the ancient traditions of their ancestors and in traditional conquests and competitions.

So it is possible! One can act to attract a more important part of the 13 million Romanian in Diaspora to tourist events in our country.

Here are some proposals to be successful in this endeavor to raise the number of Romanian ethnic tourists and, accordingly, of incomes:

- intensifying Ministry of Foreign Affairs efforts through the Department for Romanians All Over the World towards bringing together all professional associations and all non-profit organizations etc., from the respective country and create one single Union with a unique, representative structure, empowered to negotiate with local and Romanian authorities;

- professional, scientific, cultural organizations in the country should get involved in strengthening links with similar structures in the countries with a significant number of Romanian communities;

- travel agents and tour operators should identify strong partners in the countries with many Romanians and offer them special programs to our country;

- through the Department assistance, they should offer the diaspora tourists magazines published in the country such as “Vacanțe în România”, “România Pitorească”, „Vacanțe și Călătorii”, „Vacanțe la Țară”, „Travel Magazine” etc. to inform and make potential tourists more aware of the tourists supply;

- opening and reopening Information and Promotion Tourist Offices of Romania in countries and towns with important Romanian ethnic communities to ensure the connection with the Ministry of Tourism and with the tourist, trade union, and professional organizations in the host country to attract a larger number of tourists to Romania;

- identifying “leaders of opinion” among various personalities – academic teachers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, politicians, writers etc. and stimulate them to actively promote the tourist image of Romania in the host country;

- the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism should intensify and make permanent links with representatives of the Diaspora communities (including tourist offices) and invite them to Tourists Fairs, Conventions, Conferences, various events with national and international character, on the basis of the Ministry expenses;

- together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism should offer logistic and material support to strengthen the unity of Romanians from all the host countries.
2. Conclusions

The almost 13 million Romanians in Diaspora are an important resource to make the tourist circulation to Romania go up and to actively promote and disseminate our offer among the people in the countries of residence.

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