

**RESIDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PRESENCE OF HERITAGE
ELEMENTS MEANT TO DEVELOP THE HERITAGE TOURISM WITHIN
DROBETA TURNU SEVERIN, ROMANIA**

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ABSTRACT

Heritage tourism is recognized as a sustainable economic alternative based on cultural heritage resources. In the area of the city of Drobeta Turnu Severin there are historical monuments dating from the Roman period, the medieval period and the modern period, monuments with a special historical load. Our study tries to determine the extent to which the success and sustainability of this type of development, based on ruiniform tourism or material – archeological cultural tourism, depends on the support obtained from the local residents. Methodologically, a questionnaire was applied among the resident population. The content of the questions was based on the residents' knowledge of the heritage values in the vicinity of the dwelling. The second part of the questionnaire aimed at supporting, by the residents, of the heritage tourism, as an alternative to the local development. The number of questionnaires applied was 237, including persons of different sexes, ages and professional training. The methodology used was able to provide a clear explanation of the insufficient knowledge of the local history by the residents, which is in contrast to the desire to develop heritage tourism. The obtained results offer a favorable framework for supporting the local population in order to acquire due historical knowledge, so that heritage tourism should be a natural phenomenon, by itself. The information and better documentation of the residents, as an activity supported by the local authorities, allow the development of sustainable heritage tourism.

Keywords: heritage, tourism, monuments, residents, economy

INTRODUCTION

The analysis of heritage tourism and of the determining factors regarding the relationship between heritage and the resident population, is based on certain models of social exchange, by using the theories of material culture [2], [7], [15]. The proximity of the perceptual inheritance, influences the attitudes of the residents towards the positive and negative impact of tourism [4], [5], [1], [12]. At the same time, it creates a direct influence on the support of tourism by the residents [3], [8], [10]. Heritage tourism is thus recognized as a sustainable economic alternative based on the natural environment and constitutes one of the best models for local development [9], [6], [16]. It is increasingly

recognized that the success and sustainability of this type of development, based on ruiniform or cultural material - archaeological tourism, depends, among other things, on support from local residents. Romania has many material traces that can represent sources of tourist attraction [9], [2], [14], [11], [17]. What the present study intends is to follow the attitude that the residents have towards the ruiniform heritage in the respective locality [8], [4], [13].

METHODOLOGY

In order to carry out this study, we resorted to the simple, empirical method, by which a questionnaire was applied on a number of 237 inhabitants of the city of Drobeta Turnu Severin. In order to obtain a clear answer, the questionnaire consists of four distinct parts: a) personal data - for tracking the age segment of interest for the valorization of the ruiniform heritage for tourist purpose and for analyzing the positive or negative reactions depending on the age; b) contextual variability - appreciation and consumption of cultural-tourist or heritage services; c) knowledge of the details related to the ruiniform heritage or the resident's knowledge of the neighborhood heritage monument; d) involving the residents in arranging the heritage monument for the purpose of tourism recovery.

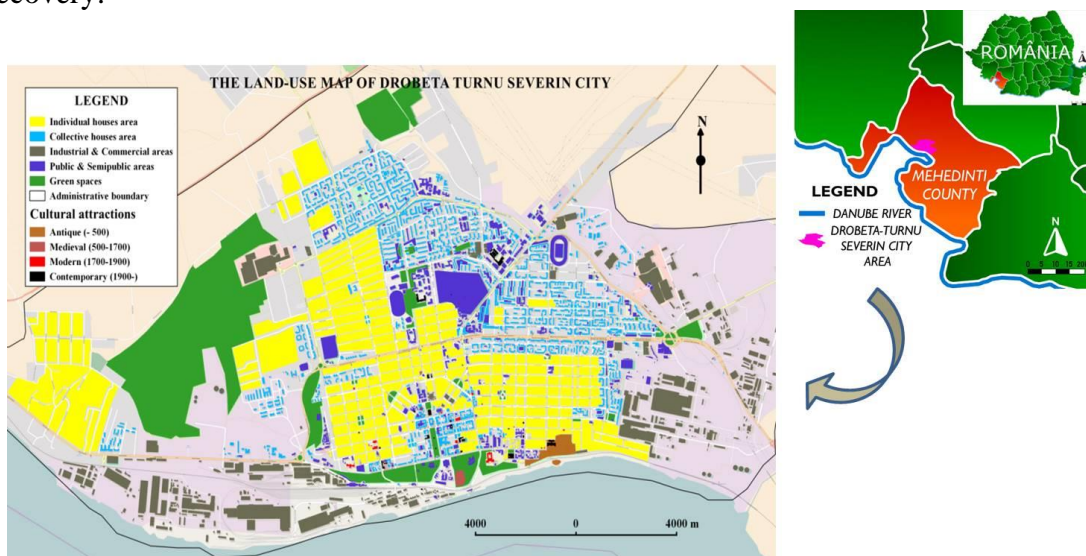


Figure 1. Distribution of cultural monuments in Drobeta Turnu Severin, Mehedinți County

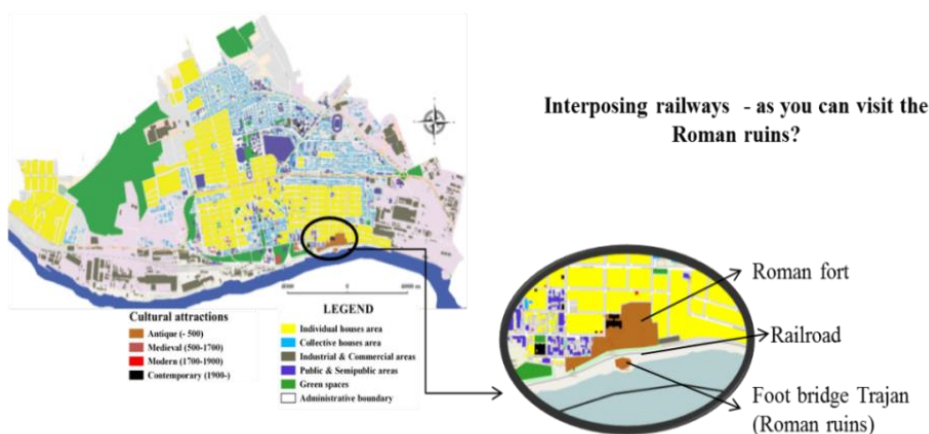


Figure 2. The location of the ancient monuments and the sectioning of the access by the railway line – a shortage or disadvantage in the tourist recovery

Also on the city level, each area was identified, offering therefore the global image of its functionality. In order to be able to make a detailed analysis of heritage monuments, it is necessary to locate them in the city plan (figure 1).

RESULTS

The analysis of the ruiniform heritage in the DTS refers first of all to the ancient monuments - the foot of the bridge of Apollodorus of Damascus, built during Trajan, the Roman Fortress and the Fortress of Severin built in the 13th century.

All these monuments are part of the Cultural Heritage of Romania and are considered by the specialist as symbols of the city of Drobeta Turnu Severin. Each of these monuments presents a number of positive elements, but also some negative ones regarding the possibility of tourist valorization (figure 2).

a. Personal data - for tracking the age segment which is interested in capitalizing the ruiniform heritage for tourist purpose and to analyze the positive or negative reactions depending on the age (figure 3), socio-professional structure (figure 4) and level of education (figure 5).

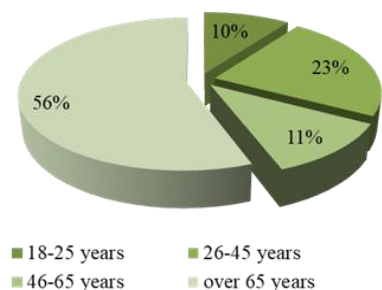


Figure 3. Structure by age of the residence participating in the study

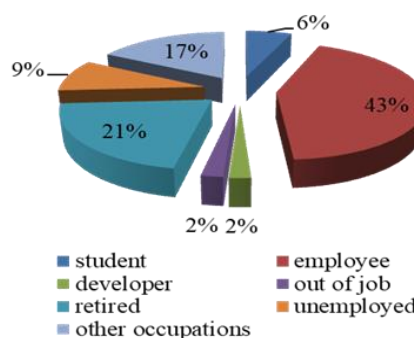


Figure 4. The socio-professional structure of the residents participating in the study

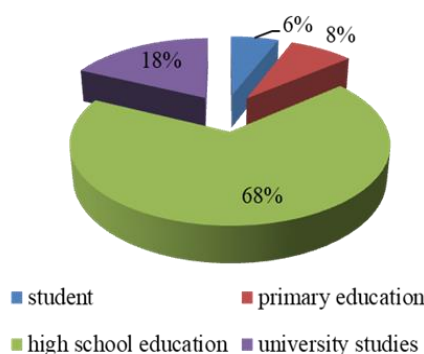


Figure 5. The educational structure of the residents participating in the study

Of the participants in the study, the highest weight according to age is reached by those of over 65 years. It represents the segment of inactive population, with predominantly high school education (figure 5). It represents the age segment which is most interested in enlarging the economic development possibilities of the locality. Tourism can represent a sustainable activity, while the existence of a material cultural patrimony represented by the ruins of the Romanian fort, as well as the existence of other vestiges from the Roman period (traces of the war of conquering Dacia by the Roman Empire in the 2nd century AD), or of medieval fortresses from the 13th century constitute sufficient premises for such tourism potential generating economical development. This segment of the

population is the one that can have a viable point of view for the development of such activities. They are those who have worked in the locality, have grown and fallen economically and culturally with it. They are also the ones who stand for the return of the working population in their native locality, or, in other words, they want their family, children and grandchildren to come back to the city from abroad or from other areas. Demographic studies that show a decrease in the working population by reasons of temporary or definitive trips outside the locality (either in other cities or in the countries of the European Union), can support these ideas of local development, appealing to the ruiniform material cultural heritage. The presence in high numbers of unemployed people or people in search of a job, the idea of valorizing the Danube bordered area of the city from the point of view of tourism potential, are all reasons to nurture a plausible hope. On the other hand, those who want to implement tourism in this area, must take into account these details related to the potential existence of the workforce that can work in this area. Tourism in this case is regarded, from the point of view of the majority, as an opportunity. From the economic point of view, the city of Drobeta Turnu Severin registers a decrease, which has been installed for more than 20 years. Precisely for this reason, cultural tourism studies can be successful on what implementation concerns.

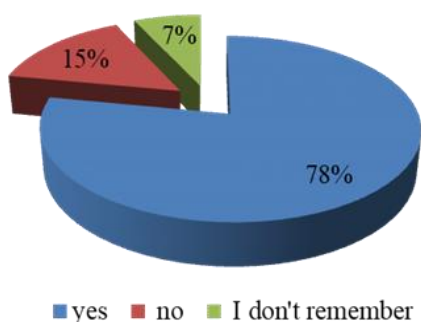


Figure 6. The degree of participation with the family when visiting the heritage monuments of those involved in the study

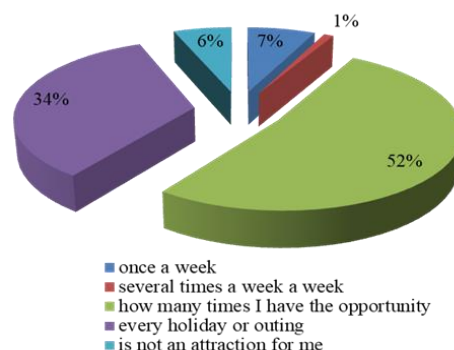


Figure 7. Expression of the level of visiting habit and practice of the cultural monuments of the study participants

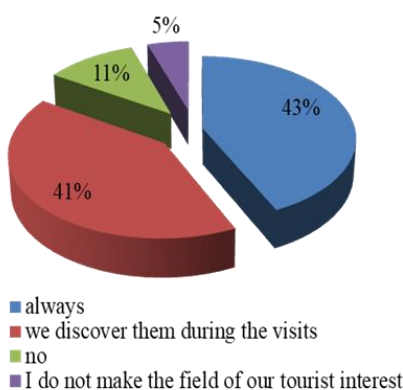


Figure 8. Individual training with information for visiting cultural monuments during vacations expressed by the participants in the study

b. Contextual variability - the appreciation and consumption of cultural-tourist, or heritage services, is the second point followed in the present study (figure 6). Raising children in a family environment in which cultural tourism has been a form of consumed tourism, is beneficial to the development possibilities of that respective type of tourism,

in the very area in which they live (figure 7). Familiarity with cultural tourism - in this case, ruiniform material, is a real advantage (figure 8).

Family education plays a major role in later establishing an individual's preferences [7]. In this case, among the participants attending school in Drobeta Turnu Severin, many of them go with their family on vacations and visit this type of tourist objectives, or participate in concerts, festivals or consume tourism and traditional art, which are specific to the place where they go on vacation.

The open questions of the questionnaire allowed the free expression of the participants. The positive, as well as the negative answer, is found in "we visit as many times as we can" (figure 7). It can be understood as a positive answer, but the negative answers received in connection with individual training, reading and information regarding cultural objectives that could be visited during the holidays (figure 8), indicate that it is a negative answer. In relation to all the study participants, after having analyzed the data obtained, the answer "we visit as many times as we can" proved to have been given in high percentage by those aged 18-25 and 26-45 years. The fewest are registered in the age group over 65, reaching only 3%. From the point of view of the socio-professional structure, those who give the most negative answers or "we visit as often as we can", are the students, the unemployed and those who do not have a stable job. The justification can thus be found in the absence of material possibilities. Vacations, recreational activities and implicitly visiting cultural monuments involve costs, sometimes quite high.

c. Knowing the historical data related to the ruiniform heritage or the resident's knowledge of any possible heritage monuments existing in the proximity. The notion of proximity from the perspective of geographical distance analyzes the bilateral effect; on the one hand, the effect of the individual upon the heritage monuments and, on the other, the effect of the monument on the individual living in its vicinity. There are two aspects that must be analyzed differentially: the area of attraction of heritage monuments, that is, the role of spatial proximity and, the tourist attitude. Over 90% of the residents consider that the ruiniform heritage in the city of DTS is a symbol of the city (figure 9). Equally, the most of them have a quite increased frequency of visits, and, more than that, there are cases in which there is a clear connection between family, individual, or historical events (related to the city or military events) and these ancient and medieval ruins (figure 10). The celebration in such a framework by the residents proves a close connection between the residents and this ruiniform heritage.

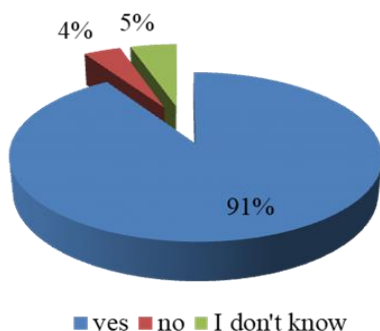


Figure 9. The ruiniform patrimony within the perimeter of the city of DTS – considered as symbols of the city by the residents

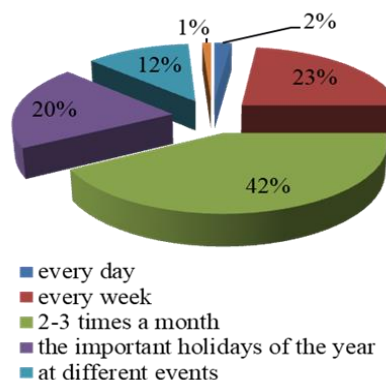


Figure 10. The pace of visit of the heritage monuments analyzed by the residents participating in the study

d. Involving the residents in arranging the heritage monument for the purpose of tourism valorization. The support given by the local residents to the phenomenon of tourism is a behavior or concept of intention that the residents express towards tourism (figure 11). Although some studies refer to supporting tourism as an attitude towards tourism, there is a greater understanding of the premise that residents act upon their attitudes relative to the perceived impacts of tourism, including both the positive and negative impacts. In the case of the residents of the city of DTS, the residents involved in the study have highlighted the positive effects of the development of the ruiniform material cultural tourism.

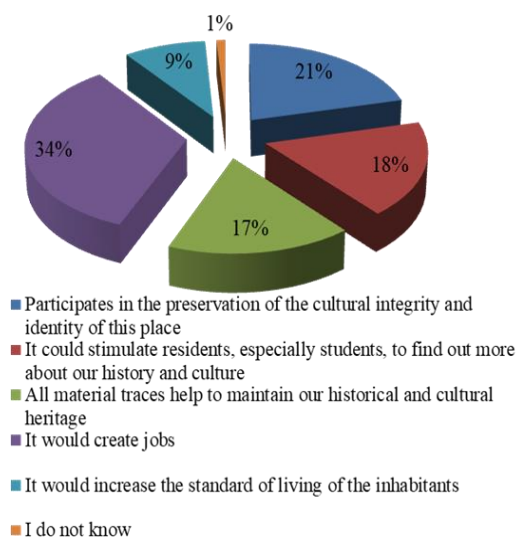


Figure 11. The positive effects of the tourism valorization of the ruiniform heritage of the DTS for residents

While the party that implements tourism, requires the support of local residential population, the essential interests of the residents are: obtaining benefits that exceed the long-term costs and incomes. Tourism studies demonstrate that residents sustain tourism only if their own interests in obtaining benefits really exist. The attitude towards the tourism impact could mean a psychological tendency of the local inhabitants generated by evaluating the impact regarding the impact of tourism with a certain degree of favorability (figure 11).

Local residents believe that tourism has the potential to promote their sense of belonging to a certain place, their own pride of culture and self-esteem and, their sense of culture and local identity [2]. It can also improve life-style quality of the local people by triggering work place potential and income-producing opportunities. In addition to that, it can promote the conservation of local and environmental heritage and promote public awareness of environmental issues.

CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between tourism and residents is more than necessary. A sustainable economic activity must start from the premise that it brings added value to the life-style quality of the inhabitants. In this case, in the city of Drobeta Turnu Severin in Romania, a harbour city on the Danube River, with an age of more than two millennia, the historical heritage could represent a veritable source of income.

The study starts from this idea, of consulting the residents regarding the development of cultural tourism in their city, especially of cultural tourism based on ruiniform heritage tourism. The resident population is an already aged population, and the economy of the locality is in a visible decline. Many of the economic units that functioned in the communist period, based on a centralized economy, are today ruins. The workforce finds itself in a rather difficult and insecure situation. In this case, on this socio-economic background, the idea of developing tourism in a city-harbour loaded with history is an important plus. The existence of a prosperous economy 30-35 years ago, explains the level of cultural perception of the residents. The residents participating in the study, especially those over 65 years of age, are the ones who support the idea of capitalizing on this ruiniform cultural heritage. They are very well documented about the historical data of these ruins. They are the ones who identify with these monuments and, insist that the young people should know as well the history of these places. The young people, between the ages of 18-45 years, are modest in percentage in knowing the history of these monuments, but they prove to have a greater opening and appetite to the social-economic side, that of the valorization, of supporting the idea that these monuments should be better presented, and prove to be interested in finding the resources needed to be highlighted all these tourist objectives.

In this way, the shortcomings related to the road or rail infrastructure, which cross the area between the Foot of the Bridge built by Apollodor in Damascus and the Roman fort in the second century, could be overpassed by the ideas of capitalization of such monuments and ruins, as proposed by the young generation with so much conviction. So, every generation supports the idea that the symbols of their city should be treated with due care and promoted as much as possible.

The study brings as a novelty a possible implementation of urban tourism based on the ruiniform material cultural heritage, based on the certainty of the supporting arguments and attitude provided by the residential population. It is a marketing study for what cultural urban tourism signifies.

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