

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF BLACK TOURISM IN ROMANIA AND WORLDWIDE

Romeo Cătălin CREȚU, Silviu Ionuț BEIA, Ioan Iulian ALECU, Petrică ȘTEFAN

University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Bucharest of Bucharest, 59 Marasti Boulevard, District 1, 011464, Bucharest, Romania, Phone: +40213182564, Fax:+40213182888, Mobile:+40744 6474 10, E-mails: creturomeocatalin@yahoo.com, beiaionut@yahoo.com, alecu.iulian@managusamv.ro, stefanmarian2004@yahoo.com

Corresponding author: stefanmarian2004@yahoo.com

Abstract

Dark tourism (or black tourism, or grief tourism), is the tourism associated with death or tragedy. Well known dark tourism attractions are: Auschwitz, Ground Zero or Chernobyl. Dark tourism is controversial with some viewing it as an act of respect and others as unethical practice. This study was carried out during February 24-25, 2023, on the occasion of the Romanian Tourism Fair. We wanted to make a comparative analysis regarding the popularity of black tourism in the world; the opinion of Romanian tourism consumers is presented. For the external part of the research, we used the data provided by Passport Photo Online, a specialized company from the United States. For Romania, the authors of the article, together with master's students from the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine - Bucharest, Faculty of M.R.D., specialization in Management in agritourism and public catering, applied 1121 questionnaires to possible tourists who visited the fair. The questionnaire purpose was to find out the opinion of the visitors regarding black tourism, if this form of tourism is popular and which are the tourist areas in Romania where this tourism is practiced. The answers were analysed and interpreted, the conclusions being very interesting and useful for the new National Strategy of Romania for the development of tourism, which is under public debate.

Key words: dark tourism, national strategy for tourism, questionnaire

INTRODUCTION

Black tourism involves visiting places associated with death and suffering. The traces of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the field of Chernobyl and the Nazi or communist camps are today objects visited by millions of people every year. Are you wondering what "black tourism" is? Well, he is as black as his name [2]. This type of gloomy tourism involves thrills, new experiences, visiting places generally associated with death or related to famous characters. Among the most interesting and visited places that are part of black tourism, we list: • the cities where the nuclear bomb fell in Hiroshima and Nagasaki • the radioactive city of Chernobyl • Nazi concentration camps • Genocide Museum in Murambi, Rwanda • Catacombs in Paris Black tourism, although it is something strange, is also sought after [12]. Moreover, even appreciated. It has been defined as tourism involving historical places associated with

death and tragedy. Thanatotourism is a term derived from the word "thanatos", the word "death" in Greek and the god of death in Greek mythology, and "tourism" [11]. People are attracted to different places due to the historical value, but also the association with suffering. There is a long world tradition, recent but also ancient, of those who visit places related to death and tragedies, such as: • gladiator games in ancient Rome at the Coliseum, • participation in public executions by beheading in France of Robespierre • punishment by being shot at the stake or on the wheel in the public square in the Middle Ages • the burning of witches or the trials of the Templars • visiting the catacombs. Academic attention on the subject was found in Glasgow, Scotland. The term "black tourism" was invented in 1996 by Lennon and Foley, two professors from Glasgow Caledonian University [10] [13]. The term "thanatotourism" was first mentioned by A.V. Seaton in 1996, professor of tourism

marketing at the University of Strathclyde [20] [21]. Since 2014, various studies, definitions, labels and categories have appeared:

- holocaust-related tourism
- tourism related to the legacy of African slaves [22].

There is no longer a question of tastes, trends or economy. But that thirst for the gloomy, searching for the supernatural. In England, there were even studies on this topic. In 2005, the Institute for Black Tourism was founded. Death and suffering become a tourist product. Stone even divided the sites according to typology from the most "white" to the most "black":

- funny "black" factories
- "black" galleries
- "black" prisons
- "black" burial places
- "black" altars
- "black" places related to conflicts
- "black" places related to genocides

In 2008, Stone and Sharpley concluded that the association with suffering and death in black tourism represents immorality, precisely to communicate morality. On the other hand, critics of this type of tourism were also brought. Namely the exploitation of the deceased for profit. But reexamining tragedies can lead us to avoid others in the future. The most visited and interesting destinations include:

- castles and battlefields such as Culloden in Scotland and Bran Castle in Romania
- former prisons such as Beaumaris Prison in Anglesey, Wales
- Places of natural or man-made disasters such as Hiroshima Memorial Park in Japan, Chernobyl in Ukraine on the site of the former nuclear power plant, Ground Zero - what remained after the attack of September 11, 2001 [19]
- Jack the Ripper exhibition in London
- places related to human atrocities and genocide, Auschwitz concentration camp, Poland, [5] Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Cambodia, Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall, China, Spirit Lake Internment Camp Center near La Ferme, Quebec, Jeyu Uprising sites in South Korea,.
- the hills of Culloden Moor, in Scotland, where the British troops, led by the Duke of Cumberland, nicknamed "the butcher", crushed the Jacobites in 1746.
- a tour following Hurricane Katrina in New-Orleans,
- tour in Rwanda following the genocide

Assassinated famous personalities and places of pilgrimage:

- Ford's Theater, in Washington D.C. On April 14, 1865,

Abraham Lincoln was assassinated here, over 700,000 visitors a year

- President Kennedy, at Dealey Plaza, and the museum has over 350,000 visitors a year
- Pompeii Theatre, from Rome. Julius Caesar was assassinated here in 44 BC
- Birla House, New Delhi. Here on January 30, 1948, Mohandas K. Gandhi was shot
- The Dakota Building, in New York. In front of this building, on December 8, 1980, John Lennon was shot
- Lorraine Motel, Memphis, Tennessee. In April 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. was shot here
- Yusupov Palace, St. Petersburg. In December 1916, Grigory Rasputin was assassinated here
- Sarajevo, Bosnia. On June 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand was shot here [1]
- Audubon Hall, New York. On February 21, 1965, Malcolm X was shot here. Although Romania does not excel in many aspects, we find it on the map of black tourism [14].

Foreigners are very interested in the legend of Dracula and Bran Castle [7]. Passionate about the horrors of the past, fictional or real, foreigners come to Romania especially for these places. If you can believe it, the Carpathians, Transylvania, Dracula, Bran or Poienari are discussed intensively on foreign forums [3]. But few foreigners know about Sighet and the Memorial to the Victims of Communism and the Resistance. The memorial was founded in 1993 by Ana Blandiana and Romulus Rusan. Here we find photos, documents, objects, letters, newspapers, textbooks, albums and over 5,000 hours of audio recordings from that period [24].

We have museums about kitsch communism, but also the Sighet Museum and black cells of communism. Massacres, catastrophes, battles, attract Romanian tourists.

Places of black tourism visited in Romania:

- Sighet Memorial Museum and former communist prison.
- Bran Castle [18].
- Ceausescu's palaces and, of course, the People's House [25].

In this context, this study aimed to make a comparative analysis regarding the popularity of black tourism in the world and to test the opinion of the Romanian tourism consumers on this topic.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was carried out during February 24-25, 2023, on the occasion of the Romanian Tourism Fair. We wanted to do a comparative analysis regarding the popularity of black tourism in the world, compared to the opinion of Romanian tourism consumers [9]. For the external part of the research, we used the data provided by Passport Photo Online, a specialized company from the United States. For Romania, the authors of the article, together with master's students from the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine - Bucharest, Faculty of M.R.D., specialization in Management in agritourism and public catering, applied 1121 questionnaires to possible tourists who visited the fair. The questionnaire purpose was to find out the opinion of the visitors regarding black tourism, if this form of tourism is popular and which are the tourist areas in Romania where this tourism is practiced [6].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Passport Photo Online surveyed 900 Americans to find out what their motivations are and what are the most popular for "black tourism." A revealing statistic: 82% have already visited at least one black tourism destination and, of those who have not, 63% are interested [15].

Eight out of ten respondents have already visited a black destination in their lifetime, although for Gen Z this percentage rises to 91% and among baby boomers it drops to 71%.

The main reason why they visit destinations marked by death or disasters is related to the educational aspect (52%), but also to the desire to pay tribute to the affected people (47%) or because they want to discover a place with history and not just a fashionable destination.

Concerning the most attractive sort of dark tourism, war or battlefield tourism are on the first places.

Ecological disaster tourism is also very important by a great deal of morbid curiosity and, to a lesser extent, travel for the

exploitation of cemeteries, for their artistic, architectural, historical or landscape heritage [4].

At the same time, there are tourists who want to meet or learn about ghosts or enchantments, travel to places associated with the deliberate killing of a nation or an ethnic act, and even prisons, Passport Photo Online explains. Nuclear tourism is another category of interest; the Chernobyl series of events had a lot to do with it, and today the nuclear power plant is the ninth most popular destination visited by tourists. In Bali, funeral rites have become tourism. Balinese customs show us the traditional discovery and exhumation of corpses after a certain period. And even keeping them in the houses. All these customs became the occasion for black tourism. Other American citizens visit the Holocaust Museum in Washington [23]. We note with surprise, but also with pride, the fact that Bran Castle is in 8th place [16] [17] (Table 1).

Table 1. The 15 most popular destinations in the world

PLACE	DESTINATION	COUNTRY/ AREA	%
1.	PEARL HARBOUR NATIONAL MEMORIAL	HAWAII	45
2.	GROUND ZERO	NEW YORK	44
3.	CATACOMBS OF PARIS	FRANCE	43
4.	HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI	JAPAN	42
5.	WRECK OF THE TITANIC	NORTH ATLANTIC	41
6.	ALCATRAZ FEDERAL PENITENTIARY	CALIFORNIA	40
7.	AUSCHWITZ CONCENTRATION CAMPS	POLAND	39
8.	BRAN CASTLE	ROMANIA	39
9.	CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR POWER PLANT	UKRAINE	37
10.	FUKUSHIMA	JAPAN	35
11.	WUHAN	CHINA	34
12.	CHOEUNG EK	CAMBODIA	32
13.	KIGALI GENOCIDE MEMORIAL CENTRE	RWANDA	32
14.	AOKIGAHARA FOREST	JAPAN	32
15.	AZOVSTAL PLANT IN MARIUPOL	UKRAINE	31

Source: Passport Photo Online [15].

We also tried to find out the opinion of the tourists from Romania, through the 1,121 questionnaires applied to the tourists who came to the tourism fair [8]. To begin with, we analysed the distribution of respondents based on age and gender (Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by age depending on gender

	under 18 years	18-25 Years	26-35 Years	36-45 years	46-55 years	56-65 Years	Total
Female	1.2%	15.2%	15.3%	7.9%	5.2%	2.4%	47.2%
Male	2.2%	23.6%	15.7%	7.2%	2.8%	1.2%	52.8%
Total	3.4%	38.8%	31.0%	15.2%	8%	3.6%	100.0%

Source: Own calculation.

From the analysis carried out, it follows that 47.2 of the respondents are female and 52.8 are male. Among women, the largest share is

those aged between 18 and 35, respectively 30.5%. The situation is similar for men, where the two categories add up to 39.3%. As the educational level of the respondents is concerned it was found that the majority of those with secondary education (high school) with a ratio of 61.4%, followed by those with graduate studies (college/university) with a ratio of 29.8%, finding at the opposite pole respondents having postgraduate studies, 7.4%, as well as those with primary education (middle school) with 1.2% (Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of respondents by age depending on educational level

	Middle school	High School	College / University	Postgraduate studies	Total
under 18 years	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
18-25 years	0.4%	35.9%	8.4%	1.1%	45.8%
26-35 years	0.2%	16.6%	13.2%	0.9%	35.9%
36-45 years	0.2%	6.7%	7.1%	1.6%	13.3%
46-55 years	0.2%	2.2%	0.9%	0.9%	4.0%
56-65 years	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.4%	0.7%
Total	1.2%	61.4%	29.8%	7.4%	100.0%

Source: Own calculation.

Regarding the occupation of the respondents it was observed that 60.3% are represented by employed/self-employed individuals, followed at a great distance by students, with a ratio of 28.8% (Table 4).

In terms of declared income of the respondents it was found that 41.97% of them have an income situated between 1,000 LEI and 2,000 LEI, followed by those with an income below 1,000 LEI in the share of 21.73%, and the others with an income in the range of LEI 2,001-3,000 in the share of 12.99%, while at the opposite pole there are those with income exceeding LEI 4,000 in the share of 8.79% (Table 5).

Table 4. Distribution of respondents by age depending on occupation

	Employee / Self-employed	Student	Unemployed	Other	Total
Under 18 years	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%
18-25 years	26.4%	25.5%	0.9%	3.1%	55.8%
26-35 years	18.3%	2.2%	0.2%	4.2%	24.9%
36-45 years	11.5%	0.7%	0.4%	1.6%	13.2%
46-55 years	3.5%	0.4%	0.0%	0.2%	4.0%
56-65 years	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%
Total	60.3%	28.8%	1.6%	9.3%	100.0%

Source: Own calculation.

Table 5. Distribution of respondents by age depending on income

	< LEI 1,000	LEI 1,000-2,000	LEI 2,001-3,000	LEI 3,001-4,000	> LEI 4,000	Total
under 18 years	0.23%	0.25%	0.26%	0.02%	0.12%	0.79%
18-25 years	16.25%	24.35%	8.90%	1.81%	4.48%	44.28%
26-35 years	4.87%	11.75%	5.60%	3.80%	2.22%	29.96%
36-45 years	2.04%	5.36%	4.21%	12.18%	2.32%	15.30%
46-55 years	0.66%	3.52%	1.92%	1.23%	1.00%	8.35%
56-65 years	1.28%	2.20%	2.23%	0.92%	0.88%	7.89%
Total	21.73%	43.97%	12.99%	7.56%	8.79%	100.0%

Source: Own calculation.

To the question related to knowledge of the concept of black tourism, 44% of those surveyed replied that they have little information about this type of tourism, 22.0% responding that they have enough information, while only 24.4% admitted to having insufficient information, 5.5% have a lot of information and 3.4% said they know nothing about this type of product (Table 6).

Table 6. Distribution of respondents' opinion on the information held about black tourism depending on age

	A lot	Many	Few	Very few	Nothing	Total
under 18 years	0.5%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%
18-25 years	2.8%	18.6%	24.6%	6.8	1.6%	55.8%
26-35 years	2.4%	7.7%	13.5%	3.7%	0.7%	25.9%
36-45 years	0.6%	5.4%	6.8%	0.9%	0.2%	15.3%
46-55 years	1.4%	0.7%	1.4%	0.8%	0.3%	6.0%
56-65 years	0.2%	0.6%	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.8%
Total	5.5%	24.4%	44.0%	22.0%	3.4%	100.0%

Source: Own calculation.

The most important question in the questionnaire was whether the respondents had visited a black tourism destination at least once (Table 7).

Table 7. Distribution of respondents' opinions on the visited black tourism destination

	Yes	No
Under 18 years	2.2%	7.0%
18-25 years	11.0%	5.8%
26-35 years	23.1%	1.9%
36-45 years	25.1%	1.2%
46-55 years	30.5%	1.4%
56-65 years	1.4%	1.2%
Total	83.3 %	16.7%

Source: Own calculation.

Another important question was whether tourists who have not yet visited a black tourism destination would be willing to go to such a location? (Table 8). The results are very interesting and show that tourists who have not yet visited a black tourism destination want to do so in the near future. The most willing are those over 18 years old and the younger ones and those over 56 years old are less determined.

Table 8. Tourists' willingness to go to a black tourism location.

	YES	NOT	MAYBE
under 18 years	50%	20%	30%
18-25 years	60.0%	15%	25%
26-35 years	70%	10%	20%
36-45 years	75%	5%	20%
46-55 years	78%	2%	20%
56-65 years	55%	15%	30%

Source: Own results.

Table 9. The 10 most popular black tourism destinations in Romania

Rank	DESTINATION	%
1.	BRAN CASTLE	85
2.	THE PEOPLE'S HOUSE.	74
3.	SIGHET MEMORIAL MUSEUM	53
4.	POENARI FORTRESS	42
5.	THE MERRY CEMETERY OF SAPANTA	41
6.	MAUSOLEUM OF MĂRĂȘEȘTI	38
7.	THE SULINA CEMETERY	35
8.	PITESTI PRISON MEMORIAL	32
9.	NICOLAE CEAUȘESCU MEMORIAL HOUSE FROM SCORNICEȘTI	31
10.	"PRISON OF SILENCE" FROM RĂMNICU SĂRAT	28

Source: Own calculation.

Following the analysis of our questionnaires, regarding the opinion of Romanian tourists regarding black tourism, we can conclude that the 10 most popular black tourism destinations in Romania are the following: (Table 9).

CONCLUSIONS

Regarding the opinions of tourists surveyed by Passport Photo Online, it was found that of the 900 respondents, 82% have already visited at least one black tourism destination and, of those who have not, 63% are interested. Eight out of ten respondents have already visited a black destination in their lifetime, although for Gen Z this percentage rises to 91% and among baby boomers, it drops to 71%. The main reason why they visit destinations marked by death or disasters is related to the educational aspect (52%), but also to the desire to pay tribute to the affected people (47%) or because they want to discover a place with history and not just a fashionable destination.

REFERENCES

[1]Allen, B., 1996, Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
 [2]Ashworth, G., Isaac, R.K., 2015, Have we illuminated the dark? Shifting perspectives on 'dark' tourism. *Tourism Recreation Research* 40(3): 316–325.
 [3]Bran, F., Rădulescu, C. V., Bodislav, D. A., Burlacu, S., 2020, Environmental risks in the context of globalization. *Economic Convergence in European Union*, 350-356.
 [4]Chiurciu, I.-A., Soare, E., Chereji, A.I., Cofas, E., 2020, Analysis regarding the evolution of agrotourism pensions in Romania between 2010 and 2019,

Conference Romanian Rural Tourism in International Context. Present and prospects. Iasi. 50.

[5]Cohen, E. H., 2011, Educational dark tourism at an in populo site: the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem. *Annals of Tourism Research* 38(1): 193–209.
 [6]Cretu, R.C., Cretu, R.F., Stefan, P., 2017, Analysis of the economic crisis concerning the pensions from the Danube Delta, *Scientific Papers. Series "Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and rural development"*, Vol. 17(2), 67-73.
 [7]Cretu, R.C., Cretu, R.F., Stefan, P., 2013, Innovative and sustainable strategies in Romanian tourism and agritourism. *Proceedings of the 7th International Management Conference "New Management for the New Economy"*, 7-8 November 2013, Bucharest, Romania.
 [8]Cretu, R.F., Ciobotar, G.N., Cretu, R.C., 2015, Survey regarding the corporate governance implementation in Romania. *Scientific Papers. Series "Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and rural development"*, Vol. 15(4), 33-38.
 [9]Cretu, R.C., Stefan, P., Alecu, I.I., 2021, Has tourism gone on holiday? Analysis of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on tourism and post-pandemic tourism behavior. *Scientific Papers. Series "Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and rural development"*, Vol. 21(2), 191-198.
 [10]Foley, M., Lennon, J.J., 1996, Heart of darkness, "International Journal of Heritage Studies", Vol.(4), 195-197.
 [11]Hartman, R., 2013, Dark tourism, thanatourism and dissonance in heritage tourism management. *New directions in contemporary tourism research*, "Journal of Heritage Tourism", Vol. 9(2), 166-182.
 [12]Hertzog, A., 2019, Tourism and places of memory: exploring the political side of tourism and the spatial dimension of. *Magazine of the European Observatory on Memories* 3. <https://europeanmemories.net/magazine/tourism-and-places-of-memory-exploring-the-political-side-of-tourism-and-the-spatial-dimension-of-memory/>, Accessed on 11 November 2022.
 [13]Lennon, J., Foley, M., 2000, *Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster*. 1st ed. London; New York: Cengage Learning EMEA.
 [14]Marcuta, L., Marcuta, A., Popescu, A., Tindeche, C., Tudor, V., Smedescu, D., 2020, Study on the development of adventure tourism in Romania. *Scientific Papers. Series "Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and rural development"*, Vol. 20(4), 339-346.
 [15]Passport Photo Online - 2022
 [16]Popescu, A., Plesoianu, D.M. 2023, Tourist arrivals and overnight stays in Romania by tourist destination in the years 2020 and 2021 of Covid-19 pandemic compared to 2019. *Scientific Papers. Series "Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and rural development"*, Vol. 23(1), 639-648.
 [17]Popescu, A., Dinu, T.A., Stoian, E., Serban, V., Ciocan, H.N., 2022, Romania's mountain areas-present and future in their way to a sustainable development.

Scientific Papers Series "Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and rural development", Vol. 22(4), 549-564.

[18]Popescu, A., Tindeche, C., Marcuta, A., Marcuta, L., Hontus, A., Stanciu, M., 2022, Romania's tourism offer and demand in the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 and 2021 compared to 2019. A statistical overview. Scientific Papers Series "Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and rural development", Vol. 22(2), 579-590.

[19]Sather-Wagstaff, J., 2011, Heritage That Hurts: Tourists in the Memoryscapes of September 11. Walnut Creek, CA: Routledge.

[20]Seaton, A.V., 1996, Guided by the dark. From thanatopsis to thanatourism, "International Journal of Heritage Studies", Vol.2(4), 234-244.

[21]Seaton, A.V., 1999, War and thanatourism: Waterloo 1815–1914. *Annals of Tourism Research* 26(1): 130–158.

[22]Simone-Charteris, M., Kirkpatrick, J., McLaughlin, C., 2018, An investigation of the differences that exist between generations in relation to supporting dark tourism in Northern Ireland. *DBS Business Review* 2: 69–88

[23]Smith, L., 2006, *The uses of heritage*, Routledge, London.

[24]Stanciu, M., Popescu, A., Stanciu, C., 2023, Rural tourism, agrotourism and ecotourism in Romania: Current research status and future trends. Scientific Papers Series "Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and rural development", Vol. 23(1), 745-758.

[25]Stoicea, P., Iorga, A.M., Dobre, C.A. 2021, The economic -financial effects of the pandemic on tourism. Scientific Papers. Series "Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and rural development", Vol. 21(2), 619-628.