

## **Mountain tourism - practice and effects**

### **Turismul montan - practică și efecte**

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#### **Abstract**

*Background.* With the development of modern society, sport also has evolved into a multifaceted reality, both in terms of actual movement, characteristics of the subjects and of the motivation for participation. In recent years, tourism (including mountaineering) has been analyzed mostly in economic, social, and environmental terms. We believe that the adaptive effects on individuals and/or groups of practitioners can be analyzed in the same way.

*Aims.* The research aims to highlight the extent occurring or not of adaptive effects in terms of socialization, communication, integration, motivation, self and peer knowledge, personal involvement etc., by practicing mountain tourism in an organized form.

*Methods.* The research was conducted during the course of the practical application of Mountain tourism and sport orientation in the Padiș massif from Apuseni mountains. Subjects were 52 students in the first year of FEFS Oradea. To conduct this research aspect, we used the questionnaire as a sociological survey, applied before and after the activity. Responses were pooled, interpreted and analyzed by graphs.

*Results.* There were considerable changes regarding aspects considered important in mountaineering (motivation), some important components of personality and interpersonal interaction and group processes, ultimately resulting in a better physical and mental condition.

*Conclusions.* Leisure sports - a category that includes mountaineering - is a socio-cultural aspect of society, but at the same time a factor of development. One of the most important aspects is the diversity of motor skills, an aspect that determines the high degree of accessibility for all persons, regardless of age, sex or aptitude.

**Key words:** leisure, mountain tourism, adaptive effects.

#### **Rezumat**

*Premize.* În condițiile de dezvoltare a societății contemporane, sportul a evoluat și el într-o realitate multiformă, atât din perspectiva mișcării propriu-zise, a caracteristicilor subiecților, cât și din cea a motivației pentru participare. În ultimii ani, turismul (inclusiv turismul montan) a fost analizat preponderent din perspectiva efectelor generate în plan economic, social și ecologic. Considerăm că în aceeași măsură pot fi analizate și efectele de tip adaptativ produse asupra indivizilor și/sau grupului de practicanți.

*Obiective.* Cercetarea și-a propus să scoată în evidență măsura în care se produc sau nu efecte de tip adaptativ în planul socializării, comunicării, integrării, motivării, cunoașterii de sine și a aproapelui, implicării personale ș.a, prin practicarea turismului montan în formă organizată.

*Metode.* Cercetarea a fost realizată pe parcursul desfășurării aplicației practice de Turism montan și orientare sportivă în zona Padiș din munții Apuseni. Subiecții au fost 52 de studenți în anul I la FEFS Oradea. Pentru realizarea acestei cercetări, am utilizat ancheta sociologică sub forma unui chestionar de opinie, aplicat înainte și după desfășurarea activității. Răspunsurile au fost centralizate, interpretate și analizate prin metoda grafică.

*Rezultate.* Se constată modificări considerabile în privința: aspectelor considerate a fi importante în turismul montan (motivație), a unor componente importante ale personalității, proceselor reglatoare și relațiilor interpersonale și de grup, în final rezultând o stare de bine, atât în plan fizic, cât și psihic.

*Concluzii.* Sportul de loisir - categorie în care includem și turismul montan - reprezintă un aspect socio-cultural al societății, dar în același timp un factor de dezvoltare. Unul din aspectele cele mai importante este reprezentat de diversitatea actelor motrice ce pot fi practicate în cadrul său, aspect care determină gradul ridicat de accesibilitate pentru toate categoriile de persoane, indiferent de vârstă, gen ori aptitudini motrice.

**Cuvinte cheie:** loisir, turism montan, efecte adaptative, curriculum.

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## Introduction

Sport for all means a socio-cultural aspect of society, but also a factor of development (Minciu, 2002). Dragnea (2002) defines this category as a generally non-competitive form of sport that is practiced both in clubs and in unorganized forms. More recently, this type of activity has been identified with the notion of *leisure motor activity* (Bota, 2006).

By the mere enunciation of the words above, we think that the content of this type of practice becomes obvious (simple or complex motor actions borrowed from specific techniques of some branches or sports, practiced under regulatory or simplified conditions, in the absence of competitive characteristics, organized or not, during the spare time). Dynamic leisure activities use very different exercises, their choice being determined by economic, geographic, cultural and social conditions, etc. In another perspective, its contents can be practiced in unorganized and non-competitive forms and may consist of the full range of motor acts performed indoors or outdoors, the latter responding very well to the need to return to nature (Diehl & Ludington, 1998) and to do sports in camps or during holidays, camping by the sea or by the mountain peaks.

Without making an exhaustive list, we can enumerate the whole range of classic sports (sport games, swimming, cycling, rowing etc.), others which open up new fields of activity (athletics, jogging, skiing, sailing etc.), or intense activity, even extreme (free climbing, extreme skiing, paragliding etc.).

To justify the role and place of mountain tourism in the curriculum of the Department of Physical Education, Sport and Physical Therapy by the inclusion of the discipline "Mountain tourism and sport orientation", we appeal to the opinion of recognized experts (Cârstea, 1993; Dragnea et al., 2006), which classifies the components of the educational process of physical education and sport (which we believe can include specific objectives such as mountain tourism) as follows:

- a) specific knowledge (theoretical: documentation about equipment and materials, transport, camp organization, buildings and constructions, field orientation, monuments, environmental protection etc.);
- b) body morphofunctional indices, high but mostly harmonious somatic and functional indices, developed by mountain tourism;
- c) physical skills, especially coordination (moving in special circumstances, climbing, building specific facilities, etc.), and resistance/endurance (routes lasting from 1-2 up to 6-8 hours with different configurations);
- d) special skills (movement acts performed in specific mountain relief: climbing, weight transport, various jumps etc.);
- e) content items specific to other components of education, by developing important intellectual features (actions and decisions involving the whole community, because "the mountain will not forgive"), moral features (personality, character, attitudes), aesthetics (beauty of nature in pure form, if preserved).

## Objectives

The presence of "Mountain tourism and sport orientation" in the curriculum of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport in Oradea is found starting with the first series of students (1960-1963), with a break of seven years (1983-1990), being reintroduced with the revival of activity after 1990. Although at first glance one might think that all is the result of an inertial behavior, the presence of this activity as a study subject is fully justified, which is also proved by the delayed reactions of successive generations of students who performed this work.

Without pleading pro domo, we try to justify with arguments - adaptive effects determined by participation in specific mountain tourism activities (Lucaciu, 2009), the need for the presence of this discipline in the University curriculum, supporting at the same time the need to streamline all this activity by adapting the content, strategies (didactic and managerial), and even improving the aspects of technical support.

From this perspective, we wanted to know the position of some "beneficiaries" of this activity regarding its content and structure, the consequences felt in terms of socialization, communication, motivation, self-knowledge (Dragnea, 2006), involvement in joint activities, and regarding the management of all activity.

## Hypothesis

Addressing mountain tourism at an institutional level by including it into the curriculum of the Department of Physical Education, Sport and Physical Therapy determines, thanks to the impact of this activity on a growing number of people from various categories, the capitalization of the influences of mountain tourism in terms of recreation (no stress), motor skills, psychosocial abilities (communication, collaboration), aesthetics (natural beauty), and equally, the multiplication of opportunities for professional inclusion (professions such as mountain guide, mountain camp instructor, etc.).

On the other hand, we think we can assume that the objectives of the course of Mountain tourism and sports orientation involve specific components of the university educational process of physical education and sport (mentioned above).

## Material and methods

We mention that according to the Helsinki Declaration, the Amsterdam Protocol and Directive 86/609/EEC, the approval of the Ethics Commission of the Department of Physical Education, Sport and Physical Therapy of the University of Oradea regarding research on human subjects was obtained, and the persons participating in the research gave their informed consent.

### *Research protocol*

#### *a) Period and place of the research*

The study was conducted over two 9 day periods, during 07-15.07.2008 and 06-14.07.2009, in the context of the practical application of "Mountain tourism and sport orientation" held in the Padiş Massif from Apuseni Mountains.

b) Subjects and groups

The analyzed sample consisted of 52 subjects (28 boys and 24 girls) in the first period and 54 subjects (29 boys and 25 girls) in the second period, aged between 19 and 27 years, 1<sup>st</sup> year students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport from Oradea.

c) Tests applied

For this approach, we used as a sociological survey the questionnaire (Questionnaire I applied before work and Questionnaire II applied after work), targeting personal experience in this type of activity, assessing individual and group relations (aspects of leadership and communication), evaluating the relationship with proponents, estimating the effects of the activity at physical and mental level and on attitudes, beliefs, motivation, etc. In this way, we wanted to highlight the evolution of the studied items.

d) Statistical processing

The questionnaires applied in the two phases of the study were composed of 33 and 25 items, respectively. After completion, the responses were pooled, and in order to highlight the variables, they were translated into graphs using the Excel program. To calculate the error estimate (0.05), we used Taro Yamane's formula:  $n = N/1+e^2N$ , where  $n$  is the number of cases in the sample,  $N$  is the population size, and  $e$  is representativeness error (Rotariu & Iluț, 1997). For various reasons, out of 120 students (60 in the first period and 60 in the second period), 6 (2 girls and 4 boys) had no activity, and 8 - 4 girls (3+1) and 4 boys (1+3) - discontinued the activity (disease-3, accident-2, family problems-3), the number of remaining respondents being 106.

Results

The study aimed to highlight the changes in the following aspects:

- important issues for the subjects, pursued in mountain tourism (Fig. 1);

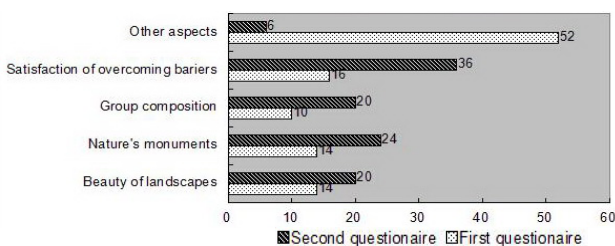


Fig. 1 – What do you appreciate mostly during mountain tourism?

Thus, if before work, for 52 (49%) of the subjects other matters were more important, in the end, the situation was as follows: the interest in the beauty of natural landscapes increased by 42% (from 14 to 20), “spectacular” monuments of nature captured more than 71% of interest (from 14 to 24 positive feedbacks), the importance of group composition increased by 50% (from 10 to 20), while the most important change (from 16 to 36, meaning a more than 2 times increase) was recorded for the satisfaction of overcoming obstacles; tourist trails marked or not, often very complex, with a difficulty level 4 or even 5, which prima facie seemed inaccessible, offered once the

difficulties were overcome a different perspective on the self and personal abilities, while giving another meaning to mutual aid, solidarity, team spirit, etc.

- aspects of personality (temperament, character, skills), the self-regulation process (motivation, volition) and interpersonal and group relations (Fig. 2);

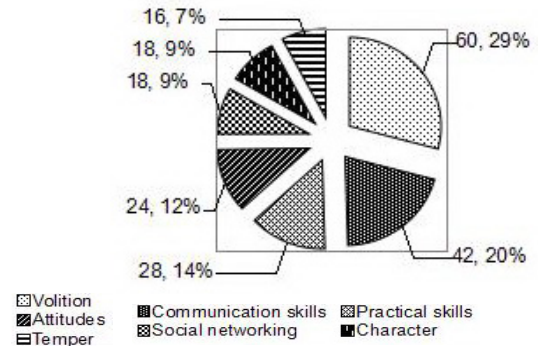


Fig. 2 – What aspects do you consider were changed after the “Mountain tourism and sport orientation” activity?

Tent camping specific living conditions, more Spartan than urban life, as well as the program of activities did not cause a reaction of rejection, but on the contrary, these conditions contributed to the shaping of character, behavior, attitude, and ability to communicate in the case of most of the subjects. A total of 98 of the respondents considered that there was a mutation in at least one or more of the issues. Note that multiple answers were possible.

- cumulative effects of activities at the end of the period, assimilated to psychological stress (Fig. 3);

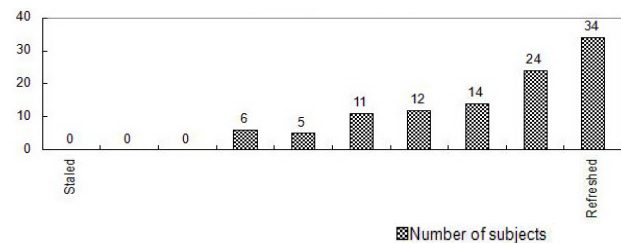


Fig. 3 – On a scale of 1 to 10 (1=stale, 10=refreshed), how do you evaluate your mental state?

Talking about the effects manifested at this level, the majority of the subjects (72, representing 68%) considered that they were refreshed or fully refreshed, physically and mentally restored, and therefore ready for any other activities, while only 21 of them (19%) reported a relative accumulation of mental fatigue.

Discussions

Adventure tourism (including mountaineering) is a rapidly expanding segment of tourism; it is estimated that adventure tourism alone contributes to the U.S. economy with over 220 billion dollars annually, direct and collateral costs (Cater, 2006). Our position is halfway between that of researchers who highlight the negative impact (Geneletti & Dawa, 2009) of tourism - especially for destinations in developing countries - and those who emphasize the

social and economic benefits of tourism (rational and well planned tourism).

In recent years, new (mentalizing) theories have outlined with increasingly stronger arguments that the effects of landscapes (mediated by tourism action) directly influence the physical and mental state of tourist groups (Rose, 2012). The author claims that natural landscapes contribute to a better self-understanding and improve the capacity of empathy with others.

Despite the large amount of research in the field of tourism, there is little investigation aimed at recreational effects (Valtonen & Veijola, 2011), feelings, emotions, the impact of individual behavior on others, the individual-individual and individual-environment interaction (Houge Mackenzie & Kerr, 2013).

Mountain tourism, especially that organized as tent camping (due to the opportunity of combining different types of activities), is an important means of complex education - motor, aesthetic, moral, etc., for all categories of people, especially young people (Frazzei, 2004; Roșu, 2008).

### Conclusions and proposals

1. The research showed that most of the activities that were not liked were activities with appliances, such as food preparation, dish washing, wood cutting, etc., that is - we suppose - activities with which the subjects were not familiar.

2. The responses and opinions regarding the reasons that led the subjects to alter or refine their views on mountain tourism, the mountain, themselves or their teachers must be a guide for us in the organization of future activities.

3. We believe that the feedback effect must be highlighted by the formulation of proposals, as follows:

- the mountain tourism activity content should be not only educational, but also pleasant, agreeable, because subjects can become prospective promoters of this activity by influencing their future students or athletes;

- we support the need for popularizing and promoting the effects and benefits of mountain tourism "more aggressively", because of the presence of a neutral attitude that is most often due to the lack of information;

- the institutional provision of the basic material infrastructure would ease the financial burden on all participants and could make this activity more attractive, subsequently leading to a deeper involvement of our students - future teachers - in organizing and carrying out mountain tourism specific activities.

### Conflicts of interests

Nothing to declare.

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