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THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AND FOLKLORE IN THE BASARABEAN TOURIST CIRCUIT

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Abstract

Cultural heritage refers to the set of physical elements and intangible attributes that represent a nation or society, acquired through social inheritance from ancestors. Such heritage includes tangible cultural elements embodied in buildings and monuments, objects and works of art. These elements are also represented in books and other literary creations, musical instruments, costumes, gastronomy, etc. Intangible elements such as folklore, traditions, language and knowledge of different kinds are also present. Cultural heritage is an asset that has value for the people; hence it is a heritage that is valued, preserved and passed on.

Key words: *sustainable development, cultural heritage, market development*
JEL: *Z33, Q51, F61.*

Introduction

The Republic of Moldova has a rich cultural heritage, which can be successfully exploited in tourism. A total of 140 cultural heritage monuments have been identified that can be included in the tourist circuit. Ancient monuments include the Geto-Dacian settlements and Roman fortifications. A variety of attractions for tourists offer the remains of medieval fortifications, various archaeological complexes, primarily the Orheiul Vechi, cave monasteries, noble mansions and rural cottages. The capital of the country also boasts an impressive number of monuments, representative examples of local architecture from the 19th and 20th centuries, capable of arousing tourists' interest. There are 87 museums in the Republic of Moldova with rich collections of exhibits. Additionally, most of them are located in buildings of particular architectural importance. In principle, the museums are intended for a specific contingent of visitors, but at least 20 of them deserve the attention of the general public.

The cultural heritage of the Republic of Moldova represents the entirety of cultural values and assets (tangible and intangible, mobile and immobile) of local, national and global importance, accumulated throughout history. Out of the fifteen thousand known sites, only 5,206 are included in the Register of State Protected Monuments.

Of the total number of monuments, about 8,000 are archaeological sites, of which about 100 are earthen fortresses, 3 medieval walled fortresses, 6 medieval towns (Orhei, Lăpușna, Tighina, Soroca, Căușeni, Chișinău), 788 churches, 129 manor houses and several 19th century historic towns (Bălți, Cahul, Chișinău, Orhei, Soroca, Tiraspol). Of the 5,206 monuments included in the register, 4,086 are of national importance and 1,120 of local importance. The register of state protected monuments includes 2,696 archaeological sites, 1,284 historical monuments, 1,261 architectural monuments and 225 art monuments.

In 2005, the geodetic meridian close to the Rudi village, Soroca district, entered the World Heritage List, managed since 1978 by UNESCO. It is one of the 258 elements of the "Struve Arc"

(named after the scientist Wilhelm Struve), which is 2820 km long and stretches over the territory of ten countries from northern Europe (Hammerfest, Norway) to the Black Sea (Ismail, Ukraine), and represents one of the most remarkable scientific and technical achievements in the field of terrestrial measurements of the 19th century.

To date, "more than 15,000 monuments of history and culture from different historical periods have been identified on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, representing nearly 90% of the great cultures that have perished in Europe. Of these, only 5,698 objects are registered in the Register of Monuments of the Republic of Moldova protected by the state, including 891 ecclesiastical buildings, 2 medieval fortresses (Tighina and Soroca), 17 manor-parks and about 700 monuments of urban and folk architecture, the others being archaeological sites of European, regional and local importance. The first evaluation of the above-mentioned objectives identified about 115 national heritage sites of major tourist value".

Results and discussions

Cultural heritage is promoted through its enhancement. In order to have something to offer our descendants in the future, as today's society, we must take the necessary steps to protect, preserve and enhance the country's cultural heritage. The responsibility for maintaining the objects of the national cultural heritage belongs to everyone, both the public authorities, the decision-makers who make state policies and set budgets, and the individuals (individuals, companies or local authorities) who directly own them.

The most effective way of exploiting monuments of cultural heritage with architectural and historical significance is to expose them to tourist promotion.

Cultural tourism's main drivers for development are increased income and higher levels of education and civilisation. Cultural tourism can mainly be achieved through: visiting historical heritage, historical buildings, museums, historical monuments, memorial houses, etc.; participation in cultural events (performances, festivals, traditional celebrations, cultural exhibitions, etc.); industrial and technical tourism, consisting of visits to large-scale industrial buildings or infrastructure, urban architectural ensembles, etc.

Beyond its identity value, cultural heritage can become, with proper management, a sustainable development and social cohesion factor, as shown by the experience of other countries. In contrast to European cultural heritage standards and practices, Moldova's cultural heritage has been in a state of continuous deterioration since its independence.

One of the most unfortunate consequences of the deplorable state of the cultural heritage and the poor knowledge of it is the lack of defined identity landmarks for many Moldovan citizens.

The Republic of Moldova has 87 museums with rich collections and exhibits. Additionally, most of them are located in buildings of particular architectural importance. Basically, the museums are intended for a special contingent of visitors, but at least 20 of them deserve the attention of the general public.

The Republic of Moldova is a tourist destination of great interest to citizens of other countries, with the number of foreign visitors growing steadily (Table 1).

In 2019, the Republic of Moldova attracted 4.6 million foreign citizens, 0.3 million more than in 2018, an increase of 6.2%. Compared to 2013, the number of visitors to our country practically doubled (94.9% increase, average annual rate + 12%).

Table 1. Statistical data on the crossing of the state border by foreign citizens between 2013 and 2020.

Annual	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2019 compared to 2013**	**2019 compared to 2013**
Total, mln people	2.36	2.23	2.86	3.40	3.90	4.33	4.60	1.39	+2.24 mln people	- 0.97 mln people
percent		-6%	+14.8	+18.8	+14.7	+11.7	+6.2%	70%	+94.9%	- 41%

Source: www.statistica.md, accessed on 12.09.2022

In 2019, 374.8 thousand visitors were accommodated in the 267 tourist structures with accommodation functions, with a capacity of 24.5 thousand accommodation places, which is 10.2 thousand people more than in 2018, an increase of 2.8% (Table 2).

Table 2. Number of tourists accommodated in tourist facilities between 2013 and 2020

Years	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
Foreign tourists	95.6	93.9	94.4	121.3	145.2	160.2	174.0	28.7
In percentage compared to previous year		-2.0%	+0.5%	+28.5%	+19.6%	+10.4%	+10.9%	-83.5%
Local tourists	175.9	189.1	184.5	184.9	192.0	204.4	200.7	61.6
In percentage compared to previous year		+7.5%	-2.5%	+0.3%	+3.8%	+6.4%	-1.8%	-69.3%
Total number of tourists	271.5	283.0	278.9	306.3	337.2	364.6	374.8	90.3
In percentage compared to previous year		+4.2%	-1.5%	+9.8%	+10.0%	+8.1%	+2.8%	-75.9%

Source: www.statistica.md, accessed on 12.09.2022

Particularly noteworthy is the increase in the number of foreign tourists staying in tourist accommodation. In 2019, tourist facilities with accommodation functions were attended by 174.0 thousand foreign citizens, an increase of 13.8 thousand persons, or 10.9%, compared to 2018.

Compared to 2013, the number of foreign citizens staying in tourist facilities with accommodation functions increased by approximately 78 thousand guests, an increase of about 82%. At the same time, a decrease of approximately 3.7 thousand compared to 2018 in the number of domestic tourists accommodated in tourist facilities, which represents a decrease of 1.8% compared to the previous year.

An attractive point of the national tourism product consists in the variety of cultures in different parts of the country. The Republic of Moldova presents an abundance of nationalities and cultures, and therefore of traditions, spoken languages, folklore, gastronomy, etc. There are about 880 folklore groups in the country, many of which reflect traditions specific to the region and their origin. National handicrafts are also worth mentioning - both as a cultural value and as a craft product offered for sale.

Tourist facilities include those constructions that exploit natural and man-made resources with tourist value. Tourism facilities must ensure the enhancement and protection of the tourist heritage through the development of sustainable and high-quality tourism. Depending on the main forms of

tourism (spa, cultural, religious, etc.) and the types of tourism (rest and recreation, transit, business and meetings, etc.) there are specific facilities that exploit and enhance various resources (mineral waters, salt pans, salt lakes, caves, paths, roads, sea beaches, historical monuments, etc.).

The "Register of Monuments of History and Culture of the Republic of Moldova", approved by the Moldovan Parliament in 1993, was published in 2010, 17 years after its inception. Many of the monuments of architecture and folk art included have since disappeared, and a lot of public monuments or professionally crafted monumental art, which have appeared in the meantime in almost all urban localities of the Republic of Moldova, have not been included.

The study of the cultural-touristic heritage management policies of the districts of the Republic of Moldova includes:

Art monuments. The number of art objects according to the Register is: in the northern area - 50, in the central area - 88 and in the southern area - 28, in total - 166 monument addresses, the actual number being several times higher. Unintentionally, the register also included ethnographic objects.

There are 9 types of immobile ethnographic monuments: dwellings, folk technical installations, and objectives serving rituals. In the northern area 33 ethnographic monuments were discovered, in the center - 50 and in the south - 2, in total - 65, although the number would be much higher during dedicated research. There is a lack of information about events in the interwar period: the tomb and monument of "Stan Poetaș" at Bârnova, the graves of Romanian soldiers in the cemeteries of Șiganca, Tabăra, etc., objects that would reveal the personality of the members of the County Council.

Historical monuments. Monuments of national history, of the formation of the autochthonous state, military, represented by commemorative signs in memory of battles and burials at the graves of participants in the world conflagrations, of victims of social cataclysms, buildings related to outstanding personalities where various important events took place. No less than 14 types of historical monuments have been found in the north and central areas and another 9 in the south. The number of titles in the northern area is 524, in the central area - 467, in the southern area - 214, in total - 1205. Of these, monuments commemorating events of the interwar period, victims of the famine and post-war deportations were not included.

Architectural monuments. In the northern area, 191 monuments of architecture and town planning (of which 157 were religious buildings) have been investigated during the frontal research, and 311 new monuments of national architecture have been included in the Register of Monuments created in 1993, eventually forming a corpus of 501 titles. These included monuments with ecclesiastical architecture - 337 (252 stone churches, 55 wooden churches and 9 monasteries and hermitages); fortifications - 1, buildings with public architecture - 44, dwellings - 91 (36 manor houses and manor houses with parks, 45 urban and 2 rural dwellings, built-up area - 3); industrial - 27.

In the northern area, there are about 50 different building types.

In the central area, the ecclesiastical architecture amounting to 348 monuments (5 cathedrals, 282 stone churches and 27 wooden churches, 18 monasteries and hermitages of which 4 idiorrhythmic monasteries and 3 rock hermitages, 3 synagogues), fortifications - 2, buildings with public architecture - 108 (21 administrative buildings, 10 cultural buildings, 46 educational and vocational buildings, 5 banks and branches, 18 treatment establishments, 5 hotels and inns), housing - 410 (47 manor houses and villas with parks and 6 isolated landscape parks, 296 individual urban dwellings and villas, 61 semi-detached houses and dwellings with commercial units), industrial and engineering - 34 (5 wine and beer factories, 4 wine cellars and cellars, 11 steam mills, 3 hydroelectric power stations, railway and tram

depot, 2 bridges, 2 water towers, etc. In total, the architectural monuments in the center of the city formed a corpus of 902 titles and over 70 types of architectural monuments.

In the southern area, which has not been researched, but only collected information from the literature, explaining the typological poverty of the buildings included, the number of architectural monuments can be estimated with a probability of 127 titles, of which 120 are religious buildings (2 cathedrals, 111 stone churches, 7 wooden churches), 3 residential, 1 public and 1 industrial.

Overall, across the whole country, the number of architectural objectives is estimated at about 1530 titles (residential - 404; fortifications - 3; public - 152; industrial - 181).

Numerous architectural monuments also belong to the sites with the highest historical and cultural value of the genres and monument types.

Among the most impressive defensive fortifications are the medieval fortresses, part of the defense system of Moldavia - the fortresses built at the fords of the Nistru - Soroca and Tighina (Bender). The bastion fortress of Tighina and the Vladimir bastion of the medieval fortress of Tiraspol (which has disappeared) have survived since the last period of bastion fortress use.

At the same time as the construction of administrative buildings, the first penitentiaries were built in all the urban settlements of Basarabia according to standard designs, the appearance of which was inspired by Ottoman architecture, alluding to the period of domination in which Moldova was situated between the Prut and the Nistru. The penitentiary in Chisinau, built on the south-eastern outskirts of the city, was inspired by Romanesque architecture (arch. G. Toricelli, 1842, disappeared). The establishment of the zemstvo favored the construction of schools and hospitals. The administrative buildings of this social institute have been preserved in Bender (50 Pushkin Street) and Soroca (18 Alecu Russo Street).

The construction of healing units received great attention. The Chisinau City Hospital was founded in 1818 on the western outskirts of the city. According to the principle of functional zoning in separate pavilions, the county hospital in Soroca (1891-1893, M. Kogalniceanu Street, 1), the Jewish hospital in Chisinau, the Jewish hospital in Balti, the hospital in Floresti, in the villages of Tarnova, Vadul Rascov, Dondușeni district, etc. were built. Particularly interesting is the hospital in the village of Stolniceni, Edinet district, 1912, which was built by E. Stroescu for the farmers of the nearby villages. The hospital was located in the middle of greenery, in front there is an orchard of fruit trees, in the back - a landscaped garden.

One of the old restaurants still functioning according to its original purpose, built specifically as a restaurant, is located in Orhei (1914, Vasile Mahu Street). Aligned to the street line, only the main facade, designed in neoclassical spirit, is architecturally exposed.

The end of the 19th century was marked by the emergence of railway stations, near which settlements for railway workers were established. Next to the railway junction near the village of Ocnitsa, Ocnitsa railway station was built - the largest railway town, consisting of a passenger pavilion, dwelling houses and social infrastructure - a kindergarten, a primary school and a special training school for railway workers with three classes, all built on two levels. Buildings with different architectural solutions were assembled into a complex with common solutions, repeating details and building materials - brick with apparent shape, a common process for Russian railway constructions. In the interwar period, the architecture of public buildings was oriented towards European styles - Constructivism, Functionalism, Neo-Romanesque, Modern (Art Nouveau). Several types of municipal town halls were implemented, built in neo-Romanesque style, with sloping roof penetrations and exposed stonework. Educational buildings were also built: in Soroca the A.D. Xenopol Boys' High

School (1932, 16 Alecu Russo Street), the Agricultural Technical High School and the School of Cultural Enlightenment (41 Stefan cel Mare Street).

Under the threat of demolition and alteration of the original architecture are the architectural monuments of the heritage built in historic towns. A large number of monuments with monument status have had their facade architecture altered by building attics, changing door and window openings, and architectural detailing, with even greater losses to the built heritage.

Therefore, in order to understand the "values, vestiges and way of life" of the people living in the border area of the Republic of Moldova and to promote them, it is necessary to identify and structure them.

In this regard, sub-action 1.1 was included in the Action Plan for the implementation of the Tourism Development Strategy "Tourism 2020" - Development and approval of the Tourism Register, implemented by the Government Decision on the approval of the Concept of the Automated Information System "Tourism Register" No. 559 of 14.08.2015 (in the Official Gazette No. 224-233 art. 638 of 21.08.2015). Although this normative act aims to create a unified and systematic database on the tourism potential of the Republic of Moldova, so far the given actions have not been carried out, which leads to confusion caused by the areas required to be involved in defining this form of tourism .

The enhancement of cultural heritage is one of the main tasks of our nation, which manifests itself in various ways: either through art, music, dance, crafts, as well as through the set of practices and skills inherited over time.

A cultural heritage management plan is particularly necessary in order to identify all the cultural vestiges of the Republic of Moldova which, unfortunately, have not been included in national tourist routes for various reasons. In case of researching these routes, officially registered on the basis of the Order of the Tourism Agency No. 11 of 30.04.2015, 7 tourist routes out of 20 do not contain the theme of cultural tourism, i.e. the approach to the definition of these routes was one-sided and incomplete, or each defining element of "non-cultural" routes is based on "cultural" components (for instance, TTN No. 7 " Monasteries of Calaras" has a religious theme, traditions, customs and folklore, respectively these are also the basis of the culture of a nation). In general, according to the Tourism Development Strategy 2020, point 18, cultural tourism is among the "less capitalized" forms of tourism, i.e. this is another argument in favor of Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMP). Celebrations, customs and rituals are sets of repetitive, codified behaviors and acts, with a repeated symbolic charge, which human communities use to control and regulate both their internal relations and those with other communities. They take place in a well-defined time and place, following a script known to the whole community, with the use of musical, choreographic and literary folklore, but also with the use of symbolic objects and sacred clothing. The activities are coordinated by certain people with important roles (the squire, the nanny, the midwife, the matron of honor), for the benefit of the people involved (the bride and groom, the groomsmen, the carolers) and the other participants (the groomsmen, the groomsmen). These social tactics give individuals a sense of belonging to a community, a group, an institution. At the same time, they solidify communities and cultivate their adherence to the same value system, strengthen their sense of identity and reinforce their social cohesion.

The winter holidays take place between January 1st and 14th and have as their focal points the days of Christmas, New Year and Epiphany, their most important feature being the incomparably rich repertoire of traditions and beliefs, literary, musical and choreographic artistic achievements, etc. Carols, wishes for abundance and a rich harvest with the Lug, the Sorcova, the Masked Games, the Star

Songs are just a few of the folkloric manifestations that make the winter holidays some of the most beautiful and ritualistic manifestations of our folklore.

In general, folklore has created calendar customs in three cycles corresponding to the four seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter customs.

The customs that are still practiced today in folklore and that represent interesting forms of integration into contemporary culture are those of the New Year cycle, which is particularly bitter and full of meaning in our rural culture.

Customs, as mentioned earlier, belong to the consciousness of the Moldovan people, as they express the national understanding of this nation, and are the essence of our ritual richness. But the most widespread and lavish customs turned out to be those connected with the great Christmas and New Year's celebrations. The traditional repertoire of Romanian customs and traditions includes not only the so-called carols - star songs, vifleemul, lugusorul, sorcova, vasilica, games with masks (turca, cerbul, brezaia), folk theater, dances (caluți, calusharii) - but also a whole range of slogans, tactics, superstitions, sayings, advice originating in ancient or Christian beliefs and myths.

A well-known custom is the "cutting of the porc". In some parts of the country, the holiday is celebrated on Ignat, i.e. December 20th. Legend says that the orc that has not been cut on this day does not get fat, because he has seen his knife. The blood drained from the hard stone which has been stabbed is dried, then ground and smoked with it for a year to get rid of whooping cough, scabies and other diseases. Another well-known custom is the decorating of the Christmas tree. The evergreen tree symbolizes life, making an analogy with the life that enters the world with the birth of the Son of God, for the One who is Life is born so that we may attain eternal life. The tradition of decorating the Christmas tree seems to be of German origin, as is the song "O beautiful Christmas tree!".

Cârciuma, Țurca, Brezaia are some of the traditional Christmas and New Year customs. Dimitrie Cantemir said in his "Description of Moldavia" that "Turca is a game invented since ancient times, because of the hatred and disgust the Moldovans had towards the Turkish". With the turca, cart or berezaia, young people go around asking for Ignat and ending with Christmas and sometimes St. Basil's evening. The name Țurca, Carra or Brezaia is mentioned by one of the young masked men. The game of "carrei" (killing, mourning, burial, resurrection) was originally, certainly, a serious ceremonial, an element of worship. During agrarian celebrations, the game became a ritual intended to bring fruitfulness for the following year, the herds of animals in the reapers' flocks, the success of the harvest - invoked and evoked by the grains thrown by the hosts is the procession of the "carrei". The custom is said to have its origins with the Romans and Hellenes: either in the games and songs played around altars by Greeks or singers disguised as animals at feasts given in honor of the gods, or in satirical verses to generals rehearsing a triumph, or in vague memories of dances known to the Greeks as the "cool sunrises". Carra plays loudly on the flute, and at the end one of the boys, leaning against the table where the family members are seated, tries to play. The boys play the part of the house maid, the girls and even the maids if they are at home, and some of them play with gratitude.

Therefore, there is substantial documentation of March 1st beliefs and practices (in nine villages); Flower customs, including the Paw and the Sow (in six villages); Easter beliefs and customs, ceremonial and ritual practices (in sixteen villages). Accounts are recorded of personal experiences of turning people into the undead, encounters and battles with the undead, beliefs, superstitions and magical practices for obtaining and protecting the manna of St George (27 April/6 May) (in eleven villages).

Original are the verses and formulas, folk theater and choreographic performances of a magical nature to invoke rain, such as Paparuda and its variants, the Doll and the Dungaree; as well as the

watering of the graves of the drowned and hanged, the watering of the undead, processions with icons to the boroughs, etc. (in fifteen villages).

Various data have also been documented concerning beliefs and knowledge, ritual practices (green branches and leaves, watering them), religious (summer stalls) and social customs (parties in the "green grass") attested in the period between Holy Sunday (in fourteen villages) - Pentecost; as well as prohibitions, superstitions and taboos referring to these female deities (in fifteen villages). Similarly, there is data on the prescriptions and beliefs related to the feast of the Assumption of the Holy Cross (pop. Day of the Spring Cross, March 17th/30th) and the Ascension of the Holy Cross (pop. Day of the Autumn Cross, September 14th/27th) (in five villages). The descriptive texts argue for a chronological coherence of numerous aspects of popular religiosity, rituals, ceremonial sequences, but with the loss of the significance of some beliefs, the symbolism of some ritual tools and objects, the meaning of some customs.

By analyzing the content of the calendar customs (spring, summer, autumn), as told by passive or active folklore carriers, recorded between 1956 and 1992, it can be seen that the rapid pace of globalization, access to information and mobility, processes that emerged in the first decades of the 21st century, led to the rapid and aggressive mutation and disappearance of cultural facts preserved by economic stagnation, diluted by political and ideological control and censorship in the second half of the 20th century. Thus, respondents' testimonies "provide a narrative trace of declarative memory". In such heterogeneous situations, digitized material must be analyzed in circumstances of action as complex as those in which rural communities operate.

The following are some of the beauties of Moldovan traditions that unfold around calendar celebrations or important moments in the lives of Romanians that are meant to imbue us with their charm.

Saint Andrew

The night of St Andrew's Eve is dedicated to customs, perhaps pre-Christian, that provide protection for people, animals and households. Romanian villagers placed them under the protection of this saint, precisely because they must be vouched for by his authority and power. St Andrew's Eve is considered one of those moments when the barrier is raised between what is seen and what is not seen.

The most favorable time to obtain prospecting information for the coming year. Furthermore, " St Andrew's winter head ", as the Bukovinians call it, allows the interference of evil plans with good ones, important things in people's existence can be turned from their natural mother. It is believed that on this night the "undead" walk to steal the "hand of the cows", the "minds of men" and the "fruit of the orchards".

Against these dangers, the Romanian countryman uses garlic as the main apotropaic (defensive) element. Likewise, the house, the stable, the hutches, the doors and windows are oiled with crushed garlic, intended to ward off the entrance of evil spirits to humans and animals.

Saint Nicholas

December then comes with the long-awaited feast of St Nicholas. Many of us waited anxiously on the morning of December 6th to see if Santa Claus left anything in our stocking last night. This custom of presents brought by Grandpa Nicholas has become a long-established tradition across the town. It may be a borrowing from Catholic countries, where it is Santa Claus who puts presents in the specially prepared stockings or boots. Children in Romania may even get a stick from Santa Claus (for the naughty ones), and St Nicholas' role as protector of the family, which the Orthodox religion has endowed him with, gives him the right to intervene in children's upbringing this way. The story of Santa

Claus begins with an old man called St Nicholas, Bishop of Myra. He is said to possess magical powers who died in 340 BC and was buried in Myra. Later, in the 11th century, religious soldiers from Italy brought the saint's remains back to Italy. They built a church in his memory in Ari, a port city in southern Italy. Soon, Christian pilgrims from all over the world came to visit the Church of St Nicholas. They took the legend of St Nicholas back to their native lands. The legend spread around the world and took on the characteristics of each country.

For the most awaited holiday in December, Christmas, Romanians have also turned to tradition, accepting more recent customs. The custom of caroling has included not only song and ritual gesture, but also many messages and symbols of an ancient Romanian spirituality. It has been preserved by association with the celebration of the great Christian event which is the Birth of Jesus Christ. In the evening of Christmas Eve, carol singing begins in all the villages of the country. The star-spangled children proclaim the Birth of the Lord and are joyfully welcomed by their hosts who reward them with apples, nuts and cakes.

For the most important moment, the transition to the New Year, preparations are resumed. In the week between Christmas and New Year, in every village, groups of musicians prepare for the 'urat', a complex system of traditions and customs. In the evening, on New Year's Eve, the "Bear", the "Goat", the "Bunghieri", the "Căiuții", the "Malanca", the "Jienii", the "Mascații", etc., are expected to show up. A spectacular embodiment of ancient myths linked to animal symbolism, they are an original way of expressing archaic ritual associations between animals and the near-universal cult of the sun. Such customs are practiced at the end of the year and are justified by the symbolism of December 31st, which in popular thought represents the date of death and the rebirth of the cosmic order. The ceremonial structure of the custom is at once full of strength and vitality. The music and dance, remarkable for their virtuosity and dynamism, and the expressive masks make for a unique spectacle. As midnight approaches in the New Year, the farmers used to predict what the weather would be like in the coming year. They use the leaves of a large onion, which they tear off and arrange in order, naming them after the months of the year. In each of them they put a little salt. The next day, on Saint Basil's Day, the day that unravels spells and incantations, they will check how much liquid is left of the salt melted in each leaf. This way they will know (because the quantities are mysteriously different) whether they will have drought or rain and in which month.

Mărțișor is the popular name for March, the month of the spring equinox and the new agricultural year, dedicated to the god Mars and the planet Mars. In folk tradition, the mărțișor is a rope made up of the days of the week and the months of the year gathered together and twisted into a two-coloured rope, symbolizing winter and summer, given as a gift on March 1st. At the end of the 19th century, the mărțișor was received by children, girls and boys alike, from their parents on the morning of March 1st, before sunrise. The little mărțișor, to which a silver and sometimes gold metal coin is attached, was worn tied to the hand, later attached to the chest or neck. Depending on the ethnographic area, it was taken out at certain spring festivals (Macinici, Florii, Easter, Armindenii) or at the flowering of certain shrubs and fruit trees. It was believed that the bearers of the Mărțișor would not be sunburnt in summer, that they would be healthy and beautiful like flowers, pleasant and loving, rich and lucky, and protected from disease and evil eyes. The custom of the Mărțișor is a sequence of a ritual script of renewal of time and the year, spring, at the symbolic birth and death of Dochia, an agrarian and maternal deity who dies and is symbolically reborn on March 9th, the spring equinox in the Julian (old style) calendar.

The inclusion of the "Mărțișor" in the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity has been approved. The dossier "Cultural practices associated with March 1st" was jointly prepared by Romania,

the Republic of Moldova, Bulgaria and Macedonia. The Republic of Moldova can be proud of the introduction of two more elements: "Men's group caroling in Romania and the Republic of Moldova" (2013) and "Traditional bark-making techniques in Romania and the Republic of Moldova" (2016). The bark graphic elements are introduced in the Tourist Brand of the Republic of Moldova (Figure 1)



Figure 1. The correlation between the "Tourist Brand of the Republic of Moldova" and the Moldovan bark

Source: List of objects included in the Moldial Heritage. https://wikitravel.org, accessed on 12.02.2022

With the increase in population income, leisure time, the growth in rapid transport, the increase in international travel, the rise in tourist spending, it is clear that there is a direct correlation between the share of objects of tourist interest (mainly from the UNESCO World Heritage List) and the share of tourism in the GDP of countries.

In June 2015, the first open-air opera performance was held in Butuceni, on a stage improvised by the owners of the Butuceni Agropension. The show was performed by the soloists of the "Maria Biesu" Opera and Ballet Theatre, who performed under the direction of Viennese conductor Friedrich Pfeiffer, and was attended by over a thousand guests.

Television promotion, through TV shows - Folklore Fan, Asfalt de Moldova, films and interviews, is an effective way of attracting tourists. Visits to the Agropension by prominent personalities from various fields also increase its appeal.

Ethnographic and folkloric tourist villages may include villages where traditional dress, architecture, furniture and interior decoration in a rustic style, music and folk dances, which are essential features of the village, predominate.

In these villages, permanent exhibitions of handicrafts for sale can be organized, and for tourists who do not stay in the village but only visit it, one or more farms can be set up as an open-air ethnographic museum.

Folk rhapsodies (vocal and instrumental) can also be identified and encouraged in these villages, choirs can become permanent (on Sundays and holidays), fairs and other local customs and traditions can be held, in which tourists can participate effectively.

Artistic and craft tourist villages can offer the possibility of a tourist stay in which, under the guidance of renowned specialists and craftsmen, tourists can learn about archaic folk art and techniques in specially equipped workshops. There are many villages where the main concern of the housewives is the weaving of carpets in folk looms, sewing and embroidery, activities in which amateur tourists can be initiated.

Although the demand for cultural and educational tours in the Republic of Moldova has increased in recent years, the number of tourist routes remains generally unchanged, as no new tourist products are being developed. At the same time, existing tourist products are not sufficiently promoted from a cultural and educational point of view.

The historical and cultural heritage of the Republic of Moldova is unique, important and unrepeatable, which is a tourist resource that must be exploited to its full value, thus creating new jobs and attracting tourists from the country and abroad.

As far as the Republic of Moldova is concerned, tourist attractions are rather poorly exploited. This is primarily due to the poorly developed road infrastructure. In addition, many tourist attractions are in an advanced state of deterioration. There is also a lack of a well-organized tourist infrastructure capable of meeting the needs of tourists: there are not enough accommodation places (about 257 throughout the territory), there are no tourist information offices, and tourism marketing is far from reaching its true potential. A major problem when speaking about tourism in the Republic of Moldova is the poor media coverage of the tourist offer, therefore tourists arriving in the area find rather limited information about the activities that can be undertaken in the region.

In terms of tourist routes with an important historical and cultural imprint, the Republic of Moldova has many sights that can be visited: the Soroca Fortress, the "Capul de Pod Șerpeni" Memorial Complex, the Orheiul Vechi Museum-Archaeological Complex, the "Lumânarea Recunoștinței" Monument or the Geodetic Arch of Struve included in the UNESCO heritage.

Additionally, there are a number of tours that include an unforgettable journey into the world of famous writers, such as the memorial house of the poet and playwright Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin or the memorial house of the poet Grigore Vieru, still under discussion by the Moldovan authorities.

Furthermore, particularly in summer, many towns in the Republic of Moldova host festivals (BUNKASAI Festival of Japanese Culture, DescOPERĂ Outdoor Classical Music Festival, "Piano Nights of Moldova-Black Sea" Festival, Art-Labyrinth Festival, Cucuteni Festival) which can attract both Romanian and foreign tourists. Given that festivals on different cultural themes are also organized in Iași, Vaslui and Prahova counties during this time of the year, this could be the starting point for an efficient and prosperous cross-border cooperation that would attract tourists eager for such events to these areas.

Among the cultural and sporting events of international importance, the "Invite Maria Biesu" Opera Festival and the "Marțișor" Festival; the National Armwrestling Sports Federation; the National MMA/K-1 Championship; the Chisinau, Cricova, Purcari Marathons; the President's Cup in cycling, Criterium, Velo Hora, etc. are noteworthy.

Despite the economic and political situation in the country, the Republic of Moldova hosts the most diverse festivals every year. It is a new custom for our country, which is turning into a beautiful cultural tradition. Listed below are 10 festivals to attend throughout the year.



Figure 2. "Mărțișor" International Music Festival - March

It is one of the most popular musical events in the Republic of Moldova, ensuring the participation of many artists from dozens of countries in musical performances of all genres, held both in Chisinau and in other cultural centers in the country. The International Festival "Mărțișor" is a true celebration of music and spring, which delights lovers of the genre, bringing to the fore the love and passion of our nation for art, culture and life alike. This year, the festival had a 50th anniversary programme.

Chronograph International Film Festival - May

The 14th edition took place in May. It is organized annually in our country, at the initiative of a group of young filmmakers who had the inspiration to launch the event in 2001, enjoying with each edition more and more appreciation from audiences and critics alike.

Today, the festival is attended by filmmakers and documentary filmmakers from all over the world, and includes round tables, conferences and other related activities designed to foster the exchange of experience in the field, to the delight of lovers of the genre.

"Mai Dulce" Festival - May

In May 2021, the third edition of the sweetest festival in Moldova took place. The event aims to promote and preserve home baking traditions, promote local brands producing children's clothes, support young artisans and educate children to communicate, negotiate and interact with peers and adults. The sweet atmosphere is provided by local and international artists invited to the event.



Figure 3. "DescOPERA" Classical Music Festival - June

The festival takes place in Orheiul Vechi. The distinctive feature of this festival is the opportunity to listen to classical music in the open air. During the festival, world-famous orchestra conductors perform. Spectators can enjoy a distinguished atmosphere with people who appreciate culture and art.

"Lavender Fest" Festival – June

The festival takes place for the second time in the village of Cobusca Noua. Visitors dress in white for the festival and enjoy a true oasis of relaxation: gastronomy, yoga sessions, handicraft fair, outdoor massage sessions and even lavender ice cream. Visitors can also enjoy live music performed by guest artists at the festival.

La Vatra Plăcintelor Festival - June

The festival took place this year in Cigîrleni, Ialoveni. The most skilful housewives impressed the visitors with homemade pies made according to ancestral recipes, but also with all kinds of dishes. The atmosphere of hospitality is provided by folk music.

The Art-Labyrinth Summer Festival is an annual outdoor event held in the most scenic places in Moldova. The festival lasts six days. The programme is diverse - concerts by local and international

musicians, theater performances and film screenings, representatives and land art, craft exhibitions and numerous workshops. The project is non-commercial, being organized thanks to the enthusiasm of a group of people who believe that art and music can bring positive change and inspiration to every person's life.



Figure 4. The Art-Labyrinth Summer Festival – June

"iProsop" Festival - June

At the end of June another festival takes place in the village of Selemet, Cimislia. The festival "iProsop" has reached its 2nd edition. This event is dedicated to the hand-woven towel tradition and entrepreneurial opportunities to promote culture. The festival brought together more than 50 folk craftsmen from all over the region to promote the ethnic traditions and customs of the south of the country, related to the national costume, gastronomy, folklore and rural lifestyle, but above all - the towel - a symbol of the national cultural heritage.

"Ia Mania" Festival - July

The 2nd edition of the festival will take place in Holercani, Dubasari. This event falls into the category of new festive trends in our country, successfully promoting the implementation of the characteristics of the local folk costume in the modernist landscape of the fashion world on an international scale.

Our traditional take is the protagonist of the event, but enjoys a company to suit, thanks to the matching accessories, starting from jewelry and proceeding with scarves, bags or shoes, specially crafted to harmonize with the specific design. The event will feature the mural art competition " Cai Verzi pe Pereti", as well as "Mândria" - a clothing competition, traditional food fair, authentic crafts and "Bridge of Flowers", where people will talk about working traditions.

Today, the cultural tourism sector in the Republic of Moldova faces several challenges, including poorly defined plans for the protection of the cultural heritage; these are often not coordinated and integrated with other sectors; in addition, the need for economic growth often takes priority over the protection of cultural heritage. It is therefore considered appropriate to create and implement new cultural heritage management plans to guide the day-to-day operation of cultural sites and to balance maintaining the integrity of the heritage with generating sufficient visitor volumes to meet economic needs. The benefits of cultural heritage management plans (CHMPs) are to reduce the impact on the local environment and improve the quality of life of local residents, to ensure the optimal requirements

for the proper functioning of cultural heritage sites to respond to market trends and opportunities, to achieve legal, social, business standards and objectives, as well as to provide an opportunity to give all stakeholders greater involvement and information power in the development of the cultural heritage site.

All stakeholders will be responsible for identifying, developing, monitoring and improving the infrastructure of cultural sites in the region. Consequently, priority will be given to developing this form of tourism as sustainable and with a positive impact on the regions.

The Republic of Moldova still does not have enough portals where foreign tourists can learn about the culture and architectural monuments that represent the history of our nation and constitute the cultural heritage of the country, which is why we witness the lack of interest of many to visit the Republic of Moldova. Moreover, there are still no national cultural digital spaces that are integrated with international ones, which would also contribute to the development of tourism and the enhancement of national heritage.

On a different note, we would like to point out that in recent years there has been a certain movement in the right direction with regard to the situation of manor houses and other architectural monuments in the Republic, mentioning the initiatives that have been launched for the restoration and enhancement of these vestiges, as well as the approach we have from the Government. However, the restoration of heritage monuments requires not only financial and physical investment, but also investment in human capital, so we end up talking about an architectural project that preserves the authenticity of the mansion in question. It is important to find an economic approach, which includes turning these mansions into tourist attractions and not leaving them under an administration that over time can lead to their deterioration or neglect.

The reality of today reveals that, for the maintenance of some monuments, due to lack of money, local public authorities have often intervened by carrying out unauthorized repair or reconstruction works, but not restoration. As a result, in many heritage monuments, the original, authentic condition has been altered to the detriment of the building and its cultural value. Also, some economic agents have received immovable cultural heritage objects for restoration and subsequent tourist exploitation, but due to a lack of restoration specialists, through negligence and indifference, have started repair works instead of restoration. More harm than good has thus been done to historic manor houses. In this context, the unfortunate experience related to the so-called reconstruction of the architectural-historical complex "Balioz Mansion" in the village of Ivancea, Orhei, a branch of the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History, can be highlighted. It is worth mentioning that the intention to modernize heritage sites does not always leave the best imprint on history. Only the development by central public authorities of pilot projects in which there is a lot of will and dedication to these monuments will succeed in transforming what today is in ruins, tomorrow into a heritage "jewel" with a tourist destination. The enhancement of a monument requires very large and long-term investments. In this regard, we would highlight, on a positive note, the restoration of the Soroca fortress, the Manuc Bey mansion in the city. Hîncești, the mansion (today a house-museum) of the Lazo family in the village of Piatra, Orhei district, the Mimi mansion in Anenii-Noi district, etc. The latter, thanks to private investment, has managed to become a very attractive tourist destination as well as an event venue with many visitors.

The modernisation of the Moldovan countryside would require a cultural vision that would make the most of specific values and traditions in line with the requirements of this development. From the perspective of cultural policies, both the cultural planning of the territory and cultural action in the field

of culture are taken into account in all aspects, in addition to the pre-existing human, financial and cultural resources.

Conclusions:

Tourism development is based on cultural-historical, leisure and recreational, balneological and climatic objects, etc. UNESCO World Heritage objects have a special place. In order to increase the efficiency of mutually beneficial cooperation and tourism development, it is advisable to strengthen the efforts of public and tourism authorities. In order to speed up the provision of tourism services, a significant contribution belongs to objects of tourist interest, including religious and World Heritage sites.

Culture can be seen as decisive in making a travel decision, namely 'cultural travel'. Moldova's culture is rooted in the diversity of subcultures represented in the country's regions. The Republic of Moldova is a country with an eclectic mix of nationalities reflecting their traditions and customs. International research has confirmed that culture and cultural heritage matter a lot to visitors. The country's history and culture strongly influence the choice of holiday destination. For the Republic of Moldova, cultural tourism offers opportunities to penetrate and develop a new and growing market and to promote a favorable image of the country at national and international level.

So far, the tourism industry in the Republic of Moldova remains underdeveloped. Supporting and expanding this sector would contribute to increasing the interest of foreign tourists in culture and architectural monuments that represent the history of our nation and represent the cultural heritage of the country, as well as to the prosperity of urban and rural localities. Both the public administration and the owners of cultural heritage objects must contribute to their enhancement through the development of local and national tourism.

By contributing through quality public services, the objects that constitute the country's cultural heritage could become much better known and more attractive both nationally to the local population and internationally.

Officials and state institutions in the Republic of Moldova should be more aware of the role that cultural policies can play when responding to the distinct needs of different community groups in society.

The key public document that reveals the priority areas and directions of development of the tourism sector until 2020 is the Tourism Development Strategy "Tourism 2020". The overall objective of the Strategy is to stimulate tourism activity in the Republic of Moldova through the development of domestic and inbound tourism.

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