

The dilemma in the book's title deals with whether Romania should embrace a globally known literature character for tourism marketing, whilst this character is usually perceived in Romania as an affront to history with an impact on Romania's image as a modern nation. The purpose of the book is not to solve the dilemma but to provide a cultural and historical insight of the Dracula tourism phenomenon. Moreover, the book succeeds in the both the political and historical contextualization of Dracula tourism as it has been operated from its inception in the 1960s till today.

The book is divided in 8 chapters, each of them acting as a stepping stone to a better understanding of the circumstances of Dracula tourism development in its home country, Romania. The analysis is well documented, although the author stated there was a shortage of primary documentary sources, so that he had to use a combination of secondary documentary sources and interviews with the key stakeholders involved in Dracula tourism.

The first chapter presents a conceptual research framework about the relationship between tourism and nation's identity on the one hand and tourism and literature and film on the other hand. In this context the author places Dracula tourism within the concept of "screen tourism" instead of "film tourism".

Chapter two presents the fiction of Dracula by describing the character of Bram Stoker's novel and the place unarguably connected with him, namely Transylvania viewed from a dual perspective: in the Western culture and in Romania.

Chapter three delves deeper into the foundational myths upon which Stoker's fictional character builds. The so-called "historical Dracula" Vlad the Impaler, the ruler of the Principality of Wallachia and a significant figure in the Romanian Middle Age history, presumably is the origin of the name of Bram Stoker's vampire.

Chapter four enters into the Romanian realities of the socialist period, providing a good tourism policy analysis and what Dracula tourism meant for the communist authorities of Romania in the second half of the 20th century.

Chapter five focuses on three places that are competing to become Dracula's castle, although this castle only existed in Bram Stoker's imagination: Bran Castle, Poienari Citadel and Tihuta Hotel in Bargau (Borgo) Pass.

The following chapter deals with the Dracula tourism in the new political context of Romania, called “post-socialist”, the period from the 1990’s close to the current days. A different political context occurred with a shift from state to private sector involvement in Dracula tourism.

A special analysis for this period is separately presented in chapter seven. It deals with what was meant to be “Dracula Park”, considered by the author to be “one significant attempt by the Romanian state to exploit the commercial possibilities of Dracula” (p. 136). The rise and fall of this state project is critically examined in the chapter.

The book ends with the author’s conclusions on what the future might include concerning Romania’s “unwanted” Dracula problem. Romania could continue to ignore it or take advantage of Dracula tourism for its own benefit, finding a strategy that would meet the demand for such form of tourism but make a clear distinction between the fictional character and the historical character.

Overall, the book provides a thorough assessment of Dracula tourism in Romania and covers mainly the period from the mid 1960’s up to the present days. Actually, one can notice that the period is associated with the great development of tourism not only in Romania but also worldwide. Therefore, the study of Dracula in Romania before mid-1960 is rather scarce. There are only a few facts presented along with some assumptions of the author. I would argue that the author could have delivered more information about Romania’s tourism policy and development during the interwar period also, although one can hardly find any evidence of Dracula tourism in that period. Not to forget that Dracula was also famous back then in the Western world, although to a lesser extent, and this might have played some role in the “scene setting”, so to speak, of later years.

Another practical critique refers to chapter five, “Fiction, History and Myth at Dracula’s castles” which is placed between the analysis of Dracula tourism in the socialist period and the analysis in the post-socialist period. This can somehow make a break in the analysis of Dracula tourism in Romania. Instead, I view this chapter to be better placed after chapter six as it is a particular issue in the analysis. Moreover, identifying Dracula places in chapter five would have required an approach not limited to the socialist period. This is justified by

the fact that the last part of the sixth chapter (p. 128-134) also discusses each of the locations which compete for “Dracula’s castle” in the post-socialist period. Maybe this last part of the sixth chapter should have been an extension of chapter five in order to ensure continuity in analysis.

The author is familiar with Romania’s realities and this is evident throughout the book. The reader will have the chance to discover in a gradual manner what Dracula is about and how Romania has been coping with this legend both in the past and in the present. This book can serve as a guide in approaching Dracula tourism as a distinct type of cultural tourism, so anyone interested in this subject can benefit from the author’s research. As a methodical analysis of Romania’s dilemma regarding the capitalization of Dracula for tourism without compromising the history and the image of the country, this book succeeds in enhancing the debate and I do recommend this book.

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