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THE ROLE OF THE MARKETING MIX IN CONCEIVING THE STRATEGIC OPTIONS FOR THE COUNTY MUSEUM OF BOTOȘANI

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THE ROLE OF THE MARKETING MIX IN CONCEIVING THE STRATEGIC OPTIONS FOR THE COUNTY MUSEUM OF BOTOȘANI

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Rezumat

Muzeele sunt instituții care colectează, cercetează, promovează și interpretează obiecte (Sandell and Janes, 2007). S-a insistat mult pe ideea că întreaga existență a muzeelor depinde de posesia unei colecții (McLean, 1994). În timp ce îngrijirea și interpretarea colecțiilor sunt recunoscute drept funcții de bază a muzeelor, declinul fondurilor publice și presiunile asupra responsabilităților au dus la perceperea marketingului din muzee ca o importantă contribuție a viabilității muzeelor (McLean, 1994). Această descoperire a dus la modificarea comportamentului personalului muzeelor, astfel încât începutul marketingului din organizațiile culturale a fost creat.

Cuvinte cheie: instituții culturale, muzee, mixul de marketing.

Abstract

Museums are institutions that collect, research, promote and interpret objects (Sandell and Janes, 2007). It was insisted on the idea that the whole existence of the museums depends on the possession of a collection (McLean, 1994). While the collection's care and interpretation are recognized to be the museum's base functions, the decline in public funding and the pressures on responsibilities have conducted the perception that marketing in museums has an important contribution to the museums' viability (McLean, 1994). This finding has led to a change in the museum's staff behavior so the base for marketing in the cultural organizations has been created.

Keywords: Cultural Institutions, museums, the Marketing Mix.

JEL Classification: M39

1. THE MARKETING MIX IN MUSEUMS

The marketing mix is a vital concept for the development of strategic marketing activities. Traditional, the marketing mix represents a union of strategies developed on four base directions: product, price, distribution and promoting (Balaure et al., 2002).

The process of building the marketing mix and the strategies is a complex one (Olteanu, 2005). It influences the way and the time frame in which the specific objectives of the organization are met. Projecting the most suitable alternatives depends not only on reasoning and logical arguments, but also on the experience and the intuition of those who have the power to decide in this field. Also, the resources available impose certain limits in the adopting of strategies.

Four factors have determined the application of marketing principles and practices in museums: the growth of that sector, the financing problems, the rise in offers for spending the free-time of clients-visitors, the need for a better knowledge regarding the visitors (Tobelem, 1990). The museum-like organizations are seeing marketing more and more as a very useful tool for reaching in optimum conditions the organization's objectives, for the benefit of all parties, but also for the society as a whole. The efficient application of modern marketing methods depends not only on the leadership of those organizations, but also on its employees. They have to understand the role that the marketing policy plays, the importance of improving the work and the services they offer. Especially in Romania this aspect is poor (Zbucea, 2005).

Also marketing has a contribution in eliminating the numerous problems that museums and similar organizations are faced with, like the reduced number of visitors, insufficient funds for an adequate administration of the heritage and the development of collections, a general lack in popularity of specific cultural products. The numerous problems that a museum-like organization is faced with can be successfully eliminated by an adequate marketing strategy. In the developed countries the most used "recipes" consist in organizing temporary exhibitions that are large in scale and impact, and even in restoring and expanding the building (Bradburne, 2001).

Because these strategies are extremely expensive and require special organizing efforts, they are used in general by the big museums. Museums and similar organizations that are small in dimensions have to discover other methods. A solution could be the transformation of clients from simple visitors to active users and discussion partners.

2. THE MUSEUM AND ITS CLIENTS

According to the website www.muzeubt.ro, the County Museum of Botoșani is a public institution of culture, which has legal responsibility. Through its activity the County Museum of Botoșani serves the following base functions: buying, conserving, researching and capitalizing the cultural objects with the purpose of forming and cultivating the civic, patriotic and esthetic sense.

Besides its museum-like activities, the institution also employees scientific research activities for knowledge of history, civilization and national, regional and local culture, for identifying new objects of national and local value. Besides these activities, it also does the conservation and restoration of the national cultural heritage that it possesses.

By the collections it possesses, the museum represents an object of study for historic, archeology, geography, ethnography, sociology, arts history, memoirs research and a source of inspiration for temporary artistic creations. It serves also as a laboratory for studies and practice for pupils and students.

In 2008 a number of 30.000 people visited the County Museum of Botoșani. This figure increased by 36,36% to 2007, and by 25% to 2006.

The increased interest is explained by the events organized on the occasion of marking historic events. Another explanation is that after an interruption of a few years, the County Museum of Botoșani organized a series of extremely interesting exhibitions: an exhibition about the past of Botoșani; the wedding exhibition; the book exhibition; the exhibition about famous women; the Mihai Eminescu Theater exhibition for posters; the "talking" exhibition; the exhibition of wax figures; the exhibition dedicated to the poet Mihai Eminescu; the autographs exhibition; the exhibition dedicated to the winter holidays.

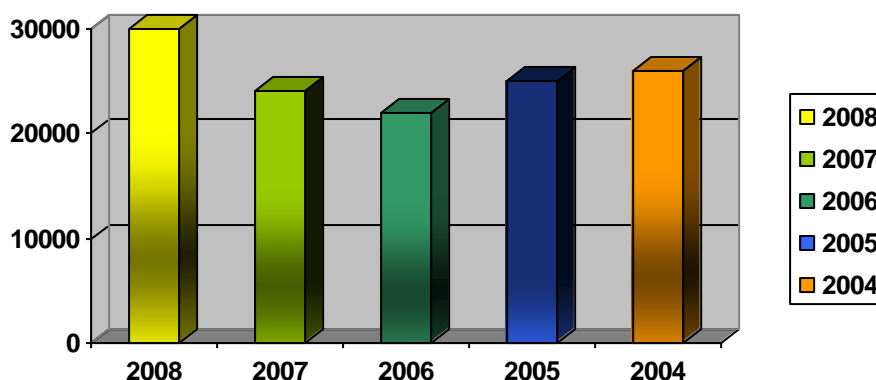


FIGURE 1. VISITORS RECORDED BY THE COUNTY MUSEUM OF BOTOȘANI DURING THE 2004-2008 PERIOD

The centralized data show that the biggest parts of visitors are preschoolers. They are followed by students in Primary and then by those in Secondary education. Those from high school are less interested in visiting a museum.

There is a total disregard shown by the County of Botoșani adult population, the adult visitors that pass the threshold of the museum are foreign tourists or people who live in other counties of the country. Most foreign visitors recorded in 2008 have come from countries as Italy, France, The United Kingdom, Israel and Germany.

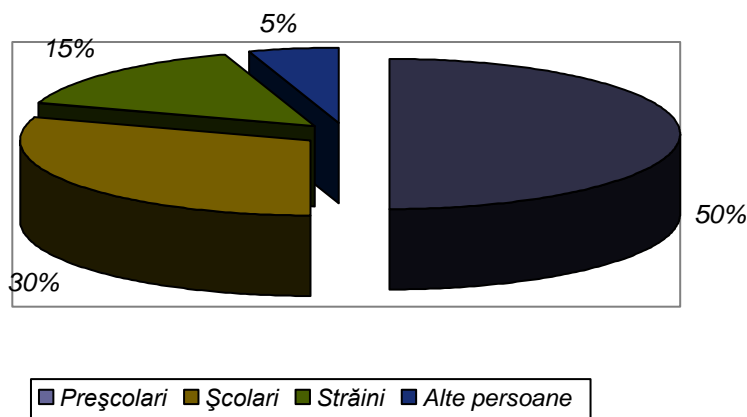


FIGURE 2. THE CATEGORIES OF PUBLIC BY THEIR SHARE IN THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VISITORS IN 2008

As for the people in Botoșani, they rarely pass the museum's threshold on the days in which the museum is not hosting a special event, although the museum offers facilities to pupils, students, Pensioners and those from the military.

3. THE MARKETING MIX IN THE COUNTY MUSEUM OF BOTOȘANI

3.1. The product policy

The policy regarding the cultural products materializes in the County Museum's of Botoșani offer that manages, studies and capitalizes the national and local cultural heritage: the products' ensemble of all categories (exhibitions, programs, events), the ensemble of complementary and additional services offered. Also, in regards to the complementary services policy bear in mind the necessity of offering new products, which must present competitive advantages and be in accordance with the interest of the museum's potential visitors, but also with those of the local community. Equally important are: the

establishing of quality levels for products and their design and for the types of experiences offered, of a products' style that the County Museum of Botoșani is offering.

The factors that influence the museums product policy are of exogenous and endogenous nature. In the first category are included: the local community; social-cultural events, the wishes, the demands and the features of the targeted visitors. From the internal factors are mentioned the following: the material, financial and human resources from the museum; the organizational structure; the museum's staff attitude towards its public, and others.

The County Museum of Botoșani places its activity in a building that sums up 2020 sqm, from which 880 sqm are occupied by the 18 halls. In these halls the base exhibition of the History Section is presented:

- The Old Stone Age, the Paleolithic, the first and the longest in the history of mankind is illustrated in the first exhibition. The exhibits displayed succeed in capturing the visitors' attention, some of these are unique.
- The New Stone Age is represented in halls 2-4. In hall number 4 – the last from the rooms that present the Neolithic age that is so well represented in the County of Botoșani – are displayed the best and most succeeded pots, from the shapes point of view, as well as from the incision ornaments point of view.
- In hall number 6 are presented the materials for the second Iron Age, culminating with the weapons and iron deposit, discovered recently in the peat deposit of Lozna.
- The restoring period of the Dacian state during the reign of King Decebal, the Roman's wars of conquer from 101-102 and 105-106, the period of the Roman province Dacia and the age of migrant races are presented in hall number 7.

The dominating figure of hall 10 is that of Moldavia's Voivode – Ștefan cel Mare. One is presented the Romanian people's struggle for unity and independence during his time, illustrated in a museum-like way with guns and harness pieces, iron and stone balls, the map of the county marked with the battles fought by Ștefan cel Mare and his survivors against the Turks and the Tartars. One can watch some distinct, original objectives which come from the two places founded by Stephen the Great in the County of Botoșani, architectural creations of big equilibrium and taste.

- In hall number 11 there are some important episodes in the life of the Romanian people. The central place is occupied by „The unification of the three Romanian countries in the life of Mihai Viteazul”. The exhibition presents after this the Romanian people's fight for liberty and unity in the 17th – 18th centuries, mentioning that the Romanian countries have maintained their

autonomy, even though the Turks' involvement in the internal political life became more and more obvious.

- The halls 12 and 13 propose to the visitors an overview of our modern history, with its big moments, in which the lands of Botoșani are well integrated.
- The images that open hall number 14 are presenting aspects from the towns of Botoșani and Dorohoi at the beginning of this century's third decade. Are also presented numerous documents and original objects that reflect the slow economic development of the Botoșani area after 1918. Newspaper frontlines in Botoșani, documents regarding canvass for the first elections after 1918 and their result in the County of Botoșani reflect the agitated political life of this period.
- The first appearances that open hall number 15 illustrate the cultural life of Botoșani in the interwar period, the activity of big Romanian personalities of science and culture that lived in these parts.
- Hall number 16 presents the most important appearances of the Romanian political life in the socialist edification period. The first panels expose documents that reflect the creation process of the workers' class single party in our homeland, process finished in 1948 on the occasion of the sixth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party and the elections for the Big National Gathering in March 1948.
- The first panel in hall number 17 renders the most important political events that have followed the proclamation of the Romanian Socialist Republic. The documents and photographs exposed refer to the 10th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party in August 1969 that established as fundamental objective the continuous enlargement of the technical-material base and the creation of the multilateral developed socialist society, and to the 1972 Conference of the Romanian Communist Party.
- The numerous photographs exposed in hall number 18, the statistics, the cites and the texts that join them reflect the big accomplishments obtained in the rising level of living for the inhabitants of this area.

3.2. *The price policy*

It would be ideally that all those who show their interest could have free access to the products forming the cultural heritage offered by the County Museum of Botoșani. Unfortunately that is impossible

because of the financial problems confronted by the museum's administration and because it would register a high afflux of all sorts of visitors that could deteriorate significantly the numerous art objects sheltered in the museum.

In regards to the price policy, the County Museum of Botoșani develops two kinds of fees: for the permanent exhibitions, respectively for the temporary exhibitions.

The entry tax level is difficult to establish for both permanent exhibitions and temporary exhibitions. As a result, equilibrium must be discovered that can secure in optimum conditions the museum's objectives, the access for the interested public and for the one targeted, the presentation of the art objects exhibited, the attraction of new funding by the museum.

Presently the price for a visit at the County Museum of Botoșani is of only 2 lei, and the ticket is for a whole day. In cases of groups larger than 5 people the fee halves, to 1 leu. Also, the CMB offers facilities for a series of people. Among them are: pupils, students, Pensioners and disabled.

In the case of temporary exhibitions the facilities for the groups mentioned are no longer valid, they have to pay the full ticket price. It must be mentioned that the ticket price is no longer reduced, the value rises depending on the duration of the exhibition, by its complexity and also by the number of visitors estimated to come to the museum (for example, at the „Wax figures exhibition” and at the reptile exhibition the price for a ticket was 5 lei).

The County Museum of Botoșani offers to those interested the possibility to photograph and/or record during the museum visit, for a standard rate. Thus, if a visitor wishes to photograph he must pay a fee of 20 lei or to record he must pay a fee of 30 lei.

The evaluation of the cultural heritage is extremely difficult because the museum must not only keep in mind the value of the physical elements contained in the real good, but especially the spiritual value. Also, it must be mentioned that the evaluation is made by comparing with other elements, and depending on the object rarity, on the craftsmanship, on the historic period when it is dated.

So, the CMB must take into consideration the value of the heritage incorporated in its offer when establishing the price for a product/service offered to the public. Still, this is not the only element that must be taken into calculation. It must be equally or even more kept in mind the objectives that the museum aims at, its prestige, and the targeted groups.

Establishing an entry fee must not be looked at like a prerequisite. The justification for soliciting an entry fee is usually linked to the financial needs that the CMB is confronted with, the development of its activity and its offer. The decision of applying a certain price must be taken after an attentive analysis of

the effects generated. The museum must avoid a significant downfall in certain visitor segments, which in this way would be deprived by an important cultural service.

3.3. The distribution policy

If a coherent and adequate distribution policy would not exist, the museum's product would not reach the public in optimum conditions. The distribution has various functions, of educational, cultural, social, even humanitarian and not least, economic nature.

The primordial role of distribution is of intermediation between the County Museum of Botoșani, represented by its staff specialty collaborators and the final consumer of the cultural heritage products.

The distribution policy implies the establishing of clear strategic objectives that keep in mind the museum's situation and its cultural heritage, its mission to society, both for the local community, and even for members of other communities.

Among the general objectives of the County Museum of Botoșani must be specified the rise in earnings and reduction of costs. It must survive from an economic point of view, in the conditions in which the funding received is smaller and smaller. The rise in earnings is necessary for self-financing and activity expansion, especially for research. The obtaining of venues must be permanently correlated to the cultural mission's consequent monitoring.

The distribution strategy's projection keeps also in mind some specific objectives. Among the specific objectives of the distribution process one can count the optimum protection and conservation of the heritage's components in the products offered. By their inherent nature these components are subjected to some multiple risks on the way of reaching towards the clients. There can be distinguished two risk categories: of endogenous (fragility, perish) and exogenous (because of their value they can easily be the object of theft) nature. Like in other areas of activity at the level of the History Museum of Botoșani the products are distributed using many ways. The election of the strategy is made conditioned by the objectives fixed.

Regarding the distribution policy of the County Museum of Botoșani there must also be reviewed the numerous temporary exhibitions held during 2008:

- Donations that reveal the past of Botoșani;
- The wedding exhibition;
- The books exhibition;



- The famous women exhibition;
- The Mihai Eminescu Theater exhibition for posters;
- The "talking" exhibition;
- The exhibition of wax figures;
- The exhibition dedicated to the poet Mihai Eminescu;
- The autographs' exhibition;
- The exhibition dedicated to the winter holidays.

The museum offers also a wide range of educational programs children and also parents/teachers can take part in.

It must be mentioned that the CMB had a number of exhibitions abroad that were a real success. Vatican, Poland and Switzerland hosted the exhibition of Cucuteni pots of the CMB.

A very important mean of distributing the knowledge and popularization of cultural values owned that had a large social impact is the organizing of some varied educational programs, that would focus on different market segments. These programs are part of the distribution channel in the sense of facilitating the access to cultural information and to the museum's cultural heritage, but are also part of the offer because there are being provided special educational services. The educational programs performed were both punctual, linked to a specific event realized at the museum level, and performed periodically throughout the year.

Other educational programs are projected for schools. These include active visits and recreational workshops. During 2008 have been organized 23 such programs. The participants were between 6-16 years old. Also, there have been organized on demand from authorized institutions educational programs for children with physical handicap and psychic problems from the county of Botoșani and Suceava County.

There were educational programs associated to other events or with the occasion of certain anniversaries: the town's day (23rd of August), World Children Day (1st of June), The Museums' spring and other events in the temporary exhibitions.

An important problem that the County Museum is faced with and must be resolved is how to accomplish its mission and make accessible the heritage owned and its specific offer outside the physical location. For this the museum has at least three different channels:

1. Other museums – objects from the museum’s collection can be presented as part of other exhibitions or can be organized independent exhibitions.
2. The educational system – through the use of collaboration programs, or independently, the County Museum of Botoșani can be part of the pupils’ education. Also, by using the educational system tickets can be sold for different events organized by the museums or even for visiting.
3. Tourism agencies – in the West a solid practice has been established that tourism agencies or hotels to include in their price the access in different museums. The CMB could use this method to of ticket distribution, because is one of the most attractive and important museums in the whole county.

3.4. The promoting policy

For the promoting policy of the County Museum of Botoșani to be efficient, it must be projected and consequently monitored. A first step for projecting is defining some objectives accordingly. These must be realistic. Also, they must be formulated so they can be later evaluated and compared with the results obtained.

The general objectives followed by the CMB using the promoting campaigns can be structured like this:

- a) Communicating with the public – sending messages, informing the public regarding the offer and the different programs or actions done by the museum, presenting new products or services offered, obtaining information or opinions from different audience ranges.
- b) Developing the CMB’s image – we are considering the creation, imposing and development a new brand image of the museum and the offer that it presents.
- c) Promoting the CMB’s offer – following, mainly, a rise in public’s trust regarding the museum and its offer, the stimulation of interest and wish to benefit from the respective services and programs, and also stimulation of the visitors’ numbers that pass the museum’s threshold.
- d) Public’s education – the promoting campaigns follow to influence the way of thinking and behavior of the existent public and the potential one.

The promoting policy is one of the most important marketing policies. The museums’ promoting can be achieved through many methods, depending on numerous factors, such as: the promoting activity’s budget, the specialized staff etc.

Even if the budget for marketing activities is restricted, the County Museum of Botoșani uses almost all the classic categories of museum promoting.



Thus, the most used promoting method for the CMB is the **poster**. In the Museum of Botoșani there are two kinds of panels: permanent posters refer to the museum's historic thematic, to the ceramic exhibitions etc., and temporary posters dedicated to temporary exhibitions (posters that had promoted „The exhibition

of wax figures”, „The wedding exhibition”, „The reptile exhibition” etc.). The permanent posters are, most of the time, of large dimensions, printed in a reduced number, but they are exposed in the town's central areas (the Mihai Eminescu Park area, The Union Pedestrian area, the Old Centre). The posters promoting temporary exhibitions are printed in larger numbers than the ones for permanent exhibitions and are exposed in a larger number of places that often include shops, restaurants, as well as other public places. The posters for temporary exhibitions are, most often, printed in small sizes.

Regarding the use of posters, the CMB adopted the idea that they present an image, most often photograph – only for some temporary exhibitions have been used graphical images – colored, beautiful, big, attractive and easily distinguishable.

Also, the text used on the posters informs the potential visitor about the exhibition's thematic, and the opening hour, the address.

The **picture card** is the most frequent mean for promoting a museum, after the poster. The County Museum of Botoșani can praise itself with a wide range of picture cards. The museum preferred the color picture card, with a high quality image. Thus, the visitor can buy picture cards with the image of the CMB, with interior images that include different exhibitions, as well as picture cards that present collages with the County Museum of Botoșani and the other museums from the county: the „Mihai Eminescu” Memorial House from Ipotești, the „Nicolae Iorga” Memorial House, and the Art Galleries etc. The museum offers the visitor a range of over 10 picture cards with prices varying from 50 bani to 2 lei, depending on the dimension and image and picture quality in general.

Another promoting element for the County Museum of Botoșani is the **museum booklet**. It represents an easy to read material, with images and short informing texts. The booklet offered by the museum is a combination of black and white pictures with color pictures. The images present the building's facade, the permanent exhibitions, the Mirror Hall, information regarding visitor hours, the museum's address,

as well as a little map so to be easily located. Besides this useful information, it is shortly presented the CMB's history – historical data, structure and profile.

Also, besides the booklets, the picture cards and the posters, we can mention other propaganda



materials that have the purpose of promoting the County Museum's of Botoșani image: **flyers, bookmarks, calendars, pens** etc. For example, the bookmarks are varied, from images with the museum and the other memorial houses to the personalities born in the county: Mihai Eminescu, Nicolae Iorga, Ștefan Luchian, George Enescu and others.

The **museum guide** represents one of the most complex publications. The County Museum of Botoșani chose to make a guide that includes

the most important museums in the county. Thus, besides the information and images referring to the museum's history, it contains visiting schemes that help to recognize the exhibition spaces, short presentations of the rooms and the display cabinets of most importance.

Also, there are **a series of publications edited by the County Museum of Botoșani in cooperation with the County Counsel of Botoșani**: „Botoșani – Museums and Memorial Houses”, „Nicolae Iorga and Botoșani”, „The Cucuteni Culture's Fascination”, „George Enescu – the lands of birth and childhood”, „Memories in Bricks”.

Also **the local, regional or national newspapers**, as well as **the culture magazines** represent a way in which the County Museum of Botoșani can promote itself. Thus, the numerous articles regarding the exhibitions hosted by the museum, regarding the prizes obtained by different museographers, as well as the interviews with different persons from the CMB, are just a way in which the museum's activity is made known to the general public.

A modern way of promoting the museum is the **Internet**; the CMB has even a website that can be accessed at the address www.muzeubr.ro. It is a complex website, presenting information both regarding the institution, and regarding the museums subordinated to it. The visitor has the possibility to inform himself about the museum, to take a virtual tour of it, to visualize photos with the most important exhibitions, as well as to contact a person from the museum, if he wishes additional information.

4.CONCLUSION

The marketing mix implementation for the market development of the County Museum of Botoșani is difficult to achieve because of the low level funding available. At the present moment the auto financing for the CMB remains a desideratum.

The museum would achieve a successful marketing implementation by formulating clear objectives, by an efficient management of the funds, by attracting new sponsors, collaborators and by attracting as many visitors as possible.

Four factors (Kotler and Kotler, 1998) have determined the search for applying the marketing principles and practices in the museum:

- The museum's sector development, the promoting of the Romanian cultural heritage;
- The problems regarding the financing problems;
- Multiplying the offer for spending the free time of the clients-visitors;
- The need for better visitor knowledge.

The CMB's management sees marketing more and more as a very useful tool for reaching in optimum conditions the objectives proposed. The efficient application of the modern marketing methods depends not only on the management of the respective organizations, but also on its employees. They must understand the role that the marketing policy plays, the importance of improving the work and the services that they provide. Unfortunately, the County Museum of Botoșani makes no exception at this chapter, being, like most museums in Romania, poor in this area.

Marketing would contribute to the elimination of the numerous problems that the museum is facing with, like the following: the fairly reduced number of visitors, the insufficient funds for the corresponding management of the heritage and the collections' development, the lack in popularity of its specific cultural products.

A solution for the County Museum of Botoșani was the transformation of clients from simple visitors into active users and discussion partners. Also, other persons and businesses from the museum's external environment should become active partners.

This thing is not very easy because there are some factors that limit the projection and the appliance of marketing strategies in this museum. Some negative aspects were found, such as:

- Inadequate knowledge of marketing theory and practice;

- Insufficient experience;
- The inadequate quantity and quality of market information;
- Considering the products and services offered as addressing to a any person, not to a specific segment;
- The offer's rigidity;
- The fear of radical changes;
- The lack of motivation.

A frequent wrong approach and extremely harmful is the equivalence of marketing with promotion (Kotler and Armstrong, 2004). Also, it is extremely difficult to measure the efficiency of the marketing activity performed. This is due to the fact that mostly, the objectives pursued are of socio-cultural and not financial nature.

Others factors often met are the resilience of employees, the ethical and moral problems regarding a too „commercial” approach of the offer, the fencing of access for some visitors categories etc.

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