

## Knowledge, attractiveness and intention to (re)visit the national and natural parks of the Southern Carpathian Mountains. Case study: the perception of Romanian tourists

Alexandru Cosmin CĂLIN<sup>a1</sup>, Elena MATEI<sup>b</sup>, Octavian COCOȘ<sup>b</sup> Iuliana VIJULIE<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of Bucharest, Faculty of Geography, „Simion Mehedinți” Doctoral School, Av. N. Bălcescu, 1, Bucharest, Romania

<sup>b</sup> University of Bucharest, Faculty of Geography, Av. N. Bălcescu, 1, Bucharest, Romania

**Abstract:** This paper aims at evaluating, based on the domestic tourists' perception, the relationship among the extent of knowledge, tourist attractiveness and the intention to (re)visit the natural and national parks of the Southern Carpathians. The research is based on the survey method applied on a sample of 543 people from all the Romanian counties. The results reveal a strong lack of knowledge as far as the Grădiștea Muncelului - Cioclovina and Buila - Vânturarița parks are concerned, and a very large one for Retezat, Pietra Craiului and Bucegi, which were established in these mountain massifs as early as 1935 or 1938, and 1974. The knowledge is closely related to the appreciation of attractiveness, which is perceived differently depending on the educational level, the gender of the respondents and their experience as visitors in these areas. One can notice that the attractiveness and implicitly the intention to (re)visit have as common factors, with a high influence, accommodation, food and leisure services, but also the natural resources (topography, waters, fauna and flora). Neither cultural and architectural elements, nor the costs, are factors that cluster with convergent perception. The results of this study may be useful to the park administrations and the authorities responsible for the protected natural areas in Romania (Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests; National Agency for Protected Natural Areas), in order to improve the ecotourism capitalization of the protected natural areas in Southern Carpathians.

**Key words:** *tourist attractiveness, intention to (re)visit, knowledge, multidimensional scaling, perception, Southern Carpathians, natural protected areas,*

### I. Introduction

The Southern Carpathians, the mountain unit with the highest altitude in Romania (2544 m), host most of the natural and national parks in the country. Although they cover 21% area of the Romanian Carpathian Mountains, three natural parks (Bucegi, Grădiștea Muncelului - Cioclovina, Dinosaur Geopark - Țara Hațegului) and six national parks (Pietra Craiului, Cozia, Buila – Vânturarița, The Jiu's Defile, Retezat, Domogled – Valea Cernei) have been established here. Besides, a private organization, the Foundation Conservation Carpathia, has proposed that Făgăraș, which is the highest massif, be declared a national park (Aastrup et al., 2021). All these areas are suitable for tourism and especially ecotourism (Matei et al., 2014), and their natural and anthropogenic diversity gives them a special attractiveness.

---

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author: Alexandru Cosmin CALIN, E-mail: [alexcosmin93\\_calin@yahoo.com](mailto:alexcosmin93_calin@yahoo.com). Received in August, 2022. Revised in October, 2022. Published in December, 2022.