THE CURRENT TOURISTIC CAPITALIZATION OF THE KARSTIC GORGES IN THE APUSENI MOUNTAINS

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Abstract: - The Current Touristic Capitalization of the Karstic Gorges in the Apuseni Mountains. The karstic gorges in the Apuseni Mountains have a remarkable touristic potential, thus being one of the reference resources in the Apuseni Mountains, alongside caves and cultural heritage. The Apuseni Mountains are in fact the most typical study area in this matter in Romania due to the relatively large number of sectors. The main attractions of gorges are the morphological and aesthetic features, as well as the fact that they constitute the absolutely necessary framework for some more technical forms of tourism: climbing, canyoning or even speleotourism. However, despite their considerable potential, tourism does not yet have an economic dimension around the gorges of the Apuseni Mountains. Accommodation units, the clearest indicator of such economic dimension, have not yet appeared in the gorges’ perimeter or in the immediate adjacent areas. Other units have developed in neighboring areas based on other attractive resources but they are, in most cases, unsuitable for the groups of tourists visiting gorges. In addition, the existing facilities and the presentation of gorges on the touristic market do not support tourism development in the specified areas, and do not support the development of new accommodation units.

Key-Words: karstic gorges, Apuseni Mountains, tourism, accommodation, facilities

1. Introduction
Karstic gorges occupy one of the leading positions among the touristic resources, natural or anthropogenic, of the Apuseni Mountains. In fact, three main touristic resources can be identified in this region: caves, karstic gorges and cultural heritage. This paper will focus on gorges firstly because they are the most attractive landforms in the surface landscape of the Apuseni Mountains, advantaged by the low altitudes in the mountain area whose peaks do not posses the spectacular sights of the Eastern and Southern groups of the Carpathians. Secondly, gorges address a large group of tourists through their attractive features that allow a wide range of activities, and thus, different forms of tourism can be promoted.

In addition, their locations in karstic areas situate them near other important landmarks: caves, sinkholes or karstic springs, that all contribute to the typical and very spectacular karstic landscape.

2. Touristic attractiveness of gorges
The general attractiveness of gorges is stored in a series of morphometric and morphologic features, including: the spatial development, the narrow profile of the valley that sometimes has numerous meanders, the waterfalls, the large potholes carved by evasion processes, the mosaic morphology of the slopes containing vertical karren, potholes, towers and pillars, the caves and the wide possibilities for climbing and canyoning.

One can identify some aspects related to the morphology of gorges that directly influence the touristic attraction which they emanate, and thus their potential to confirm themselves as leading touristic resources.

To begin with, for any touristic attraction (not just gorges or natural landmarks) the presence of some unique features or components provides a special attraction. This is due to the psychological effects of having been in contact with something unprecedented and unseen before. The uniqueness of some gorges

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can result from their genesis, this being the case of the Borzești Gorge, where the hydrographical network had reversed its direction of flow through capture phenomena; it can also emerge from well preserved evidence of their evolution, like the correspondence between the Cetățeaua Mare and Cetățeaua Mică caves of the Turzii Gorge, or it can just arise from specific, unique scenery features.

Most gorges, however, present a high level of attractiveness even though they do not possess any features claiming uniqueness, but that still have original, novel character. Deviations from the rules and prominent or distinctive features will always generate people’s interest, and thus will decisively contribute to the removal of monotony, a fact that is positively perceived by tourists.

The high steps over which water in the Cetii, Vâii Oșelu and Bulbuci gorges topple, forming spectacular waterfalls, the large rimstone pools in the Cetii, Geogelului and Cibului gorges, the natural bridges in the Uibăreștilor and Râmețului gorges, the arches in the Intregalde and Turzii gorges, the high towers in the Turzii Gorge [Fig.1.], the mosaic morphology of the slopes in the Turului, Poșăgii and Galbenei gorges or the very narrow profiles of the Vâii Oșelu and Sighiștelului canyons [Fig.2.] are all elements of great novelty.

Fig. 1. Turnul Ascutit in the Turzii Gorge

Fig. 2. Narrow profile in the Sighiștelului Canyon

Of course, the association of more novel features or elements in the same sector shows an increase of the structural complexity and a more profound typological diversity. Variety and the presence of more micro-forms enhanced by the “harmony index” generate an increased attractiveness of the gorge, and thus, arises the interest of tourists.

The physiognomy of gorges, shaped by all the details of the slopes and riverbeds, plays an important role in shaping the touristic offer. Different types of karren that can be admired on the slopes, the sinuous profile of some sectors etc. all awake the curiosity of tourists.

Moreover, even the genesis and evolution of gorges are processes that have numerous attractive attributes that must be brought to the attention of tourists in a rigorous but exciting manner. Explaining the way in which the Feneșului valley has split the Corabia- Dâmbău Massif in the context of its tectonic lift and the fierce competition between these two morphogenetic factors can change the perspective from which the gorge is perceived by visitors, adding a note of interest. Similarly, the mechanisms that led to the formation of peripheral subsidence gorges (Cocean P., 1988) and the paradox of the epigenetic ones, where the valley deepened in the hard rocks, instead of avoiding them while searching for soft, friable rocks, can also be quite interesting. Of course, the most intriguing scenario remains the evolution of karstic capture gorges, due to the more spectacular and complex processes. Evidence of this type of genesis are easily identifiable: the natural bridges in the Râmețului and Uibărești gorges, the narrow profile of the Galbenei Valley, the ovoid profile of the Râmețului Gorge, the proximity of the active
caves leading the water to the undergrounds (Cetăţile Ponorului and Cetăţile Rădăsei) and that will eventually be replaced by new gorge sectors can be elements of great interest, if they are presented in an appealing and easily understandable manner.

The dimensional aspect has been intentionally left in the closure or this argument simply because, although still important, it is influenced by the above features. Thus, it is true that the oversized and widely developed landforms can project a greater touristic attraction, but with some amendments in this case.

Firstly, the length is not always a great asset for karstic gorges. If for some defiles great length leads to a more attractive landmark, for karstic gorges it can be an insignificant aspect, especially if the general landscape of the gorge is less inviting. Long sectors of gorges with a wide, rather splay profile and wooded slopes are automatically surpassed by shorter sectors that present a greater complexity and a more attractive landscape. In case of difficult access, long extension becomes a negative factor. The example provided by the Videi Gorge is quite explicit in this regard. Although the longest karstic gorge in the Apuseni Mountains, it is surpassed by many other sectors that have more of the attractive features described above. The Galbenei case, where the touristic circuit only includes the appendix containing the Galbenei Karst Spring, should also be considered. Most of the tourists that visit it do not even know it is, in fact, just a small section of the gorge, being misled by the presentation board that only represents this precise sector. The particularly difficult access and the considerable length of the Galbenei Gorge would make touristic planning inside the whole gorge extremely expensive and difficult. Thus, the touristic flows have been directed towards the short section where one can note a high concentration of attractive elements. It is clear that these elements, such as the Galbenei Karst Spring, the Evantai Waterfall and the narrow profile of the valley, are in fact the attractive features that place the Galbenei Gorge among the top landmarks in the Apuseni Mountains, and not the appreciable length of the unvisited sector. On the other hand, another interesting example is provided by the Cetii Gorge, that in spite of the short extension, of slightly more than 100 meters, and the difficult access, impossible without proper equipment and climbing experience, still attracts a great number of tourists.

Secondly, the vertical display, although an extremely important aspect, is directly related to the width of the valley. It is true that the scarps instantly strike with the vertical display and thus, they give a spectacular touch to the scenery. It is also true that, generally, the higher the scarp (in terms of elevation, and not absolute altitude, of course), the greater the attraction generated. However, one can note that the perception of such heights is different according to the width of the valley. Sometimes 50 meters high scarps located in a narrow valley can be perceived as being more attractive or more impressive than scarps above 150 meters located in broad valleys. This is where subjectivity interferes, as well as the different nuances given by each situation - on the other hand, in the case of wider valleys with higher slopes, the panoramic view from the lookout points located in the upper part of the slopes are often more impressive.

3. Main types of tourism practiced in the gorges of the Apuseni Mountains

The recreational tourism, through its representative forms: hiking, climbing, canyoning, speleotourism, paragliding or cycling, is the most characteristic type of tourism inside gorges. Gorges provide wide and favorable conditions for hiking, a quite active form of tourism that involves various categories of tourists. The great variety of sectors and the diversity in length and degree of difficulty among access paths allow travelers of any age or level of training to find a suitable location to go hiking.

Thus, short distance walks, on less than five kms, are possible in a large number of gorges crossed by roads or situated relatively close to touristic routes and accommodation infrastructures. Gorges situated on the major touristic axes, like the Albacului and Mândruţului gorges on the road accompanying the Arieşului Valley and the Aiudului Gorge at the entrance in the Trascăului
Depression are among the most popular locations; and so are the sectors of valleys that allow access towards the high mountain area in Gilău - Muntele Mare (Runcului and Poșâgii gorges), the Trascău Mountains (Mănăstirii, Galdei, Intregalde, Feneș, Ampoța, etc), Pădurea Craiului (Albioarei) or Metaliferi (Cib and Ribicioarei gorges). However, the most famous location remains the Turzii Gorge, where the arrangements that ease access had made a difference.

Hiking on medium distances (five to ten kms) is possible in most gorges in the Apuseni Mountains. Crossing the gorges from one entrance to the other and returning using the same path or in a sort of circuit often fall between these values (for example the circuits of some gorges: Tureni, Turzii, Aiudului, Intregalde, Runcului and Poșâgii etc).

Long distance hiking (over ten kms) finds great conditions in the longer gorges or in the ones situated in such manner to allow circuits that would include more sectors. Such pathways are present in the Bihor Mountains: the Galbena circuit, the Someșului Cold Spring route, the Sighișoarei route; in the Trascău Mountains: Întregalde - Pravului Gorge - Râmețului Gorge – Râmeț cabin; Cetea – Cetii Gorge - Piatra Cetii - Modolești - Întregalde. In addition, there are some gorges situated in distant locations, far from roads and settlements, such as the Crișului Alb Gorge that has remained relatively isolated, because the six kms road leading to the Crișului Spring has not been repaired in years and it's only accessible by foot (or using an off-road, with caution). The Videi Gorge has a similar problem, being best reachable from the small village Râcaș and only by foot.

The majority of these trails are accessible all year round but some of them, especially the ones in the upper parts of slopes, are not recommended in winter. On the other hand, paths accompanying the riverbed should be avoided in case of heavy rain, due to the high risk of flash floods.

One should also note that some gorges include sectors that require a certain degree of training. Sometimes the valley is so narrow that there is no kind of touristic path, therefore one must continue his way through the water. In other cases there are some minimal arrangements: strategically placed ropes, chains, handholds and ladders. Such sectors can be very challenging under any kind of weather and may become unapproachable under difficult conditions (rain or snow). Sometimes passing through such sectors requires climbing skills, the second important form of tourism inside gorges.

The various dimensional and altimetric aspects of the steep slopes have turned gorges into the most favorable locations for climbing in the Apuseni Mountains. Each category of scarps contains some sectors where climbing has developed under one of its forms: classical rock climbing, sport climbing, endurance climbing (on more than 2-3 pitches) or bouldering, a form of climbing practiced without rope, on more difficult routes, but at relatively low heights.

The Turzii Gorge remains the most famous climbing location in the Apuseni Mountains, due to its 18 zones of over 300 trails (Coecean, Anghel, 2011). But the interest towards other gorges is raising as well, thus Turenilor, Aiudului, Mănăstirii, Feneșului, Intregaldei, Cetii, Ampoței gorges are becoming better known, and so do some of the gorges in the Metaliferi Mountains: Cibului, Madei and Glodului.

Climbers constitute a significant percentage of the tourists visiting gorges. The influx of climbers is especially important in the Trascău Mountains, which concentrate a high number of gorges as well as isolated massifs that are also particularly favorable for this sport. In addition, climbing is a form of tourism that does not show such a seasonal pattern, being practiced during summer on the shaded sectors (the north-facing walls or the entries in some caves, like the Ungurească Cave), in spring and autumn time, when the temperatures are at their best in all areas and during winter. In the cold season, this form of tourism uses the south-facing sectors, such as Peretele Aerian or Peretele Cald, and is completed by a quite novel form of ascents, ice climbing. Because of its dependence of water flows along the scarps that would allow the accumulation of ice, it has found few suitable places. The best known locations for ice climbing are the Râchițele Waterfall at the exit from the Văii Stanciului Gorge, and the ice verticals that sometimes form in the Runcului Gorge.
**Canyoning** is the form of tourism that can only be performed inside gorges and canyons. The Apuseni Mountains, with their great number of karstic gorges is one of the main locations for canyoning in Romania. Vâii Oşelu and Cetii gorges have the greatest potential for canyoning due to the successions of waterfalls and large rimstone pools, thus representing ideal areas for canyoning. It is particularly important for the tourists that practice canyoning to know the morphology of the gorge, and the possibilities of withdrawal from the route, in case of extreme conditions.

**Speleotourism** is an important form of tourism practiced in the karstic areas of the Apuseni Mountains, gorges included. If the Trascău Mountains excelled in terms of suitability for climbing, for speleotourism it is the Bihor and Pădurea Craiului Mountains that are representative in this region, due to their higher degree of endo-karstic activity that resulted in larger and more complex caves.

However, one must not forget that the main resource for speleotourism remains the cave. In most caves the passage itself becomes an attraction due to the difficult access: crossing narrow passages in which one can only crawl, climbing or rappelling in vertical pits, cave diving in sectors which are at least partially filled with water, etc. Such caves can only be visited by a small category of tourists that posses the necessary skills, training and equipment.

In such cases, gorges only participate alongside caves to the natural heritage of the areas. It is the case of the gorges located near grand caves (the Mişidului Gorge located near the Vântului Cave, the Vâii Gărdel Gorge near the Ghețarul Vârtop cave, the Ordâncușe Gorge near the Ghețarul Scarisoara and Pojarul Poliței caves etc) or situated upstream or downstream of the caves that are currently modeled by the water – Cetățile Ponorului downstream of the Vâii Cetăților Gorge and Cetățile Rădesiei that stands at the origin of the Someșului Cald Gorge).

The situation of small caves close to the riverbed is quite different because they are basically part of the attractive features of the gorge. Unlike the great caves mentioned before, in this case extended speleological incursions are not possible. The small caves inside gorges mainly have an aesthetic value and enrich the touristic offer of the gorges. The crossing of the Sighiștelului Gorge would not be as charming without the brief exploration of the underground world through Coliboia, Tibocoia and Mâgura caves, nor would the Turzii Gorge circuit without Cetățea Mare, Cetățea Mică or Peștera Ungurească caves.

There are however other less representative forms of recreational tourism: **cycling,** practiced along country roads, forest trails parts of the hiking trails that can be approached with the mountain bike, and **paragliding** for which the best known location is the Turzii Gorge (considering the restriction period between February 15th and July 31st, the nesting period of the Golden Eagle), practiced however by a small group of tourists.

**Geotourism** is another form of tourism, situated at the borderline between the recreational tourism and cultural tourism (due to its both active and educational features). It involves sightseeing in the perimeter of geosites and Geoparks. Of course, most of the karstic gorges (epigenetic, antecedent, of peripheral subsidence or karstic caption) can be found on the list of referential geosites in the Apuseni Mountains.

A first attempt to organize thematic circuits in the area is the so-called “Drumul Calcarului” (Limestone Road) in the Trascău Mountains. It is an integrated circuit that includes 15 natural reserves, thus being, in fact, too general. More specific circuits, more selective and more focused on some aspects are in order. “Gorge roads” should be planned in the Trascău Mountains, especially in the Intregalde- Râmeț area, as well as in the Bihor Mountains, in the Padiș- Cetățile Ponorului- Sighiștel area. Of course, the didactic dimension of geotourism must not be forgotten, such circuits require information points, guides or at least more comprehensive information panels.

Other forms of cultural tourism present in such areas must also be mentioned: **religious tourism** caused by the location of monasteries in protected, scenic places like the perimeter of gorges: Poșaga or Râmeț monasteries; **ecotourism,** one should not forget that most gorges are parts of natural parks or complex
reserves: Turzii, Intregalde, Poșaga, Râmeț, Vâii Morilor, Cibului etc; rural tourism in the proximity of those gorges located in highly populated areas. The most representative example of a rural destination is the Albac village, although many other villages or settlements located near gorges have that genuine rural ambience, in which tourists can discover the rural world with all its customs, traditions, crafts, festivals, folklore, gastronomy, etc.

4. Touristic infrastructure and facilities around gorges

Although gorges possess a high attractive potential that allows several forms of tourism to expend, one can note that the touristic infrastructure is however poorly developed in most cases.

There are few accommodation units located in the very heart of gorges’, mostly because of the morphology of such sites. One such unit is the boarding house located in the central section of the Aiudului Gorge, right next to the old Vălișoara camping.

Even if, generally, the narrow sectors are not suitable for the construction of accommodation infrastructures, the areas right before the entrance in such sectors could be convenient locations. They used to be exploited by tourism, some of the main cabins in the Trascău Mountains having such locations: Cheile Turzii, Râmeț or Intregalde. Today, when most cabins are closed (only the Râmeț cabin still functioning) one can also note that most such places are not properly capitalized.

Still, the problem for most gorges in the Apuseni Mountains is that there are no accommodation units in the nearby area, let alone the entrance points. This may be due to the position of such gorges, far from main roads (the sectors from the upper basin of the Râmeț Valley, the Cetii and Ocolișelului gorges), to the relative isolation from other landmarks (Videi or Crișului Alb gorges) or simply to the lack of interest and promotion (Intregaldelor, Galdei, Tureni, Cuților, Ardeului etc.).

Tourists visiting these areas have to choose between camping near the gorges (first choice mainly for the climbers, speleotourists and some hikers) and searching for accommodation in the nearby regions. A real issue is that for some gorges there are no such units on even more than 20 or 30 km, the situation being quite different from one mountain region to another one.

The Trascău Mountains stand out in the Apuseni Mountains due to the large number of gorges, 22, which are also their main touristic asset (Popescu-Argeșel, I. 1977; Cocean P. 1988). The expansion of accommodation facilities, however, does not comply with its potential.

Of all the gorges in the Trascău Mountains, the most advantaged in terms of infrastructure and accommodation are the Aiudului Gorge and the ones in the nearby Trascău Depression-Bedeleu area (Siloșului, Plaiului, Bedeleului, Pleșii and Drăgoiului). Tourists visiting these gorges can easily find accommodation in nearby Rimetea (263 beds in 19 boarding houses and 44 beds in a camping) or Livezile (36 beds in four boarding houses).

The situation of infrastructures in the other two main regions constituted around gorges is precarious. In the Tur- Hâșdate area, which includes the Turzii and Tureni gorges, there is just one boarding house (of 17 beds) and a camping. The Petrești ridge is however situated near major roads, allowing greater mobility of tourists, who may resort to the accommodation in Tureni, Mihai Viteazu and, of course, Turda. The status of the Râmeț- Intregalde area is quite similar, except of the favourable location. This area includes all the gorges in the Râmeț Basin (Mănăstirii, Râmețului, Pravului, Bălții, Geogelului) and Galdei basin (TecEstilor, Cetii, Galdei, Găldiței, Intregaldelor) and only has the Râmeț cabin and the boarding house in Geoagiul de Sus with 14 beds, in the perimeter.

As far as the gorges in the southern part of Trascău are concerned, their situations are quite different: while the Feneșului Gorge has no kind of accommodation near by closer than Zlatna, the Ampoței gorge benefits from the proximity of the Pietrele Ampoței isolated massifs, that have three boarding houses that can host up to 42 guests in their neighboring area.

Gorges in the Bihor Mountains are part of a wider, more complex touristic offer, containing other important landmarks that led to an increased development of accommodation infrastructures.

The Padiș- Cetățile Ponorului area is
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...emblematic for the Bihor Mountains, comprising the gorges in the Boga Bazine, Văii Cetăților Gorge and of course, the Galbenei Gorge. There are more options in this area: several cabins on the Padis Plateau, the Cetățile Ponorului Cabin (48 beds) and the five boarding houses in Pietroasa. The Someșului Cald Gorge is also included in this touristic area, although its visitors can also choose the accommodation in Mărgău (four boarding houses), which also serves the nearby Văii Stanciu Gorge in Vlădeasa.

...The Scașișoara- Casa de Piatră area, comprising the Ordâncușe Gorge, the two sectors of the Gârdei Valley, Albacului and Mândruțaului gorges is equally famous. The touristic infrastructures are just emerging on the Scașișoara- Ocoale plateau and in Casa de Piatră village, but the area benefits from the high-capacity accommodation in the locations from the Arieșului Valley: Arieșeni (29 units, mainly boarding houses, but villas and cabins as well, with a total capacity of 535 beds), followed by Albac (18 units with 267 beds), Gârda de Jos (10 units with 117 beds) and Scașișoara and Horea (one boarding house each).

...The Sighiștel- Valea Crăiașa area has no accommodation facilities, therefore tourists must either camp on the plateau at the entrance or use the tourist infrastructure in Nucet-Bâta (280 beds).

...Tourists visiting the gorges in Gilău-Muntele Mare do not have a lot of options since the tourist area of Belioara is quite isolated from this point of view, Belioara Resort being quite distant and no touristic services functioning in the nearby sector of the Arieșului Valley.

...The Videi Gorge is just as isolated, unlike the other gorges in Păduarea Craiului Mountains. In the Albioara- Soimăș area, constituted around the Albioarei, Cuciul and Lazurilor gorges, there are a camping and a boarding house of 61 beds, in Remetea. The Mișidului Gorge has a great location besides the Crișului Defilee around which some hosting units have emerged in Bratca (32 beds in two boarding houses) and Vadu Crișului (96 beds in two units).

...Considering the touristic offer, the Metaliferi Mountains benefit from the presence of Geoagiu Băi resort, with a total of 1349 beds concentrated mainly in hotels and villas. Moreover, the Geoagiu- Cib area relies on these facilities, because in the proximity of such important gorges as Glodului, Madei, Cibului only one cabin and one boarding house can receive guests.

...The Bulzeștă area is not very developed either from this point of view. Basically, the closest accommodation facilities to the the Uibărești or Ribicioarei gorges are the six boarding houses of 89 beds in Brad, or the one in Tebea.

...Last but not least, the area between the Arieșului Mic and Crișului Alb Valleys, including the Văii Morilor and Crișului Alb gorges has two boarding houses in the nearby Vidra (23 beds), and Câmpeni or Vadu Moților are not very distant either.

...The accommodation units presented above reflect the options that tourists have when staying overnight in certain areas. However, it does not reflect the choices they actually make. And that is the result of the incompatibility between the specific forms of tourism practiced in gorges and the accommodation in nearby regions. For example, it is highly unlike that a tourist that wants to climb in the Cib Gorge for a couple of days to go spend the night in a hotel in Geoagiu Bai, he will probably just camp at the base of the slopes or close enough. The situation would be quite different if suitable accommodation units functioned in the area: cabins, campings or boarding houses.

...Thus, we believe that an essential first step towards the development of tourism in the gorges of the Apuseni Mountains is the appearance of cabins close to the gorges frequented by tourists and that do not have other kind of accommodation nearby. The main priorities are Galbenei, Intregalde, Tureni, Runcului, Poșaga, Glod and Uibărești gorges. The development of lodging infrastructure is necessary for economic capitalization of landmarks, while being its fundamental indicator.

...Any analysis of tourism development in a territory can not neglect the arrangements of landmarks, from information panels, to picnic areas, balconies or arrangements for touristic access, arrangements for the enhancement of some touristic resources etc.

...One can notice that gorges that are part of the Apuseni Natural Park or other nature reserves have quite detailed information panels, containing...
scientific information and maps or images for a better orientation. The situation of the other gorges, that are not yet protected areas, is quite different; most of them often do not even have appropriate trail signs, some of them being bypassed by touristic trails, thus the orientation in the field can be difficult: Ocolișelului, Crișului Alb gorges etc.

The most important arrangements inside gorges, alongside safety measures, are the ones facilitating the access. In some cases, like the Turzii Gorge, these arrangements have quite an impact, some parts of the trail have been covered in asphalt, there are several bridges, ropes have been placed in the more exposed sectors, a via ferrata has been recently installed etc. But still, these arrangements did not eliminate the risks that tourists are exposed to; and in the Turzii Gorge falling rocks in the touristic path are not actually rare. In other cases, like the Râmețului and Galbenei gorges (the sector of the Galbenei Karstic Spring) arrangements are minimal, with handholds, chains or steel cables fixed at 1-1.5 meters above the river.

Of course arrangement of gorges is still far from what it should be in order to ensure touristic capitalization of the full potential of gorges. Ease of access in the difficult sectors should be a priority, in order to make the gorges accessible to a larger number of visitors; safety measures must be multiplied (constructions to protect from the risk of falling rocks, installation of a warning system on potential floods, etc.); information boards must be present in all gorges and at the entry of the main gorges tourist info-points should be considered. Still, one should remember that all arrangements made inside a geosite should respect the principle of minimum intervention.

And last but not least, marketing for gorges should be more pro-active. At the moment, there are few gorges that are actually included in travel guides or that have dedicated brochures to promote their image. The presentation of gorges on the tourist market should be more visible, and it should use appropriate information in an interesting and attractive manner. A potential direction of drawing public attention is the organization of sport events or competitions, like the Atta Cup in Turzii Gorge. This marketing for gorges should begin in parallel with the development of infrastructure and arrangements, since they are all interconnected and are all based on the particular attractive potential of the gorges from the Apuseni Mountain.

5. Conclusions

The touristic offer based on the gorges in the Apuseni Mountains is still rather poor, even if these landforms are among the most important landmarks in the Apuseni Mountains. The attractiveness of gorges is quite significant and creates the background for a wide range of types and forms of tourism. Still, the poor touristic infrastructure in gorges’ perimeter and the incompatibility between the types of tourism in the gorges and the accommodation units in the nearby areas, show that the development of tourism in this area, under its economic dimension, is still a desideratum. Of course, this determines the insufficient and inefficient marketing of these landmarks, having negative consequences over the touristic flows. But all these matters can be eliminated by planning new accommodation units, facilitating the access to some locations and by actively marketing gorges as a reference Landmark of the Apuseni Mountains.

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