Abstract
Hiking is part of outdoor activities and, at the same time, is a way of doing physical education. It is an extracurricular activity, playing a major formative role for the young generation.
It favorably influences the development of the individual’s physical appearance, especially by increasing aerobic endurance and by causing positive changes in the cardiovascular system.
It also influences in a positive way the individual’s psychic health, by favorably acting upon some psychic phenomena like: will, courage, motivation, sociability, thinking, etc.
Taking these aspects into consideration, we think that those involved in the shaping of the young generation should pay more attention to hiking.

Keywords: tourism, mountain, hiking, extracurricular, adolescence

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Conceptual delimitation
Tourism is defined as a “sporting activity which consists in traveling on foot through picturesque landscapes or through regions interesting from a scientific point of view” (Frazzei, F., 2004, quoting from the Dictionary of Modern Romanian Usage). Pedestrian tourism is foot tourism, not requiring thus a transportation device, and is often also called hiking. If tourist activities take place in the mountains (as often happens), they are called mountain pedestrian tourism or mountain hiking.

The same activity is improperly called mountain tourism by a (still) large number of people practicing it and by many others. We believe that this expression is not appropriate because it greatly limits the meaning of the concept, reducing it to pedestrian tourism. Mountain tourism has a much broader meaning and refers to: rest and recreation tourism, pleasure tourism, (summer and winter) sport tourism, ecotourism, hunting tourism, religious tourism and we might probably go on with examples (Drăgoi, C-C., 2006).

The English notions of trekking and hiking have been adopted lately by our language. Hiking is defined as pedestrian tourism, mountain walk, travelling

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through saddles and climbing mountain peaks, following marked or non-marked trails, while trekking is accepted and translated into Romanian as pedestrian tourism in the mountains, an activity consisting in walking on trails, but most often off trails, and sometimes requiring the use of one’s hands for moving forward, and lasting several days. We can notice that these two notions are sometimes given similar meanings in Romanian, because some “experts” give personal interpretations to these concepts, since a proper conceptual delimitation is lacking.

**Defining characteristics**

Mountain pedestrian tourism or hiking means walk, but a walk that is not only efficient in terms of physical and mental health, but goes beyond that. It is a totally free activity, the tourist (trekker, hiker or randonneur in French) having to pay only the price of his physical effort, which many times accompanies the pleasure of walking. The tourist enters at his own pace in a special environment, which is a mountain landscape or another natural setting, and which can offer him what he is looking for: space, elevation, quiet, landscapes etc. (Elziere, C., 1997).

Tourists consider mountain walks to be their easy but active contact with the landscape, the elements of which are in total harmony, their patient but sure victory over each trail curve, over each crest, over the horizon which is always higher as the altitude increases. Being active and contemplative at the same time, hiking offers one the pleasure of becoming one with the wild, genuine, nature, this intimate relationship being achieved in time.

Pedestrian tourism has become a hugely widespread activity during the last two decades, an activity practiced especially by city dwellers. They are the ones who mostly feel the need to retrieve natural settings, to rediscover a simpler way of life, as well as the need of physical exercise and oxygen, of less costly holidays (Elziere, C., 1997).

Tourist activities are activities by which the human person acts upon herself, under different forms, the object of her action being her own body. The main purpose for practicing these activities is obtaining a more harmonious development from both a physiological and psychological point of view.

Tourism is a type of sport that involves long-term aerobic effort (III), of medium intensity, punctuated, during more challenging climbs, by higher levels of effort, where the anaerobic threshold is reached. This threshold involves more difficult moments, where the pleasure of travelling through and admiring a picturesque landscape may be obscured by pronounced fatigue. In this case, physical endurance and perseverance become necessary tools for overcoming momentary difficulties.

**Physiological and psychological impacts**

The mountain climate, with different altitude levels, is characterized by low atmospheric pressure, extremely low temperature and humidity, strong currents of
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Mountain tourism involves the participants’ direct contact with natural environment factors and with their sudden fluctuation, a thing which contributes to an adequate strengthening of the self.

This type of activity has an important impact on the cardiovascular system, stimulating the circulatory activity. Also, it causes a higher respiration rate, which is needed to satisfy the oxygen uptake requirements and the delivery of oxygen to the muscles and to the organs participating in the effort (Demeter, A., 1972).

Depending on the length and the difficulty level of the journey, the human organism makes a great, a medium or a small effort.

Heart rate values usually range between 120 and 150 heartbeats per minute, but they can be higher in certain cases, between 165 and 170 heartbeats per minute, and smaller in other cases, under 120 heartbeats per minute, especially during a smooth descent. The heart-rate recovery time is between 2 and 4 minutes, being shorter for people with greater physical fitness.

The respiration rate increases proportionally with the level of effort and may get to 25–30 breaths per minute, influencing the maximal oxygen uptake (VO2 max).

Once at higher altitudes, the aerobic effort greatly increases the capacity of the organism to take, deliver and use the oxygen (Demeter, A., 1972).

Mountain tourism helps very much, thus, develop aerobic endurance and strengthen the organism of young people.

Its impacts do not stop here, however. Its positive impact on the favorable development of certain aspects of teenagers’ personality can be seen in those who regularly practice mountain hiking.

**Extracurricular activity**

Mountain pedestrian tourism or mountain hiking is part of outdoor activities and, at the same time, is a way of doing physical education. It is an extracurricular activity, playing a major formative role for the young generation.

It differs from the other ways of doing physical education because it takes place in a natural environment – on footpaths, through the woods, along watercourses, in the mountains and does not require special conditions (gyms, courts, pools etc.).

Practicing different forms of tourism offers one the possibility of combining psychic renewal and active rest, on the one hand, with outdoor physical exercise and familiarization with attractive tourist areas, on the other hand, contributing, thus, to accomplishing educational tasks required in secondary education.
Pedestrian tourism during adolescence can also be conceived as an educational and physical activity outside the school. School tourism is by its nature formative, its purpose being that of familiarizing children with this activity and playing, thus, a particular role.

The educational purpose of these activities is accomplished by expanding the field of knowledge concerning certain natural or socio-economic phenomena, by engaging children in observation, research and application activities. The educational role of tourist activities becomes apparent in the development of an enquiring spirit, in the moral development of a person, in the ability to use leisure time in a refreshing manner, in a person’s familiarity with realities other than the usual ones.

School tourist activities can also be seen as a complex teaching method, because they use almost all other teaching methods and because they encourage intellectual, moral, physical, esthetical and environmental education.

Mountain tourism activities practiced during adolescence can be a good support for the elaboration of educational extracurricular programs meant to develop a teenager’s personality. Tourist activities should be planned by teachers who have academic and practical knowledge in this field and who can plan tourist routes and draw up a system of the best managerial strategies.

Different forms of mountain tourism allow integral experiences in nature, offer numerous possibilities of moral development, encourage action, cause a state of biological and spiritual equilibrium, and engage the entire developing personality. At the same time, teenagers can learn to know themselves better and to achieve a better understanding of the surrounding world.

Encouraging teenagers to practice tourism means offering them a true personal and social education, allowing them to manifest themselves in nature. Being interested in active tourism is a crucial condition for the development of a positive attitude towards tourist activities, such an attitude being manifest in the permanent inclination to acquire more knowledge and to accomplish oneself. Therefore, identifying teenagers’ interest in different forms of tourism and identifying the reasons behind this interest are the main tasks of trainers who should be able to correlate the knowledge and the practice of teenagers, and to help them evolve intellectually.

**Conclusions. Recommendations**

Mountain pedestrian tourism or hiking is great refreshment, a type of active rest and of strengthening of health for young people and for others.

It favorably influences the development of the individual’s physical appearance, especially by increasing aerobic endurance and by causing positive changes in the cardiovascular system.
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At the same time, it influences in a positive way the individual’s psychic health, by favorably acting upon some psychic phenomena like: will, courage, motivation, sociability, thinking, memory, etc.

It is an extracurricular activity, with a major educational role, which should be taken more into consideration by those responsible with the education of the young generation.

Taking these aspects into consideration, we think that we can present a few recommendations:

- To increase the number of tourist activities among the extracurricular activities in secondary education.
- To include a greater number of tourist activities in extracurricular educational programs and to create departments of tourism where different tourist routes and tourist activities should be made popular.
- To attract a greater number of young people in tourist activities and to encourage their involvement in tourist societies, canalizing thus their energy into a positive development of their personality and avoiding their fall into the traps of momentary illusions (alcohol, drugs, sex, and easy ways to make money).
- The staff involved in the education of teenagers should carefully plan and organize tourist activities so that they might succeed in cultivating in teenagers’ personalities their beneficial attraction towards tourism, creating at the same time the favorable conditions for building team spirit, attachment to human values and creation, competitive spirit, as well as training moral and volitional qualities.

REFERENCES