

STRATEGIES TO ATTRACT TOURISTS IN BIHOR COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

Bihor county has a high tourism potential but defectively exploited. Through a better use of tourism, Bihor county could attract significant sources of income, but in order to accomplish this it has to develop and implement a set of strategies that lead to attracting more tourists.

Key words: tourism, potential, strategy, perspective

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become nowadays a task as important as those carried out in other key sectors of the global economy.

Tourism activity in our country is well supported by a valuable tourism potential - natural anthropogenic - differentiated on areas, which are organized according to the different types of tourism (Morna A., 2011). Best known in Romanian tourism practice are: *health tourism*, which harness the therapeutic qualities of natural factors (thermal and mineral springs, mud, ionized air); *mountaineering and winter sports*, practiced on a large scale for hiking, climatic cure and winter sports; *cultural tourism*, organized for sightseeing of art, culture and other achievements of human activities; *commercial tourism exhibition*, whose practice is occasioned by high profile events (fairs, exhibitions), which attract many visitors; *festival tourism*, occasioned by cultural and artistic events (ethnographic, folk) national or international; *sports tourism*, which knows a great national and international expansion, having as motivation various national and international sports competitions (Morna A., 2011).

Romania and Bihor county in particular have a high tourism potential but defectively exploited (Camera de comerț și industrie Bihor, 2015). A high potential because it can be carried out throughout the whole year, providing pools with thermal water, ski slopes, ponds for fishing, caves, mountain areas for tourist routes, the most significant and famous being the tourism for health reasons (treatment with thermal water).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Bihor County is one of the most important counties, due to the high tourism potential, characterized by the beauty of the natural landscape, historical monuments, folklore and ethnographic items, but its turning to advantage is slow.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bihor county has 5 tourist areas of national and local interest, as presented in Table 1.

Table no. 1

Touristic areas in Bihor county

Area	Landmarks
1. Apuseni Mountains area	South-East of Bihor county, Beiuș, Budureasa, Ștei, Lunca, Băița
2. Oradea area	metropolitan Oradea area included
3. Beiuș Country area	Central-South of Bihor county, Beiuș, Ștei, Vașcău, Roșia, Remetea
4. Crișul Repede valley	Extreme North-East of Bihor county is crossed by Crișul Repede river, Cluj, Oradea, Beiuș, Aleșd.
5. Crișurilor Plain	Crossed by the three rivers: Crișul Repede, Crișul Alb and Crișul Negru

Source: http://www.turismbihor.info/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=29&Itemid=41, accesat la data de 24.04.2013

A. Apuseni Mountains area

Location and access: the south-eastern extremity of Bihor County.

The area's tourism particularities: tourist heritage of the Apuseni area is characterized by karst landscape: caves, gorges, canyons, karst plateaus, being one of the most impressive in Romania, having a scientific and aesthetic value, but little exploited in terms of tourism (Dr. Könyves Erika -coord., 2014).

Thanks to the ski slopes in the area, the tourist activity is more intense in winter than summer. The area offers the possibility of practicing various tourist activities: hiking, cycling, mountain biking, climbing,

speleology, rafting, paragliding. In the area there are centers where you can rent: ATVs, sleds, snowmobiles, skis, snowboards, and there are also ski and snowboard instructors.

Guest houses in the area organize hiking trips and team-building activities. In this area there is a school of Speleology, namely in the Padiș-Căput area, that provides internships in the alpine caving technique.

Faulty infrastructure is a disadvantage in terms of tourism development of the area. An important problem is the insufficiency of the accommodation and camping places in Padiș. The existence of events, such as Snow Festival, has a significant impact on tourist areas, representing thus a tourist attraction.

B. Oradea area

*Location*¹: metropolitan area of Oradiei is located in the North-West area of the county.

The area's tourism particularities: Tourist area of Oradea is one of the most developed areas in the county in terms of tourism. The area is recognized nationally and internationally because of the medicinal water and treatment bases. Oradea was awarded as the "Green Capital", because of the size of green areas. The tourism potential is given by architecture and monuments' history and location on a relatively small area. The area takes advantage of many attractions that can be included within the sightseeing tours in the county (ebihoreanul.ro). A disadvantage are the touristic attractions in need of repair, but not included yet in the rehabilitation program (buildings of historical and architectural value).

The city is close to two major resorts: Băile 1 Mai and Băile Felix. Băile Felix is the largest permanent spa base in Romania. The area offers the possibility of practicing various tourist activities: hiking, horseback riding, fishing etc. The tourist infrastructure of the area is developed, as there are over 60 tourist accommodations. Access to the area can be done by road, rail and air. Allocated funds are needed to repair road infrastructure, but also for airport modernization. Băile Felix and Băile 1 Mai require investments for modernization of accommodation and treatment bases (bihar-bihor.eu).

C. Beiuș Country area

Location: central-south area of Bihor county

¹ <http://www.comune.ro/?/judet/ijud5/>

The area's tourism particularities: accessibility of the area, the presence of culture and traditional crafts, areas rich in ethnographic elements, with traditional mountain villages, are a special attraction in Bihor county. Traditional cuisine is particularly tasty, but little is enhanced by the restaurants in the county (apusenixperience.ro).

The existence in the area of tourist caves managed at an internationally level is an advantage for the area, but the number is small compared to its potential. Caves in the area are part of the largest networks managed tourist caves in Romania(extreme-zone-aventura.ro).

At the tourists' disposal are put tourist centers, tourist guides. It was found the presence of many souvenir shops in tourist areas (comune.ro). The interest of local communities promoting and preserving traditional specifics is declining, although taking economical advantage of the area would mean a significant source of income for the village. One drawback to the area is the location of tourist facilities in remote areas difficult to access on forest roads.

D. Crișul Repede Valley area

Location: extreme north-eastern part of Bihor county, being crossed by Crișul Repede.

The area's tourism particularities: The area of Crișul Repede Valley is appreciated as one rich in caves of great value in terms of scientific, caving and tourism points of view, with ethnographic elements, human settlements, worship settlements, all harmoniously joined to give a special charm to the area (cjbihor.ro).

Crișul Repede Valley area enjoys a favorable position because of the link with E60 European road. Access to the area can be also done by railway, which is an advantage for the development of the area. The area has the potential to become an important tourist destination if one takes into account the following aspects: improvement of national and local roads and tourist routes of interest, community involvement to develop the area, setting up tourist centers or information in tourist areas, reorganization of the promotion zone (marketing activity).

Investments in tourism infrastructure are needed on upgrading existing accommodation facilities and develop new ones. Given its great potential, the area is favorable for the development of ecotourism, agritourism and speleology.

E. Crișurilor Plain area

Location: the western area of the county, on the border with Hungary.

The area's tourism particularities. Crişurilor Plain, bordering Hungary, known for fortresses and archaeological sites, fishery lakes and cellars famous for wine storage, is an area where customs and traditions are preserved, but the interest of local communities promoting and preserving traditional specifics is decreasing. Gastronomy is an important attraction of the area that became promoted in recent years.

However, tourism infrastructure is underdeveloped, with a small number of accommodations. Allocated funds are needed to repair road infrastructure and investments for the modernization of the existing accommodations. Lack of water and sewerage networks are important issues the area faces in terms of tourism development (bihor.insse.ro).

After analyzing the above data, we identified a set of five strategies to increase the number of tourists in Bihor county.

1. Infrastructure development is important to all fields, including tourism. Special emphasis should be placed on introducing Oradea airport among international ones, as any foreign investor needs flexibility and fast moving. These are the premises from which it starts when considering various business opportunities.

2. The development of tourism products can be achieved by:

- creating active tours for tourists: hiking, bike trails, kayak, equestrian, in Stana de Vale and Padiş area;
- development of recreational services, especially in Băile Felix and 1 Mai resorts;
- creating an adventure park in the Băile Felix forest;
- developing of cultural services, especially in Oradea.

3. Restoring walking trails in the Stana de Vale and Padiş area.

4. Management strategies through:

- training a qualified and properly motivated personnel;
- implementing modern management methods that result in improved quality of tourist services;
- building regional, national and cross-border projects of tourism development;

5. Marketing strategies by:

- communication and easy access to information for tourists;

- creating a website to promote tourism in Bihor county;
- tourism development by involving all stakeholders in the market;
- aggressive marketing promotion.

CONCLUSIONS

The data presented and analyzed show that Bihor county has a high but underused tourism potential.

Tourism products should be developed in order to reduce seasonality and to increase demand for tourism products.

In order to succeed in this endeavor, involving all stakeholders in the market is mandatory.

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