

THE EVOLUTION OF TOURIST ACTIVITY IN THE WEST REGION CORRELATED WITH TOURIST RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND LEGISLATION ISSUES

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Abstract: *The tourist activity is connected to the existence of tourist resources and is influenced by a series of factors, among which the legislation in force. The multitude and diversity of tourist resources does not guarantee a lucrative tourist activity. Their responsible exploitation, their inclusion in the national or international heritage according to the legislation in force can be an asset of tourist development within a region.*

In Romania, numerous natural and anthropogenic tourist resources were identified, some of which being already included in the tourist circuit.

The West Region is one of the development regions established in 1998, located in the western part of the country, which is made up of Arad, Caraş-Severin, Hunedoara and Timiş Counties, and covers an area of 32.028 km². The existing tourist resources in this region have led to the development of various types and forms of tourism such as wellness, leisure and recreation, mountain, rural, cultural, scientific, and business tourism.

The evolution of tourist activity in the region under discussion goes together with the development of tourist activity in Romania. Some of the issues identified are linked to resource valorisation, legal changes and ignoring legislation.

Keywords: *tourist resources, tourism, legislation, development, region*

Introduction

Tourism is the field which is based on the environment, and for its development, an important role is played by the tourist resources in the area of interest. Considering the origin of resources, two main categories of tourist resources stand out, natural and anthropogenic. Natural resources are composed of relief, climate, hydrographical network, flora and fauna, natural protected areas, while the anthropogenic resources include historical relics, religious settlements and the cultural-artistic heritage. The historical relics represent archaeological findings (cave animal skeletons, tools, pots, coins, weapons, from different periods in history), castra, fortresses, and castles. Religious settlements are varied, depending on the degree of development of society and

religion, thus we distinguish sanctuaries, churches, monasteries, mosques and synagogues. The cultural-artistic heritage includes collections of graphics, painting, sculpture, literary works, musical works, monuments, statues, commemorative plates, architecturally significant buildings, memorials houses, museums etc.

These categories of resources, and implicitly tourism development in an area, are supported by numerous events that are held periodically.

The mere existence of these resources does not provide a safety guarantee of success in tourism, therefore a number of factors must be taken into consideration. Thus, the factors that influence tourism are social (urbanization, weekly and yearly paid holidays), economic (population's incomes, tourist offer, prices and fares), technical, demographic, educational and psychological, political.

Romania is a member state of the European Union having numerous valuable tourist resources which are still insufficiently exploited. Each development region of the country has tourist resources capable of supporting tourism development, including the West Region.

The existing legislation for tourism regulates the main aspects regarding the organization and development of this economic sector, which is in accordance with the EU legislation.

Legal issues

Tourist activity in regions, at national level or in relation to EU developments must be reinforced by a legal framework that should succeed in combining the three levels, national, regional and community, since in the case of regions it is possible that one of the affiliated countries is not an EU member.

Also, the EU requirement for the alignment of national law with Community law must be taken into consideration. The diversity of climate, soils and human activities has created a great diversity of natural and semi-natural environment where there is a plethora of species of plants, animals or the existence of sites. Despite the progress in nature protection policies, including by the legal regulation of tourist activity in the Member States, many species populations do not cease to decrease whether they are rare or common species.

In just a few decades, increasing human activity in different areas, agriculture, forestry, industry, energy, transport and tourism has led to losses or even natural fragmentation.

Legal regulations must consider Community law which is based on directives "Oiseaux" and "Habitats" providing safeguard of natural environments and of fauna and flora species, especially by establishing a European network of protected sites and the main EU legislation on biodiversity.

Still, at present managing tourist resources through legal issues is deficient, as there are gaps in the Community legal system governing environmental issues.

A first step towards the improvement of relevant legislation is the completion and consolidation of regulations in a number of fields including the legal framework governing tourism. Likewise, a priority must be the improvement of the legislation in force in order to build a coherent operational legal structure, while facilitating a better control of the implementation of the Directives. Increasing the role and requirements of Community norms towards the protection of the environment and tourism is claimed by a double imperative: internal and external.

At a national level, the absence of a high level of environmental and tourism protection has already led to some loss of interest of some countries, especially the developed ones, towards Community law. Unless they switch to the adjustment of firm and appropriate rules, we may presume that Member States will rather follow their own regulations. A stable Community legislation on environment and tourism, at international level, is not likely to favour industrial and commercial competitiveness of the EU compared to some neighbouring countries that have adopted the high standards.

The tourism Law in Romania (Law 282/2013 regarding the approval of Government Emergency Ordinance 25/2010 for amending the Ordinance 58/1998 on the organization and performance of tourism in Romania) regulates the organization, coordination and sustainable development of tourism, an area of strategic importance for Romania's national economy. It addresses public authorities involved in tourism, tourism associations and operators, generally all natural or legal persons performing tourist activities.

The European Union has been promoting the Natura 2000 network of protected areas in member countries ever since 1992. In this regard there are two Habitats and Birds Directives that were transposed in Romania by Law no. 49 / 2011 for the approval of the Emergency Ordinance no. 57/20.06.2007 on the regime of natural protected areas, conservation of natural habitats, wild flora and fauna.

Also, the Romanian legislation has taken into account the EU conventions such as the Convention on the Protection of Cultural and Natural World Heritage, the Convention on the protection and promotion of cultural expression diversity, the European Landscape Convention.

One of the missions of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) is to draw up a list of places of natural or historical importance, which must be preserved as they are very important for mankind. Romania is a member of this organization and has several such sights listed in the UNESCO Heritage.

The challenge of these reflections is not to perfectly define the identity in legal matters concerning tourism in different regions, but to identify the means by which this might be gradually consolidated.

Tourist resources of the West Region

The West Region includes the province of Banat (Arad, Timiș, Caraș-Severin) and a county from Transylvania (Hunedoara), with a total area of 32,033.17 km². Its geographical position gives it a degree of openness decisive for development, and the presence of the Danube, which forms the border with Serbia, intensifies this fact. Its distance to the European tourist markets is relatively small and it also has rail, road, air and water infrastructure.

On the territory of this region we meet a variety of tourist resources, some known, others less known.

Natural tourist resources are better represented in Caraș-Severin and Hunedoara counties, because the relief is mostly mountainous, but natural resources are not lacking in the other counties of the region either.

From the category of natural tourist resources we highlight the relief:

- mountain landscape aspects in Zarand and Codru Moma Mountains in Arad County, Țarcului, Godeanu, Semenicolui, Aninei, Mehedinți Mountains in Caraș-Severin County, Parâng and Retezat Mountains in Hunedoara County;
- karst forms: Cave of the Water Mill in Arad County, Poiana Gropii abyss, Comarnic, Buhui, Popovăț, Dubova, Gaura cu Muscă, Gaura Chindiei caves in Caraș-Severin County, Ciclovina, Șura Mare caves in Hunedoara County, and the cave from Românești in Timiș County;
- bizarre rock forms in Caraș-Severin County: the Banat Sphinx, Babacai, the rock of Iorgovan;
- gorges and canyons: Danube Gorges, Nera, Rudăriei, Carașului gorges in Caraș-Severin County, the Iron Gate of Transylvania and Jiu Gorge in Hunedoara County.
- The hydrographical network is well represented, we can list some major attractions:
 - mineral springs from Moneasa, Lipova in Arad County, thermo-mineral waters in Băile Herculane (Caraș-Severin County), thermal waters in Geoagiu (Hunedoara County), mineral waters in Buziaș, Timișoara, thermal spring in Sânmihaiu German (Timiș County);
 - karst lakes in Caraș-Severin County (Devil's Lake Nera Gorges, Ochiul Beiului in Anina Mountains, Baia Vulturilor in Semenic Mountains);

- Iezerul Țarcu, Iezerul Nevaia, Pietrele Albe glacial lakes, all in Țarcu Mountains, Caraș-Severin County and Bucura, Zănoaga in Retezat Mountains, Gâlcescu glacial lake in Parâng Mountains, Hunedoara County;
- Bigăr, Beușnița, Șușara waterfalls, across the Caraș-Severin County, and Bulzești, Bampotoc, Geoagiu in Hunedoara County.

The elements of temperate continental climate with sub-Mediterranean or Mediterranean influences are beneficial for tourism development.

The vegetation is abundant, diverse, adapted to the existing relief and with endemism, rare plants.

The fauna is also adapted to the relief, climate and vegetation of the West Region, and can support hunting and fishing, scientific, knowledge, and photo safari tourism.

The anthropogenic tourist resources are located in almost each territorial - administrative unit of the region.

The best known resources in the historical sites category are:

- the ruins of Dacian fortresses from Dezna (Arad), Bocșa, Ocna de Fier, Oravița, Sasca Montana (Caraș-Severin), Costești, Blidaru, Pietra Roșie, Grădiștea Muncelului (Hunedoara);
- the ruins of Roman castra found at: Mehadia, Teregova, Vărădia, Jupa in Caraș-Severin County, Vețel, Orăștioara de Sus, Călan and the ruins of the Roman Dacia – Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana (Hunedoara);
- the archaeological findings from Lipova, Aradu Nou in Arad County, Băile Herculane, Divici, Jupa (Caraș-Severin), Orăștiei Mountains in Hunedoara County and Cruceni, Timișoara, Parța, Izvin, Nerău, Cenad, Beba Veche (Timiș);
- the fortresses in Șoimoș, Dezna, Șiria, Arad (Arad), Mehadia, Carșova (Caraș-Severin), Deva, Colț (Hunedoara), Jdioara, Ciacova, Timișoara (Timiș);
- the castles in Macea, Săvârșin (Arad), Hunedoara, Deva, Sântămărie Orlea (Hunedoara), Timișoara, Banloc, Sânnicolau Mare, Lovrin, Comloșu Mare (Timiș).

The best known religious settlements are:

- the wooden churches from Groșii Noi, Roșia (Arad), Dognecea, Carșova (Caraș-Severin), Almașul Mic de Munte (Hunedoara), Curtea, Povergina (Timiș);
- the hermitages from Feredeșu (Arad), Armeniș (Caraș-Severin), Straja (Hunedoara);
- the monasteries Hodoș-Bodrog, Maria Radna, Bezdin, Gai (Arad), Bocșa-Vasiovei, Călugăra, Baziaș, Zlatița (Caraș-Severin), Prislop,

Crișan (Hunedoara), Cebza, Izvorul Miron, Șag, Săraca, Dobrești, Partoș (Timiș);

- the churches in Arad, Vinga (Arad), Caransebeș, Oravița (Caraș-Severin), Sântămărie Orlea, Ribița, Densuș, Geoagiu (Hunedoara), Timișoara, Lugoj, Ciacova (Timiș).

The cultural-artistic heritage is very rich and the following would be representative:

- the museums in Arad, Roșia (Arad), Caransebeș, Reșița, Ocna de Fier (Caraș-Severin), Brad, Petroșani (Hunedoara), Timișoara, Lugoj (Timiș);
- the memorial houses: „Vasile Goldiș” from Arad, „Ioan Slavici”, „Emil Montia” from Șiria, Arad County, of General Dragalina from Caransebeș (Caraș-Severin), „Aurel Vlaicu” and „Crișan” from the villages with the same name in Hunedoara County, „Dositei Obradovici” from Ciacova, Timiș County;
- the monuments and architectural sites in Arad, Sebiș (Arad), Rudăria (Caraș-Severin), Timișoara, Lugoj (Timiș).

The tourist potential in the West Region is significant and can support the development of different forms of tourism.

The evolution of tourist activity in the West Region

An image of what tourism means in the West Region can be formed after viewing the evolution of some indicators in this field.

The number of accommodation facilities in the region analyzed in the past four years has had an increasing trend. It may be noted that in 2012, there were 87 accommodation facilities more than in 2011, due to the completion of construction of some pensions with the help of European funds.

Table 1 Evolution of accommodation facilities and accommodation capacity in the West Region

Year	Accommodation facilities (no. of facilities)	Existent accommodation capacity (no. of beds)
2010	497	23257
2011	513	23671
2012	600	26080
2013	611	26949

Source: www.insse.ro TUR101D, 102D, Tempo online

The accommodation capacity has also increased together with the increasing number of accommodation facilities in use.

The number of tourists registered in this region has increased, but taking into account the number of overnight stays and the number of existing beds we cannot talk about a good tourist activity.

Table 2 Evolution of tourist arrivals and overnight stays in the West Region

Year	Tourist arrivals (number of persons)	Overnight stays (number)
2010	542801	1504943
2011	639657	1682795
2012	674981	1672222
2013	684383	1755149

Source: www.insse.ro TUR104B, 105D, Tempo online

In the West Region, the majority of tourists preferred the Timiș County, in all the years analyzed, which leads us to say that the business, scientific and cultural tourism were preferred by tourists.

Table 3 Evolution of tourist arrivals in the West Region according to the component counties (number of persons)

Year	Arad County	Caraș-Severin County	Hunedoara County	Timiș County
2010	161799	92833	71996	216173
2011	190361	106866	82023	260407
2012	197277	109932	86540	281232
2013	197300	119070	88306	279707

Source: www.insse.ro TUR104B, Tempo online

In 2013 the average overnight stay at regional level was only 2.56 days, which was influenced by short visits and the reduction of the number of people practising wellness tourism.

Although the number of people who, for one reason or another, have chosen as a destination the West Region grew, still we cannot talk about developed tourism.

Conclusions

Tourism development requires a clear legislation that should organize and coordinate tourist activity, and support sustainable exploitation of tourist resources. At present, in Romania there is legislation in the field in accordance with the EU directives, but there is also a new law on tourism in the phase of public debate. The changes in recent years regarding the governmental body responsible for tourism (Ministry or Agency) have had no positive effects, as well as the failure to apply norms and the non-sanctioning of rules violations.

The West Region has valuable tourist potential, and from the previous presentation one can observe the possibility to develop the recreational and leisure tourism, winter sports, wellness, cultural, religious, hunting and fishing, scientific, ecotourism and rural tourism.

From the evolution of the indicators analyzed one can notice the investors' interest for tourism development in the region, the increase of the number of tourists and their preference for one of the counties. Caraş Severin County whose attractions are Băile Herculane, the mountain resorts Mic Mountain and Semenic has failed to attract large numbers of tourists because either the specific infrastructure is old or the services quality is unsatisfactory. The lowest number of tourists was recorded in Hunedoara County, despite its outstanding tourist resources.

Weak promotion, the non-involvement of decision makers and local community, the lack of thematic tourist packages, and in some areas, the low quality services are the factors that interfere negatively on tourism in the West Region.

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