MONITORING OF THE AGRO-TOURIST POTENTIAL IN THE ARAD COUNTY

MONITORINGUL POTENȚIALULUI AGROTURISTIC DIN JUDEȚUL ARAD

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***Abstract**: Part of the Romanian territory, the Arad County offers the tourist a wide range of possibilities for a successful holiday. The hereinafter work tries to surprise the main characteristics of the natural agro-tourist and anthropic resources by using new methods of qualitative and quantitative evaluation of this area. Starting from a theoretical model realized by specialists, we have calculated the value of the tourist potential of the Arad County. Last but not least, we have talked to the main 'actors' involved in the Arad tourism who were kind to answer the questions comprised in a set of four questionnaires (tourists, authorities, locals, head of the accommodation units). Their answers have resulted into formulating some conclusions that you can discover in the following pages.*

***Key words**: Monitoring, new evaluation methods, the sustainable capitalization, agro-tourist potential.*

INTRODUCTION

The tourist resources are the entirety of the attractive elements of an area that can possibly be fructified from a tourist point of view, without considering their origin (natural or anthropic) and the relationships between them. By their qualitative, quantitative and positional characteristics and after introducing a series of adequate tourist arrangements, these are capable to stand as focussing elements of a differential tourist request (from an amplitude, intensity and diversity point of view, related to the attraction level defined by the individual and collective contribution of the elements involved in its contour) and to determine the choice of the tourism type.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Despite the numerous efforts of elaborating evaluation methods of the tourist potential of a territory which are recorded in the specialized literature, the relativity degree of the outcome is often high. The main discommodity derives from the difficulty of the quantitative appreciation of certain qualitative terms, respectively the level of attraction or of innovation exercised by various objectives or tourist landscapes upon visitors, the partialism note (which characterizes the human beings, different from one individual to another, depending on the age, culture level, behaviour etc) all these enlisting in a wide range of each tourist's options (Cocean, 1999).

a. Edward Bergman (1996) considers that the tourist potential of an area, of a region depends on the three 'A's:

- Attractions– the components of the natural and anthropic potential having an attractive value;
- Accessibility– the accessibility level of the area/region of a tourist interest in relation to the areas generating tourist flows;
- Accommodation (the accommodation facilities, the food stuffs, the leisure capabilities from a qualitative and quantitative point of view).

b. In conformity with the formula elaborated by Rosenberg in 1956, the attraction of an objective is the result of the accumulation of specific characteristics importance, of the value associated with the action and the objectives, respectively the instrumental perception of these characteristics.

$$Aj = \sum_{i=1}^{n} (Vj)x(Iij)$$

Whereas: Aj is the attraction of objects or actions; Vi is the importance of the 'i' feature; Iij is the instrumentality of the alternative j related to i; N is the number of the characteristics.

c. By the formula he proposed for estimating the tourist potential, *Ion Şandru* (1970) considers that this includes only the technical and material basis of the tourism:

$P = I^i \times I^d \times I^a$

I^i – the ranking indicator of the attraction point area

I^d – the equipment indicator

I^a – the accessibility indicator

RESULTS AND DISCUTIONS

In order to delimitate and rank the tourist areas, first of all it is necessary to inventoried and understand all the components of the tourist potential, to group them spatially and then later to evaluate them quantitatively and qualitatively in order to establish the development opportunities, the development forms that they can generate and the necessary equipments for an administration under efficiency and competitiveness conditions. The main elements of analysis in order to delimitate the areas is base on: (chart 1).

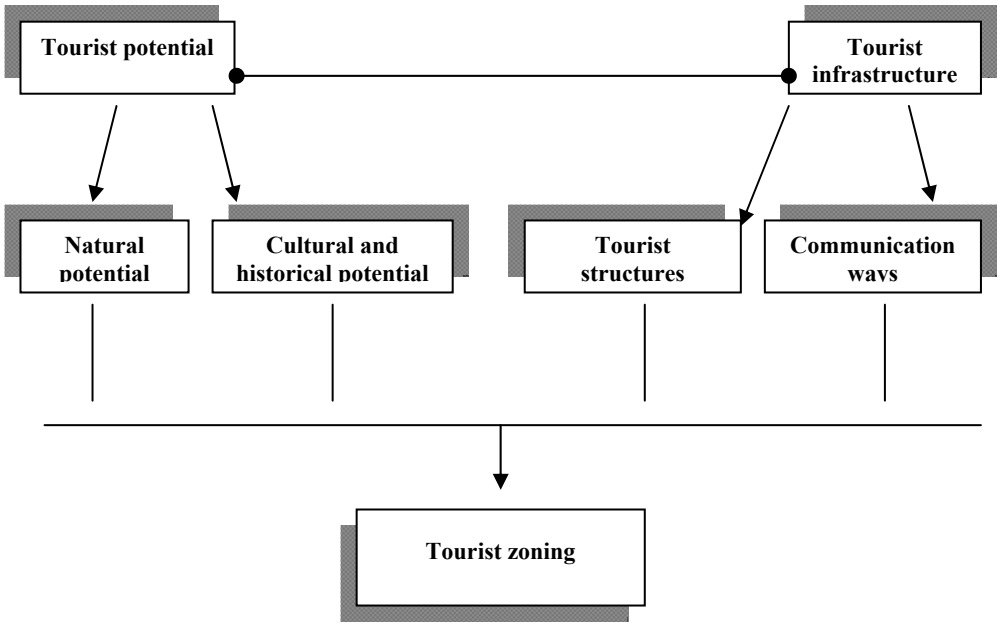


Chart 1: Elements of qualitative and quantitative analysis for establishing the tourist areas (regions) (According to Ştefan Deszi)

By means of the integrated analysis, the goal is to delimitate spatially the territorial entities with a certain structure and complexity of the tourist potential by taking into consideration the following aspects:

- The existence of certain tourist resources, diversified from a structure, volume, dimensions and tourist value point of view;
- The landscape value of some environment components, regarded in their entirety;

- The territorial concentration of the tourist resources which give a certain particularity to the territory in discussion;
- The specific and the dimensions of the components of the tourist potential;
- The qualitative and quantitative capabilities of the tourist resources offering a tourist function.

The Graphs method represents an analysis system based on a series of basic criteria and sub-criteria where the analysis is carried out on several levels. Each level of appreciation based on a certain number of criteria has received a certain number of points. The elements that make up the tourist patrimony have received 70 points out of the total 100, the balance of 30 points being awarded for the level of tourist equipments. By using this method proposed and applied by specialists (for realizing the projects of territorial arrangement – the tourism division), we can highlight the main tourist zones and sub-zones. The whole methodology of realizing the value scores is based on the following potential components:

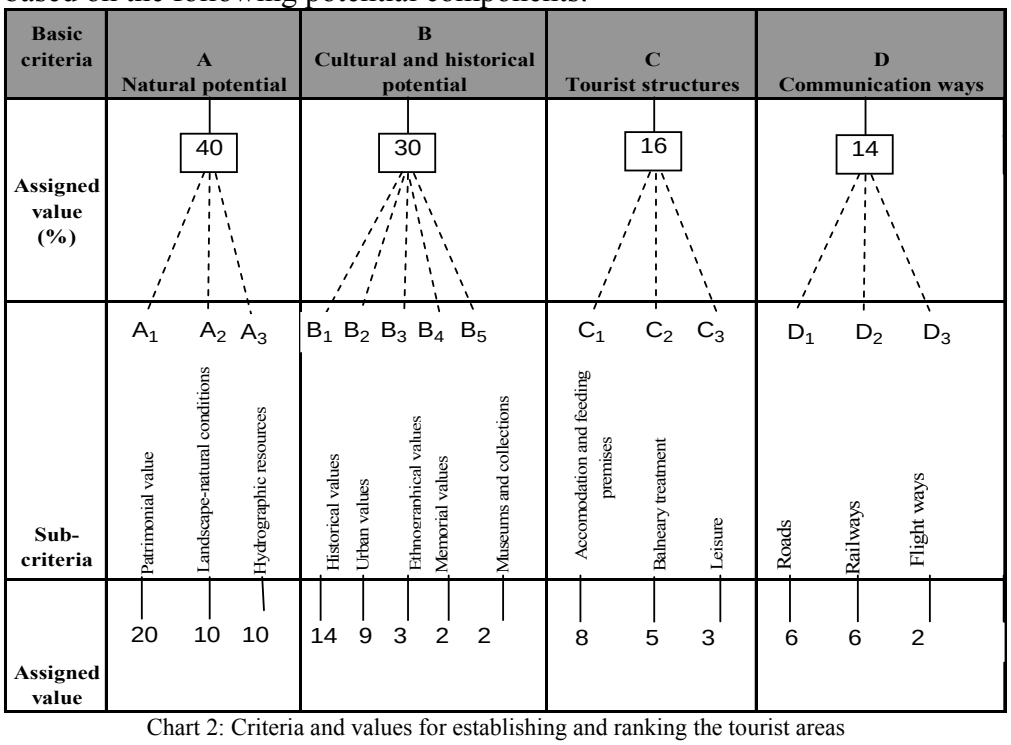


Chart 2: Criteria and values for establishing and ranking the tourist areas
(According to Melinda Cândea and her collaborators)

The high levels show an increased tourist interest, areas with multiple functionalities for tourism, objectives of national interest, of an exceptional value, of high attraction for the tourism.

The classification of the regional tourist spaces, essential elements in the tourist organization of the space, can be done based on the tourist potential, on the tourist infrastructure etc. sometimes the regional tourist spaces may correspond to the territorial and administrative limits, other times the administrative units are classified based on the potential and the existing tourist endowments.

The whole analysis which was carried out highlights the existence of three important types of tourist concentration:

1. Areas with high concentration of natural and built tourist objectives, extremely diversified and valuable and favourable to the complex development of the tourist function;
2. Areas with valuable natural and/or cultural tourist objectives which are favourable to developing a form of specific tourism;
3. Areas with only a few natural and/or cultural tourist objectives, fructified on a local level.

In the first category, we have 16 tourist areas with the highest scores (from 50 to 67) out of a maximum of 70 points. In the second category there are 16 areas with a scoring between 35 to 45 points out of the same maximum. The ranking of these areas at a national territory level, according to the value of the tourist potential is shown under Table no. 1.

Other areas with tourist and/or cultural objectives with tourist valences are to be found in the third category, with a scoring below 35 points. Most of them are concentrated in the lower parts of valleys and plateaus, with low-down and mild shapes, with a high forestation level and less accessible to the tourists.

Another classification and ranking starts from the evaluation of the existing tourist infrastructure and of the communications ways and it is based on the same Graphs method. This way, there have been taken into consideration the tourist equipments related to:

a) Localities and existing accommodation and feeding premises for tourism;

b) Structures for balneary treatment and winter sports;

c) Equipments for recreation and leisure;

d) Communication ways of all types are extremely important for tourism due to the fact that they ensure the access and the rapidity of travels.

Ranking of the tourist areas according to the value of the tourist potential
Table no. 1

Position	Name of the tourist area	Value
1-2	Vâlcea – Câmpulung – Muscel	67
1-2	Porțile de fier (The Iron Gates) – Cerna Valley	67
3	Brașov – Bucegi – Prahova Valley	65
4-6	Bihor – Țara Moților	64
4-6	Bistrița – Călimani – The Dorna Plateau	64
4-6	Bucovina	64
7	The Danube Delta – The Northern part of Dobrogea	60
8	Retezat – Hațeg – The Dacian boroughs	57
9-12	The tourist area of the Black Sea coast	56
9-12	Rodna Mountains – Borșa	56
9-12	Neamț – Bicaz	56
9-12	Semenic – Caraș Plateau – Nera Gaps	56
13	Maramureș – Oaș	54
14	Gorj	51
15-16	The areas of the Superior Olt	50
15-16	Vrancea	50
17-19	Mărginimea Sibiului (including Sibiu) the Olt region	45
17-19	Bucharest City	45
17-19	Oradea and the surroundings	45
20	Timișoara and the surroundings	42
21-24	Iași and the surroundings	40
21-24	Târgu Mureș and the surroundings	40
21-24	The areas of the lower Mureș	40
21-24	Cluj – Dej and the surroundings	40
25	Târnava Mare	39
26-27	Făgăraș - Iezer	38
26-27	Parâng Mountains – Lotru	38
28	The middle and higher Teleajen's valley	37
29-30	The areas of the Buzău Valley	36
29-30	The Valley of the higher Mureș	36
31-32	The regions of the Lower Danube (Galați, Brăila)	35

Source: The Ministry of Public Works and Territorial Arrangement, The territorial arrangement plan, The Tourism Division

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the tourist potential in the Arad County

Based on the analysis carried out in the field, the conclusion is that the Lower Mures area (Arad County) accumulates a total of 65 points by taking into account the tourist potential (natural and anthropic) and the infrastructure (the tourist structures and the communication ways). This

scoring places the Lower Mureş area (Arad County) in a middle position in the hierarchy of the tourist areas in Romania.

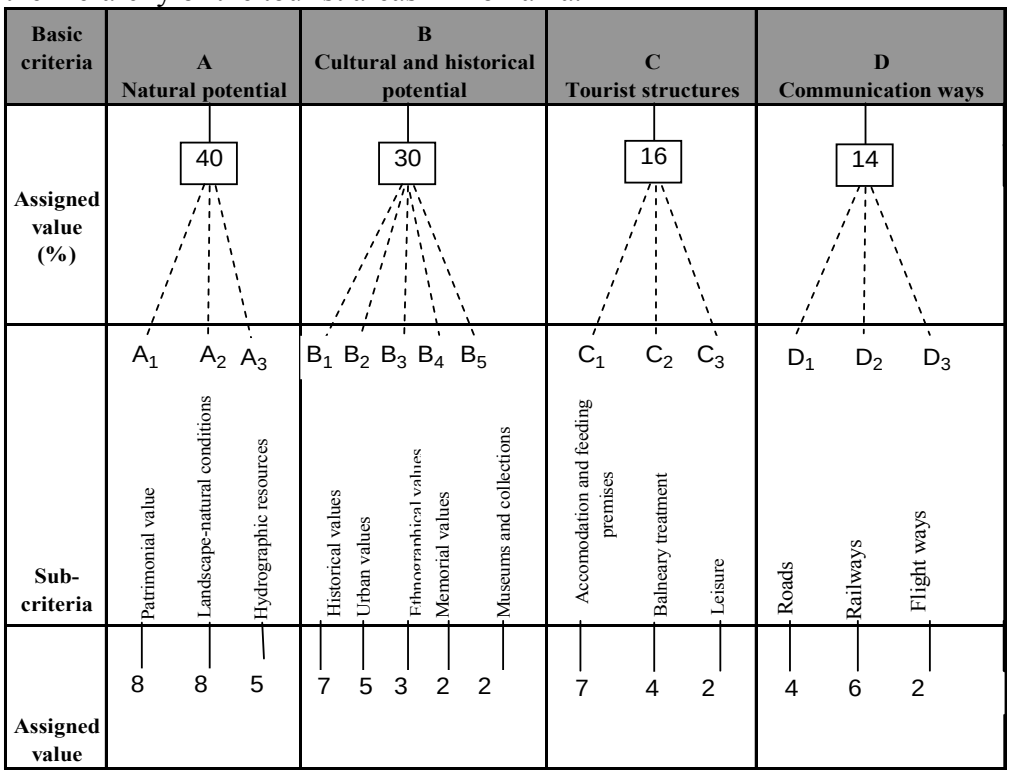


Chart 3: Criteria and values for Arad County (own analysis)

CONCLUSIONS

In order to draw pertinent conclusions regarding the fructification of the agro-tourist potential of the studied area, we have interviewed the main 'actors' involved in the tourist process, that is: the tourists, the locals, the heads of the accommodation facilities.

Following the applying of these questionnaires and by the interpretation of the data, we have obtained the following proposals and suggestions:

- Involvement of the central and local authorities for the purpose of modernizing the infrastructure (highways, modernizing the national, county, communal roads; sewage system; water supply system; gas supply system; electricity

supply system).

- Increasing the quality of the services by training and completing the knowledge of the personnel working in the tourist field;
- Developing the entertainment component within the tourist offer of the county;
- Adjusting the prices in relation to the quality of the services and to the tourists' incomes;
- Local authorities' involvement in limiting the effects of pollution as well as in the elaboration of civic education programs;
- Increasing the number of rural and agro-tourist hostels as well as registering them in the ANTREC county branch.
- Establishing a coherent marketing program in order to promote the area as a tourist destination.

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