THE FORTIFIED CHURCHES IN SIBIU COUNTY – PROMOTER OF RURAL TOURISM AND AGROTOURISM DEVELOPMENT

BISERICILE FORTIFICATE DIN ZONA SIBIULUI – PROMOTOR AL DEZVOLTARII TURISMULUI RURAL SI AGROTURISMULUI

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Abstract: *The promotion is a very important and complex component for the rural tourism development, that's why it must be present at all levels. This paper aims to present the main areas around Sibiu and the fortified churches. In each of the above ethno-folkloric areas, there are gourmet specialties printed to different cultures and characteristic agricultural activities for the area (e.g., sheep or buffalo breeding in "Mărginimea Sibilui" area, "Ţara Oltului" area, Târnavelor Valley and Hârtibaciu Valley). In an overview of these monuments state, it is found that the majority would require at least minor restoration works / reconditioning in order to allow a better tourist exploitation.*

Key words: *churches, heritage, potential, tourist area, Sibiu*

INTRODUCTION

The characteristic of Sibiu area is justified by the presence of fortified churches, dating from 12th - 16th centuries, found in most of the villages and fairs colonized by German population and known under the name of Saxons

Opposed to Western European citadels, the churches - fortresses from South-Eastern side of Transylvania weren't permanently inhabited. They had a sacral function, housing of population and defense possibilities in case of danger. Some of them have disappeared and others are endangered, but most of them have been preserved with pride even in abandoned or already forgotten villages. Fortified churches from Biertan, Viscri, Saschiz, Prejmer, Vine Valley,

Darjiu and Calnic were declared monuments of heritage being now included on UNESCO list.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The authors of this paper have completed two phases. In the first phase, it has been required a theoretical and bibliographical documentation concerning the fortified churches around Sibiu and how they can become a promoter of rural tourism and agricultural development. It has been defined the issue and formulation of the main hypotheses in order to constitute an explanatory and convincing model, inducing the importance and activity of the researched subject. The final phase has been drawn up and completed by the collected information. The drafting of this paper was made in laboratory, based on the notes from the ground, the existing material and consulted bibliography.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Sibiu County was able to get noted as a top tourist destination in Romania both for Romanian tourists, but especially for foreigners.

Fortified church Cisnădioara, "the most significant monument of Saxon ecclesiastical architecture" is the oldest Romanesque churche in Romania (and one of the most important monuments in Romanesque style, with the Cistercian monastery of Carta), preserved in excellent conditions, dating since 1223. Fortified church Cisnadie was built in the 12^{th}-13^{th} centuries, being destroyed for the third time by lightning so that at the new restoration, the tower was rebuilt in the form it is today being mounted a lightning conductor (first lightning conductormounted in Transylvania). Church Hosman is distinguished by iconographic theme of the whole setting. From the entrance, the external portal will attract our attention where fabulous animals and fantastic characters are represented

The area of "Mărginimea Sibiului" is the cradle of ancient Romanian customs storage, the place for festivals and fairs of folk tradition and the practice of ancient artisanal trades and occupations. Gastronomy of the area is also recognized, both due to traditional agricultural products and by

Saxon influences novelty in Romanian cuisine. So, anthropic tourist heritage has a significant immaterial component, whose potential begins to be exploited. Fortified Churches in the area "Marginimea Sibiului": Cristian, Cisnădie Cisnădioara.

Table 1.

Analysis of tourist potential in the area "Marginimea Sibiului"

Analysis of tourist potential	**„Marginimea Sibiului Area"**
Area delimitation argumentation	Well-known ethno-folkloric area; Several centers of tourist development (Păltiniş, Cisnădioara, Sibiel, Răşinari, Gura Râului,)
Particularities of tourist offer	Main forms of tourism: active and recreational tourism (leisure, trips, traditional cuisine, extreme sports), cultural tourism (ethnography, churches, customs and traditions); Although it is a rural area, the tourist offer is very diversified
Tourist identity elements	Preserved rural area, gastronomy (cheese), unique traditions and customs; sheep breeding
Strengths	Well-known ethno-folkloric area and recognized as agrotourism pole Maintenance of traditional villages Many local festivals with ethno-folkloric and gastronomic specific
Weaknesses	Poor utility infrastructure The existence of some areas where the marking of tourist attractions is poor
Opportunities	The wider fructification of ethno-folkloric immaterial heritage (customs and traditions, gastronomy, artisanal trades) by introducing specific services in tourist offer
Threats	Losing rural architectural specificity, with the use of building and finishing materials which can't be integrated in the rural landscape Degradation of citadels / fortifications (Salgo, Landskrone, Tilişca, etc.)

The area of "Ocna Sibiului-Secase" is distinguished as a traditional vine-growing area, whose potential remains largely unexploited.

Table 2.

Analysis of tourist potential in the area „Ocna Sibiului – Secase"

Analysis of tourist potential	**„Ocna Sibiului – Secase" Area**
Area delimitation argumentation	The main tourist pole on the basis of which it can develop tourism in Secaşelor area
Particularities of tourist offer	The main tourism type within the area is the balnear one
Strengths	Famous wine-growing area (the area Apold) Area known for tradition in the bread preparation

Weaknesses	Exploitation of reduced tourist villages (aging population and depopulation)
Opportunities	Agrotourist development of the area Exploiting the viticultural potential viticultural of the area
Threats	The risk of losing traditional architectural aspect in some localities due to the use of materials for arrangements or new construction which don't comply witharchitectural style

"Valea Târnavelor" represents an area of important tourist attractions concentration from the fortified churches category, resources owed to pages of history written by Saxons population. The plateau of Târnavelor is a well known wine region, but the exploitation of this resource remains limited in Sibiu County. "Valea Târnavelor" includes an agglomeration of Saxon fortified churches in Romania, many of them being representative for this type of tourist objectives (Alma Vii, Aţel, Bazna, Copşa Mare, Dârlos, Ighişu Nou, Moşna, Mălâncrav, etc.). We can also find here two of the seven sites with fortified churches in Romania declared monuments of UNESCO (ValeaViilor and Biertan towns). Fortified churches in "Valea Târnavelor" area: Agârbiciu, Alma Vii, Axente Sever Aţel, Bazna, Brăteiu, Biertan, Copşa Mare, Curciu, Dârlos, Ighişu Nou, Mălâncrav, Moşna, Şeica Mică, Valchid, Valea Viilor, Velt, Buzd.

Table 3.

Analysis of tourist potential in the area "Valea Tarnavelor"

Analysis of tourist potential	**„Valea Tarnavelor" Area**
Area delimitation argumentation	Significant concentration of preserved fortified churches, exponents of this category of tourist resources Well-known wine area with potential in oenological/gastronomic tourism development The inclusion of both UNESCO sites (Biertan and Valea Viilor)
Particularities of tourist offer	Accommodation possibilities exist in non-specialized units, such as the parish houses of fortified churches, where tourists can rent rooms The main attractions points are the traditional villages (Mălâncrav, Biertan, etc.)
Tourist identity elements	UNESCO sites, fortified churches, vineyards, Transylvanian /Saxon villages, authentic rural area
Strengths	Authentic Saxon area with the most important concentration of fortified churches and the existence of two UNESCO sites Famous wine-growing area
Weaknesses	Precarious state of roads infrastructure (Axente Sever, Bazna, Biertan, Hoghilag,Tarnava)

	Poor or inexistent accommodation offer
Opportunities	Oenological tourism development in the conditions of wine revitalization Arrangement of tourist trails between villages with fortified churches (eg., Azel -Dupuş - Biertan)
Threats	Abandonment of wine-growing areas, degradation of arranged terraces Risk of loss architectural aspect in some localities due to the use of materials forarrangements or new construction that don't comply with established architecturalstyle

"Hârtibaciu Valea" is an area with potential in multiculturalism exploitation (Romanian communities, Rroms, Hungarians and Saxons). A valuable part of ethnography is represented by Rroms occupations (coppersmiths, brooms made from Fofeldea) and Saxon customs (eg, "Feast of Lolelor" from Agnita). The main tourist resource consists in traditional aspect and life of villages, accompanied by the presence of fortified churches as a symbol of preserving the ancient specificity. Fortified hurch (in the area of Valea Hârtibaciului: Alţâna, Brădeni, Dealu Frumos, Hosman, Merghindeal, Movile, Slimnic, Şura Mare, Stejărişu, Iacobeni şi Veseud. In the area of "Valea Hârtibaciu" you can visit several Orthodox churches painted by the most important family of painters of churches from Transylvania – Grecu family (eg. „Sf. Nicolae" Church from Mohu, „Sf. Vasile" Church from Fofeldea, „Cuvioasa Paraschiva"Church from Ţichindeal).

Table 4.

Analysis of tourist potential in the area "Valea Hartibaciului"

Analysis of tourist potential	**„Valea Hartibaciului" Area**
Area delimitation argumentation	Ethno-folkloric / historical Well-known area Creation of a starting basis for tourism development covering various tourist resources: "Fortified Churches", "Natura 2000 sites", "traditional villages".
Particularities of tourist offer	Accommodation capacity can be considered in early stage of development (just a few hostels, in addition some accommodations in parish houses of fortifiedchurches) The main attractions of the area are fortified evangelical churches, Orthodox churches painted by Grecu family and an avifaunistic diversity of the area.
Tourist identity elements	Fortified churches, multiculturality, churches painted by brothers Grecu

Strengths	Entire area is a Natura 2000 site Attractive and wild area
Weaknesses	Relative isolation from the rest of the county's villages in the area Slow economic development
Opportunities	Iacobeni village has a great tourist potential in terms of the five fortified churches located in the commune
Threats	Degradation of fortified churches

The area of "Tara Oltului". The rich history of the area offers real opportunities to exploit the architectural tourist heritage and can represent an important starting point in attracting tourists. A visit to the Orthodox churches in the neighboring towns Avrig, Arpaşu de Sus, Arpaşu de Jos, Colun, Sarata or Cârţişoara will be really interesting. Paintings of the famous family Grecu in 18th and 19th centuries will be transpose you into a world apart where biblical scenes are adapted to time of contemporary painters.

Table 5.

Analysis of tourist potential in the area „Tara Oltului"

Analysis of tourist potential	**„Tara Oltului" Area**
Area delimitation argumentation	Distinct ethno-folkloric area, which is part of the wider area generally named Land of Fagaras The existence of same categories of tourist resources, with the same specific ethno-folkloric
Particularities of tourist offer	Chalet type structures dominate, but in the area, tourist complexesor guest houses with an agrotourism specific were developed.
Strengths	National parks, natural reservations, Natura 2000 sites The existence of tourist information centers (Avrig and Cârţişoara)
Weaknesses	Poor utility infrastructure Poor marks for tourist attractions
Opportunities	Development of educational tourism and agrotourism (including artisanal trade as well as manufacturing/processing glass in specific tourist products) Promoting and increasing awareness of the area tourist valences
Threats	Degradation of objectives due to the lack of investment concerning the conservation and planning

Interests and tourist consumption generated by the need for leisure is developed in the form of "Romanians escape" from daily routine to a clean environment, with natural beautiful landscape and tranquility, for recreation

(vacation, holiday), or for a weekend or mini-holiday. Main targets are the areas more or less well-known in rural tourism and agrotourism, respectively mountain stations or villages. Tourists are also attracted by the fresh air from forests favoring the merge of recreation with small trips in open air (part of active tourism). In the last period, internal tourist trips for leisure are identified more and more with agrotourist areas, being searched by tourists for more discrete and intimate accommodation spaces, but also the opportunity to interact with hostel owners and, in general, with local people in order to learn things about the specific area (mountain stations offer other attractions in general an active or adventure tourism and can generate agglomeration)

CONCLUSIONS

The main general directions of development refer to: agrotourism stimulation, a way of superior local ethno-cultural values, by organizing conferences and workshops; traditional aspect conservation of localities by regulations on new construction and architectural changes that can be brought to the buildings; wine-growing area revitalization by supporting small entrepreneurs; investment support to create more accommodation units and planning specific areas for agrotourism activities; restoration of fortified evangelical churches gradually andtheir including in the tourist circuits, the rehabilitation road connections between the villages with fortified churches (Hoghilag-Valchid-Biertan); conservation of artisanal traditions and support traditional artisans (including revitalization of old guilds); tourism products development and promotion: cultural routes (churches painted by brothers Grecu, circuits of traditional crafts: glass, painting icons on glass, , weaving), riding, fishing

In a state overview of these monuments, it is found that the majority would require at least minor works of restoration/ reconstruction to a better tourist exploitation, while in some identified cases, it is required major rehabilitation projects (eg. fortified churches in Veseud, Iacobeni, Buzd, Salgo fortress, Slimnic fortress).

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