ANALYSIS OF RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT LEVEL IN SALAJ USING THE S.W.O.T. MATRIX

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Abstract *In this paper, the authors made a comparative analysis of tourism development in some counties of Romania, the most frequently visited by tourist and ecotourists. In the study, the authors have used two indicators of tourist traffic in the literature, namely: the tourist function and tourist traffic density. As a tool for strategic analysis of the level of ecotourism services development, it has been used The S.W.O.T. Matrix. During the work, the authors have achieved a SWOT Analysis of ecotourism field in Salaj county.*

1. Introduction

The tourist function and tourist traffic density indicators which will be studied in the article, show the extent of the tourist development at national level.

The authors choose to analyse Covasna, Suceava, Arges and Salaj counties from Romania, because they are the most representative in the tourism field, especially ecotourism sectors. The first three counties are similar in geo-administrative terms. Tourism related indicators of Salaj County were calculated and can be found in the *„Development of ecotourism services in Romania. Comparative analysis in the territorial profile"* written by M. Ioncica and A. Gheorghe.

The two indicators which will be studied in the paper evaluates indirectly the quality of romanian tourism and ecotourism services. In order to improve the quality of ecotourism services it will be realized The SWOT Analysis of the rural tourism sector for Salaj county.

2. Literature review

The development of the rural tourism industry by improving the quality of the tourist services offered by both, as well as those of transport, eating, recreation is debated both international level and national level.

The specialist in tourism, P. Nistoreanu (2002) focuses on the concept of total quality, as the continuous improvement of tourist services, in particular those of ecotourism. An important role in the analysis of tourism services, also ecotourism services is played by the *tourist function* and *density of tourist traffic*, because their calculation is a ratio between the development of tourist activity and population or

territorial area in which it takes place (Ioncica, Gheorghe, 2014, p 548).

The specialized literature (Anghelache, 1995, pp. 137-144, Ioncica, Stanciulescu, 2006, pp. 49- 53) reveals a number of sub-systems which make up the tourism indicators system, such as:

A. indicators of tourist offer;
B. indicators of tourist traffic: total number of visitors, total number of days-tourist, average number of tourists, the number of arrivals, departures, average length of stay, tourist traffic density;
C. value results indicators: volume of expenses, volume of proceeds from tourism;
D. effectiveness of tourist activity indicators: economic efficiency of the accommodation, the use of accommodation capacity, average rent accommodation, average expenditure on accommodation rate, profit, profitability.

As methods of indirect quantifying tourism service quality, and thus, ecotourism is mentioned by specialists in the field, Ioncica, Stanciulescu (2006), Minciu (2004), the tourist function and density of tourist traffic.

In the specialized literature, *the tourist function is the ratio of the number of places in the area or locality and the permanent population of the area* (Minciu, 2004, p. 48).

Tourist traffic density is an indicator of the static intensity, which is calculated as the ratio between the number of tourists that visit the area and the local population (Anghelache, 1995, p 136).

The tourism sector, experts contend, should have responsibility in relation to the application of the principles of sustainable development in its commercial activities, taking into account the examples that demonstrate that, apparently, the companies that succeed are those who employ staff, customers, suppliers and local communities in an active dialogue on the subject of the objectives and measures which are necessary for their realization (Final Report of the International Year of Ecotourism 2002, Austria, St. Johannes, pp 15-60).

3. Methodology of research

Research methodology consisted in bibliographical sources consulted both national and international ones, in physical form and on-line in connection with matters debated in this paper.

To highlight the evolution of tourism on national level have been researched series of data and information supplied by specialized organizations. Research methodology consisted also in linking indices with fixed base and dynamic ones, on the basis of statistical data provided by the INS-Salaj Direction.

Tourism indicators were analyzed in order to establish their operation in Romanian tourism activity, especially in Salaj county.

In terms of strategic analysis of rural tourism in Salaj, the authors turned to the S.W.O.T. Matrix to highlight shortcomings in the field of rural tourism services. As a result of this type of analysis will be highlighted a future strategy to improve tourism services and its applicability on ecotourism services in Salaj county.

4. Tourist function of Covasna, Suceava and Arges counties

Analysis of the tourist function indicators and tourist traffic density has been achieved using the database provided by the National Institute of Statistics (http://www.suceava.insse.ro/main.php?lang=fr&pageid=519 accessed at 21.12. 2013, http://www.arges.insse.ro/main.php?lang=fr&pageid=546 accessed at 21.12.2013, http://www.covasna.insse.ro/main.php?lang=fr&pageid=517 accessed at 21.12.2013).

The first indicator studied in this work is the tourist function of Covasna, Arges and Suceava counties, represented in Figure 1:
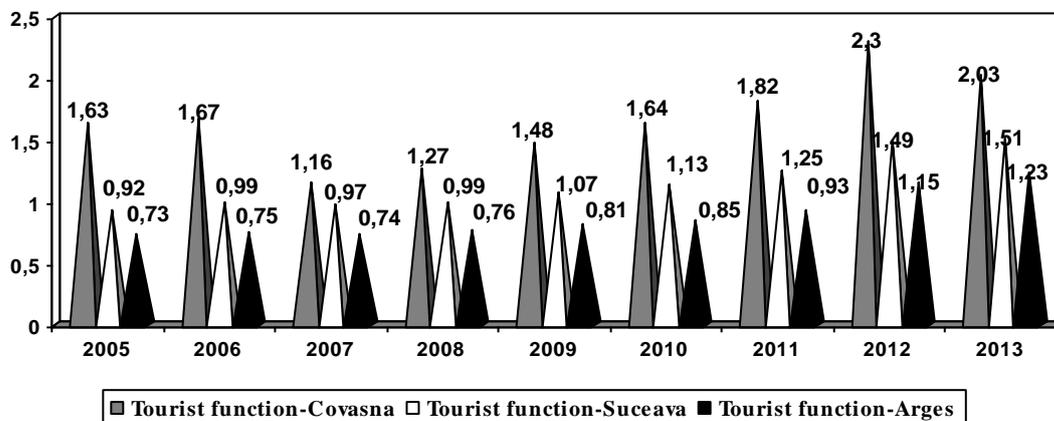

Figure no. 1. Tourist function of Covasna, Suceava and Arges counties within the timeframe 2005- 2013
Source: Made by authors

After the tourist function analysis of these counties, during the period 2005-2013, we can see in Figure No. 1 that in the ranking top was Covasna county, due to its tourist attraction. On the second place was Suceava county, which owns multiple surface exploited natural resources through a smart rural tourism. It maintains a constant position, and ultimately, Arges county was registering the lowest values.

Tourist traffic density of Covasna, Suceava and Arges counties

The second indicator studied in this paper is the tourist traffic density of Covasna, Suceava and Arges counties,calculated as the ratio between the number of tourists that visit this areas and the local population of

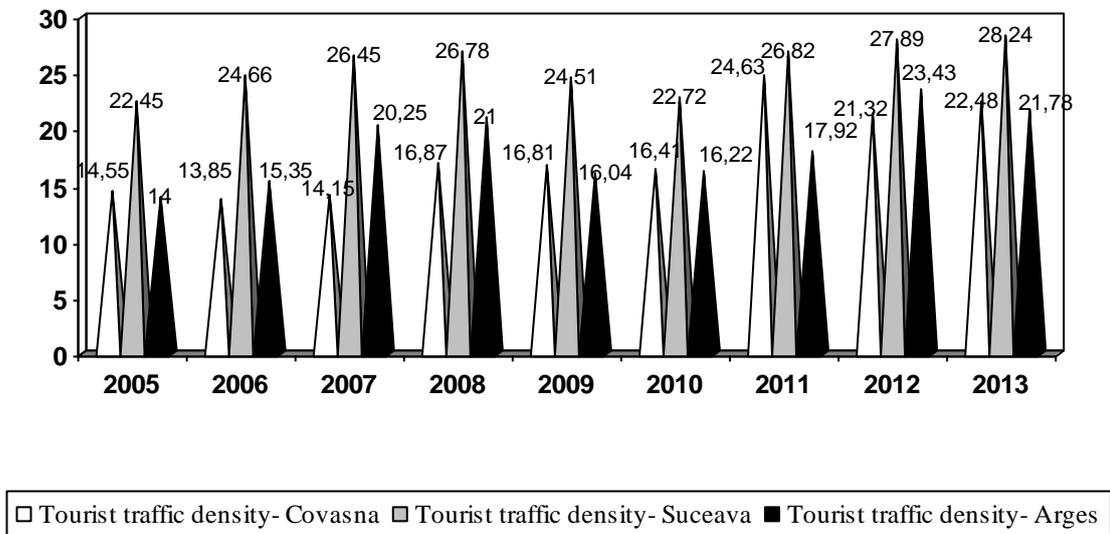those. The tourist traffic density is represented in Figure   2:

Figure 2. Tourist traffic density of Covasna, Suceava and Arges counties within the timeframe 2005- 2013
Source: Made by authors

The tourist traffic density within the timeframe 2005-2013 register the highest values in Suceava county, the maximum threshold of 28.24. Arges county which has values ranging between 14 and 21.78, with an average approximately equal to that of Covasna's.

Moreover, the tourist traffic density can be calculated as the ratio between the number of overnights in the county and the county area, as you see in Figure 3:
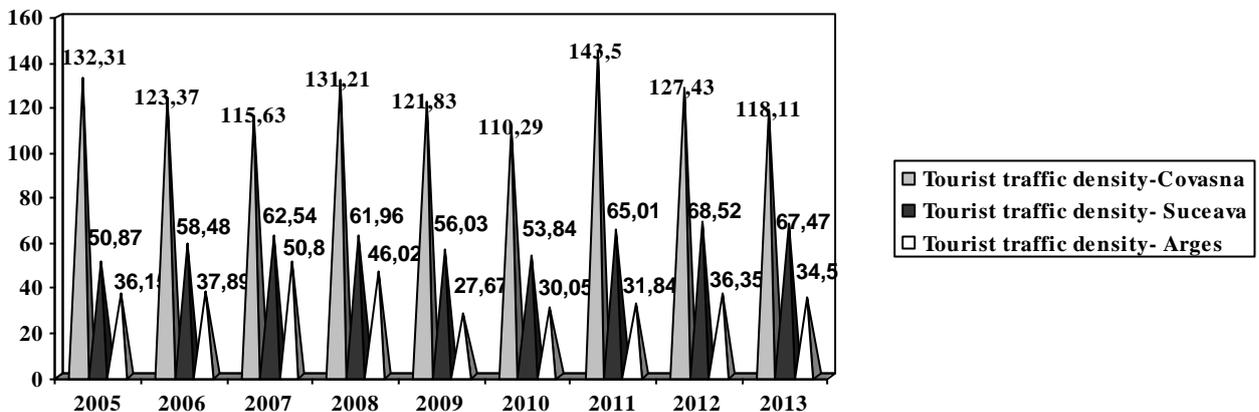

Figure 3. Tourist traffic density of Covasna, Suceava and Arges counties within the timeframe 2005- 2013
(overnights density)
Source: Made by authors

In Figure 3, it can be observed that the highest overnights density   was the one of Covasnas', registered because it has a material basis of consistency and quality of accommodation services and ecotourism.

Rural tourism is got a higher level than the other two counties. Tourist traffic density values of Covasna on the analyzed timeframe is approximately two times higher than those of Suceavas' county, and the one of

Arges's county, with values ranging between 27.67 and 50.8.

5. Indicators of tourist traffic density in Salaj county

In the research conducted by the authors, it may be said that the above mentioned indicators, calculated for Salaj county, in the paper „Development of ecotourism services in Romania. Comparative analysis in the territorial profile" written by M. Ioncica and A. Gheorghe,

were much smaller than the values recorded in Covasna and Suceava counties.

The tourist function and tourist traffic density of Salaj county are represented in Table no. 1. Indicators of tourist traffic density in Salaj, within the timeframe 2005-2013:

Table no. 1. Indicators of tourist traffic density in Salaj, within the timeframe 2005-2013

Tourist traffic indicators in Salaj County	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Tourist function-Salaj	0.43	0.38	0.34	0.31	0.52	0.57	0.63	0.70	0.77
Tourist traffic density-Salaj	3.88	4.76	4.22	4.5	5.53	6.29	7.5	8.82	8.64

(Source: Addapted by M.Ioncica, A. Gheorghe,2014, pp 548-553)

The two indicators studied in this paper show us the degree of tourist development at the county level. It can be seen that the results recorded in Salaj county are discouraging compared with counties like Covasna, Suceava and Arges with a higher potential, both in tourism sector and ecotourism, as well harnessed and untapped. The causes for which the tourist traffic density in Salaj has small values are: poor quality of service of accommodation in the area, the lack of

training of staff who work in the tourism field, the small number of specific rural tourism activities, the lack of strategies for the promotion of ecotourism and tourism services.

Accommodation units in Salaj county are: tourist huts, campsites, tourist villas and bungalows, rural guesthouses and hostels.

The evolution of the capacity for accommodation in Salaj county can be seen in Table 2:

Table no.2 Dynamics indices with fixed base(BF) and chained one (BL)

Tourist structures with accommodation function in Salaj County	2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2013	
	BF	BL	BF	BL	BF	BL	BF	BL	BF	BL	BF	BL	BF	BL	BF	BL	BF	BL
Tourists huts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100,0	-	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100.0	100.0
Camping and cottage type units	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	200,0	200,0	200,0	100,0	200,0	100,0	200,0	100,0	200,0	100,0	200,0	100,0
Touristic villas and bungalows	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	300,0	300,0	333,3	111,1	333,3	100,0	400,0	120,0	433,3	108,0	433.3	100.0
Preschool students and students camps	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	50,0	50,0	50,0	100,0	50,0	100,0	50,0	100,0	50,0	100,0	50,0	100,0	50.0	100.0
Rural guesthouses	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	133,3	133,3	133,3	300,0	400,0	75,0	300,0	100,0	400,0	133,3	400.0	100.0
Hostels	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100.0	103.7

(Source: Made by authors)

In the table above, it can be seen that there are no holiday villages in Salaj county and neither houselet, one of the reasons being the lack of financial funds that could be targeted in this regard.

The number of rural tourist guesthouses and bungalows has seen a massive development in the under review timeframe.

The physical basis for the purpose of accommo-dation rural tourism presents some variations

attributable mainly to developments in tourist demand. At the same time, tourism promotion in Salaj has resulted from the increasing number of accommodation units, as a consequence of the evolution of tourism demand.

6. S.W.O.T. Analysis of the ecotourism services in Salaj county

Comparing the levels of ecotourism development in these areas in Romania, one can achieve a S.W.O.T. Analysis of ecotourism services in Salaj county.

Some of the data found in the S.W.O.T. Analysis represented in Figure No. 4 were collected from the Development Strategy-Salaj County Council - http://www.cjsj.ro/date/pdfuri/Turism/PotentialTURISM.pdf accessed at 19.03.2014 and Salaj County

To configure a strategy to improve the quality of ecotourism services in Salaj county, the authors proceeded to an analysis of ecotourism services using the S.W.O.T. Matrix.

Development Plan 2007-2013, realised in 2006 by Tiberiu Marc, Salaj County Council President- http://www.cjsj.ro/date/pdfuri/Proiecte/dezvoltare2007-2013.pdf accessed at 19.03.2014:

Strengths	Weaknesses
• The existence of protected natural areas: Zmeilor's Garden, Poiana cu Narcise; • The existence of traditional- cultural attractions: Botanical Garden from Jibou, the Holocaust Museum, the Wesseleny castle in Jibou, the ancient fortress from Moigrad; • The existence of tourist information points; • The preservation of traditions in the rural area; • Natural environment suitable for ecotourism activities: Meses Mountains, Bazinul Somesan (canoe trips on the Someş).	• Poor infrastructure; • Insufficient promotion of the rural traditional tourist attractions and cultural sites; • The lack of education programmes in this regard; • The lack of training strategies to those working in tourism; • The lack of an appropriate materials in terms of quality and structure of housing, nutrition and leisure; • The lack of a specific ecotourism transport infrastructure; • The lack of concern regarding the classification and labelling of ecotourism natural geographical specific frame.
Oportunities	**Threats**
• Create a level of difficulty to individual mountain biking and organized mountain biking; • The practice of organized tours with the backpack; • Organization of cultural meetings-traditional villages with traditional folk; • Organizing meetings with commercial character for the marketing of agri-food products specific to traditional food; • Concerns regarding improving the material basis and legal framework for the conduct of the business of ecotourism; • Possible actions regarding the employment of disadvantaged people who could serve in ecotourism.	• The existence of a strong competition from neighboring counties, on the organization of the ecotourism activity; • Economic-financial crisis threatens the ecotourism businesses in Salaj county because they are underdeveloped; • High unemployment rate; • Degradation of the natural geographic environement as a result of the lack of protection measures.

Figure 4. S.W.O.T. Analysis of ecotourism services in Salaj
Source: Made by authors

High unemployment in counties with less developed economy, as Salaj county, is explaining why businesses from all areas register a low level of development.

You should note that in the field of ecotourism, businesses in the urban area of Salaj county excels, compared to those in rural areas, whereas entrepreneurs have more interest and are better trained

professionally and have managed to absorb the european investment funds (for example Eden Guesthouse from Jibou). Even though, the farmhouses in the countryside enjoying natural geographical advantage have grown less in Salaj county, since these businesses have failed to stabilize due to lack of funds. At the same time, businesses in the field of rural ecotourism of Salaj county lack the professional experience of persons working in the field and in small measure, absorbing the labor force of women or other disadvantaged persons.

The interest in the field of ecotourism businesses in Salaj county were concentrated mainly in urban areas and express business delocalisation in ecotourism, as well as, the impossibility of rural entrepreneurs to access the investment sursum. The disinterest of entrepreneurs in the field of ecotourism also affects the labelling and classification of the guesthouses in the area and the protected areas in geographic environment. This issue could be resolved through better organisation of specific training actions and which would result in improving the quality of services and to the labour absorption made available.

The author used this type of analysis in order to identify deficiencies in the field of ecotourism services in Salaj and testing the design and implementation of strategies to improve them.

7. Conclusions

Due to insufficient promotion of ecotourism, also to the ecotourism specific deficient infrastructure, see that Romania is a country least visited, both of romanian ecotourists, as well as by foreign ones.

The number of ecotourism accommodation units is reduced in our country. Also, the human resource working in the romanian ecotourism field is not sufficiently prepared from the professional point of view. In this sense, it may be recommended the excursions guide courses in nature on hiking trails and themed trails with different difficulty levels: beginner, intermediate and advanced. The same thing could be recommended for both cyclotourism and canoe trips.

Cultural resources, the traditionals one and the natural surface should be exploited to their true value, bringing benefits, both in terms of economic field and socio-cultural field.

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