

MOUNTAIN TOURISM INTERCONNECTIONS. VARIATION OF MOUNTAIN TOURIST FLOW IN SUCEAVA COUNTY

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Abstract

Mountain tourism, in addition to one of the most common types of tourism, is generated by a complex of factors and at the same time, triggers a series of processes involving tourism phenomenon, especially the environment where it is taking place. This paper aims to discuss some of these causal factors, and the relationship between this type of tourism and the tourist area itself (1). By using SPSS analytical methods, it can be practically demonstrated the impact of mountain tourist flow in spas (2) and mountain resorts (3) in Suceava county.

Key words: *Mountain tourism; Ecotourism; T.A.L.C; Suceava County; SPSS.*

JEL Classification: *Q20; O13; R11, L83*

INTRODUCTION. PRESENTATION CONCEPTS

The mountain has always been a special attraction to man since ancient times, where it was considered the dwelling of the gods, but then, with the passing of time, the interest has gravitated mostly around the admiration for beautiful and unique landscapes developed under this landform; the high altitudes, the abrupt difference of level, the rocks form, saddles, color, gaps, caves, specific vegetation and fauna, clean waters rich in minerals, plus an invigorating climate with important remedies for respiratory and circulation diseases and movement make the mountain area a tourist location extremely visited for leisure holidays.

Society and technological development, directly related to the economic momentum characteristic of human society, at least in the last two centuries, have led to a high mountains arrangement, thereby increasing the accessibility of this landform. Mountain areas are increasingly equipped with numerous accommodation places, amusement parks for mountain resorts, access routes (road, rail, air), cable installations within the ski slopes or for visiting the mountain peaks, thereby increasing the degree of humanizing them. Mountain attraction is reflected not only in spending free time in a passive way, but also in the desire to conquer and reach the highest heights of this area, or engaging in specific activities, extreme sports (climbing, paragliding, river rafting, skiing, snowboarding, zip line), (Muntele, Iașu, 2006) and the use of mountain resources (air, water, vegetation) as ways of health care. Many of the items listed above constitute distinct forms of tourism, but all have something in common - the mountain area. Many of

these activities have negative parts, human presence in this space and man-made facilities cause an inevitable transformation of the mountain landscape and the quality of this environment characterized by purity, fresh air, curative waters and „unspoilt nature”. Mountain anthropization generated sometimes an important deterioration of mountain natural elements by intense or inadequate exploitation of its resources. In response to this phenomenon, the human society, through specialized institutions, and sometimes simply through private initiative, created ways to protect these perishable values, sometimes non-renewable and unique, providing legislative and territorial organization to stop and prevent the mentioned processes. The analysis and theorizing of mountain tourism phenomenon caused the birth of a "new kind of tourism", especially focused on caring for the nature- the ecotourism.

Ecotourism, in general, is seen as a branch of tourism in which the concern for preservation and keeping of the natural, unaltered characteristics of the environment are prevailing. Usually, this type of activity is analyzed in connection with the natural environment and human activities, in general; tourism activities, in particular, have brought, over the years, many environmental changes: arrangements and specific tourism activities generated numerous imbalances in nature (appearance of waste, the extinction of animal and plant species), which itself has generated an increased concern about their existence, which actually resulted in the "creation" of a type of tourism dedicated to this idea. Regardless of the genesis and ecotourism purpose, it is certain that it is organically linked to the natural environment and the activities performed in its midst.

A logical idea, increasingly accepted in this direction of ecotourism, is that of Erleta Cater (1994), highlighted also by Cheia (2013), which is synthesized in the phrase - ecotourism, product or principle – an idea that wants to make ecotourism a widespread concern, a way of thinking that is actually included in all existing forms of tourism, without exception. In his study on the Nepalese Himalayas, Sanjay (2000) reveals environmental and social risks that tourism may present on mountain areas (especially on those protected); this is possible in the case when the management and implementation strategy is deficient; it is noted the need for further research studies on this phenomenon, therefore the proposed solution is the support of a strong local administrative collaboration. Ștefănică and Butnaru (2013) emphasize the same direction, showing that sustainable tourism should have the main purpose to reduce the negative effects on the environment, without neglecting that, by its economic side, tourism should be characterized by some efficiency (profit). Gill and Williams (1994) analyzed the growth in tourism in mountain area, along with environmental degradation, and especially with important changes, transformations in the social communities.

The purpose of this paper is not ecotourism theorizing, but the awareness of mountain importance for this eco-touristic feature of the tourism phenomenon, in general. The anthropogenic pressure on the mountain is considerably lower than in the other landforms (plain, hill, plateau), especially if we consider the characteristics of human settlements within each landform; however this pressure has more pronounced repercussions in the mountain area than in other places, repercussions that are highlighted in the features / properties of the environment, as well as in those of specific landscape; therefore, we support ecotourism as a principle, as a main rule to dominate and guide the whole tourism phenomenon. We support this trend in terms of both ecological, protection of the natural environment in which the tourism activity is taking place and of sustainable perspective. A sustainable perspective also includes the ecological one, given further support to the development and expansion of human society. Development of society cannot or does not want to be stopped, so the principles of sustainability must be a real presence in the implementation of tourism activities. Tourism does not put itself in the way of human society development as a whole, but it is just the result of this development, benefiting from all the technological development (basically, the globalization of tourism is possible with its help), but, at the same time, being a sharp remedy for human intervention to the natural environment and for the stressful lifestyle of the 21st Century man.

Analyzing the sustainability and development of mountain tourism, Gurung (1998), in an adaptation of Colby's ideas (1990), highlights some of the paradigms of this situation. The author delimitates five

paradigms from an ecological and economic perspective. In addition to a social and spatial phenomenon (in terms of space and natural environment where this takes place), tourism phenomenon has a great economic value, with a real contribution to the local and national economies.

The first of these paradigms concerns "the trans border economy", referring to the fact that nature is generally regarded as an inexhaustible reservoir of resources to be used for the pleasure of man; the concept is characteristic for the years 60s and 70s, the ideology of limitless consumption gradually having changed. The second is the paradigm of "the environmental protection", which comes as a logical consequence of the first one, in order to weave the momentum of economic development with environmental protection compliance, an action that didn't have an immediate result in stopping the resource exploitation, but sometimes the change in the method of making such exploitations. "The Resources Management" is the third model and strictly regards the resources management in response to their global exhaustion and the constantly increasing population, all these superimposed the constant desire for growth and expansion; an aspect of this model is looking for new resources that can be exploited in the future. The next paradigm, "the eco-development", emphasizes again the need to clarify ecological principles in the development of human society and relationships they engage with the natural environment. The last example is that of "the deep ecology" which "emphasizes ethical, social and cultural rights, recognizing mutual dependence and the need for cooperation between nature and man."

It is observed the evolution of the patterns of the interactions between man and nature, regarding the developing strategy of the human society in connection with the elements of the natural environment, especially from the perspective of the effects of this interaction. In the same way, on the same structure, we can construct an evolution of the touristic phenomenon, and even actually, the evolution of the ecologic concept in tourism; obviously, the first steps of the touristic development in a territory (the implementation stage) are characterized by the excessive consume of the touristic resources, a consume which does not immediately create an imbalance, because even the number of tourists is not very big. The touristic development of the territory will implicitly bring a growing number of tourists, an increasing number of the endowments (accommodation and food, roads, places for spending spare time) and, at the same time, with local and national involvement (if we take into consideration touristic areas of national interest), it will be developed a strategy for sustaining tourism, for protecting, conserving and developing the touristic resources and the environment. According to the pattern designed by Butler (1980, 2006), T.A.L.C. (Tourism Area Life Cycle), every touristic area knows

the layout of increasing development from the exploring stage, implication or development, until the stage of maximum consolidation, followed by a stagnation stage, restart or, in some cases, even decline. The author makes this analysis from the perspective of the tourists number who visit the area, but not without observing the implications of the consume of resources and the transformations which take place from this point of view. In this evolutionary pattern, it can be integrated the mountain tourism; the mountain area which desiderates directly the human pressure and the negative effects, most of the time: pollution, degradation and mutation of the landscape, overpopulation, depletion of resources.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

This paper’s purpose is to analyze the medium evolution of two types of touristic destinations, very relevant for mountain tourism and implicitly for human destination in the mountain area - balneary and mountain resorts. The number of tourists arrived in the mountain zone from Suceava could be a remarkable indicator for the analysis of the dimension of mountain tourism; the evolutionary trend offers the possibility for the mountain tourism from Suceava to fit in one of the stages model of T.A.L.C. The analyzed data are official and offered by "Direcția de Statistică Suceava" (Stats Direction Suceava) through "Breviarul Turistic" (Tourism Compendium) annually edited since 1996 (with data from 1995) until 2012 (with data from 2011). For a better and efficient organization of the paper and especially for a touristic reason, the analysis of the period of 17 years was divided in 3 intervals. Tourism is a very sensitive socio-economic phenomenon from the point of view of several factors (economic, politic, natural); therefore, the division in 3 periods wasn’t randomly made, but marking as aiming points the years 2001 (changes in the tourism legislation- Law 775/2001 in organization and in the development activity of tourism in Romania, whose effects will be seen practically starting with 2002) and 2007 (the beginning of economic crisis).

The actual analysis was made using the soft SPSS v.20, with the method *one-way* ANOVA (to determine if there exists an important difference of average between two variables - in our case between time and number of tourists arrived) and Turkey test HSD (analyzes how big is the difference of averages).

1. Are important differences of averages between the number of tourists quartered in balneary resorts between the intervals 1995-2001, 2002-2007 and 2007-2011?

Firstly, a one-way analysis between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of time intervals on the number of tourists accommodated in balneary resorts in the three time periods 1995-2001,

2002-2007, 2008-2011. There was a significant effect of time intervals at the $p < .05$ level for the three conditions [$F(2,107) = 3.28, p = 0.041$]. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the 1995-2001 period of time ($M = 8039, SD = 7071$) was not significantly different than the 2002-2007 condition ($M = 4714, SD = 6507$), $p = .085$ and the latter was not significantly different than the 2008-2011 condition ($M = 4010, SD = 4625$). The only significant difference found was between the 1995-2001 period of time and the 2008-2011 one, $p = .040$. Our results indicate that there is an effect of time intervals upon the number of tourists that are accommodated in the balneary resorts. More exactly, the mean number of tourists in 2008-2011 period of time is significantly smaller (two times smaller) than the mean number of tourists in 1995-2001 period, accommodated in balneary resorts. This may be due to a number of causes, among which is the fact that between 1995-2001 (there are no official statistics for the period 1990-1994) tourism phenomenon still functioned under the old management inertia, trend of the socialist, where balneary tourism was well represented and accessible to a wide range of tourists. Accessibility refers to the fact that prices were more convenient reported to the incomes of tourists; it was a common practice to spend holidays "at the baths" and therefore the flow is presented as an important one. Means plot is shown below.

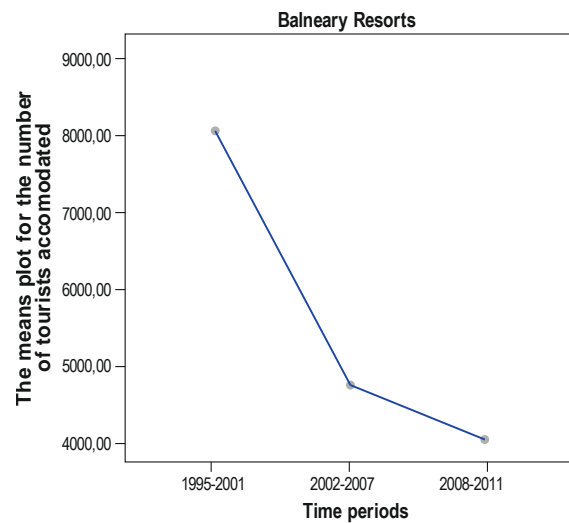


Figure 1 - Means plot for the number of tourists accommodated in balneary resorts in the three time intervals

2. Are there important differences of averages between the number of tourists quartered in mountain resorts between these intervals 1995-2001, 2002-2007 and 2008-2011?

Secondly, a one-way analysis between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of time intervals on the number of tourists accommodated in mountain resorts in the three time periods: 1995-2001,

2002-2007, 2008-2011. There was found no significant effect of time intervals at the $p < 0.05$ level for the three time periods [$F(2, 169) = 1.85, p = 161$]. Tukey HSD was not conducted because there is no statistical significant difference between the three time periods. This means that the mean number of tourists is statistically the same if we compare the three time intervals, although visually it can be noticed that the numbers are different. Mountain has always been a great tourist attraction being associated with "going out in the nature", "recreation", "fresh air". It is surprising the dynamics of tourist flow within mountain resorts, if not a regress (absolute data analysis), it is considered a situation "relatively constant" without fluctuations; this due also to the fact that during the three periods of time, Suceava also developed at least two major types of tourism: cultural-religious and rural tourism Means plot is shown below.

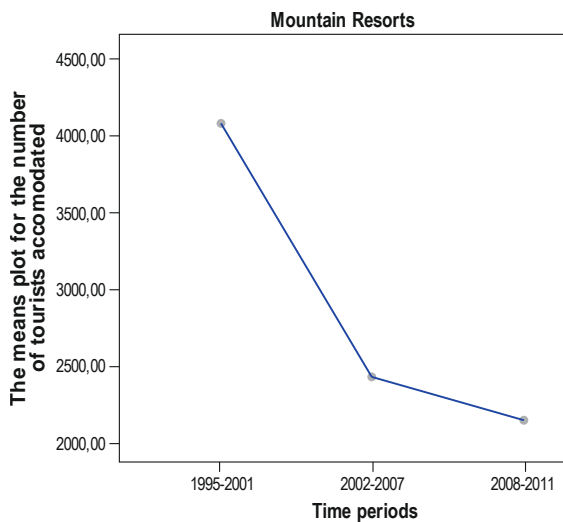


Figure 2 - Means plot for the number of tourists accommodated in mountain resorts in the three time intervals

CONCLUSIONS

Regardless the statistical analysis and looking at the two graphics, we could say that we assist at an obvious situation, a steady decline in the arrival of tourists in the two mountain destinations (balneary and mountain resorts), with big differences between extreme ranges 1995-2001 and 2008-2011. The investigator / researcher himself is the one who decides on what type of data builds his argumentation / statement; he can use absolute data based on the variation of the numbers from year to year, or he can use environments; in this case, the analyses are overall, based on the mathematical algorithm which is

considered very accurate / precise. Although the trends of the two graphics appear identical, we see that the results are different. In the evolution of the tourist flow to resorts, the conclusion is that there are statistical significant differences between the two extreme intervals, 1995-2001 and 2008-2011, with lower values for the latter.

Regarding the evolution of the number of tourists arriving in mountain resorts, it is demonstrated that there is no significant statistical difference between the three intervals. How is it possible when the graphics show approximately the same? The answer lies in the numerical values of the two analyses; in the first case, we talk about a statistical difference of averages of approximately 4000 tourists (a value which determined that the value of p is less than 0.05 - so a significant difference between intervals), and, in the second case, there is a difference in the number of tourists because they are less than 2000. This fact generated that the average difference range is not statistically significant.

On the other hand, how is possible this downward trend in the county of Suceava, where the tourist phenomenon knows constant growth, at least in 2000, and with a decrease in 2005-2006 (both the number of accommodation structures and number of tourists arrived)? The analysis was carried out only for mountain tourism; in the past few years, Suceava county was established at the national level like a standard county for cultural and religious tourism, which is presently representative for the type of tourism in Suceava. Years 1995-2001 had, as main polarizing center, resorts that were already established (Vatra Dornei, Câmpulung Moldovenesc, Gura Humorului), these destinations being the most popular, at the time representing in fact the areas with the most and the best tourist facilities; the passing of time and the entry into the tourist circuit of more and more areas in the county, provided new and different accommodation options for tourists, who preferred to visit new places, generating a phenomenon of decentralization in the enshrined locations. Further more, there is added the launch, especially during the interval 2002-2007, of the rural tourism, the bucovinean village (in the mountainous region and the plateau) which, with its traditions, customs and crafts, has grown to be a national and international tourist attraction. This decentralization can be synonymous with the widely expansion of the tourism phenomenon in Suceava county and, regarding sustainability, it represented an important moment that led to decline, or at least to stagnation of anthropic /demographics pressure on mountain areas of Suceava.

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