

## THE PREMISES FOR SPORT TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND PRACTICING IN BISTRIȚA-NĂȘĂUD COUNTY

Ioan BĂCA

*Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of Geography, Department of Geography of Extensions,  
Faculty of Tourism Geography Bistrița, Romania  
john\_grimo@yahoo.com*

### Abstract

*Sport Tourism is a form of relaxation and active leisure based on motric activities that contribute to health maintenance. The social dimension of sport tourism results from its ability to mobilize large masses of the population to participate in recreational activities and to contribute to the pursuit of project development and exploiting potentially attractive regions (tourist resorts, recreational complexes, etc.).*

*At the level of Bistrița-Năsăud County, organising and pursuing sport tourism is based on three fundamental elements: natural resources, infrastructure, and tourism sport tradition. Among sport tourism activities, following are noteworthy: cycling tourism, hiking, horseback riding, swimming, navigation, skiing, paragliding, alpine skiing, ski touring, enduro, etc.*

**Key words:** *Sport tourism; Active tourist; Recreational sport; Bistrița-Năsăud County.*

**JEL Clasification:** *Q 26, Z 10*

### INTRODUCTION

Sport Tourism is a form of relaxation and leisure based on outdoor activities that train the body and contribute to the maintenance of health. Some examples of such activities are: hiking, cycling tourism, climbing, skiing, snowboarding, paragliding, horseback riding, swimming, etc. In addition, tourism and sport can be perceived as a form of relaxation and leisure, by participating at various sports competitions (matches, tournaments, competitions, demonstrations, etc.) as a spectator. In this context, we can narrow down a series of sport tourism types, defined as sports activities effecting active relaxation, helping to maintain health by practicing them (swimming, tennis, golf, volleyball, skiing, snowboarding, water skiing, kayaking, canoeing, yachting, horseback riding, dirt track, etc.), which, in turn, are shaping tourism for sport activities, defined as a form of recreational sport by practicing them.

Therefore, sports tourism and tourism for practicing sports (or touristic sports) represent the concepts and issues gathered around the idea of sport and movement, with due regard to the restoration and preservation of the physical and mental capacities of the individual.

The social dimension of sport tourism resides in its ability to mobilize large masses of population in order to practice relaxation activities and to contribute to the pursuit of development projects and exploiting potentially attractive regions (tourist resorts, recreational complexes, etc.).

The present study aims to analyse the factors that concur to practicing sport tourism in the Bistrița-Năsăud County, as well as the characteristics and

dynamics of sport tourism activities through case studies with relevance to this issue.

### METHODOLOGY

For the preparation of this study, various sources related to the practicing of sport tourism in the County of Bistrița-Năsăud have been consulted (archival documents, press materials), zoning and plans, a series of statistical data provided by some of the organizers and providers of touristic activities. Also important was the conduction of direct field observations, in order to inventory and evaluate touristic resources and to collect certain data at some tourist activities and sports events.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Sport Tourism is a factor of physical fitness (bone and muscular system, circulatory and respiratory system, etc.) and mental development (audacity, courage, self-confidence, competitive spirit, the spirit of decision-making, etc.), as well as one of maintaining health (weight loss, heart disease prevention, mitigation of high blood pressure, slowing aging cells, preventing osteoporosis, back pain, bad cholesterol decrease, reducing the level of triglycerides, reducing blood sugar and improving glucose tolerance, uptake in burning fat in the blood, etc.), but also a factor of development and social integration, both at the individual level (the development of team spirit, communication, vocabulary development, broadening knowledge of general culture, education, etc.) as well as at the community level, where tourism sport contributes to

the development of tourism infrastructure, resource management, and integration of regional tourism destinations in national and international circuits, raising the quality of tourist services, the development of rural and urban tourism, job creation, the development of the local economy, the protection and conservation of the environment, etc.

Sport tourism field is broadly extended, comprising all areas involving relaxation and mobility (Figure 1). Sports tourism also is associated with all other forms of tourism (cultural tourism, seaside tourism, resort tourism, business tourism, etc.), which stresses the interdependency of active forms of tourism with education and widening of the cultural horizon.

At the level of Bistrița-Năsăud County, the frame for organising and pursuing sport tourism is based on several relevant elements, such as natural resources, the geographical environment, sport tourism activities tradition, and educational resources.

**Natural resources** comprise mountains, which represent 1/3 of the area of the County, including the Țibleș, Rodna, Suhard, Bârgău and Călimani mountain areas; hills, which occupy 2/3 of the County and

include the Someșul Mare Hills, Bistrița Hills, Transilvanian Hills; a tonic-stimulating climate in the mountains, the sedative climate of the hills, hydrographic network consisting of rivers from Someșul Mare and Mureș catchment area, natural lakes (glacial lakes, landslide dam lakes) and artificial lakes (hydroelectricity reservoirs, fish ponds); vegetation (forests, pastures and meadows), the hunting and fisheries fund and the protected areas (national parks, nature reserves) (Chintăuan, 1998; Chintăuan et al, 2002; Naum and Moldovan, 1987; Naum and Butnaru, 1989; Mac and Csaba, 1992; Cocean et al, 2011).

**The infrastructure** includes tourist settlements (Piatra Fântânele, Colibița), recreational complexes (Alpina Blazna, Figa Baths), the horse farms of Livezile, Șieu Sfântu and Beclean, the ski slopes from Piatra Fântânele and Valea Blaznei, chalets and hostels, forestry cabins (Secii River Mouth, Valea Fiadului, Aluneasa, Dealu Negru, Colibița, Coldău) which provides accommodation and technical support for participants in tourism sporting activities; and forest roads (Bâca and Șteff, 2010; Bâca, 2012).

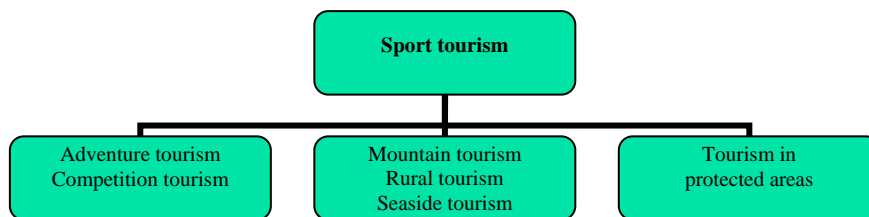


Figure 1 - The fields of sport tourism

**Sport tourism has an old tradition** in Bistrița-Năsăud County, dating back for over a century, and was inaugurated by tourist activities carried out since the second half of the 19th century in the Colibița climate resort and in Rodna, Bârgău and Călimani mountains area. Setting up the Tourist Association Siebenburgischer Karpatenverein (SKV) in 1880 in Sibiu and the subsidiary Bistrița SKV in 1881 had an overwhelming influence on the further development of tourism. In the 70s of the 20th century the winter sports became more popular, which brings out two tourist destinations in the County, namely Valea Blaznei and Piatra Fântânele, where numerous contests of alpine and cross-country skiing were organized.

An important role in the organization and promotion of tourism sports has been set up over the years by mountain tourism clubs in the County, such as Floarea de Colț (1981-1990), Gențiana (1984-2001), Günther Maltzer (1995-2005), Călimani Club (1995-2001), the ciclourism clubs (Bistrița DH, Velomont, Bistrița XRT, Bistria Bike-The Routers, etc.), school associations and sport clubs (Sports Association Club Schreiner, Șo-Moto Club Racing). Also noteworthy are the sport tourism competitions organised at Sângeorz Băi, Colibița, Ciceu Hills, etc.,

cycling tourism competitions (Colibița Bike Fest 2010-2011, Bistrița Flow Ride 2010-2011, etc.), and other sports events (Sport and health from Colibița, Colibița Tour, horse riding contest of Beclean, The Gabriela Szabo cross-country, etc).

**Educational resources** are to be found within educational establishments and have the role to shape attitudes, to ensure physical condition for practicing sport tourism, for practicing sports (volleyball, tennis, football, skiing, cycling tourism). These resources are represented by the number of classes in the school sports programme, the number of qualified teachers, classrooms and sports bases, as well as sports activities carried out in the educational establishments (contests, clubs).

The number of classes allocated to the sports school schedule is as follows: classes I-IV 2 hours/week; classes V to VII 2 hours/week; class VIII 1-2 hours/week; classes IX-XII-1 hour per week. Activities in the school curricula are represented by athletics, preferably from different groups, static and dynamic elements in acrobatic gymnastics, jump to the acrobatic gym, sports games, which improves the physical skills and develop students' moves. Sport halls in the County of Bistrița-Năsăud are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1 - Distribution of sports halls in the county schools**

Colleges, High Schools		School of Arts and Crafts		Gymnasium	
Urban area	Rural area	Urban area	Rural area	Urban area	Rural area
11	8	1	1	7	5

Source: The Bistrița-Năsăud County School Administration

From the 125 schools, 91 units have a sport field, and 34 do not benefit from these items. The 91 units, school sports fields are outdoors and have a total area of 57 185 m<sup>2</sup> with the following characteristics:

- 24 sports fields are with grass and earth, having a surface area of 14 325 m<sup>2</sup>;
- 43 sports fields are covered with bitumen and has an area of 34 735 m<sup>2</sup>;
- sports fields are covered with gravel and have an area of 330 m<sup>2</sup>;
- sports fields are covered with grit and their surface is 5320 m<sup>2</sup>;
- 2 sports fields are covered with slag and have an area of 840 m<sup>2</sup>;
- 1 sports field is covered with cement and has an area of 35 m<sup>2</sup>;
- 1 sports field is covered with synthetic material and has an area of 1600 m<sup>2</sup>.

The total number of qualified teachers of physical education and sport in the County is 219, of

which: 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers - 101; 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers - 32; fully employed teachers - 46; teachers in training - 40.

Among school competitions, the following may be mentioned: rhythmic gymnastics, athletics, cross-country skiing, alpine skiing, tennis, etc.; the main sporting event held in the city of Bistrița is the *Gabriela Szabo* Cross-country, organized each year at Youth Day in early May. An important role in the promotion of sport and tourism activities have sports associations operating in many schools in the County (Bistrița, Livezile, Prundu Bârgăului, Ilva Mică, Ilva Mare, Sângeorz-Băi, Maieru, Budacu de Jos, Lechința, Teaca, Urmeniș, etc.).

Sport tourism activities are organised at this time by tourism service providers, associations and clubs for sport tourism, and by tourists on their own. Different forms of sport tourism, as well as specific service providers and locations are listed in Table 2.

**Table 2 - Sport tourism activities in Bistrița-Năsăud County**

Activities	Organizer	Localization
Hiking	Sports Association Schreiner, Călimani Club, Mountain Travel Association Floarea de Colț, etc.	Bistricior Massif, Bârgău Mountains, Bistrița Hills, etc.
Trekking	Călimani Club, Mountain Travel Association Floarea de Colț, etc.	The Mountain massifs Ineu, Bistricior, Țibleș, Heniu, etc.
Climbing	Mountain Rescue Service, Faculty of Sport Bistrița, Faculty of Tourism Geography Bistrița	Bistrița Ardeleană Gorges
Paragliding	Individual practitioners	Brăteni, Matei, Oala Massif, Căсарu Massif, Valea Blaznei, etc.
Cycling tourism	DH Club, XRT Club, Bike News Club, etc.	Hills and mountain area of the County
Horseback riding	Horse Riding Club Beclean, Horse Riding Club Valea Lupilor Șieu Sfântu, Horse Riding Club Livezile	Hilly area of the County
Endurance	The Șo-Moto Adventure Club Bistrița, etc.	Hills and mountain area of the County
Kayaking-canoeing	Sports Association Schreiner, Călimani Club, etc.	Colibița Lake
Rafting	Călimani Club, Faculty of Sport Bistrița	Rebra River, Bistrița Ardeleană River downstream the Hydroelectric Power Plant of Bistrița Bârgăului
Cave tourism	The Military Border Museum of Năsăud, The Rodnei Mountains National Park Administration	The Izvorul Tăușoarelor Cave, The Corongiș Cave, etc.
Alpine skiing	Faculty of Sport Bistrița	Piatra Fântânele, Valea Blaznei, Bistricior Massif, etc.
Ski touring	Mountain Rescue Service	Valea Blaznei-Ineu Massif, Bistricior Massif, etc.
Snowboarding	Faculty of Sport Bistrița	Piatra Fântânele, Valea Blaznei, Bistricior Massif, etc.
Fishing	The Bistrița-Năsăud County Hunting and Fishing Association, Esox Spinning Club, Lucioperca Fishing Association, Pescar Modern Club, etc.	Colibița Lake, recreational lakes in the County, the County rivers
Hunting	The Bistrița-Năsăud County Hunting and Fishing Association, Hunting Associations from the County, etc.	Lechința, Bozieș, Figa, Miceștii de Câmpie, Cușma, The Valley of Budac, etc.

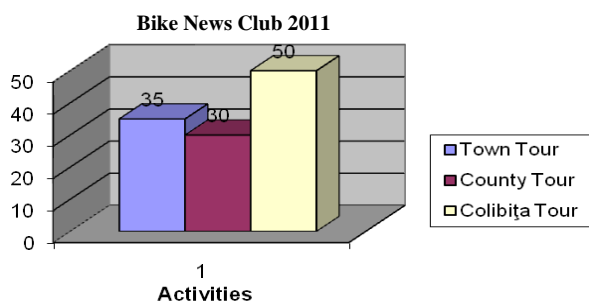
Among the activities monitored for this paper we can mention the following:

**a. The cycling tourism festival Colibița Bike Fest**, which takes place in the Stegea Glade in the Bistrița Gorge. In 2010 the festival brought together 110 attendees, and in 2011 it recorded 120 participants

from adjacent localities: Bistrița, Oradea, Piatra Neamț, Cluj-Napoca, Târgu Mureș. The event is at its second edition and has been organised by the Directorate for Youth and Sport Bistrița, The XRT Club from Bistrița, and the Bistrița Bârgăului Town Hall.

*b. The activities organized by The Cycling Tourism Club BikeNews-Routers in 2011 (Figure 2):*

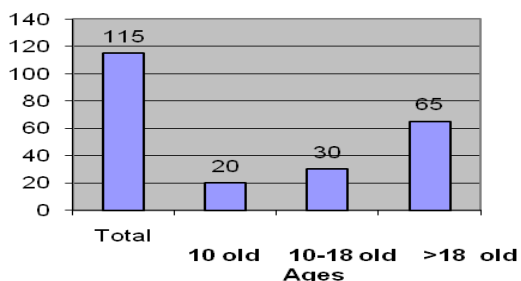
- The Tour of Bistrița in May, which brought together 35 participants, aged between 16-40 years;
- The Tour of County Bistrița-Năsăud in August, which brought together 30 participants, aged between 16-50 years;
- Colibița Tour in September, which brought together 50 participants, aged between 14-60 years.



**Figure 2 - The Diagram of participants in events organised by the Bike News Club - Rutierişti Bistrița in 2011**

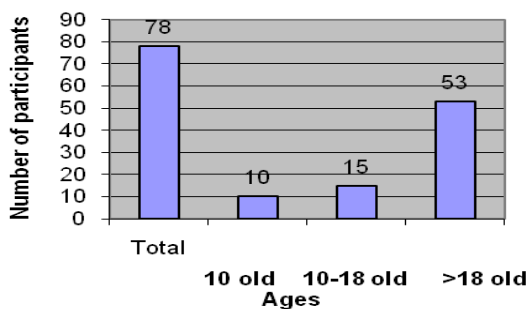
Source: Bike News Club

*c. The Event Health and Sports* organized by the Sports Association Schreiner Bistrița. This event took place in Colibița and held following sports activities: mountain biking, hiking, kayaking, windsurfing, swimming, climbing, etc. This event is at the third edition; the number of participants and the situation of age groups is shown in Figures 3-5.



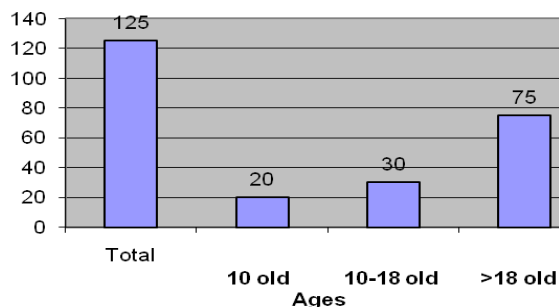
**Figure 3 - The number of participants per age group in the year 2009**

Source: Sport Association Schreiner



**Figure 4 - The number of participants per age group in the year 2010**

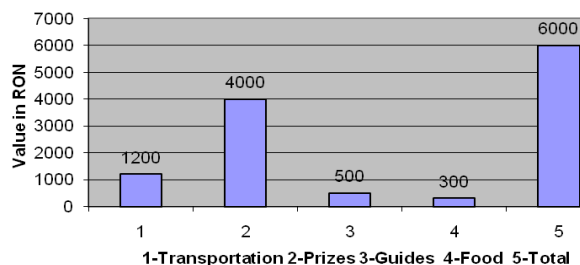
Source: Sport Association Schreiner



**Figure 5 - The number of participants per age group in the year 2011**

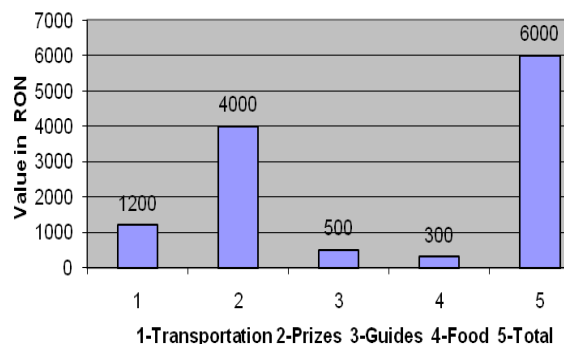
Source: Sport Association Schreiner

Regarding the expenditures related to the organisation of this sport tourism event, the prizes rank first, as they are meant to stimulate the participation of as many people as possible (Figures 6-8).



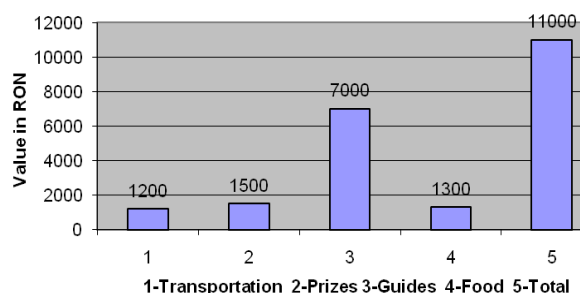
**Figure 6 - Costs for the event Health and Sport, 2009 Edition**

Source: Sport Association Schreiner



**Figure 7 - Costs for the event Health and Sport, 2010 Edition**

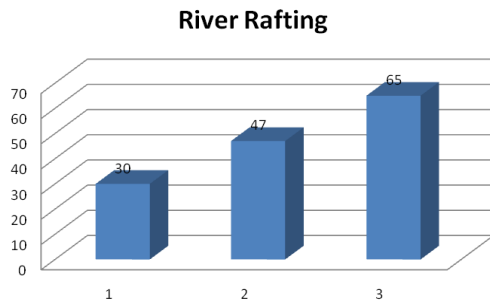
Source: Sport Association Schreiner



**Figure 8 - Costs for the event Health and Sport, 2011 Edition**

Source: Sport Association Schreiner

**d. The River Rafting** activities organized by the Călimani Club Holidays on the Rebra River and Bistrița Ardeleană River (on the segment between the Powerplant Bistrița Bârgăului and Prundu Bârgăului). Spring and fall do record around 150-200 participants, in addition to the student traineeships organized by the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, which, even if restricted to a small number of participants, gather students which are very interested to be initiated to the "mysteries" of this sport (Figure 9).



**Figure 9 - Number of students who have participated to rafting activities on the Bistrița Ardeleană River: 1 – in year 2010; 2 – in year 2011; 3 – in year 2012**

Source: Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Bistrița

Sport Tourism is a necessity in the County, so there are several prospective actions in this direction, such as:

- Re-launching of the tourist resort Colibița, basing on a draft funded by the Commune Hall of Bistrița Bârgăului and the Bistrița-Năsăud County Council, which involves the

building of ski slopes and a tourist's embarkation point;

- The Project Wonderland Amusement Park, proposed by the Mayor of Bistrița on the former location of the Military Polygon where there should be arranged sports fields, ski slopes, swimming pools, etc.;
- Completion of the accommodation facilities in the Bistricior Massif (Mountain Rescue base, tourist refuge);
- Equipping the Bistrița Ardeleană River for rafting downwards the dam of Colibița till Prundu Bârgăului;
- Realization of a cycling tourism base in the Stegea Glade in the Bistrița Gorge;
- Equipping the slope from Piatra Fântânele with snow cannons;
- Arranging and re-launching the old touristic walking trails around Bistrița.

## CONCLUSIONS

Sport Tourism is a well-defined form of leisure with numerous niche subtypes. In the Bistrița-Năsăud County, sport tourism activities are not very present, but progress continues. In order to intensify sport tourism activities, there should be an increased involvement from educational institutions (schools, high schools, the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, the Faculty of Tourism Geography), tourism associations, travel agencies, of mayoralties and local communities.

## REFERENCES

1. Bâca, I., Șteff, I. (2010) *Colibița - dimensiuni turistice*, Editura Nova Didactica, Bistrița.
2. Bâca, I. (2012) *Arealul turistic Piatra Fântânele-Măgura Calului*, Editura Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca.
3. Chintăuan, I. (1998) *Bistrița-Năsăud, Ape minerale și stațiuni*, Editura Supergraph, Cluj-Napoca.
4. Chintăuan, I., Ștefan, V., Marquier, I., Coldea, G. (2004) *Arii protejate din Bistrița-Năsăud*, Editura Supergraph, Cluj-Napoca.
5. Cocean, P., Ilovan, O.R., Boțan, C.N. (2011) *Județul Bistrița-Năsăud*, Colecția Județele României, Editura Academiei Române, București.
6. Mac, I., Csaba, B. (1992) *Munții Oaș-Gutâi-Țibleș*, Colecția Monografii Montane, București.
7. Naum, T., Moldovan, G. (1987) *Munții Bârgăului*, Colecția Munții Noștri, Editura Sport-Turism, București.
8. Naum, T., Butnaru, E. (1989) *Munții Călimani*, Colecția Monografii Montane, Editura Sport-Turism, București.
9. \*\*\* (2011) *Planul Urbanistic Zonal (PUZ)-Complex Sportiv Polivalent în extravilanul localității componente Unirea – Zona Poligon*, Primăria Municipiului Bistrița.
10. \*\*\* (2010) *Studiu de dezvoltare a comunei Bistrița Bârgăului. Studiu de fundamentare privind perspectivele de dezvoltare durabilă cu detalierea potențialului turistic*, Halcrow Romania SRL, București, Primăria Comunei Bistrița Bârgăului.