

## DIAGNOSTIC ANALYSIS OF ECOTOURISM POTENTIAL OF CARAS-SEVERIN COUNTY

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### Abstract

Sustainable tourism development is not just a concept discussed, supplemented or restated in the conferences held on this subject. Need to protect natural and cultural riches which is the common heritage of humanity and to meet the needs of tourists and local people led to the emergence in practice some form of sustainable tourism. Objectives, principles, sustainable tourism development requirements can be found in forms of tourism such as ecotourism, rural tourism or cultural tourism. These forms are an expression of desire for tourism to represent not only a positive factor and dynamic development and a practical solution for keeping unaltered the environment.

Caras-Severin position in a natural setting, in a mainly mountainous area with a rich and varied forest and wildlife, with a representative hydrographic network, with great cultural-historical values encourage tourism development in various forms, these elements representing tourist destinations with a high degree of attractiveness.

Tourism values are given by a natural setting rich and varied with many types of terrain, climate elements that are under the influences of ocean and southern, a representative of the hydrographic network, a rich and varied forest and wildlife, all representing tourist destinations with a high degree of attractiveness.

Because of the exceptional features of the landscape and species diversity in the county were established more than 50 protected areas. Protected areas account for approximately 14.6% of the county, so almost three times more than the rest of the country. From total, three of the protected areas have the status of national park and a natural park.

**Key words:** ecotourism, protected areas, natural resources, human resources

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Tourism environment relationship has a great importance, environmental protection and conservations representing main condition for the progress and development of tourism. Tourism activity has positive influences or negative and on long term on natural environment, socio-cultural and urban. Negative effects can occur when planning, management and tourism development are inadequate for local interest of communities and public authorities.

### MATERIAL AND METHOD

Cultural heritage of national importance included in the tourist circuit, for the most part, recovery depends on its state of preservation of monuments, restoration and planning for the visit and therefore many of the cultural values can not be visited or shown to the public. To radiography the problem of ecotourism in the Caras-Severin, I made a diagnosis of current situation analysis, a statistical analysis of existing data on this topic. The analysis undertaken was not intended to be an exhaustive one this large topic. Scientific research is oriented towards mass phenomena knowledge

economy, society, nature, meet the need of information. Research was conducted in a certain order, starting from the particular to general, from simple to complex.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In Romania, tourism activity on ecological principles must be based on Romanian legislation and other regulations or directives in the field of EU countries or world organizations supporting these efforts and will harmonize with that view. The value of natural capital of Romania during the time required for measures to protect nature. Currently, the National Network of Protected Areas includes a number of **579 protected areas** (including **13 national parks**) which represents 5.18% of the territory (1,234,710 ha). Three of them are internationally recognized as biosphere reserves under UNESCO Programme - MAB, namely Retezat, Pietrosul Rodnei and the Danube Delta. The latter is also included on the World Heritage list and the list of Ramsar wetlands of international importance.

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Table 1  
The situation of protected areas in Romania

Romania's surface (ha)	23,839,100
Area of protected natural areas (ha)	1,234,608
Share of total area of protected areas (%)	5.18
Of which: Delta of Danube of the country, (%)	2.43

Source: MAPM

Regarding the situation of protected areas at national level, we present figure 1.

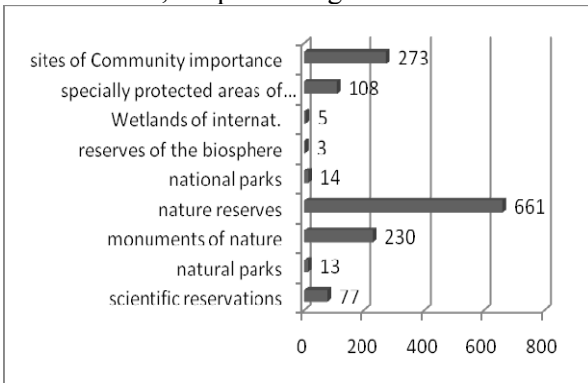


Figure 1 Protected areas in Romania, the number

At the national level natural reservations are predominant; with a share of 47.8% Sites of Community Importance and natural monuments have approximately equal shares, 19.7% and 16.6% Natural parks have an area of 737,428 hectares and 315,857 hectares national ones. National parks, natural and biosphere reservations in our country have an area of 1,132,176 hectares.

Also should be recognized that most protected areas in Romania have been self preserved given that human interventions on them was minimal or inexistent on previous regime But as well, there are countless examples where protected areas were simply destroyed, although are still listed as available.

Outside national parks, natural parks and biosphere reserves are about 800 scientific reserves, natural monuments and nature reserves whose total area has not been determined but is estimated at about 169,000 hectares. Therefore land area of protected natural areas cover 7.14% of the country's land area.

In the European eco-tourism landscape, Romania has several strengths that make it attractive to other European destinations According to a study by the Dutch market (Blumer, 2002) this is untouched nature, the authenticity of traditions, 30% of European large carnivores, the Danube Delta, natural forests and undivided, hospitality, diverse landscape, well-preserved human-nature relationship, high biodiversity, over 12,000 caves, traditional food,

mystery, Christian traditions, herbs, salt relief The following figure we present the main elements of ecotourism attraction in Romania, and their perception, according to a scale from 1 to 100 points.

Caras-Severin, the third largest country with an area of 8514 km<sup>2</sup>, has a predominantly mountainous relief, 65.5%, depressions occupying about 17%, 11% hills and plains hill about 6.5% Hunedoara, North- East of Hunedoara county County, - north and northwest of Timis County.

Caras-Severin County landscape is predominantly mountainous, 65.4% of the surface is represented by mountains, but not missing any depressions (16.5%), hills (10.8%) and plains (7.3%) County relief falls in steps from east to west, including all major units of relief.

Caras-Severin County has a remarkable tourist targets possessing both leading natural (nature reserves, three national parks: Domogled - Cerna Valley, Semenic - Caras Gorge, Nera - Beusnita, a natural park, Iron Gates, mineral and thermal springs spa resorts operated Herculane, mountain resorts and Secu Crivaia, Semenic, Trei Ape, Poiana Marului), and objectives of the historical, cultural and religious (camps, roads and Roman baths, medieval fortresses, places of worship, folk art, archaeological sites, museums, etc.) Contrary indisputable tourist potential, but the tourist infrastructure is poor or low quality.

The share of natural resources is overwhelming Thermal waters, rich mountain area (65.4% of the county), Danube River, the five parks (four national and one natural), the river with some of the most scenic gorges in the country and the multitude of caves and karst formations make natural resources of the county's main tourist attraction.

The main categories of classification of natural resources in terms of features relevant for tourism (tourist category that addresses the intensity of physical demands, the training and equipment necessary for tourists) are:

**Passive natural resources** - resources that address landscape tourism ecotourism, hiking, and which include landforms, flora, fauna, landscapes, gorges, waterfalls, nature reserves, etc. The county has few attractions in this unique national and beyond (the biggest national park in the country - Domogled Park - Cerna Valley, the longest aisle karst) In addressing these objectives, the physical demands for tourists is low, they addressing some large categories of tourists.

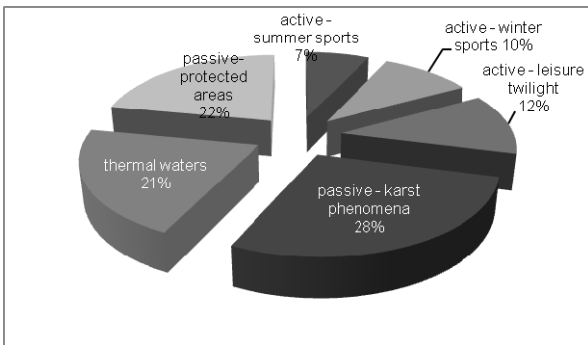


Figure 2 Attractiveness of natural resources by type of county natural resources and activities

**Active natural resources** - resources that are suitable to practice for activities for tourists has increased physical demands are mostly sports and requires knowledge and special arrangements. In terms of quality, passive natural resources are the who come to a satisfactory level in terms of attractiveness, conservation and existing facilities Shortcomings noticed in the field are: tourist information poor, lack specialized guides, damage markings on some routes, the presence of waste in some areas, destruction of vegetation in some undeveloped campsites If natural resource assets, lack of necessary facilities in a number of specific activities of these resources are a challenge for tourism planning activities Although natural resources in territory arrangement is apparently balanced, attractive tourist traffic concentration determines their different only in certain areas.

Lack of attractiveness of natural resources can be countered by specific tools tourism. The concrete arrangement of tourist resources in the area is important for evaluating the possibilities for integration of resources in the frame of tourist routes In case of natural resources, the most attractive for tourists are those related to karst phenomena (keys Caras, Nera, Beusnitei) with many caves, waterfalls and special flora and fauna.

Human resources have a lower share of the tourist and not necessarily because it would be less numerous but because they are not put in value in an attractive way The long occupation of this territory and ethnic mosaic that characterized it due to historical peculiarities of the area left their mark on the cultural heritage of the county.

Classification of human resources takes into account the identification of their connection to group the themes. A first classification shall take account of their nature: historical sites and cultural resources. Historical sites, by their variety (in terms of length, content, meaning, historical context in which they appear) are apparently difficult to aggregate in homogeneous groups. But they operate on the county is found two distinct groups: Roman remains and other artifacts of

origin, extremely varied in terms of content, meaning and time they occurred.

Cultural resources is more difficult to ethnic heterogeneity grouped because they generated. Thematic grouping of resources focused on identifying therefore an element of historical connection at least some of the resources. One of the identified connection was the main occupation of the people of this region, namely the extraction of minerals and metals processing. From this perspective, one can define the category of cultural resources industry, which can track developments (by objectives that can become tourist attractions) at the end of Neolithic date. Another grouping of cultural resources is the very reason for their diversity in this region, namely the ethnic mosaic that resulted.

Consequently, tourism themes that can highlight the human resources will focus on Roman historical relics, cities and fortifications of different times, goals and objectives of industrial culture cultural ethnic heterogeneity representative of this area. Qualitative assessment of human resources (and not only) leads to an unhappy conclusion unfortunately, that their condition is suffering, private investment have been a long time and expectations for them have been consistently unrealistic in relation to lack of financial support, professionalism and interest that have been treated. Resources are not really resources than when on their acting ability (knowledge), capital and labor.

The attractiveness of human resources among tourists who visit the county, notable differences. Ethnographic resources related to culture and spiritual are the most notable, 57.30%, topping the opposite targets industrial culture, 5%. Historical relics and museums occupy a middle position, 21%, in tourist preferences. Cultural events, 16.50%, may become a useful tool to enhance the attractiveness of certain themes-resource less motivated (figure 3).

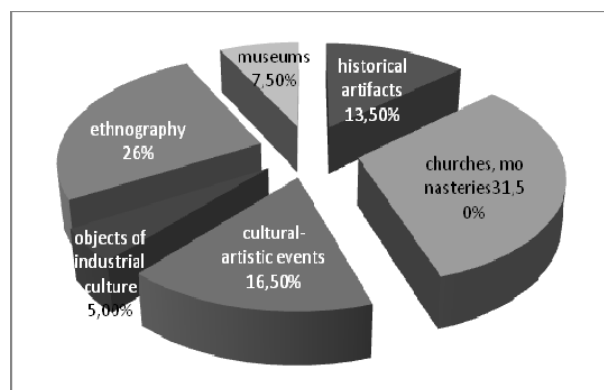


Figure 3 The attractiveness of human tourism resources by category

The value given to the county's tourism landscape features primarily relief characteristics is enhanced by other factors: hydrographic, climate, vegetation, fauna, which in turn has a great variety and originality, a high landscape printing special tourist attractiveness.

In Caras-Severin, due to its geographical position, climate conditions with strong Mediterranean influences (hot and dry summers, mild winters with high rainfall) were favored the emergence and development of many plant and animal species and a variety of natural habitats, all of our county giving the value of one of the most biodiversity areas in the country.

In the case of tourism protected areas in Caras-Severin County must be respected the legal norms in force on the regime of protected areas and management plans for each national park, natural, Nature 200 site, nature reserve, etc.

In Caras-Severin county we meet a number of three national parks with a total area of 133,865 hectares, and a natural park with an area of 115,655 hectares. The main function of national parks and natural territory should remain but the preservation. Black pine of Banat Festival organized in three consecutive editions had the greatest impact on the audience and managed to create a new emblem of the area with:

- bilateral integration of protected areas (border) of the two countries in the European network Natura 2000;
- monitoring and control of tourist flows and the impact caused by them;
- site of natural parks, national and protected areas - environmental education area;
- Ecological reconstruction in protected areas and their vicinity (buffer zones).

### CONCLUSIONS

Although Romania is very high potential, ecotourism is considered a very narrow niche in Romania. Responsible tourism is promoted and supported enough by the authorities, although European tour operators believe that Romania has a remarkable potential.

In Caras-Severin county we meet several areas of vegetation, flora, fauna or landscape looking great, who received a nature reserve status. National Parks cover three areas: recreational, intermediate (untouched and without car traffic)

and the area of scientific interest protected by natural reservations entirely. National Parks must become true natural outdoor museums, the most important basis for tourism.

Despite the fact that the west has a great heritage with great potential ecotourism recovery, ecotourism is still a relatively narrow segment of the tourism market, faced with numerous problems such as poor cooperation at local, national promotion modest and internationally, there is a poorly diversified offerings, poor infrastructure development in the protected area ecotourism specific, low level of training of those employed in the field etc.

The implementation of an ecotourism development program in Caras-Severin following changes will occur both at national and local level: ecotourism product will increase the credibility of Romanian tourism on the international market, thus increasing the flow of tourists visiting Romania; increasing number of tourists will support the sustainable development of rural areas; to identify ecotourism destinations that can offer quality products that can be promoted by tour operators; will increase quality of services in the area of ecotourism; practical mechanisms to implement nature conservation and sustainable development (including financial arrangements) at each location. These mechanisms will be supported by business sector (tour operators and owners of boarding) and the local administrations and the administrations of protected areas; businesses will be directed towards a more environmentally friendly and local communities; Association of Ecotourism in Romania (AER) will only promote international tour operators and destinations that are accredited.

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