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Procedia Economics and Finance 23 (2015) 453 – 460

Procedia
Economics and Finance

www.elsevier.com/locate/procedia

2nd GLOBAL CONFERENCE on BUSINESS, ECONOMICS, MANAGEMENT and
TOURISM, 30-31 October 2014, Prague, Czech Republic

Cultural tourism potential, as part of rural tourism development in the North-East of Romania

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Abstract

North-East is the largest region of Romania, in terms of number of inhabitants and the area held, but last in relation to the development stage. Although the North-East economy is currently supported by the tourism sector, there is still growth potential, especially referring to business involvement. A qualitative rural tourism requires a process of modernization, development and innovation in the sector by creating competitive travel services in the main areas of interest: Iași, Suceava and Neamt. These important North-East cities are loaded with cultural heritage through historical sites, cultural buildings (museums, memorial houses) and religious evidence (churches and ancient monasteries). In order to properly analyze the productivity of the tourism sector, we make reference to the following indicators: accommodation capacity in operation, the number of tourists, the number of overnight stays, average length of stay.

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Selection and/ peer-review under responsibility of Academic World Research and Education Center

Keywords: rural tourism; cultural tourism; sustainable development; tourism potential, cultural heritage.

1. Introduction

Favorable conditions , beautiful landscape , air and water purity make from the upland counties of Bacau , Neamt and Suceava , a priceless cultural and religious heritage, therefore North East has a relatively high tourism potential, which can be compared with other popular tourist destinations in the country and abroad.

Tourism activity in this region may be structured as follows (Mihalache, Croitoru, 2006):

- Cultural tourism

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- Agritourism
- Ecclesiastical tourism
- Scientific tourism
- Therapeutic spa tourism
- Agreement tourism
- Transit tourism

In this paper we want to study the interdependence of the first two forms of tourism mentioned , manifested in the North East region , namely cultural and rural tourism (agritourism) . This will be linked to tourism indicators (number of reception , accommodation capacity and the number of arrivals) and with cultural tourism activity indicators (number and structure of cultural heritage objectives) .

2. Methodology

This work was done by analyzing the characteristics of rural and cultural tourism and their impact on the evolution of the number of tourists in the North East region .

In order to accomplish this analysis we matched the tourism statistical indicators, the accommodation structure type (farmhouses) and some indicators developed by the Centre for Studies and Research in the Field of Culture detailed as follows.

We used next statistical indicators (*Minciu R.,2000*), for the rural tourism sector analysis:

- 1 The number of existing Farmhouses in North East .
- 2 Accommodation capacity in operation in farmhouses in North East .
- 3 The number of arrivals in farmhouses in North East .
- 4 The number of overnight stays in farmhouses in North East .

Indices that characterize the cultural sector for the regional level are:

- 1 The optimum use of heritage objectives, by tourism- goals this indicator reveals if cultural tourism potential of each region is used in an optimal way.
- 2 Cultural tourism index- measuring cultural tourism activities , including road situation in the region.
- 3 Cultural index- institutional capacity and operators - which measures the level of cultural infrastructure development production and distribution of cultural goods .

Correlating the two categories of indicators will determine the influence of cultural heritage on the rural tourism development level in the North East of the country.

3. North-East Region - tourism coordinated

Region covering the North East of the country and , according to tradition , is part of the old historical region of Moldavia (*North East Regional Development Plan 2007-2013*) . With a total area of 36,850 square kilometers and a population of 3,726,642 inhabitants, the North East is the largest of the eight development regions of Romania. Geographically, the region bordering Ukraine to the north , to the south by the counties of Galati and Vrancea (South East) , to the east by the Republic of Moldova and the West Maramures and Bistrita- Nasaud (North West) and Mures counties , Harghita and Covasna (Central Region) . With a rich historical , cultural and spiritual region harmoniously combines the traditional with the modern and the past with the present , its potential can be used to develop infrastructure in rural areas , tourism and human resources .

Rural tourism and agrotourism, especially, have great development potential as the region's rural areas have , besides a picturesque landscape , unpolluted and multiple choice recreation and a valuable cultural and historical potential .

Cultural tourism activity , knowledge and information can be structured as follows (*Study on the implementation of the Regional Operational Programme in the North- East*):

1. Museum tourism supported by a significant number of museums (art, history , ethnography and folklore, technical etc.) , memorial houses that belonged to men of culture , art , science ; fortress , royal courts etc. mention :
 - Rosetti - Tescanu House (Bacau County) -built in 1898 by Tescanu family - where the great musician George Enescu lived (in this settlement was established opera Oedipus) .
 - Mihai Eminescu Memorial House from Ipotesti- since 1950 has turned into a museum of furniture and other antiques that belonged to the family.
 - George Enescu Memorial Museum from Dorohoi that exposed personal objects of the artist.
 - The Palace of Culture built in 1906-1925 , is situated on the ruins of medieval royal court . Palace hosts four major museums : the History Museum of Moldova, Moldova Ethnographic Museum , Museum of Art and Science and Technic Museum .
 - Roznovanu Palace built in Vienna neoclassical style where Iasi City Hall is today .
 - Vasile Alecsandri National Theatre- built in the period 1894-1896, baroque style decorated, with one of the finest concert halls in the country with a capacity of 1000 seats.
 - University of Iasi is a former palace that served as the royal court and where worked first Pinoteca in country.
 - University of Copou is a famous monumental marble hall , known as the " Hall of Lost Steps " , decorated with fresco paintings by Sabin Balasa .
 - Central University Library in Iasi - a building with Doric columns and dome dominating foot Copou .
 - Royal Inn is one of the oldest civil buildings and houses Suceava Department of Ethnography and Folk Art Museum Suceava County .
 - City of Suceava built during the reign of Peter I Musat is nearby Bucovina Village Museum , arranged outdoors and containing a valuable collection of traditional construction since XVII -XX .
 - Ion Creanga Memorial House – Humulesti village (Neamt) contains a number of personal items of great storytelling .
 - Neamt Fortress , built between 1391-1674 Peter Musatinul withstood sieges over time Austro -Hungarian and Polish armies .
 - Porumbescu complex museum from Stupca (Suceava) consists of three objectives: the tomb of the great musician , Memorial House and Porumbescu Museum .
 - Emil Racovita Memorial Museum in Suranesti (Vaslui) is formed from the house where the great explorer was born and it contains documents from the years of school and correspondence with different personalities .
 - Basil Pärvan Museum of Barlad, found in the former Prefect, raised by Italian neoclassical architects in 1899. The museum contains three sections: art , natural science and history .
 - Stefan cel Mare County Museum of Vaslui includes sections of archeology , medieval and modern history, ethnography, fine art , and a humor salon – named "Constantin Tanase " in memory of the founder of Romanian theater magazine .
 - " Silent " Village Museum - founded in 1986, has departments of archeology, ethnography, folklore and so much less to a museum village , rich collection of fine art , rare objects and 400 autographed books by authors. Some exhibits are unique in the country.
 - Village Museum in Vetrisoaia - ethnographic and historical exhibits .
 - Cantemir History Museum where there is a collection of archaeological pieces from the Paleolithic to the medieval period, ethnographic collections , fine art collection : George Tatarescu , Dan Hatmanu , Octavian Angheluta .
2. Ethnographic tourism related popular character events (such as the National Festival " Rose of Moldova " in Strunga Iasi festival " Winter Traditions " of Iasi , artisan fairs (" Cucuteni 5000" - Iasi) ; International Folklore Festival " Ceahlaul" (Neamt) International Folklore Festival " Arcanum " (Suceava) International Festival "Hora of elders" (Vaslui) ;
3. Artistic tourism (festivals , seasons , tournaments, exhibitions , etc.) ; International Festival of Fine Art Tescani (Bacau) , Humor Festival of Vaslui .

North East Region has 4043 monuments of international interest, national and local level, according to the heritage list of Culture Ministry in 2004. The list includes archaeological sites and memorial houses, historical buildings and religious monuments. Besides visits to the purpose of pilgrimage or prayer, most tourists visit sights are preferentially oriented religious monuments. They form the "backbone traditional" tourist attractions in the North East. Of the seven tourist areas in Romania covering cultural sites of world importance monasteries in northern Moldavia were included in the UNESCO World Heritage in 1993 and include Voronet, Humor, Moldova, Probota, New St. John of Suceava, Patrauti Church and Tree Church.

Table 1: Heritage list, by county in North-East Region of Romania

County/Region	Local and national historical monuments	Historical monuments of national interest
Bacau	368	95
Botosani	516	46
Iasi	1641	128
Neamt	552	109
Suceava	517	182
Vaslui	449	80
Regiunea Nord-Est	4043	640

Source: Heritage List of the Culture Ministry (processed data), 2004

From the data presented in the table above can be seen as the most developed counties in terms of number of historical monuments are Iasi, Neamt and Suceava.

Table 2: Number of museums, by county in North-East Region of Romania

Region and counties	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
North-East Region	124	129	126	127	124	126	118	124
Bacau	21	22	20	20	20	20	20	25
Botosani	11	11	12	12	11	12	10	10
Iasi	24	27	27	27	26	26	21	20
Neamt	28	28	28	28	28	29	28	29
Suceava	30	31	29	30	30	30	30	30
Vaslui	10	10	10	10	9	9	9	10

Source: Statistical Yearbooks of Romania

In terms of number of museums, remains the same counties as the degree of importance, and the total number of museum currently owns 124 in North East Region.

Table 3 Visitors number in museums and public collections

Region and counties	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
North-East Region	1849165	1824971	1541777	1685603	1573824	1332343	1336285	1471030
Bacau	45607	46765	54684	61453	51289	58855	60078	76640
Botosani	85074	80636	68985	73214	107507	47237	47116	39802
Iasi	539930	575319	402925	282737	270361	301531	277347	301171
Neamt	433158	512039	427470	625758	609825	378153	400630	437601
Suceava	632169	536325	499522	556883	457787	457712	495130	499935
Vaslui	113227	73887	88191	85558	77055	88855	55984	115881

Source: Statistical Yearbooks of Romania

Besides the 3 counties of high importance (Iasi , Neamt and Suceava) Vaslui also stands out with the big number of museum and public collections visitors, In 2013 it attracted 115881 tourists with 10 museums, meaning an average of 317 tourists per day.

Considering the number of visitors existing and considering the fact that the study refers to rural tourism, the data obtained above should be correlated with data on agro indicators (Farmhouses number , accommodation capacity , number of arrivals and overnights).

Table 4: Agri-tourism indicators, by North-East Region of Romania

Agri-tourism indicators	Region	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Farmhouses number	North-East	177	196	200	241	229	223	265	283
Accommodation capacity in operation in farmhouses		649285	723247	822018	955865	952161	1047315	1246142	1304666
The number of arrivals in farmhouses		52792	64675	74645	77371	73401	94906	102829	105224
The number of overnight stays in farmhouses		94787	117392	133602	141586	134746	177083	202909	193244

Source: Statistical Yearbooks of Romania (processed data)

Applying formulas , it follows that , in the period 2006-2013 , the indicators presented the following changes :

- The number of farmhouses increased by 60 %
- Farmhouses accommodation capacity increased by 109% , which means they were built accommodation units with greater capacity than before 2006.
- The number of arrivals in farmhouses doubled in 2013 comparing to 2006, meaning there was demand for new accommodations.

- The number of overnight stays increased at the same rate as the number of arrivals , which means that the average length of stay in a farmhouse remained at 1.83 nights / tourist .

Assuming that the number of visitors in museums and public collections would have decided to stay in rural locations in the North East in 2006, the accommodation capacity could have met only 35% of the existing demand . In 2009 only 57% of these tourists would have been satisfied with proper accommodation capacity but in 2013 the percentage would have been up to 90%, meaning that agritourism is seen as an opportunity to pastime and also visit cultural objectives in the North-East region.

If we consider that for the same period some of the visitors would have decided to stay in rural locations, the situation would have been as follows:

- In 2006 only 3 % of visitors stayed overnight in farmhouses
- In 2009 , 5% of the tourists could stay in farmhouses
- In the year 2013 the percentage increased to 7% of those people that could stay overnight in farmhouses.

These low percentages may be justified by the existence of a transit tourism that occurs in the North-East, the tourist-visitor comes and goes so the accommodation is not a target for them, they just want to visit not to stay overnight or spend a longer period of time in the area.

4. Results and conclusion

Based on data obtained above we can estimate indices that characterize the cultural sector at the regional level:

A. *Optimum use by tour of heritage* . The high value of this indicator reflects the intensive use of heritage for tourism activities . Low value indicates reduced their use of cultural tourism .

The calculation: Reporting tourist activity patriomoni number of targets in each region. Tourism activity was constructed by calculating a score for each region . They consider the following :

- The structures and functions of tourists accommodation
- Capacity and Activity Book
- Number of visitors
- Number of arrivals location .

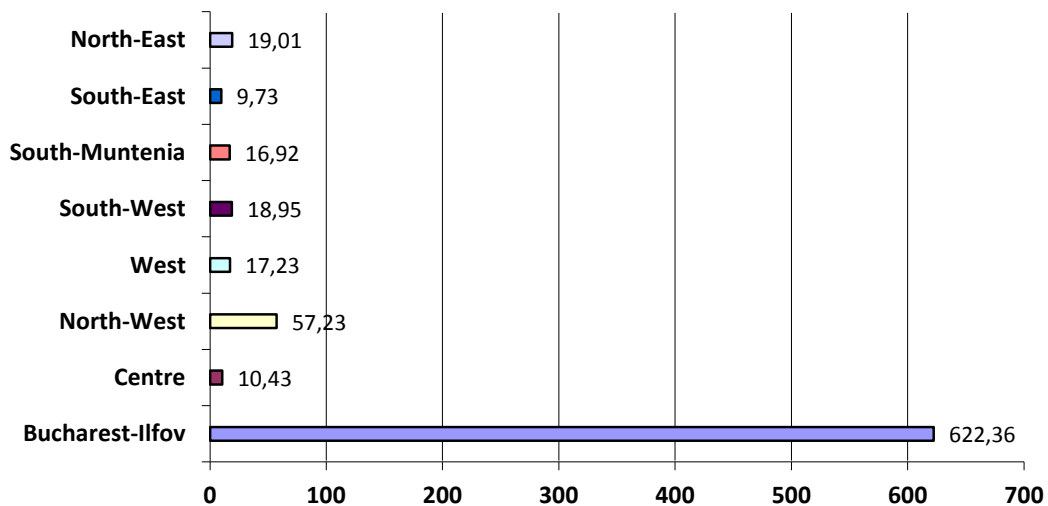


Fig. 1: Optimum use by tour of heritage, by regions of Romania

Bucharest-Ilfov Region recorded the highest value because, as the capital of Romania , attracts the largest number of tourists annually. If we don't take into consideration this region, next that uses intensively the heritage elements is North-West (Maramureş) and then North-East.

B. *Index for cultural tourism* . It is more powerful than optimal use index described above, as stresses and transport situation in the area and the actual number of visitors .

The calculation : Average values :

- Optimal use of heritage through tourism (described above).
- Road .
- The number of visits .

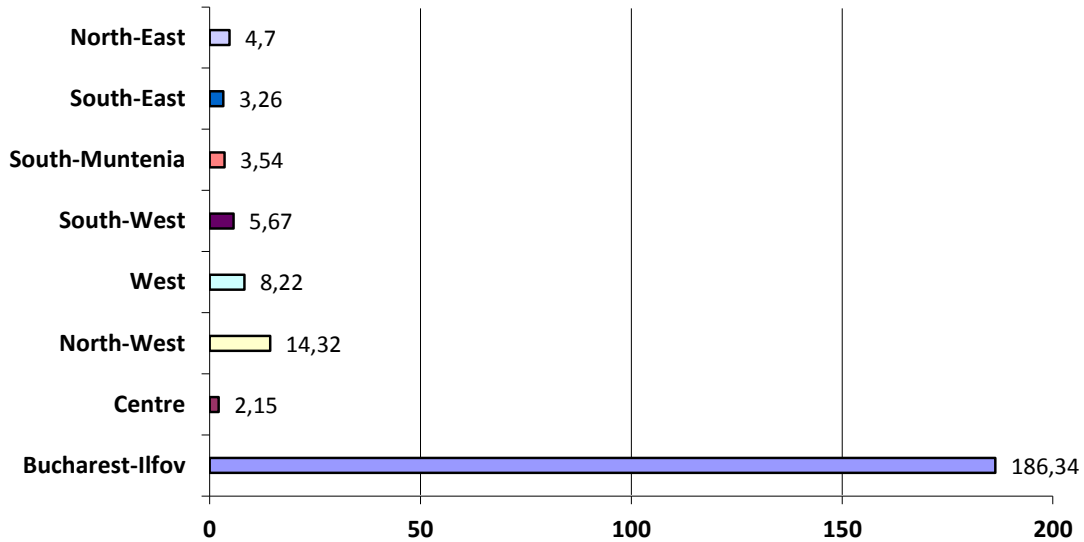


Fig. 2: Index for cultural tourism

When you take into account the situation of infrastructure is seen as Northeast Region ranks in the top five since the potential is weak . North West still remains immediately after Bucharest - Ilfov , which means an index of cultural tourism has developed in many ways.

C. *Index institutional capacity and cultural operators*. High value indicates a developed infrastructure which can support household consumption needs to run programs easier or host cultural events. Low value indicates failure of cultural institutions in the region.

Calculation : This indicator combines a number of cultural institutions in each region / 1.000 inhabitants and combines these results through a medium .

- Heritage objects (number , capacity, hierarchy , types)
- Number of libraries
- Theatres
- Shows Institutions
- Museums
- Cinemas
- UNESCO Monuments

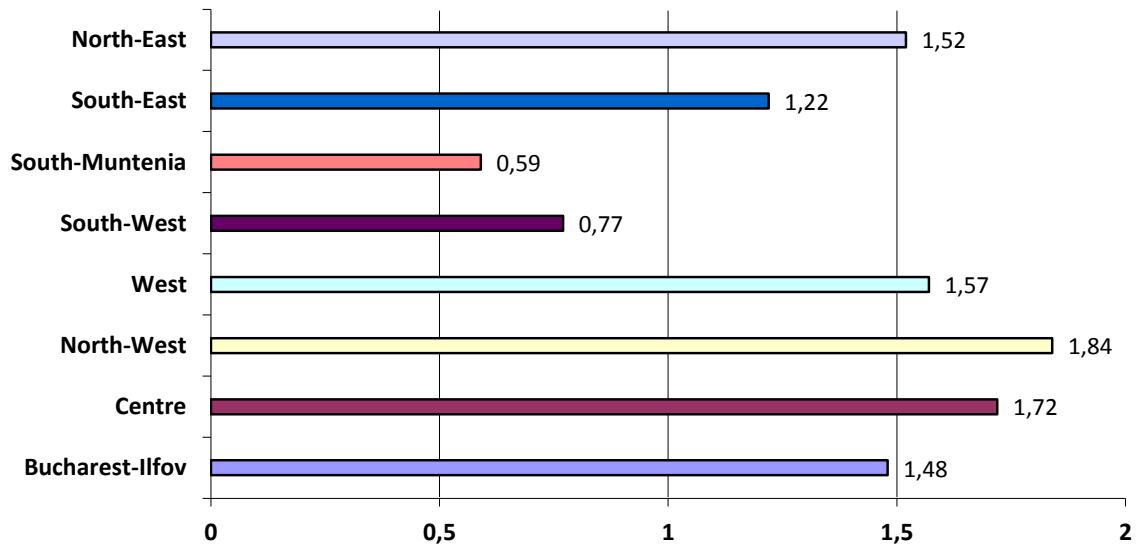


Fig. 3: Index institutional capacity and cultural operators

Looking at the chart above you can see that the region can support consumption needs of the population by organizing cultural events is the Northwest, which means it has a large number of cultural institutions based on the number of inhabitants.

In terms of North-East Region, as the 4th in terms of institutional capacity index and cultural operators, the monasteries in northern Moldavia have the most significant role, being included in the UNESCO world heritage.

Tourism in rural areas was, and continues to be increasingly appreciated and requested by people who live and work in more stressful conditions in large urban areas, but not only. Rural tourism is still primarily an opportunity to return to nature, to everything that is pure, unadulterated, a return to origins, always pleasant and refreshing. Tourist activities are alternative income generating activities, which provide opportunities for development in rural areas, due to the unique landscapes, vast areas of semi-natural, innate hospitality of the inhabitants of rural areas. Same time preserving the traditions, culture, gastronomy and rural tourism resources diversity provides a rich and diverse potential for development of this sector.

Acknowledgement

This work was cofinanced from the European Social Fund through Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2013-2020, project number POSDRU 159/1.5/S/134197 "Performance and excellence in doctoral and postdoctoral research in Romanian economics science domain".

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