

IDENTIFICATION OF THE MAIN TOURIST AREAS IN NEAMT COUNTY

Roxana Valentina GÂRBEA¹

e-mail: rocsval86@yahoo.ca

Abstract

Development of the tourism sector is dependent on the identification, valorization and promotion of attractive elements that are responsible for the development degree of tourism in that area. This article is a reference point for a better highlight of the positions that urban and rural localities from Neamt County hold in terms of tourist attraction. The purpose of this article is to create a synthetic paper, in a realistic view, which will surprise the spatial localization of the main tourist areas in Neamt County. Knowledge of the elements of tourist attractiveness can be a very useful element in the shaping of a strategy for tourism development over medium term covering new tourist areas outlined in Neamt County. Establishment of tourism areas is influenced by the distribution of natural and human resources as well as the equipment associated with this domain. Often the degree of satisfaction of tourists is given not only by visiting and knowledge of some heritage elements, but also by the quality of present tourism services and equipment. In these circumstances, the development of tourism in this county requires coordination, investment, promotion which determines collaboration between local authorities and private companies.

Key words: rural tourism, tourist attractiveness, tourist potential, tourist facilities.

The importance of studies and research about areas or tourist regions in Romania have increased since the year 2000, when they began to be aware of socio-economic benefits that tourism can bring. Unfortunately, most research in this field has a purely theoretical feature, showing in many cases only an inventory of material goods that may have touristic valences.

Any destination wishing to develop tourism must carefully assess the potential for development and after this assessment must determine methods for exploiting, namely which strategic alternatives to choose. A good knowledge on local and regional level of tourism attractions allows careful monitoring of tourism activities in relation to existing resources to avoid their overuse or degradation (Simon *et al.*, 2009).

The location of tourist facilities, their concentration or dispersion is given according to the quantity and quality of existing tourism resources in a particular geographic area. Tourism resources represent the whole elements of attractiveness of a territory, regardless of their origin and the relationships between them (Cocean, P., 2004).

Existing tourism attractions and resources of tourist destinations are the primary elements that contribute to the differentiation between them.

It is not enough for a certain destination only to be

gifted with touristic potential, competitive advantage is dependent on the quality of tourism infrastructure, transportation, etc. Tourism represents an economic network in which certain constructions, services can be grouped into a coherent and functional system and can be offered for sale to consumers from outside county.

Assessment of tourism potential attractiveness of a territory remains a very difficult task in the light of its complexity, either through the importance of ranking its parts or through the numbers of criteria that were considered for the assessment (Oprea, M., 2012).

Neamt County stands out nationwide through a rich cultural, historical and architectural heritage that overlaps varied natural potential, which helped to strengthening the tourist image. Although it has diversified tourism potential, tourism has grown and branched different into territories within the county.

Currently available studies are mainly focused on the natural potential of the tourist areas Ceahlău-Bicaz and Cheile Bicazului (Iacomi, G., 2000, Diaconu, D., 2011, Baci, D., 2010), or about the cultural and religious potential of Targu Neamt area (Davidescu, D., 1998, Dumitroia, G., 2009). Instead the problem of newly outlined tourist areas has been barely analyzed, although

¹ Universitatea „ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA”, Facultatea de Geografie și Geologie, Iași

these are complementary to those mentioned above, some of which are in full process of asserting tourism (Lacul Izvorul Muntelui, Valea Tarcăului). In these circumstances, a number of studies are needed to be able to show the current situation, highlighting opportunities and also obstacles in the balanced development of the tourism sector.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study used quantitative statistical data of the National Statistics Institute, the National Spatial Plan and carried out analysis by using the statistical method that were mapped in the Philcarto program, then processed in Adobe Illustrator CS5.

The National Spatial Plan (NSP) there is a section, "Tourist Areas", which aims to assess, as close to reality as possible, the tourism value for all administrative units in Romania. Neamt County is found in this national material, which provided an opportunity to achieve the classification of spaces in terms of tourism, having as main criteria the natural and man-made tourism resources, tourism infrastructure and technology. Also with the help of the NSP indicators has been made an overall score of tourist attraction on which we put over the characteristic population of each territorial unit in 2011. Peripheral areas in terms of tourism attractiveness are identified after synthesizing quantitative data from NSP and from the National Statistics Institute.

The methodology used for the study can be fully detailed in a future study where we will use other tourism indicators to achieve identification of attractive areas in the light of other several tourism indicators.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the Neamt County we can distinguish tourist areas with tradition in tourism: Piatra Neamt, Bicz, Ceahlău. These areas, mature in terms of tourism infrastructure and investments, manage to be successfully integrated into national and international circuits.

Based on data provided by the NSP we manage to achieve an ascending hierarchical classification of the four used indicators that highlight urban or rural areas which are important in terms of tourism. Identifying these types of tourist spaces allows for better knowledge and understanding of the tourism phenomenon in this county (fig. 1).

In the county of Neamt numerous places meet the necessary conditions to develop quality and competitive tourism. This category includes areas that have significant human resources and tourism and technical infrastructure. Thus can be

mentioned in this regard cities like Piatra Neamt, Roman and commons such as: Văleni, Alexandru cel Bun, Trifesti. The Piatra Neamt municipality polarizes tourism on wider areas (15-20 km) and is linked to other tourist areas (Cheile Bicazului, Targu Neamt, Ceahlău-Bicz), which are often included in programs of national interest. In recent years there has been extensive public investment (gondola, ski slope, ice rink, hiking trails), the restoration of the historic center, road infrastructure and improved urban infrastructure through structural funds.

Areas with predominantly natural tourism resources that are accompanied by tourism and technical infrastructure are situated in the west and northwest of the county (for example: Bicz, Bicz Chei, Pipirig, Borca, Agapia, Hangu). These localities are crossed by major mountain ranges, thus managing to create and enhance over time a tourism image.

Unfortunately there are several rural areas that do not meet the conditions necessary to be able to emerge on the tourism market. Rural tourism could be an opportunity for their development, but only if investments will be made to provide accessibility and comfort. Popular art, religion and unspoiled Christian customs, the opportunity to be in the middle of site-specific events, and even physical labor therapy, are in equal measure points of attraction. The areas meet the conditions for carrying out this type of tourism, rural settlements still retaining ancient customs and traditions.

Depending on the type of tourist facilities we can see that the spaces valued in terms of tourism are urban areas, followed by rural areas located close to the border with the counties of Suceava and Harghita. Administrative units situated in the proximity of dynamic areas have benefited more investments in the tourism sector thus gaining a better image.

The city of Piatra Neamt and surrounding communities attract 40% of the total tourist arrivals in the county. This domination is not beneficial towards equitable development of the territory. Urban areas manage to attract 42% of total tourist arrivals while rural areas 58%.

To assess general travel conditions which localities from Neamt County that meet, we resorted to the synthetic mapping that combines tourism resources and also tourism and technical infrastructure (fig. 2). The score of localities range from 8.5 to 53 points, the maximum score being owned by the city of Piatra-Neamt, and the minimum by the communes of Drăgănești and Văleni. Good points of the neighboring areas of Piatra Neamt are influenced by the satellite

positioning they hold but, and also by the area's tourist resources. A high rating is owned by communes located in the western part of the county, which because of their high score on natural tourism potential manage to accumulate a higher score than other municipalities located in the eastern part of the county. An overall weaker score is held either by municipalities that have a poor tourism infrastructure (for mountain localities like Fărcașa, Poiana Teiului, Hangu, Dănuț) or

have limited tourism resources (the case of localities on hill and plain, located in the central and east central area). The lowest score is obtained by municipalities that are deficient both in tourism resources and in tourism infrastructure. These are mainly located in the east (Doljești, Boghincea, Poienari, Ion Creangă, Văleni, Ruginoasa), Northeast (Drăgărești, Urecheni, Păstrăveni) and isolated in the center (Negrești, Ghindaoani).

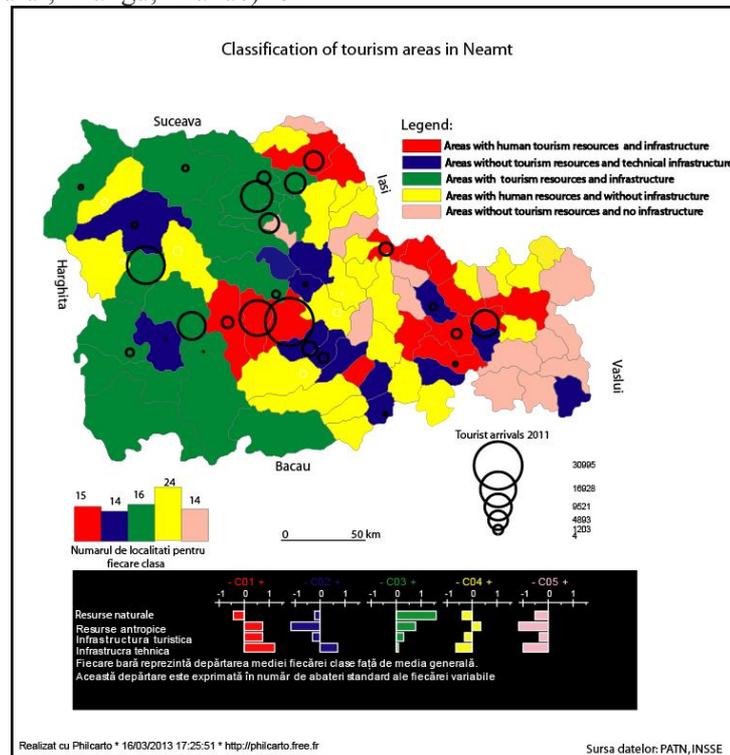


Figure 1 Classification of tourism areas in Neamt

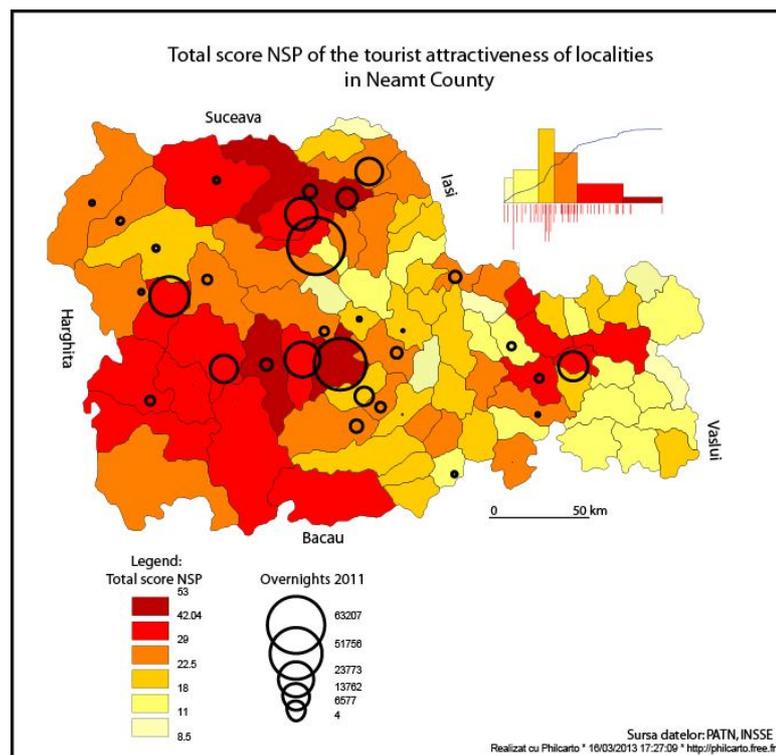


Figure 2 Total score NSP of the tourist attractiveness of localities in Neamt County

CONCLUSIONS

Neamt County is characterized by a rather large variety of tourist attractions which can easily turn it into an ideal holiday destination. The magnificent natural landscape, diversity of cultural potential, local hospitality, rich cuisine and beautiful traditions still present in the daily life of the communities are the strengths of localities in this county. However, at local level can be seen that only certain areas succeed in fulfilling the conditions for a fair and competitive development of the tourism phenomenon. An opportunity for valorization and capitalization of resources with tourism valences of these places could be established from the development of trails or specialized tours that will include these areas.

REFERENCES

- Baciu, D., Grasu, C., Brânzilă, M., 2010** – *Parcul Național Cheile Bicazului – Hășmaș*, Editura Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Iași;
- Coccean, P., 2004** - *Geografia Turismului*, Editura Focul Viu, Cluj-Napoca;
- Davidescu, G., 1998** – *Orașul Târgu Neamț și împrejurimile: natură-om-turism*, Editura Egal, Bacău;
- Dieaconu, D., 2011** – *Muntele Ceahlău în legende și povestiri*, Editura Cetatea Doamnei, Piatra Neamț;
- Dumitroaia, G., 2009** – *Muzeul Cetatea Neamț: Târgu Neamț*, România, Editura Constantin Matasă, Piatra Neamț;
- Iacomî, G., 2000** – *Ceahăul: ghid turistic*, Editura Trinitas, Iași;
- Oprea, M., 2012** - *Impactul dezvoltării infrastructurii de turism asupra turismului din Transilvania*, teza de doctorat, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca;
- Simon, T., Tătaru, A., Căndea, M., Bogan, E., 2009** - *Turism rural, turism urban*, Editura Transversal, București;
- ***PATN, *Secțiunea a VIII-a – zone cu resurse turistice* (legea 190/2009)
- www.insse.ro