

ASPECTS OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN BRAȘOV COUNTY WITH A SPECIAL LOOK AT THE PERIOD 2015-2016

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Abstract

As a branch of tourism, cultural tourism has seen a tremendous development and diversification, both at European and international level, as a result of political and economic opening in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe on the one hand and, on the other, due to the competition between the countries with old traditions in this form of tourism. The purpose of the paper was to point out that cultural tourism remains one of the most important forms of tourism practiced in Brasov city and county, which contributes both to the economic development of the area and to a better knowledge of the Romanian values in general both within the country and at international level. The data were provided by Brașov County Council, the Brașov County Development Strategy 2007 - 2013, and National Institute of Statistics, Brașov branch. They were processed and converted into tables, graphs and then interpreted and analyzed. Of the total tourist accommodation units in operation, the hotels occupied 42.7%, agrotourism pensions 20.9%, tourist pensions 18.1%, tourist villas 5.9%, tourist cottages 4.0%, hostels 4%, motels 2.5%, campings 1.4%, and other types of reception structures 1.1%. As a result of 771 tourist activities, it is noticed that the number of tourists arrived in September 2016 was 108,308 persons, of which 83,299 Romanian tourists (76.9%), and 25,009 nonresident tourists (23.1%). In January-September 827,574 tourists (82.4% Romanians and 17.6% foreigners) recorded a 10.3% increase compared to January-September 2015. Regarding the origin of the tourists, the most numerous are from Germany, 1,006, registered in March 2016, followed by Spain, with 816 and Israel, 793. The least numerous come from Russia, arriving especially during the winter holidays.

Key words: cultural tourism, tourists, tourist attractions, patrimony, material culture

INTRODUCTION

The unique features of Romania are represented by the rich cultural heritage in relation to the neighboring countries, and Brașov County is a well known example among the counties of the country for its treasures such as: churches of different denominations, monuments and historical buildings, the magnitude of the architecture, the large number of fortified churches, archaeological sites, castles, architecture and rural ethnography, specific architectural styles through the synthesis of the oriental elements with the Western ones, together with the elements of the Romanian folk art, the memorial houses of the great cultural personalities at the international level: Andrei Șaguna, Gheorghe Barițiu, Johannes Honterus,

the cultural wealth due to the multiculturalism of Brașov through the presence of a large number of minorities, exhibits of the great western and oriental cultures.

In this context, cultural tourism is a form of valorisation of anthropogenic resources and that is why in its scope can include also the urban tourism and the rural-ethnographic tourism.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To conduct this work, it was carried out a review of studies mentioned in literature which treated topics such as urban tourism, cultural tourism, heritage and tourism potential natural and human, infrastructure general and specific tourism sector, movement and tourism demand. Typology research work was used

both under the qualitative and quantitative aspects, concerning several areas of tourism.

In case of the qualitative research, there were applied the following research methods: data and information collection from the literature that could be accessed, and official documents, and observation method. In case of the quantitative research, there were used the following research methods: analysis method and data processing, graphic and cartographic method, the method of observation and interpretation.

The empirical data were provided by the following institutions: Braşov County Council, the Braşov County Development Strategy 2004 - 2020, and National Institute of Statistics, Braşov. The data were processed and converted into tables, graphs and then interpreted and analyzed. The data used in this study are part of the textbook on the desk.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Cultural tourism necessarily implies the notion of patrimony, represented by the material and immaterial components of the identity of any society.

The material heritage includes museums, monuments, architectural ensembles, art towns, villages with well-preserved traditions, archaeological sites, gardens, edifices of a religious or military nature. The immaterial patrimony includes cultural holidays, cultural traditions and skills accumulated over time [1]. The tourist flows in the cultural tourism are characterized by their own clientele which can be either specialized in a certain theme (able to travel impressive distances to capture another facet of their passion) or attracted to all that is cultural or occasional, which is usually a majority, and consists of those who are on vacation or holiday for recreation and entertainment, and also would like to visit the anthropic tourist attractions in the area where they are [5].

Another characteristic of the flows that contribute to the achievement of cultural tourism is the belonging of the participants to higher socio-professional categories or with a medium and high level of education: students,

students, intellectuals and therefore its mass character is uncertain. The urban population is predominant in the formation of tourist flows [6].

Cultural touring practices are also quite different, ranging from visiting museums and monuments to the actual knowledge of their heritage, to their simple use as a decoration of playful practices (attending a café or a bar near a patrimony, for example) [8].

Cultural tourism in Braşov County is based, in particular, on the basis of the touristic material it has at its disposal, being indispensable for the development of tourist activity.

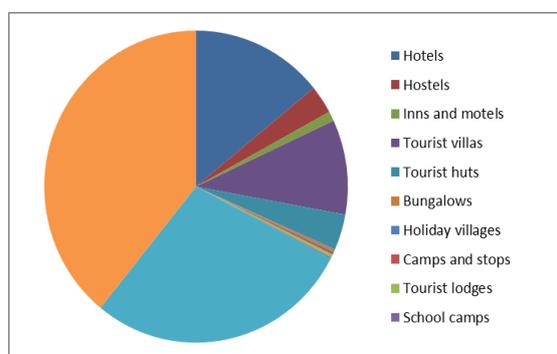


Fig. 1. Types of tourist accommodation establishments in 2015 in Braşov County
Source: Own determination.

Table 1. Touristic material basis in Braşov County in 2015

	No. of units	(%)
Total units	886	100.0
Hotels	125	14.1
Hostels	26	2.9
Inns and motels	9	1.0
Tourist villas	87	9.8
Tourist huts	33	3.7
Bungalows	2	0.2
Holiday villages	1	0.1
Camps and stops	2	0.2
Tourist lodges	3	0.3
School camps	1	0.1
Tourist boarding houses	250	28.2
Agrotourist hostels	347	39.1

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Braşov, 2015

Analyzing the touristic material basis in Braşov County in the year 2015 (Table 1), it was noticed that the most numerous units are, in the descending order, the tourist pensions with a number of 347 (39.1 %), followed by the tourist pensions, 250 (28.2 %), and the

lowest number being recorded by holiday villages and school camps (0.1 %) [9].

Table 2. The structure of tourist accommodation capacity in Brasov County in 2016

Accommodation units	Weight %
Hotels	42.7
Agrotourist boarding houses	20.9
Tourist boarding houses	18.1
Tourist villas	5.9
Tourist chalets	4.0
Hostels	3.4
Motels	2.5
Campgrounds	1.4
Other types of reception structures	1.1

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Braşov, 2016

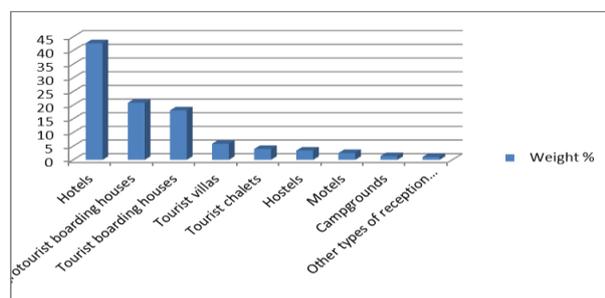


Fig. 2. Accommodation capacity in Braşov County (%) in 2016

Source: Own determination.

In the first nine months of 2016, by 10.3% more visitors came and stayed in Brasov County than in the same period of the previous year.

In structure of the total tourist accommodation capacity in operation (Figure 2) consists of: 42.7% hotels, 20.9% agrotourism pensions, 18.1% tourist pensions, 5.9% tourist villas, 4.0% tourist chalets, hostels 3.4%, 2.5% motels, camping 1.4%, and other types of reception structures 1.1% [9].

Table 3. The classification of the accommodation units depending on the number of stars in Brasov County

Accommodation units	Weight %
5 stars	3.7
4 stars	21.1
3 stars	52.3
2 stars	17.0
1 star	4.2
Without classification	1.7

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Braşov, 2016

The classified accommodation units (Figure 3) with 3 stars represent 52.3% of the accommodation capacity in operation,

followed, in descending order, by 4 stars (21.1%), 2 stars (17.0%), one star (4.2%), 5 stars (3.7%) and unclassified (1.7%).

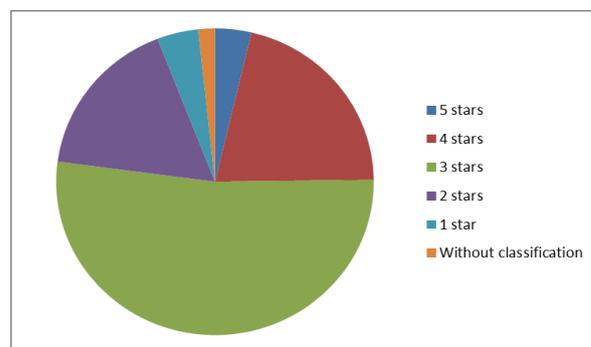


Fig. 3. The classification of the accommodation units in Braşov county by stars

Source: Own determination.

The average length of stay in 2016 was 1.9 days (equal for both for the Romanian and foreign tourists), and equal to the one recorded in September 2015, according to the data provided by the National Institute of Statistics, Braşov.

In the Central Region of Romania, Braşov County occupies the 1st place both for arrivals and overnight stays (42.1%, respectively 38.2%).

At the national level, Braşov county comes on the third position, after Constanţa County and Bucharest Municipality, both in arrivals and overnight stays, with 9.7% and 7.9% respectively, according to National Institute of Statistics, Braşov [10].

Table 4. Arrivals in tourist reception facilities

County of Brasov	Total	Romanian	Foreign
September 2015	95,090	73,682	21,408
September 2016	108,308	83,299	25,009
September 2016 versus September 2015 (%)	113.9	113.1	116.8

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Braşov, 2016

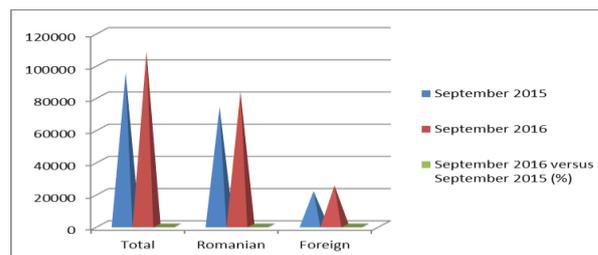


Fig.4. The number of tourists arrivals in Braşov county

Source: Own determination.

As a result, of the number of 771 tourist activity units (Figure 4), the number of tourists arrived in September 2016 was 108,308, of which 83,299 Romanian tourists (76.9%), and 25,009 foreigners (23.1%).

In January-September 2016, there were 827,574 tourists (82.4% Romanians and 17.6% foreigners) meaning by 10.3% more compared to January-September 2015.

The increase in the number of Romanian tourists arriving in Braşov County takes place on the background of promoting the area at national level. As regards international tourism, there is a decrease due mainly to the competition of the European countries with tradition in this field, amid the slump in the world economy [10].

Table 5. Tourists' overnights in the tourist reception structure in 2016 compared to 2015

County of Brasov	Total	Romanian	Foreign
September 2015	185,080	141,793	43,287
September 2016	202,795	154,123	48,672
September 2016 versus September 2015 (%)	109.6	108.7	112.4

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Braşov

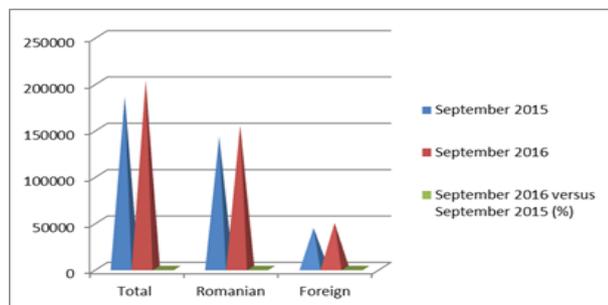


Fig.5. Tourists' overnights in the tourist reception structure in September 2016 versus September 2015
Source: Own determination.

The number of overnight stays (Figure 5) was 202,795 in September 2016, by 31.0% less compared to the previous month and up by 9.6% compared to the same month of 2015. The Romanian tourists' stays increased by 8.7%, in September 2016 compared to the corresponding month of the previous year, while the foreign tourists' overnight stays increased by 12.4%.

In January-September, the 1,643,848 days of accommodation (81.3% Romanians and 18.7% foreigners) recorded an increase of 5.3% compared to January-September 2015.

In September 2016, compared to the corresponding month of the previous year, in Brasov County the overnight stays were by 10.96% higher, according to the latest data published by Brasov County Statistics Department.

The highest occupancy rate, taking into account the number of overnight stays in the ranking of counties, is occupied by Brasov county with 38.2%, followed by Mures County (19.3%), Sibiu County (16.8%), Covasna County (11.8), Harghita County (8.2%), and Alba County (5.7%).

The average length of stay was 2.1 days (2.1 days for Romanian tourists and 1.9 days for foreigners), equal to September 2015.

Between January and September 2016, in the Central Region, overnight stays increased by 10.2% compared to the corresponding period of 2015. The average duration of the stay was between January and September 2016 of 2.1 days (equal to the romanian tourists and foreign ones) lower than the same period of 2015 (2.2 days), according to data provided by National Institute of Statistics, Braşov.

International tourism is deficient in the Brasov area due to its seasonality and due to the fact that most of the tourists come from neighboring countries. Elitist, play and other forms of tourism are not well developed, and visitors arriving in Brasov from a long distance are still rare [11].

Table 6. The main countries of origin of foreign tourists visiting Brasov County in March 2015 compared to March 2016

Country of origin	Number of tourist	
	March 2015	March 2016
Germany	876	1,006
Spain	452	816
Israel	582	793
Italy	402	665
United Kingdom	465	504
Bulgaria	304	486
France	488	452
USA	431	386
Hungary	167	226
Russia	198	187

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Braşov

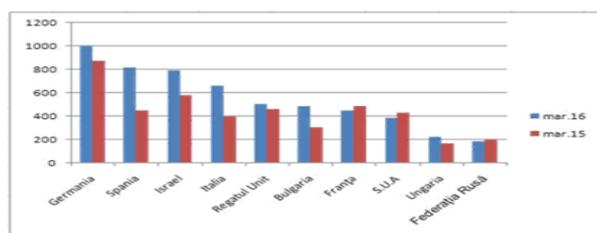


Fig. 6. Main countries of origin of foreign tourists - March 2015 compared to March 2016

Source: Own determination.

Regarding the origin of the tourists (Figure 6), the most numerous are from Germany, 1,006 visitors, registered in March 2016, followed by Spain, with 816 and Israel, 793. The fewest came from Russia, arriving especially during the Winter holidays.

In the county of Brasov, cultural tourism presents several forms. Thus, according to its mode of organization, it can be: organized, not organized (on its own) and semi-organized (mixed); according to the degree of mobility they meet: travel tourism and itinerant tourism. The two forms of tourism are called to be developed in a balanced and harmonious way, because they influence the seasonality of the activity and, implicitly, its efficiency. According to the periodicity with which the tourism forms are achieved, there is a continuous tourism developed throughout the whole year, the so called "seasonal tourism" practiced in certain seasons of the year [9].

Given the fact that Brasov county is predominantly a mountainous county, the tourism character of its territory is double (during the hot season of the year: especially from 1 May to 15 September and during the cold period between 1 December and 15 February). There are isolated touristic events at other times of the year (during winter or spring holidays), but they do not even reach the extent of the activities of the two peak seasons [9].

A recent research work identified that Brasov county patrimony includes 150 tangible and 75 intangible items of heritage. This is a reason to consider the area of Brasov as a key destination for cultural tourism.

However, many of the fortresses, monuments, such as Fagaras and Rupea

Fortresses need restoration and rehabilitation works [11].

Besides the old historical attractions for visitors, Brasov county could offer new attractions based on the transformation of the old industrial units in new modernized spaces destined to promote local culture represented by workmanships, handicrafts, and souvenirs shops which could create jobs and be an additional income source for many people from the countryside. At the same time, traditions could be maintained and developed and promoted among tourists.

The cultural potential of Brasov county is represented by impressive fortresses, castles, historical houses, Saxon churches unique in the world, etc. However, many of the items included in the cultural and historical heritage such as historical buildings, churches, castles are not enough promoted among tourists because of the status of the buildings which are not yet restored.

The city of Brasov itself is one of the best preserved medieval cities in Romania. Many of its attractions such as The Black Church, the Schei District, the Sfatului Square, the defence walls of the old fortress, its towers and bastions are just a few examples of high importance for the tourism development.

In the county, the medieval fortresses from Codlea, Făgăraș, Prejmer, Harman, Rasnov and Rupea are objectives which attract more and more visitors both from Romania and from abroad.

Also, the peasant fortresses such as the ones from Bod, Cincșor, Codlea, Cristian, Ghimbav, Hălmeag, Măieruș, Prejmer, Rotbav, Sânpetru, Feldioara-Marienburg, built by the Romanian and German residents in the villages during the 13th and-16th centuries, represent a model of medieval architecture in Transilvania [8].

Impact of tourist activities on the environment in Brașov county

The development of the hospitality industry and transport infrastructure in recent years has led to overgrowing of mountain areas in other periods not influenced by humans.

Thus, areas such as Prahova Valley, Brașov Depression, Postăvarul Massif have experienced a strong anthropomption in the last period, this phenomenon being felt even in

harder areas such as the Făgăraș, Piatra Craiului and Ciucaș Mountains [10].

Tourism can also be a positive factor, of which both the protected areas and local communities could benefit, if it is planned and managed in such a manner to assure its sustainability.

Tourism can be welcomed in or near protected areas if they respect the special nature of the area such as tourism knowledge of nature, cultural and educational tourism, or the activity of small, quiet groups in conditions where damage and pollution are minimal [4].

For the development of cultural tourism, it is recommended to improve transport networks as well as tourist information on different cultural objectives.

CONCLUSIONS

The tourist objectives on the territory of Brasov County in particular are of particular cultural, scientific, artistic, educational interest, many of which have a unique character at national and European level, characterized by a high degree of dispersion, which makes it possible to visit them via tourist circuits in organized groups, or independently.

Cultural tourism has a national and international development in Brasov. It aims the development of an organized type of tourism that covers the whole year and offers high quality services.

The accommodation capacity is dominated by hotels which represent 42.7%, followed by agrotourism pensions 20.9%, and tourist pensions 18.1 %.

In September 2016, it was recorded the top number of tourists: 108,308 persons, of which 76.9% Romanians and 23.1% foreigners.

In January-September 2016, it was registered 827,574 tourists of which 82.4% Romanians and 17.6% foreigners, their number being by 10.3% higher compared to January-September 2015.

The main countries providing tourists are Germany, followed by Spain, and Israel. The Russian tourists are less numerous, but they like winter season to spend their holidays. Cultural tourism remains one of the most important forms of tourism practiced in

Brasov, contributing both to the economic development of the county and to a better knowledge of the Romanian values in general both within the country and at the international level.

However, tourism in the Brasov area is seasonal and this fact is determined by the highest share of tourists coming mainly from the neighboring countries. It is difficult to think that tourists from a long distance to come just for a few days in Brasov County.

Therefore, the strategy applied by the local council for the period 2014-2020-2030 is focused in objectives and measures to stimulate the flow of tourists and increase the arrivals from many other countries in order to show them the high value heritage and contribute to the economic development of the county.

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