

ASPECTS REGARDING TOURISM POTENTIAL OF MUREȘ COUNTY

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Abstract

Mureș County is renowned for its generous offer to practice some recreational activities. The game has gained a European reputation here, imposing itself through diversity and quality of trophies. The fish offer is not inferior, the hydrographic network of the county is rich and there is a tradition of fish growth, correlated with a specific gastronomic offer. The main purpose of this paper is to know in all aspects and in depth the tourism potential of Mureș County. In order to highlight the tourist potential, the exhaustive inventory of all the attractive resources from the analyzed territory was used in terms of the volume, diversity and quality of natural and anthropic tourism resources, tourism infrastructure and tourism services, and it was necessarily and objectively doubled creating a graphic and cartographic basis with rigorous hierarchies of all existing resources, as well as highlighting the interrelations that are established at the level of tourist regions in terms of supply and demand for certain tourist attractions. For this, not only the main development resources have been analyzed but also the tourism types of the studied area, as well as the tourist infrastructure necessary for the development of tourist activities, and the tourist flows recorded in the territory of Mureș County. The number of hotels has recorded a significant increase from 23 in the year 2005 to 48 hotels in 2013. The number of seats has also increased from 6,093 places in 2010 to 9,840 seats in 2013. The number of overnight stays grew up from 521,610 in 2010 to 771,931 in 2013. Both the number of Romanian but also of foreign tourists has significantly increased in the last years in this area of Transilvania. In 2013 the number of overnight stays of foreign tourists accounted for 138,774, and the number of Romanians reached 633,157. As a conclusion, tourism in Mureș County has been continuously developing due to a better promotion of its heritage and higher quality services offered to tourists.

Key words: tourist flows, natural, anthropic resource, diversity, quality

INTRODUCTION

Mureș County is located in the Central - Northern area of the country in the center of the Transylvania Plateau being situated between the meridians 23°55' and 25°14' East longitude and parallel 46°09' and 47°00' North latitude.

The county stretches between the high peaks of Căliman and Gurghiului to the Tarnavelor Plateau and the Transylvanian Plain.

The physical-geographic axis of the county is the Mureș River, which crosses the NE county to the SV at a distance of 140 km, the river borrowing the name "Mureș" like the county. The county borders with the counties, Alba, Brașov, Bistrița-Năsăud, Cluj, Harghita, Sibiu and Suceava.

The capital of Mureș county is Targu Mureș, a charming city, with numerous vestiges of the

Neolithic, the Bronze and Metal Ages and Roman relics in the surrounding towns. The town was first attested in the year 1322, and since the 16th century, Targu Mureș has become an important cultural and education centre. The city landmarks, attracting a lot of tourists are: the Culture Palace, dating from early 20th-century city hall with an outstanding stained-glass hall, housing some of main local museums, The Apollo Palace built in 1822 in the late Baroque style houses the local Art School, the Old Prefecture Building built in 1711, nowadays being used as workshops by the artists of Targu Mureș, the Palffy House a model of Baroque architecture dating from the middle of the 17th century, which hosts the Music School of the University of Theatrical Arts of Targu Mureș, the St. Michael Wooden Orthodox Church built in 1794 and being

considered the oldest church in the city, the Targu Mures Fortress built at the end of the 15th century with its six bastions, added at the beginning of the 17th century, and strong walls to protect the city against the attacks of the enemies, the Teleki Library, and many museums such as: Art Museum, Ethnographic and Folk Art Museum, History Museum, Natural Science Museum, History and Archeology Museum, "Ion Vlasiu" Painting Gallery and "Nagy Imre" Painting Gallery [10].

The large variety of important cultural and historical places, as well as the modern architecture of the city, the charming Rose Square situated in the center have attracted more and more tourists from the country and from abroad.

In this context, the paper aimed to evaluate and analyze the tourism potential of the Mures County in terms of accommodation capacity, tourist flows and demand.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Consultation of the specialized bibliography was the starting point for research carried out with simpler or more elaborate scientific papers, statistical information and data, some data requiring careful filtering.

Tourism is analyzed and tracked through a system of specific indicators, based on a methodology of calculation recognized and used worldwide (accommodation capacity, tourist traffic, tourist demand).

The identification of existing and exploitable tourism resources is necessary to highlight the current offer and to forecast the future development of tourism. In this sense, the exhaustive inventory of all the attractive resources from the territory under consideration was made in terms of the volume, diversity and quality of natural and anthropic tourism resources, tourist infrastructure and tourism services, being also necessarily and objectively doubled by the realization a graphic and cartographic basis, with rigorous hierarchies of all existing resources, as well as highlighting the interrelations that are established at the level of

tourist regions in terms of supply and demand for certain tourist attractions.

Thus, in order to obtain data on accommodation and tourist movements, we consulted the data sources provided by the Ministry of Tourism, the County Statistics Department of Mures, the National Statistics Institute and the consultation of unofficial data sources (specialized sites).

In the realization of the scientific path on the knowledge and the evaluation of the potential tourism activities in Mureş County there were used specific principles, methods and means of Georgraphy study in general and some methods peculiar to the geography of tourism. In the course of the study it was necessary to go through the specific work stages: the stage of information accumulation, the stage of the analysis, the deliberative stage, which eventually led to the drawing up of conclusions regarding the magnitude of the tourism phenomenon in the studied area. The research methods specific to geography were also considered: observation, analysis and synthesis, the means of operation (description, explanation, hierarchy) and the finite elements of the use of research methods (descriptive model, mathematical model or model cartographic).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The most important in defining the tourist purpose remains the motivation, depending on which the tourist chooses their destination and leisure type. In Mureş County we can identify the main types of tourism practiced with the diversity of tourist potential and the main reason for tourism trips [1].

Thus, we identify several types of tourism: cultural tourism or visiting tourism that occupy the highest share, rural tourism and agritourism, religious tourism, curative tourism in the hills and plateaus between Mureş and Târnava Mare, recreational tourism, hiking, leisure tourism and hivernal, hunting tourism, fishing tourism, extreme tourism, business tourism, transit tourism has a fairly high share due to the existence of important rail and road arteries which interconnect and allow

tourist flows throughout the area , scientific tourism, school tourism, with a course both during the school year and during the holidays has a wide field of development [2].

Table 1. Tourist accommodation structures in Mures County in the period 2005-2013

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total	102	119	120	121	107	123	142	214	235
Hotels	23	25	24	22	22	25	40	47	48
Hotels for youth	2	2	2	2	2	-	-	-	-
Hostels	1	1	1	1	1	3	4	5	5
Motels	8	7	6	6	5	5	8	14	15
Tourist villas	27	30	31	30	14	15	8	13	16
Touristic cottages	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	4	4
Urban touristic pensions	20	27	29	32	39	47	47	81	95
Agrotourist pensions	10	17	17	19	15	17	23	30	30
Camping and cottage units	4	4	4	4	2	3	3	3	5
Tourist stops	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Bounga lows	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12	12
Camps for pupils and preschoolars	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Source:County Department of Statistics – Mureş

In order to highlight tourist activity in Mures county we have processed data on accommodation capacity, number of arrivals, number of inmates of tourists.

In the analysis of the tourist structures with functions of accommodation was mainly approached from a quantitative point of view, and less from a qualitative point of view [3].

According to the National Institute of Statistics, the accommodation is divided into: hotels, motels, hostels, tourist cottages, bungalows,tourist lodges, tourist lodgings, campsites, cottages, holiday villages.

Mures County has registered significant increases in the number of structures from 2005 until 2013, according to the data provided by the National Institute of Statistics (Table 1). Starting from a general analysis, it is noted that in 2005, the total number of accommodation establishments was 102 and increased until 2008, when 121 tourist accommodation establishments were registered for tourists. In 2009, their number decreased compared to previous years, reaching 107, followed by a sharp increase to 123 units in 2010. This year, as many accommodation units as possible began to operate. So, in 2011 there are 142, their number growing rapidly until 2012, when it reaches 214, and in 2013 it will benefit from 235 accommodation structures, the highest value ever.

For a closer look at each accommodation structure, in all nine years of study, it can identify an ascending approach to the number of boarding houses, both urban and rural agrotourism, but also hotels in Mures county [6]. The number of hotels has varied since 2005 from 23 hotels to 22 hotels in 2009, but since 2010 it has grown significantly, almost doubling in only three years (48 hotels in 2013). However, urban tourism pensions have the largest development, reaching only 20 in 2005, and 95 in 2013, also accounting for the highest share of total accommodation in the last year of study. The bungalows have grown steeply in 2012, when there was a sharp increase from just one bungalow in previous years to 12, a number that continued in 2013. Although in 2005-2008 tourist villas had an important share in the total accommodation structure, the following years saw a decline, reaching a maximum of 31 villas in 2007 villas, at least 8 in 2011, their number increasing to 16 in 2013. Even though only two youth hotels were registered from 2005 to 2009, none of them has functioned since 2010. The chart of tourist accommodation establishments with touristic functions demonstrates significant oscillations in most units, however, tourist activities on the surface Mureş county are in constant development and very attractive for tourists who have a wide

range of options for choosing the accommodation [7].

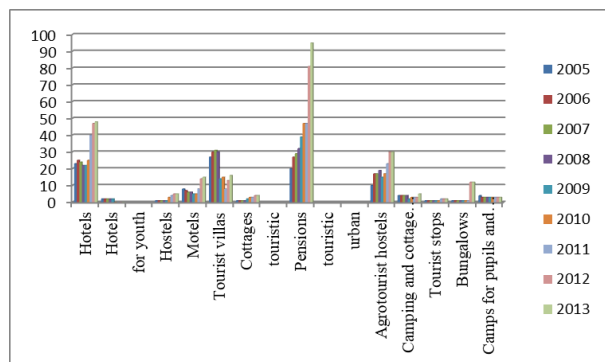


Fig.1. Tourist accommodation structures with functions of tourist accommodation 2005-2013

Source: Own determination.

In the series of data, "urban pensions" have been redefined in "tourist boarding houses", and agrotourism boarding houses include rural and agro-touristic pensions; "Hunting chalets" and "fishing huts" assimilate "huts". Since 2009, "youth hostels" have assimilated "hostels" [9].

The National Institute of Statistics annually collects statistical data from tourist accommodation structures with an existing accommodation capacity of minimum 5 beds and more.

The existing tourist accommodation capacity by type of tourist accommodation the period 2010-2013, as presented in Table 2, had an upward trend overall, so that, from 6,093 places in 2010 it reached 9,840 seats in 2013 (Fig. 2).

Depending on the types of reception facilities, the hotels benefit from the highest existing accommodation capacity, with more than 2 600 seats in 2010 and reaching almost 4,400 seats in 2013 [11].

Tourism hostels have enjoyed a rapid evolution in terms of existing capacity, with only 848 seats in 2010, expanding to more than 1,700 places in 2013.

In general, all accommodation structures have increased their existing capacity over the 4 years.

Table 2. Capacity of existing number of seats (beds) in tourist accommodation establishments during the period 2010-2013

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total	6,093	7,692	9,317	9,840
Hotels	2,612	3,728	4,313	4,395
Hostels	178	199	287	287
Motels	260	365	537	607
Tourist villas	378	338	430	604
Tourist cottages	89	89	125	121
Bungalows	224	224	224	224
Campgrounds	542	542	542	544
Tourist stops	147	187	187	140
Tourist cottages	0	0	0	12
Camps for pupils and preschoolers	486	486	486	379
Tourist guesthouses	848	904	1507	1786
Agrotourist hostels	329	630	697	741

Source: County Department of Statistics, Mureş

Only tourist stops have declined, the number of existing seats in these structures increased from 2010 to 2011, stagnating by 2012 and decreasing in the year 2013.

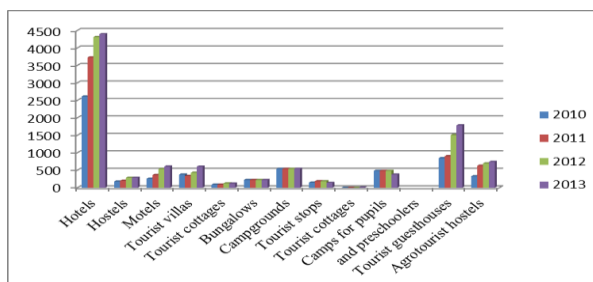


Fig. 2. Evolution of tourist accommodation capacity existing on tourist accommodation structures during 2010-2013

Source: Own determination.

Table 3. Arrivals of tourists in tourist accommodation establishments with tourist accommodation functions, by types of structures and types of tourists, in Mures County, during the period 2010-2013

Mures County		2010	2011	2012	2013
Total	Total	202,850	259,121	353,459	394,834
Total	Romanian	159,757	205,321	290,318	326,848
Total	Foreigners	43,093	53,800	63,141	67,986

Source: County Department of Statistics, Mureş

By the number of arrivals, according to the data provided by the County Department of Statistics Mures, Romanians' preferences for hotels, motels and tourist hostels are observed, the arrivals within these structures registering the highest values. Foreign tourists mostly

prefer hotels, and in units such as tourist chalets, bungalows, camps and pre-school camps, the number of their arrivals is very small (Table 3).

According to Fig. 3, both the number of Romanian tourists and the number of foreign tourists increased considerably in the four years, but the largest share belongs to Romanians arriving in Mures County, their number almost doubling from 2010 to 2013 [8].

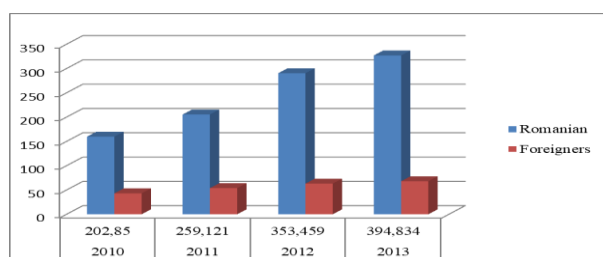


Fig. 3. Accommodations of tourists in tourist accommodation establishments, by types of tourists, in Mures County during the period 2010-2013

Source: Own determination.

Table 4. Overnight stays in tourist accommodation structures by types of structures and types of tourists during 2010-2013

Categories of tourists	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total	521,610	580,881	716,212	771,931
Romanian	427,710	470,552	583,528	633,157
Foreigners	93,900	110,329	132,684	138,774

Source: County Statistics Department Mureş

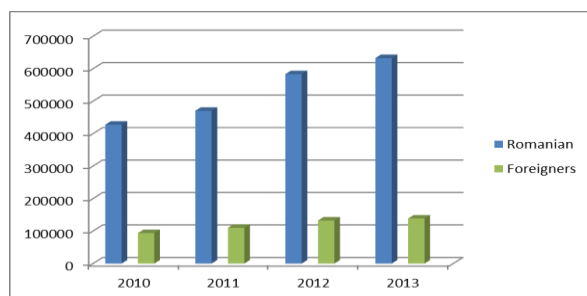


Fig. 4. Overnights stays in tourist accommodation establishments by type of tourists, in Mures County in the period 2010-2013

Source: Own determination.

The same situation as in case of arrivals is also found in case of the overnight stays of the Romanian and foreign tourists, where the values are steadily increasing and the number of Romanians is much higher than that of foreigners. Thus, the number of overnight stays increased from 521,610 in 2010 to 771,931 in 2013. In 2013 the number of overnight stays of

foreign tourists was 138,774, the number of Romanians is significantly higher, reaching 633,157 (Table 4 and Fig. 4).

An important feature of the transport routes in the studied area is imposed by the natural environment, the arrangement of the hydrographical network and the major relief in the east-west direction, and the orientation of the major communication system along the main valleys [5].

The total length of public roads in the Mures County is 1,959 km, their density being 29.2 km per 100 km² of territory, an indicator below the country average of 33.3 km per 100 km² of territory. Road condition does not meet the European standards.

A characteristic of the county is the development of specific public transport provision for short distance services and an average transport capacity. Thus, the main means of transport is the minibus, with a continuous trend of growth over the buses, the number of which is decreasing due to the degree of advanced physical wear [4].

Taxi services have grown a lot in recent years. There are also companies that offer the possibility of renting cars.

With 51.7 km of railways per 1,000 km², Mures County is above the country average of 46.4 km/1,000 km², as well as the region's average, 44.5% per 1,000 km². Mureş County is crossed by 328 km of railways, of which only 24.78% (86 km) is electrified, the share being below that of electrified railways at national level (35.87%).

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the tourism potential in Mures County has led to the following conclusions:

The study area can be referred to as a "cultural collage" due to the cultural, historical, ethnic, economic and social variety.

Correspondingly and keeping pace with the dynamics of the economic and social development of the county, as well as the quality of tourist resources, demands and exploitation prospects, the routes, the accommodation and leisure facilities have been modernized, the quality of the services offered to the local tourists and foreigners.

Mureș County is distinguished by an increasing number of tourists, accommodations, overnight stays.

The number of hotels has varied since 2005 (23 hotels) up to 2009 (22 hotels), but since 2010 it has grown significantly, almost doubling in only three years (48 hotels in 2013).

The accommodation capacity by type of tourist accommodation registered an upward trend from 6,093 places in 2010 to 9,840 seats in 2013.

The number of overnight stays increased from 521,610 in 2010 to 771,931 in 2013.

In 2013, the number of overnight stays of foreign tourists was 138, 774, while the number of Romanians is significantly higher, accounting for reaching 633,157.

Therefore, Mures County is an important spot on Romania's touristical map, attracting more and more tourists year by year. Its rich cultural and historical heritage is of high value and interest for tourists.

For this reason, tourism has become an important economic branch in the area, bringing its contribution to the economic development of the county.

The future belongs to new developments and investments in the diversification of infrastructure and services: accommodation capacity, service quality, and a larger variety of facilities.

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