EVALUATION OF THE TOURIST POTENTIAL ATTRACTIVENESS IN THE AREA OF THE SUBCARPATHIANS IN-BETWEEN IALOMIŢA AND PRAHOVA RIVER

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Abstract: The evaluation of the tourist potential from a certain region represents a difficult problem taking into account both the complexity of the tourist sites that make it up and the subjectivity of the way of choosing the research methods. It can be noticed that the region taken into consideration has a large variety of tourist resources. This variety is determined both by the features of the geosites, and by the socioeconomic conditions, which have had an impact on the evolution of the human settlements.

Our evaluation of the tourist potential attractiveness brings to light the fact that only four towns have a very high attractiveness index (over 45 points), namely Târgovişte, Breaza, Pucioasa and Câmpina. The other three towns of this area (Comarnic, Fieni and Moreni) along with five rural localities (Moroeni, Cornu, Bâneşti, Pietroşiţa and Răzvad) have an average tourist attractiveness (30–45 points). In the category of the administrative-territorial units with a low attractiveness (under 15 points) there are only five rural localities (Valea Lungă, Vârfuri, Vişineşti, Adunaţi and Proviţa de Jos). All of the other rural localities, namely a number of twenty, have an average tourist attractiveness index (15-30 points).

The region of the Subcarpathians in-between Ialomiţa and Prahova River has a rich tourist potential that should be valorized by its inhabitants, whose activity could be oriented towards tourism.

Key words: geosites, anthroposites, specifically tourist infrastructure, technical infrastructure, attractiveness, value hierarchy

1. Introduction

Geographers consider, regarding the evaluation of the tourist potential of a region that „it must start from the appreciation of each type of touristic objective, establishing its value for different ways of practicing it through the means of several criteria, quantified afterwards into specific hierarchies of attractiveness degrees” (Ielenicz, M., Comănescu Laura, 2006, pp. 413). A model of evaluating the tourist potential of a region is given by the geographer Ciangă Nicolae in 1998, in his work “Tourism in the Oriental Carpathians”. The author makes a differentiation in the attractiveness of tourist resorts in both urban and rural settlements, from a touristic point of view, by using his own formula.

The evaluation of the tourist potential of the studied region was done for each settlement taking into account the following elements: the potential of geosites (elements of the natural environment, natural therapeutic factors, protected areas), the potential of anthroposites (accommodation buildings, conference buildings, recreational facilities etc.) and the infrastructure of utilities (means of transportation, telecommunications, water supply, gas, sewers systems etc.).
This study used data existing from the research project conducted at the Urban Institute of Bucharest - Project implementation plans for national territory planning (PATN-section IV of tourist areas for 2007-2013). The tree method analysis was used, using criteria and sub-criteria that allowed the granting of grades and scores required for value hierarchy.

It was found that the studied region has a variety of tourist-sites determined by the natural features (hills, valley hollows and corridors oriented north to south, streams with large valleys oriented in the same direction, deciduous forests occupying considerable areas) and the socio-economic and historical development of human settlements (historical events, religious structure, industrialization, etc.).

2. The tourist attractiveness index in the urban environment

The analysis of tourist attractiveness in urban settlements reveals a diversity of geosite types, the highest score being recorded in the national interest tourist resort Pucioasa (20 points). This resort benefits from a naturally sheltered environment (being located in a valley surrounded by Subcarpathian hills) and from the presence of mineral springs and important ecosites. The other cities (Comarnic, Campina, Fieni, Mumbai, Moreni) do not exceed 10 points for geosite attractiveness except the local interest tourist resort Breaza. The latter recorded 14.50 points due to several factors, such as favorable landscape (with mild climate) and naturally chlorinated mineral water springs. (Fig. 1).

Large differences are found in the urban environment regarding anthroposites attractiveness, the city Târgoviște having the biggest potential (22 points). This city has many archaeological sites, medieval fortresses, churches and monasteries, to important cultural institutions, national festivals and cultural events. Important resources of anthroposites are also found in the tourist resorts of local interest Câmpina (16.50 points) and Breaza (12 points), the rest of the cities (Comarnic, Fieni, Moreni, Pucioasa), having limited resources (below 10 points), some of which are almost unknown and require intense promotion in the future (Fig. 2).

Tourism specific infrastructure harnesses tourism potential in the existing tourist resorts by attracting a larger number of tourists. In the case of urban settlements the highest score is registered in the tourist resort Pucioasa, where most of the tourist demand is met because of the infrastructure of spa health-treatment facilities. Other cities recorded very low scores on tourism specific infrastructure (Moreni, Breaza, Târgoviște, Campina, Comarnic), or lack of tourist structures able to meet tourism demand at a high level of comfort (Fig. 3).
The analysis of the attractiveness levels for technical infrastructure reveals the highest values for the cities Câmpina, Comarnic and Breaza (over 20 points), because of the presence of main roads and rail routes. The construction of the Bucharest-Brașov highway is a premise for tourist flow increase in Prahova Valley, in the analyzed region. High scores (19.00 points) are also recorded in the cities located on the Ialomița axis (Târgoviște, Pucioasa and Fieni), the tourist demand being increased recently because of the improvement of Sinaia-Moroeni-Târgoviște national road. In the future the Peștera-Moeciu road will also be improved, which will open another tourist gateway between the Ialomița and Dâmbovița valleys (Fig. 4).

3. The touristic attractiveness index in the rural environment

The analysis of the attractiveness parameter of the geosite in the rural settlements marks a high score of over 15.00 points for Moroeni and Vulcana-Băi, a big score between 8.60 and 9.50 points for Runcu, Pietroșita, Iedera, Poiana Câmpina, Cornu and Gura Ocniței. A medium score between 7.00 and 8.00 points is registered in the villages Bezdead, Răzvad, Talea, Buciumeni, Filipești de Pădure, Ocnița and Vulcana Pandele, and a low score between 4.00 and 7.00 points in the rest of 15 villages (Fig. 5).

Therefore, the touristic resort Moroeni is remarkable for its geo-morphological sites because of its caves, quays or spectacular cliffs and through its ecosites, such as the Bucegi National Park. The rural settlement Vulcana-Băi is remarkable for its hidrosites, such as the sulfuric mineral water springs and the iodine-brominated springs, which await to be once again put to good use; the touristic settlement Runcu is remarkable as well, because of its geo-morphological sites (isolated cliffs) and ecosites (leisure forests).
The attractiveness parameter of the rural settlements calculated for anthroposites shows even bigger differences in the studied region. Therefore, the biggest score belongs to the village Vulcana Pandele (13 points), where the Memorial House of Gabriel Popescu is located, the first metal engraver in Romania, who included the art of engraving as a mandatory study discipline in the Academy of Beautiful Arts. This village is followed by the villages of Aninoasa, Băneşti, Bezești, Moroeni, Provița de Sus, Cornu, Ocnita, Pietroșița, Răzvad and Runci, who score identically, between 7.00 and 8.00 points. The other six villages have a lower score, between 1.00 and 6.00 points (Fig. 6).

It is remarkable that 13 rural settlements in the studied region do not have anthroposites which could permit them to score points.

As far as the touristic specific infrastructure, only four rural settlements score points: Moreni (0.22 points), Bănești (0.05 points), Doicești (0.03 points) and Runci (0.03 points). The extension and diversification of this infrastructure represents a priority for the tourism development and it is the guarantee of the diversification of tourism forms that can be practiced within the area.

The analysis of the technical infrastructure (Fig. 7) shows the biggest perimeter of attractiveness (21.50 points) for the rural settlements Bănești and Cornu, followed by the villages Doicești (19.00 points), Poiana Câmpina, Filipești de Pădure, Florești, Gura Ocnitaei, Răzvad and Pietroșița, which score 16.50 points, continuing with the villages Moroeni, Moțăieni and Șotânga (each scoring 14.00 points).

It is noted that these rural settlements are located along main national roads, and they have access to railways and benefit from the presence of utilities which facilitate the tourist activity. Some rural settlements have access to transport infrastructure at a county or village level, which on the other hand require heavy investments for improving the generally poor traffic conditions.
4. The attractiveness degree of tourism potential

Summing up the scores given for the four categories of elements analyzed shows a hierarchy of administrative-territorial units, in terms of attractiveness, with large differences between urban and rural units. By analyzing the scores given, a four-value scale for tourist attractiveness was made: low (15 points), average (15-30 points), high (30-45 points) and very high (45 points).

Some of the urban settlements in the studied region are in the very high index of attractiveness (over 45 points) category of cities, namely Târgovişte, Breaza, Pucioasa and Câmpina. These urban settlements have very high natural and anthropic tourism potential, with a good tourism and technical specific infrastructure, which could lead to an increase in tourist demand if well harnessed. The other urban settlements, namely Comarnic, Moreni and Fieni are in the high index of attractiveness (30-40 points) category of cities and falls into the category of cities with attractive large indices (points), in these cases the values being increased by the attractiveness of geosites and technical infrastructure. (Fig. 8).

The attractiveness index analysis for rural settlements in the studied region presents a great diversity and a less favorable material basis for the development of tourism activities. There are 30 villages taken into account, located in two counties and distributed differently on the three axes of interest: 17 on the Ialomiţa tourist axes, 10 on Prahova and 3 on Crivovul Dulce.

In rural settlements with high attractiveness (30-45 points) the localities Moroeni, Cornu, Băneştii, Răzvad and Pietroşiţa are included. Most of the other rural settlements are in the average attractiveness index category (15-30 points). Another five of them are in the low index of attractiveness category (under 15 points): Valea Lungă, Vişineştii, Vârfuri, Adunaţii and Proviţa de Jos (Fig. 9).

In the rural settlements category, Moreni is remarked with a high index of attractiveness (39.22 points), having important natural touristic resources by being partially located in a mountain area and by having an emerging technical-utilities infrastructure (Fig. 10).
Fig. 10 Evaluation of tourist attractiveness in the studied region
5. Conclusions

The Subcarpathians region in-between Ialomiţa and Prahova rivers has some distinctive characteristics in the context of tourist potential evaluation: it contains many tourism-related important elements (most of them not really known), it also has human resources which can be oriented towards the touristic activity, it is surrounded by two well-populated valley corridors, and it has an infrastructure and traffic that is differentiated by their importance in the tourism domain. Also, it benefits from the fact that it is connected, in one way, to an important touristic center (the city Târgovişte), which has a polarizing role for a much larger territory, and in the other way, it is connected to the touristic mountain area Bucegi-Leaota, which is important because of its potential, planning and achievements.

The level of touristic attractiveness of human settlements in the studied region can be improved in the future, by modernizing the tourism infrastructure, by involving the local and regional communities in the development of tourism activities (including accessing European funds). Last but not least, an increase in awareness of the inhabitants is necessary, regarding the usage of natural and anthropic touristic potential that belongs to them.

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