

SPECIFIC FEATURES OF THE TOURIST FLOW IN BORSEC RESORT

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In Borsec resort, tourism occupies a special place, as an economic alternative, still remaining viable and a form of exploitation of natural and human potential, with its own history and traditions, with a bottling industry, operating for more than two centuries and which practically today offers one of Romanian representative brands of mineral water – Borsec.

The drawback of the resort's tourism, based exclusively on the exploitation of mineral water, is analyzed in the context of the recovery opportunities through diversification of tourist facilities, rehabilitation and application of modern means of image promotion. Moreover, the Carpathian road rehabilitation project will also contribute to this. One of the most important Romanian projects related to transport axes, the future Târgu Mureș-Iași-Ungheni highway may already be considered favourable in providing a national and international reputation.

Key words: tourist flow, accommodation capacity, tourism rehabilitation and remodeling, promotion.

Introduction

The tourist flow is one of the three basic components used to quantify the tourism phenomenon.

It is the synthetic element which most closely reflects the way and the recovery of tourism potential. At the same time, tourist flow is a complex and extensive geodemographic phenomenon, consisting of temporary movement of people of different ages and social classes. The effect of tourist flow is determined by the social aspect that contributes to the organization of leisure possibilities, the prevention of illness, the restoration of biological potential, improving or widening the horizon of health information, and by the economic one, which capitalizes perpetually and seasonally the tourism primary offer that can be renewed through planning and adaptation.

The size, orientation and structure of tourist flows largely depend on the quality and diversity of tourism, the degree of development and the quality of

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the material of interest (the accommodation and catering, cleaning and facilities for leisure travel ways and means of access etc) (Ciangă, 1997).

The tourist flow of Borsec resort shows a seasonality mainly imposed by the climatic factor, summer and winter seasons offering favorable conditions for carrying out various forms and types of tourism. Transitional seasons, spring and autumn, are characterized by poor overnight stays in accommodation units.

Working Methodology

There are a number of difficulties in measuring the tourist demand and many quantifying methods are imperfect. Specific instruments are used to measure tourist demand of which surveys and statistics are the most common.

In general, information from tourists is needed, referring to their socio-professional status, satisfaction, number of tourists, fees, etc. Therefore, the size and intensity of tourist flow can be presented through the analysis of some characteristic indicators: the number of overnight stays, the number of people participating in this socio-economic phenomenon, the length of their holiday, the occupancy capacity of the existing accommodation units.

It should be noted that we have great reservations regarding the data provided by the National Statistics Institute and its degree of fairness, but the field data obtained from questionnaires addressed to the accommodation units was not conclusive either.

There have been cases where people who manage accommodation units refused to cooperate, because they were operating illegally, while others did answer the questions in the survey, but provided inaccurate data. However, there are two cases (Riki Villa and Rose Pension), where conclusive data as monthly revenues, or tourists overnight stays have been obtained for a seven year period.

Results and Discussions

In this study, two time intervals were taken into account: 1972-1989 and 2001-2010. In the first period (1972-1989), a global circulation of 568,335 overnight stays in 1972 and 331 948 overnight stays in 1989 was registered, with a decrease of 236387 overnight stays. This statistic represented 3.4% of tourist flow in the Carpathians.

The volume of arrivals recorded was of 47,322 tourists in 1972 and of 34,662 tourists in 1989, registering a decrease of 12,660 tourists during this 17 year period, reference period and, representing 1.5% of total tourists in the Eastern Carpathians. The length of stays recorded in the analyzed territory averages 12 overnight stays/tourist for 1972 and 9.5 overnight stays/tourist for

1989. The second period (2001-2010), according to statistical data, shows a global circulation of 36,682 overnight stays in 2001 and 4,244 nights in 2010, showing a drastic decrease of 32,438 nights. The volume of arrivals was conducted by 4,393 tourists in 2001 and 1,208 tourists in 2010, which shows a decrease by 3,185 tourists in a period of only nine years.

The average length of stays recorded values of 8.3 nights/tourist in 2001 and 3.5 nights/tourist in 2010.

The values recorded by the sightseeing tourist flow in Borsec are determined by a complex tourism fund also arranged by the presence of a database where we can mention villa stands in 2001 (48.7% of nights and 49.1% tourists), closely followed by hotels (48.5% and 43.2%), at a considerable distance by camping units (2% and 3.5%), and tourist pensions (0.73% overnight stays and 4.1% tourists). In 2010, the situation was reversed, the pensions being predominant (68.6% of overnights, 74.1% arrivals respectively).

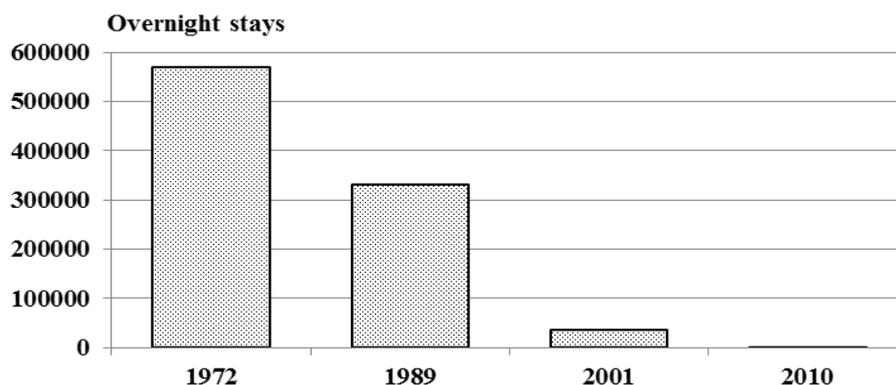


Fig. 1. Tourist flow. Borsec overnight stays recorded in 1972, 1989, 2001, 2010

The pensions are followed at a considerable distance by villas, with 31.3% and 26.5%, of over night stays and arrivals respectively highlighting the increased degree of wear and the temporary mode. The functional accommodation capacity (the occupancy rate of accommodation units) is the indicator that represents the number of beds available to tourists in accommodation units, taking into account the number of days when the units are opened in the period considered, excluding rooms or units temporarily closed due to the lack of tourists, repairs or other reasons. It is expressed in places-days.

In 2001, the accommodation capacity in function in Borsec recorded a number of 86,830 places-day, 48% for villas, 25.5% in camping units, 21.5% and 5% pensions. In 2010, this indicator recorded a total of only 48,727 places-days of which 71% for pensions, 22.6% to villas and only 6.4% in campgrounds.

The intensity and the tourist flow system attenuates under increasing altitude, due to the reduction of tourism season, and it differs in relation to the form of tourism, as reflected by the length of stay. Mountain chalets register a yearly average of 2 nights / tourist, with longer stays in huts around Borsec.

Basing ourselves on questionnaires addressed to tourists it was concluded that the micro-region attracts people of all age groups, from school age to the segment of population between 50-70 years, (thus creating a structure on certain target categories). The high mountain area is visited by young people and adults from the segment of 20-40 years whereas the low depression areas belong mostly to the mature-aged category.

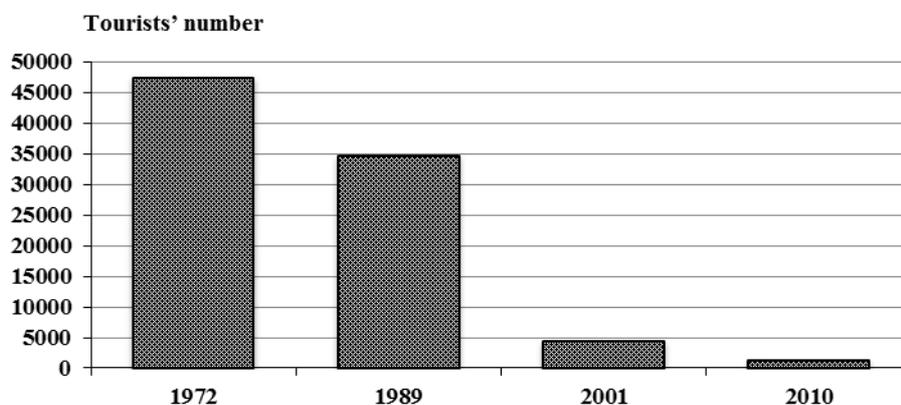


Fig. 2. Tourist flow. Number of tourists registered in Borsec in 1972, 1989, 2001, 2010

According to tourists' origin, there are two types of movements: internal tourist traffic and international tourist traffic. In the case of Borsec resort the first category of tourists is around 70%, its origin being in Mureș, Suceava, Neamț, Bacău, Iași, Botoșani, Maramureș, Satu Mare, and the second category (30%), from countries such as Hungary (45%), Israel (11%), Austria (10%), Germany (10%), France (7%), USA (7%), Belgium (5%) and the Netherlands (5%). The main mean of transport for tourists is their own car and pensions are the preferred accommodation units.

Regarding the tourists degree of satisfaction about services satisfaction, most stated that they were disillusioned with the state of infrastructure and tourist attractions. When they were asked if they would come back to visit Borsec resort and the surrounding areas, the responses were uncertain, because of the above reasons. The tourists who choose to spend overnights in accommodation units in Borsec are fewer than those passing through.

Positioned on the transcarpathian axis of Bistricioara Valley, near Borsec resort and Ceahlău Massif, Corbu and Tulgheș localities are currently benefiting from an intense transit tourism tours from Moldavia counties to Borsec, and from Transylvania to Ceahlău Massif. Therefore we consider it necessary to build a competitive material infrastructure, balanced and functional, to determine not only the numerical size, structure and quality of the tourism demand for tourist offer of the area, but also to provide it provides an easy access and an efficient use of tourist attractions by visitors flows.

The detailed study of tourism potential includes quantitative and qualitative aspects of the tourism fund and resource base, which has allowed a hierarchy of categories and subcategories of attractive elements, depending on their territorial distribution. After studying the work developed by prof. Ciangă (1997), regarding the tourism in the Eastern Carpathians, a quantification of the tourism potential value of Borsec resort was conducted, from the ideal model that would include absolutely all categories, subcategories and tourism items, which is expressed by the formula:

$$V_t = \Sigma^{0.16} 1 + \Sigma^{0.5} 2 + \Sigma^{0.18} 3 + \Sigma^{0.8} 4 + \Sigma^{0.10} 5 + \Sigma^{0.8} 6 + \Sigma^{0.24} 7 + \Sigma^{0.11} 8 = 100$$

where: V_t – tourism value, $\Sigma 1$ – morphotourism background, $\Sigma 2$ – climatic-tourism background, $\Sigma 3$ – hydrogeographical tourism background, $\Sigma 4$ – biogeographical tourism background, $\Sigma 5$ – cultural and historical tourism background, $\Sigma 6$ – ethnographical-tourism and folk background, $\Sigma 7$ – the tourism infrastructure, $\Sigma 8$ – tourism potential of communication.

Based on this assessment, Borsec resort garnered a score of 44 points, most of which were granted to the hydrogeographical potential (FHG), represented by the hydromineral sources of the hydro-halo pits Căliman-Harghita and the least points to the tourism material resources (FMT).

Table 1

Characteristics of Tourist Flow in Borsec (1972 and 1989)

No.	Tourist location	Overnight stays		Increase ±%	Tourists' number		Increase ±%	The duration of stay	
		1972	1989		1972	1989		1972	1989
1.	Borsec	568335	331948	-41,6	47322	34662	-26,8	12	9,5

Source: N. Ciangă, 1997

Table 2

Characteristics of tourist flow in Borsec (2001 and 2010)

No.	Tourist location	Overnight stays		Increase ±%	Tourists' number		Increase ±%	The duration of stay	
		2001	2010		2001	2010		2001	2010
1.	Borsec	36682	4244	-88,5	4393	1208	-72,5	8,3	3,5

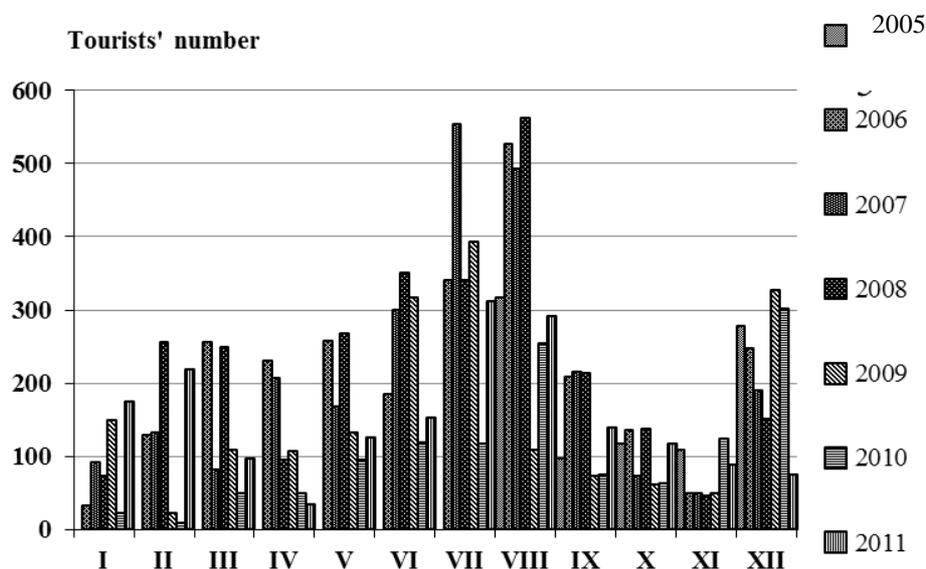


Fig. 3. Tourist flow. The number of tourists during the period 2005-2011 at Rose Pension

The graphic on the number of tourists during the period 2005-2011 at Rose Pension (Fig. 3), shows that most tourists were registered in summer and winter (December), with a maximum in August and minimum during transitional seasons (autumn and spring). If by the end of 2010, most of the accommodation establishments were operating only in the summer months (June, July and August), with the opening of the ski slope as a result of tourism demand, some of them remained open throughout the year.

Tourism Promotion

The tourism promotion in Borsec resort is done in various ways. The most common ways to promote accommodation units in the area are on the Internet and on printed materials like business cards and fliers. The most effective and the cheapest way to promote tourism in the region remains the informal recommendations (word of mouth, which on the internet takes a virtual form, and is achieved through the forums pages where tourists share their different experiences).

The existence of a webpage with all the contact details for a certain accommodation place is a great advantage in promoting it. There are situations when accommodation units presented on webpages are not marked on the

ground for any legal checks, they "do not work", but that still accommodate tourists, which leads to a false statistical view of the existing accommodation capacity and of the tourist flow in the area. Thus, the Internet can be a great way to promote tourism demand in the so-called "black" accommodation units.

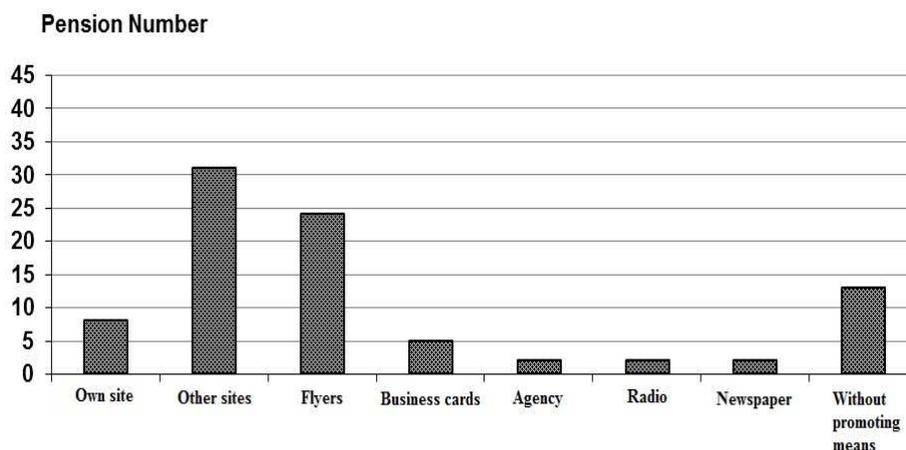


Fig. 4. Promotion methods used by the accommodation units

The promotion performed at resort level through websites does not provide online reservation systems or an evaluation of the tourism based on tourists' preferences, which is why we consider absolutely necessary to implement some systems on the websites, for the potential customers' online assistance who will be assisted in making such decisions.

Currently, in the analyzed area, potential tourists do not have the opportunity to obtain complete information to meet specific requirements.

The search and finding of information involves the consultancy of numerous specialized websites where the information is sketchy at best.

Examples of specialized websites for accommodation may be mentioned:

- <http://www.cazareborsec.com/>
- <http://www.infopensiuni.ro/borsec/cazare-vile-pensiuni-borsec>
- <http://www.romania-turistica.ro/Harghita/Cazare-Borsec.htm>
- <http://www.portal-info.ro/cazare/cazare-borsec.html>
- <http://www.turismromanesc.ro/cazare-in-Borsec>
- <http://www.tourismguide.ro/html/orase/Harghita/Borsec/index.php>
- <http://www.turistinfo.ro/borsec/cazare-hoteluri-vile-pensiuni-borsec.html>
- <http://turism.itbox.ro/cazare-harghita/cazare-in-borsec/>
- <http://www.kazare.ro/ro/locality-accommodation/510/cazare-in-borsec/>

Conclusions

The rehabilitation and the remodeling of Borsec resort is an imperative task that lies primarily in achieving a treatment center that performs a variety of procedures based on mineral water springs, that involves starting projects for creating a multifunctional spa complex, which, besides ensuring treatment, also provides an opportunity for relaxation and leisure time throughout the year.

A general problem of Borsec and other Romanian resorts is, besides inadequate privatization, the lack of coherent national strategies in tourism, which were not able to highlight the role of the state in tourism. All these combined effects are in the present as well in the disadvantage for Romanian resorts, not only in terms of foreign tourism but also for internal demand.

The interests of Borsec are related to the development of a health tourism, which depends on the interest shown by financial investors, who in addition to the development of tourist infrastructure and services, will create a new market segment for their offer, if they are able to occupy market segments and to maintain them, by using marketing techniques (Tofan, 2012).

Borsec recovery could be achieved with an adequate infrastructure, when competent and competitive factors will appear and relationships with tour operators abroad will be established, if possible during major tourism fairs and exhibitions.

In order to become the spa resort that used to be, it is necessary that in the formation of a future image basis to rely on a combination of tourist services, integrating tourism traditional treatment based on modern technologies and offering opportunities for wellness and sport activities, which could provide international prestige.

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