

Studies Regarding the Evaluation of the Tourist Potential of Oituz Hydrographical Basin – Bacau County

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Abstract. Oituz hydrographical basin belongs to the Eastern Carpathians in the eastern part of them. Its geographical area has a rich natural and human tourism potential, poorly capitalized due to its inadequate assessment, lack of promotion and limited financial resources. The tourism resources are numerous, both natural and anthropic ones. Of the natural resources there were mentioned the variety of the relief, predominantly mountainous, the quality of the environment, not existing polluting factors, rich flora and fauna, the existence of numerous mineral springs etc. The particularly rich human resources refer to ancient artifacts (a Neolithic settlement a Dacian Dava), a feudal fortress, monuments in memory of the heroes of 1916-1918, places of worship, an ethnographic museum, many elements of ethnography and folklore. For the assessment of the tourism potential there is used the scoring method taking into account four criteria of evaluation that have in view the natural potential, the human potential, specific tourism infrastructure, technical infrastructure. A scale of closed score 0-100 points was used each criterion receiving, in order of importance, a number of points. For the natural potential, it was taken into consideration that there is a mountainous and sub-mountainous relief, the climate is moderate, rich in aerosols, the hydrographic network Oituz river includes many streams, there are over 30 mineral springs, the flora and fauna are rich. This criterion received 22 points. The anthropic potential had as strengths the numerous ancient and medieval artifacts, a group of churches with a specific architecture, ethnographic items, etc. The scoring was 22 points. The other two criteria received 12 and 22 points, the significant elements being the presence of the national road DN-11, the five existing boarding houses, a tourist inn and good technical equipment (electricity, mobile coverage, TV). The final evaluation was of 78 points, which places the basin in "very high potential" category.

Keywords: tourism potential, mountain and pre-mountain areas, rural development, river basin

INTRODUCTION

In Romania there are many geographical areas with strong tourist potential, not very well-known and valued. For their enhancement, studies are needed for the evaluation on scientific criteria, that precede the strong promotion using modern means. (Glăvan, 2003)

One of these areas is Oituz basin, located on the border between Moldova and Transylvania. The study undertaken is meant to highlight the strong tourism potential of this geographical area, based on evaluation criteria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to collect the data necessary for the study, direct investigations it was done on the field, filled with data from the statistics of local administrative structures.

The methodology used is an adaptation of the one used by the Ministry for SMEs, Commerce, Tourism and Liberal Professions in 2007 for zoning Romania's tourism development.

It was taken into consideration the four evaluation criteria, which were related to: natural potential, anthropic potential, specific tourism infrastructure, technical infrastructure.

It was used a scale of closed score - 100 points, each criterion receiving a number of points, according to tourism importance. For the first two criteria 25 points each were given, for the third criteria - tourism infrastructure - 20 points and the last criterion - technical infrastructure - 30 points.

As for the assessment of natural potential, there were taken into account two components, namely: the natural environment and natural therapeutic factors, each with a certain weight and being also in turn structured and evaluated on sub-criteria.

The anthropic potential comprises five components: historical monuments of national interest, contemporary architecture, museums and public collections, art and popular tradition, cultural institutions, with adjacent sub-criteria.

The assessment of specific tourism infrastructure comprises four components namely: specific tourist accommodation, treatment facilities, ski and sleigh areas with adequate technical means, business and recreational facilities.

Finally, the evaluation of technical infrastructure received 30 points out of 100, due to its importance in development. In this type of evaluation, three components were taken into account namely: accessibility and transport infrastructure, municipal infrastructure – supply of municipal public services and electronic telecommunication infrastructure.

The data were processed and the final score was calculated which was integrated into a rating scale consisting of four levels: very high potential: 75-100 points; high potential: 51-75 points, average potential: 26-50 points and low potential: 5-25 points.

Finally some strategic lines were identified to increase the tourism potential of the studied area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Oituz hydrographical basin, also called Oituz Valley is located in the western county of Bacau, in the mountainous and pre- mountainous area of the Eastern Carpathians.

Although it has a rich natural and human tourism potential, it is insufficiently exploited, mainly due to lack of promotion and limited financial resources.

The tourism resources are numerous, both those with natural character (mineral springs, landscape, air quality etc.) and especially those with anthropic character (historical sites, monuments, museums, ethnography etc.). They were not identified and promoted, which resulted in reduced capitalization of the area from the tourism point of view. (Ciurea, 2009)

1. Evaluation of natural potential

The score of 25 points awarded to this criterion was divided into five sub-criteria, each receiving for the maximum level 5 points (see Table 1).

a) The relief of Oituz basin is varied, the weight being held by the mountainous terrain (over 70%). It is characterized by variety, balance, with areas of narrowing of the valley with steep slopes. There are several peaks above 1000 meters, defining the area (in the south Musat peak - 1502.7 m, Neagu - 1403 m, Black - 1226.8 m). In the downstream of the basin, the relief is hilly with hills and valleys belonging to Onesti - Casin depression.

Evaluation of potential natural

No.	Sub-criterion	Highest score	Characteristics	Evaluation score
1.	Relief	5	Mountainous and pre-mountainous	4
2.	Climate	5	Moderate climate rich in aerosols	4
3.	Hydrography	3	Oituz river with numerous streams	2
4.	Hydrology (mineral springs)	10	More than 30 mineral springs of which 10 certified	10
5.	Flora and fauna	2	Rich, specific to the zone	2
	Total	25		22

b) The climate is temperate continental, with a specific, mild climate, because of the "closed" character of the basin. This character favours the emergence of some topo-climates different in the more sheltered lowlands and highlands with a harsh climate. Winters are beautiful, sunny, with a rich and persistent snow layer, favouring the winter sports. Summers are cool, with heavy rains, alternating with periods of fine weather. It is an area less wet than Slanic Valley.

c) Of the surface waters the main river is Oituz with a length of 66.5 km, of which 71.5% is located in mountainous areas and 28.5% in the sub-mountainous, hilly zone. It has many tributaries, five on the right, Lipchianu, Haloş, Leşunţ etc. and eight on the left (Caraslău, Gherghionaş, Brezaia, Cernica, Ciocan etc.) passing through the gorges of rare beauty.

d) Hydrology (ground waters). The area is rich in underground waters, many mineral with known therapeutic action. 10 mineral springs are known, certified and 19 wells with mineral water. The area has a high therapeutic potential. Between 1908 and 1944 there was a spa centre in Poiana Sarata, which was partially destroyed by war or neglect. The potential, due to the number and quality of sources, was evaluated at the maximum level.

e) Fauna and flora. The fauna of the region is very rich and diverse, being less affected due to relief and reduced activity of the human factor. There are almost all species of mammals, reptiles, birds, fish specific to the mountainous and sub-mountainous zones in significant number. The phenomenon of poaching is not present, except the fish fauna (trout), which creates an additional element of tourist attraction.

On the whole, this criterion was assessed with 22 points.

2. Assessment of the anthropic potential

The anthropic potential with tourism specific has complex novel connotations for visitors.

a) The area rich in vestiges, from the Neolithic, ancient, medieval to modern times. In Marginea there are the vestiges of a Neolithic settlement, in Grozești village there are the ruins of a Dacian fortresses and in Poiana Sarata, the ruins of a medieval fortress dating from the seventeenth century (Tab.2).

b) In addition to the historical remains, along Oituz Valley in Poiana Sarata, Hârja, Grozești, Ferăstrău, Bogdănești, there are numerous places of worship (Orthodox and Catholic) of rare beauty, some of them older than 200 years.

c) There are also many memorials (cemetery of heroes, crosses) in Poiana Sărată, Grozești, Bogdănești, Coşna, Hârja. It could be also mention the ethnographic museum in the village of Poiana Sărată.

Tab. 2

Assessment of the anthropic potential

No.	Sub-criterion	Highest score	Characteristics	Evaluation score
1.	Archaeological vestiges with historical character	5	Neolithic settlement, Dacian fortress, Roman castra Angustia (nearby, feudal castle of 17 th C.)	4
2.	Places of worship	5	The Church of the People – Poiana Sărată, Sf. Gheorghe Church Hârja, Roman Catholic Church Oituz, Oituz Monastery etc.	5
3.	Monuments of national heroes	5	Cemeteries of heroes Poiana Sărată, Grozești, Bogdănești. Crosses– Hârja, Grozești, Cavalry Monument– Grozești etc.	5
4.	Elements of ethnography and folklore	10	The art of carving in stone and wood, red ceramic, weaving rugs, holiday customs, traditional costume, ethnographic museum in the village of Poiana Sărată	8
	Total	25		22

d) The ethnographic resources are of great wealth (the art of carving stone, wood, red ceramic, weaving rugs and carpets, towels) and folklore (customs at wedding, baptism, funeral, Christmas, New Year, Easter, Sîntilia etc.).

Related to this criterion, it was noted that there is little concern for emphasizing the value of the archaeological remains and their promotion, as well as the decline or disappearance of some elements of ethnography and folklore.

3. Assessment of specific tourism infrastructure

The four sub-criteria, on which assessment of specific tourism infrastructure was done and which together make up a maximum score of 20 points have different weights. 10 points were awarded for specific tourist accommodation units and 3-4 points for the other two criteria. The data are presented in Table 3.

Tab. 3

Assessment of specific tourism infrastructure

No.	Sub-criterion	Highest score	Characteristics	Evaluation score
1.	Tourist accommodation (boarding houses)	10	5 boarding houses and an inn and 30 guest houses	8
2.	Treatment centres	3	Balneary treatment is done in private households	1
3.	Ski and sleigh areas	3	There are sleigh areas without technical equipment	1
4.	Entertainment centres	4	A swimming pool with mineral water in Poiana-Sărată. Areas for discos.	2
	Total	20		12

In Oituz River Basin, although there is a national road - DN-11, which crosses it and the tourist attractions are numerous, there are only 5 agritourist guest houses and an inn. The comfort level is 2-3 stars. The potential is high, especially for Poiana-Sărată, due to the landscape, environment and especially the presence of mineral waters. Therefore, the number of points awarded for this criterion was 8.

A for the other three sub-criteria, there are only improvised facilities for treatment and skiing. It can be mentioned the existence of a swimming pool with mineral water in Poiana-Sărată.

The opportunities for growth in all sub-categories are present, if it is ensured the necessary equipment.

4. Evaluation of specific technical infrastructure

The importance of the technical infrastructure in increasing the level of tourist attraction of an area is undeniable. The low number of foreign tourists visiting Romania is determined by the weak development of technical infrastructure, especially roads.

For this criterion were considered three sub-criteria: telecommunications infrastructure, each structure having multiple items and whose score was weighted according to importance (Tab. 4).

Tab. 4

Assessment of technical infrastructure

No.	Sub-criterion	Highest score	Characteristics	Evaluation score
a)	Transport infrastructure			
	Access to national road	3	DN-11	3
	Access to European road	3	30 km away	2
	Airport	3	50 km away	1
	Railway station	2	Onești railway station at the end of the basin	1
b)	Municipal Infrastructure			
	Water supply, sewage	3	Partial	2
	Natural gas supply	2	Partial (20%)	1
	Electrical networks	3	All villages are electrified	3
	TV	3	Cable	3
c)	Telecommunications infrastructure			
	Fixed and mobile telephony	5	Total coverage	5
	Internet	3	Partial	1
	Total	30		22

Regarding the transport infrastructure, the area is crossed by DN-11 and at the end of the basin is Onesti railway station. The nearest airport is 60 km away (Bacau), and the access to the European road is at a distance of 30-50 km. The area is fully electrified and has TV coverage. Other utilities (water, gas) are partly present. There is total coverage in terms of telephony, but Internet access is limited due to the low number of subscribers to fixed telephony or lack of Internet networks.

The total cumulated number is 78 points, which situates Oituz hydrographical basin in the class with very high tourism potential.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Oituz hydrographical basin – Bacau County is located in mountainous and pre-mountainous areas of the Eastern Carpathians. Due to the geographical location, relief, environment, historical sites, cultural and religious, ethnographic monuments, it has a high tourism potential insufficiently promoted and valued.

2. Assessment of tourism potential was performed on a formal methodology adapted to the specific of the domain. Score method was used, the evaluation being performed on four criteria: natural potential, human potential, specific tourist infrastructure, technical infrastructure.

3. The total number of points obtained in a closed scale of 0-100 points is 78, which situates Oituz hydrographical basin in the "very high" class on the tourism potential.

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