

## PROSPECTS IN TOURISM IN GEOGRAPHICAL VICINITY

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**Abstract:** *A particular region is attractive to visitors when it has some special attractions to offer regarding nature, culture and gastronomy. These attractions are even more valuable when they are offered together. Conscious development can maintain the interest of the general public in the region provided environmental values are taken care of. Private companies may organize study trips or wine tasting trips in a rural setting where guests are accommodated in various farms. The region of Timisoara has splendid opportunities of touristic development. It is worth considering that both countries should join forces to participate in the development of tourism by taking advantage of subsidies available from the EU. Advertising the historical and gastronomic attractions in the settlements on both sides of the border can be mutually beneficial to both parties.*

**Key words:** *visitors, nature, culture, gastronomy, particular region, tourism*

### INTRODUCTION

It is a frequently posed question in today's globalized world whether a citizen wants to explore the world, whether they have the opportunity to explore the world and how they can do it? Travellers want to find out about the way of life of local people in a region and the social, economic and natural context of their lives. A tourist who has been raised up in an urban setting wants to see agricultural farms set in untouched nature and the special services offered by them (food and beverages) and the special features of the natural environment (birds and other species).

The many-sidedness to be experienced in the world may raise demand for tourism. It is one of the most ancient motivations behind tourism to learn about culture and cultural attractions. Examining tourism without looking into culture is out of context. (The number of cultural attractions on offer has continuously increased from the ancient times. This touristic product is a product of gathering information or, in other words, it is an "experience-oriented product type" (Formadi and Mayer 2004).

Recently (especially from the birth of the European Union), the recognition of similar interests between large regions has received a lot of attention. Tourists have the opportunity to learn easily about life in adjacent groups of people (e.g. in the region of Timisoara, Arad or Békéscsaba) in a large community of nations without borders. This could result in a change of behaviour and approach for the tourists since they might become more tolerant with the customs of other countries and people. The traveller starts to adopt a different way of thinking. This change can be seen in the following aspects:

- They will have different views on risks since such risks can threaten their countries of origin as well, e.g. environmental pollution, depletion of the ozone layer, major disasters, tsunamis (like the one that hit a nuclear plant in Japan after an earthquake),
- They will see travel opportunities in a different perspective, let it be recreation or business or disaster tourism after tsunamis, floods, etc.)
- They will treat communication and liaison in a different way since new telecommunication technologies offer a wide range of communication and instant

messaging forms such as e-mails, chatting, etc., or text and multimedia messages through mobile phones,

- Forms of cooperation are defined by the typical features of international cooperation enhanced by international treaties and contracts. People today can easily establish contact but do not see the environmental damage they inflict which should be diminished.

The new underlying conditions call for the need for a re-appraisal of the special contact between nature and humans and a careful management of processes. The accumulation of knowledge helps people to listen to the “silent” signals of the environment. A change of approach is very important even if it requires considerable amounts of financial investment since the damaged or spoilt natural surroundings might deter visitors and reduce or stop tourism in an area.

### **ADVANTAGES AND PROBLEMS OF TOURISM IN A PARTICULAR REGION**

Before any project of touristic development, it is essential to explore the economic, social and natural environment of a region, which could serve as a firm informational base of any improvement. Development should be done on a professional basis as it is the means of integration of regions into the complex system of touristic operation. Careful development may be beneficial to both the particular tourist destinations and the whole region in various ways. Some of these benefits are:

- infrastructure and services in regions with a low level of industrial or agricultural production but a high level of tourist prospects are improved within the frames of comprehensive regional development projects,
- tourism builds up a market for both agricultural and handicraft products while tourists may be involved in activities like basket-making or pottery; guides can schedule a day for such activities in the itinerary and tourists will receive the products made by them as souvenirs to take them home,
- additional activities such as farm tourism, riding, hunt, fishing or local production of handicraft goods bring jobs to local people,
- invisible export in catering and sales of products whose global markets are saturated, e.g. liver paste is important,
- involving tourists in traditional events like folk songs and dances provides an insight into rural life and generates additional income to local people,
- there is an increasing number of part-time or full-time jobs such as tourist guides, tourist organizers, etc.,
- infrastructure and services are improved, backed by the increased revenues, and also required by most tourists who demand a high standard of service,
- demand for training courses grows since visitors from other countries require the command of foreign languages and other high-standard services to meet their demands,
- ethical behaviour toward tourists and passing behaviour patterns from generation to generation builds up a good image of a region, hosts being friendly, attentive, helpful, etc....

It is important to note the drawbacks of tourism as well. Spontaneous and uncontrolled development does harm and a supplementary regulation of the market may be ineffective. Effects on nature, society and economy may not meet the expectations. Possible additional damage such as rising prices, seasonality, crowdedness, environmental

pollution and damaging natural attractions (e.g. dripstones, protected plants, graffiti, etc.) should be diminished or eliminated. Tourism should be carefully planned and environmental friendly to avoid such problems and to support sustainable growth in that sector of the economy.

### TOURISM TYPES AND ATTRACTIONS

Tourism is characterised as “invisible export” in finance since it generates revenues in foreign currencies, improves the balance of payment of the country and influences relationships between countries including export and import demands. Tourism has two types: **business** (or **professional**) **tourism** and **recreational tourism** when tourist want to find out about a foreign country, the traditions of the people and enjoy recreation or improve their health.

**Business tourism** plays such an important role today that there are many companies that exclusively specializes in that field of tourism. Services are adapted to business life (e.g. participation in conferences, negotiations, flight schedules serving EU talks, etc.). Businesspeople require little time for travelling so such trips are generally by air.

**Recreational tourism** is categorized as holiday-making, tours, town visits, spa tourism, religious tourism (pilgrimage), shopping tourism, gastronomic tourism, cultural tourism or tourism addressed to various age groups such as trips for old-age people or camps for young people or families. Recreational tourists may learn about the living conditions, work and life of people living in foreign countries and the economic, geographical, financial and architectural characteristics of the country while they may develop demand for additional services. The visited region may offer spa services to the tourists where it is possible. Recreational tourists are classified as **soft** or **‘eco’-tourists** who respect the natural environment and so-called **aggressive tourists** who inflict severe damage on the environmental assets. Aggressive tourists such as football team supporters who damage plants and urban objects by graffiti, etc. are mostly not welcomed by local people.

**The touristic product** may include one single or just a few services as well (required by people who organize their trips themselves and who only demand accommodation services with half board, full board or all inclusive options) but they have realized that they may get discounts on packages. Most tourists look for complex services that can support their recreation.

Tourist products are complex since they also include special conditions of the holiday. Tourists make their choice of destination on the basis of accessibility, accommodation types available (hotels, private rooms, farm tourism, guest houses, etc.), catering services and catering options (restaurants, shops, etc.), entertainment options or additional services, the night and day security of the place, hospitality and helpfulness of local residents and last but not least, the touristic attractions of the region. The attractions may influence the other conditions of the destination as well and they include natural attractions such as the natural environment with sunshine or snow, thermal baths or spas and human-made attractions such as the built environment, gastronomy, sport and folklore.

It is essential to know about the attractions and their importance to visitors to develop tourism of the region in an objective-oriented and well-considered way.

### ... AND ABOUT THE TOURIST OPPORTUNITIES IN THE REGION AT THE BORDER

The region of Arad – Timisoara – Békéscsaba – Gyula. This region that lies at the border of two member states of the European Union has an excellent touristic potential. Trips here could be organized where tourists would learn about the attractions of the region while visiting both countries. Thematic tours that are increasingly popular could boost tourism in the region. Information on such tours should be available in the form of traffic signs, information signs, leaflets and websites.

**Thematic tours** are continuously gaining ground in the offer of travel agencies. Usually these tours do not have a specific itinerary but include all the destinations where natural attractions or human-made attractions related to the theme can be found and all the additional services of accommodation, catering and recreation. There are specific dates when cultural events are organized on a given venue or tourists may participate in programs which aim to widen the knowledge of tourists about the region.

Thematic tours have the following types:

- local or regional trips (e.g. Arad – Békéscsaba – Gyula – Timisoara), nation-wide trips (e.g. hiking tour on the national blue marked path) or international trips (e.g. silk road) on the basis of the geographical extension;
- trips into nature, visiting objects of art, pilgrimages, photograph trips, trips for people with special interests (gastro-trips, trips visiting pubs, trips related to pipes and smoking, etc.) on the basis of the themes;
- public transport rides, hiking trips, riding tours, bike trips, motorbike trips, boat trips on the basis of the means of transport.

The elements of thematic tours can be combined according to the interests of the tourists. Both attractions and services may be customized to demand. The domain of cultural tourism also includes thematic tours since tourists have had the intension of learning about foreign cultures and the trip can be completed with special attractions and recreation programs.

The region of Arad – Timisoara – Békéscsaba – Gyula has to offer many attractions including the following, just to mention a few:

- Arad has many historic monuments (related to the fight for freedom and the execution of the leaders): the statue of freedom with the park of reconciliation; the obelisk of the executed leaders; the Castle in Világos where the capitulation after the occurred; the Bohus mansion where documents about the capitulation after the fight for freedom were signed; the wine-growing region of Ópálos where tourists can visit wine cellars, taste various wines and enjoy a day of cultural programs.
- The Basilica of Máriaradna about 30-35 km from Arad with its twin towers, large interior space and spectacular frescos offer excellent opportunities of cultural recreation. Lippa has a Greek Catholic church of an irregular shape with a transparent top and the settlement also has a thermal bath where tourist can take a rest after visiting the ruins of Solymos castle.
- Oradea has a lot of cultural programs to offer in the spring and the autumn and the Episcopal cathedral of King Saint László can be visited here.

- Timisoara offering the atmosphere of a metropolis is famous for its Baroque, Eclectic and Art Nouveau architecture. It is the administrative and economic centre of the Banat District. One of the most important sights in town is a Baroque style Roman Catholic cathedral. Other sights include the Serbian Episcopal Palace, the Serbian Cathedral, some Art Nouveau palaces (the building of Váltóbank and the Brück-Palace), the Holy Trinity Statue, the Bastion, the Museum of Ethnography, the Roman Catholic Episcopal Palace, the Savoyai-mansion, the house where Klapka György was born, the Opera and National Theater, the Greek Catholic Cathedral and several palaces (Széchenyi, Dauerbach, Löffler, Weisz), the Hunyadi Castle, the Banat Museum, the Park of the Roses, the Turkish Bridge, the Neptun Bath. Other settlements in the region worth visiting are: Zsombolya, Végvár, Nagyszentmiklós where Bartók Béla was born.
- The town of Gyula has plenty of attractions to offer (the castle, the castle bath, various churches). The town can be a starting point of excursions to Torda to visit the salt mine, the famous gorge and the town. It is easy to reach Vasaskőfalva with the Cave of the Bears from here and continue the road to see an old wooden church in Buntesti or the buffalo herd at Bíborfüred.
- Békéscsaba is situated 20 km away from the border with Romania. It hosts the Munkácsy Mihály Museum, the Békés County Library, the Catholic and Protestant Church but it is also famous for its touristic events such as the Beer and Trotters Festival, the Sausage Festival, various sports programs and exhibitions and the Spring Festival. Tourists can make excursions from here in the region nearby. Sights worth visiting include the Windmill in Csókás, the Széchenyi Park, the Mansion Park, the Tisza Mansion in Geszt, the Wenckheim Mansion in Szabadkígyós and the Historical Exhibition Area in Vésztő-Mágor.

Thematic tours should include all the most important attractions of the region while tourists have the chance of recreation during the trip as well. Apart from all the attractions mentioned above, each towns and their neighbourhood offers excellent catering opportunities and accommodation. The region offers a lot to its visitors.

### CONCLUSIONS

The study attempts to call the attention to considering the opportunities of development of touristic attractions which the region of the Southern Great Plain and the adjacent area over the border has to offer to tourists. One option is thematic tours which could be extremely beneficial since they could include regular trips to see all the attractions on both sides of the border. EU membership is an important asset here as tourists do not lose time due to the lack of border controls. Even several border crossings are possible in one day.

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