

WAYS TO DIVERSIFY TOURISM SERVICES IN CARAS-SEVERIN COUNTY

LOREDANA TUȚĂ¹
CRISTINA MICU¹

¹ *University of Pitești, Romania, e-mail lrdntt@yahoo.com*

Abstract: *Diversifying tourist services is the main way to stimulate tourism demand and to achieve a high level of quality to meet the tourists' needs. Diversification can be achieved by: introducing new areas in tourism circuits, making various programs, multiplying the actions offered to tourists for each basic service, increasing the forms of leisure and complementary services. It is associated with the efforts of enriching the content of tourism offer and of raising its quality. This paper presents the analysis of the technical and material equipment, service offer and tourist flow in Caras-Severin county, for the period 2009-2013.*

Key words: *tourism services, number of tourists, overnight stays, average length of stay, diversifying tourism offer*

INTRODUCTION

The variety and quality of services are important means to ensure the competitiveness of Romanian tourism products on the international market. At the same time, diversification is one of the main solutions to improve tourism, with direct influence on increasing efficiency and lower seasonality. It is associated with the efforts of enriching the content of tourism offer and of raising its quality.

Both basic tourist services and the existing complementary ones satisfy up to a point the needs of consumers - tourists. Therefore a fundamental concern of tourism organizers is diversifying tourist services, one of the main ways to stimulate tourism demand, to meet tourists' needs and to develop certain areas.

Tourism services should be diversified depending on the specifics of each category of services (transport, hospitality, leisure, etc.), opening multiple opportunities.

Accommodation development and quality depend mainly on the establishments of touristic reception with functions of touristic accommodation (hotels, motels, inns, lodges, touristic halting places); they should have adequate facilities, offering tourists the best conditions. Secondly, accommodation depends on personnel number and qualification.

As a component of basic services, public alimentation determines the quality of tourism services as a whole, influences the content and attractiveness of a tourism offer, having many implications in the size and orientation of tourist flows. Considering tourists' demands, leisure aims at their physical comfort, entertainment and skill development, representing the main way to individualize and diversify tourism services.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research consisted in collecting data on the system of indicators of tourist flow in Caraș-Severin county. Therefore we consulted the monthly statistical bulletins of the County Department of Statistics and Caras-Severin County Regional Directorate of Statistics. Tourism flow indicators are significant in the structure of tourism indicators. They express the actual demand on different aspects, sometimes the potential demand, and even the supply-demand relation. These are the most representative indicators of tourist flow: the number of tourists, the number of overnight stays, the average length of stay.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Hotel accommodation represents, along with transport, food and entertainment, one of the core services required by a tourist during his trip, and also an important factor of stimulating tourism demand.

The analysis of tourism flow implies the study of some main indicators in evolution and structure: number of tourists arriving in the county (arrivals), the number of overnight stays, and the average length of stay.

The arrivals in the establishments of touristic reception with functions of touristic accommodation in Romania increased by 6.6% in 2014 compared to 2013, representing 8.444 millions. From total arrivals, Romanian tourist arrivals represented 77.4%, while foreign tourists accounted for only 22.6%, shares close to those recorded in 2013. Hotel arrivals in 2014 accounted for 74.9 % of total arrivals in accommodation units, up by 6.9% compared to 2013.

In case of the overnight stays in accommodation units, 20.23 millions were recorded in 2014, up by 4.8% compared to 2013. From total overnight stays in 2014, 81.4% represented the overnight stays of the Romanian tourists in the accommodation units, while foreign tourists accounted for 18.6%. The average length of stay in 2014 was 2.5 days for the Romanian tourists and 2 days for the foreign tourists.

The indices of net using of capacity in operation recorded 26.2% of total tourist accommodation in 2014, up by 1% compared to 2013. Higher values of this indicator were recorded for hotels (32.9%), villas (20.2%) and tourist cottages (19%).

Public alimentation represents one of the major chains of tourist serving, included in the group of basic services. This sector has to ensure the food along tourists' journey and stay. It organizes its production of dishes and provides consumers the best service conditions.

Developing, modernizing and diversifying the network of food units, increasing the share of its own production, increasing the assortment of dishes, increasing the quality level of services are some directions that characterize the dynamics of Caraş-Severin food services.

The network of food units is organized in retail businesses, such as: production and sale units (canteens - restaurants), production units (laboratories), and sale units (buffets, terraces).

In Caraş-Severin, the spa treatment services are directly related not only to the existence of natural therapeutic factors, but also to the specific structures of treatment. In most cases, the treatment facilities in the settlements having natural therapeutic factors are located within the accommodation units, such as hotels and villas.

Băile Herculane is the most important tourist destination in Caraş-Severin, attracting an average of 70% of all tourist arrivals in the county.

The spa resort Băile Herculane is representative for Romania in terms of geographical location, environment and temperate mountain climate, spa characteristics and valuable resources, experience and successful treatment through natural processes of a wide range of conditions and diseases. Its curative values are famous not only nationally, since the resort is still included in some international tourist itineraries.

The main types of therapeutic procedures applied in Băile Herculane are: hydrotherapy, electrotherapy, massage, functional rehabilitation, medical gymnastics and acupuncture.

Leisure is for some tourists the main reason to visit a resort. Therefore, the leisure facilities are important components of tourism activities, since they provide the fundamental aim of a vacation - rest, recreation and entertainment, escape from everyday

life. These facilities have become indispensable for a modern stay and especially for attracting growing segments of tourists.

There are multiple means of recreation and entertainment, additional attractions for the visitors of Băile Herculane spa resort: restaurants, bars, summer terraces, swimming pools with thermal water, sauna, massage, billiards, etc., and opportunities for hiking and trips in the resort and on Cerna Valley.

The number of tourists (tourist arrivals) is one of the most representative and important indicator of tourist flow.

Table 1
Tourist arrivals by the main types of touristic accommodation

Types of touristic accommodation	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total county	94,139	92,833	104,956	108,567	118,459
of which:					
Hotels	56,680	54,275	62,837	63,719	73,840
Motels	5,825	6,005	7,524	6,009	4,980
Touristic villas	3,537	2,120	2,737	3,169	1,908
Touristic chalets	2,062	1,187	1,207	986	1,387
Touristic boarding houses	13,945	14,290	15,364	16,029	16,106
Agro-touristic boarding houses	5,703	8,166	9,083	12,029	12,186
Other structures	6,387	6,790	6,204	6,470	8,052

Source: www.insse.ro/cms/files/arhiva_buletine2014/bslj_1.pdf

The number of tourist arrivals increased by 9.11% in 2013, reaching 118,459 tourists. By types of tourist accommodation, most arrivals were registered in hotels (62% of the total), opposite to tourist chalets with only 1% of the total.

In case of arrivals by destination, tourists preferred the accommodation units in the mountain resorts (41.2% of total arrivals), the capital of the county (28.5%) and the spas (21%); in terms of comfort, they preferred 2 and 3 stars accommodation units (88.2% of total arrivals).

The overnight stays in tourist accommodation establishments in Caraș-Severin county are presented in the following table:

Table 2
Overnight stays by the main types of touristic accommodation

Types of touristic accommodation	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total county	581,966	471,000	540,688	489,312	536,400
of which:					
Hotels	446,919	354,339	421,927	370,986	415,810
Motels	18,791	16,464	4,001	9,622	7,940
Touristic villas	18,480	3,637	5,240	5,893	4,115
Touristic chalets	5,230	2,054	1,716	1,603	2,755
Touristic boarding houses	46,717	45,716	47,432	43,239	41,553
Agro-touristic boarding houses	14,200	17,241	22,274	31,039	36,331
Other structures	31,629	31,549	38,094	26,930	27,896

Source: www.insse.ro/cms/files/arhiva_buletine2014/bslj_1.pdf

There were 536,400 overnight stays in tourist accommodation units recorded in 2013, up by 9.6% compared to 2012. Similar to arrivals, most overnight stays were recorded in hotels (78% of total), opposite to tourist chalets standing less than 1% of the total.

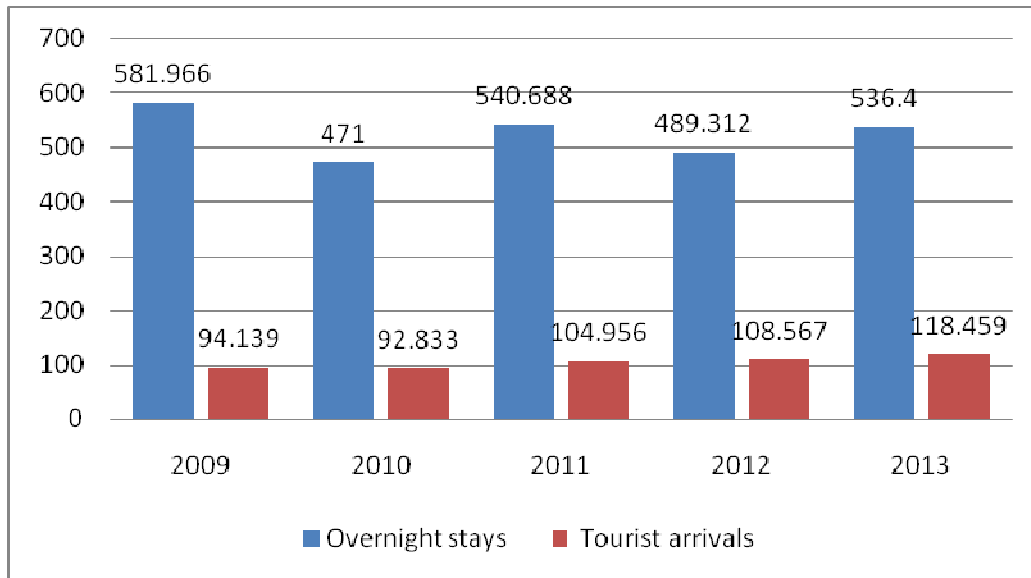


Figure 1. The evolution of the tourist arrivals and overnight stays for the period 2009-2013

In case of overnight stays by destination, tourists preferred the mountain resorts and cities (90% of the total); in terms of comfort, they preferred 2 and 3 stars accommodation units (88% of the total).

Another indicator of tourism flow is the average length of stay, representing the number of days spent by a tourist in a tourist accommodation unit.

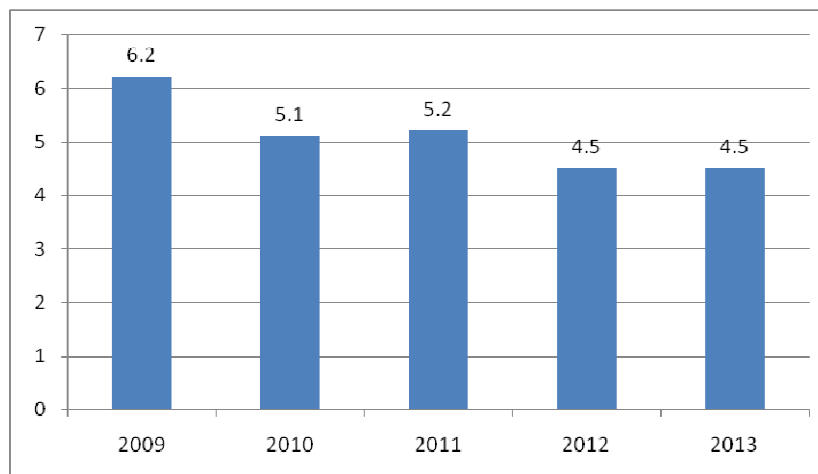


Figure 2. The evolution of the average length of stay for the period 2009-2013

The average length of stay decreased continuously in the period 2009-2013, with an average decrease of 27.4%. The high value of length of stay (6.2 days) in 2009

demonstrated that the qualitative accommodation units were able to satisfy tourists' requirements, making them spend more time in the respective accommodation units. It followed a decrease in the average length of stay (4.5 days in 2013), because most tourists traveled to destinations abroad.

CONCLUSIONS

Diversification has a direct influence on increasing efficiency and decreasing seasonality and it is one of the main solutions to improve tourism activities. Diversifying tourist services has become a way to stimulate tourism demand, influencing positively and attracting tourists to Caraș-Severin county.

The main objective of service diversification is to achieve economic and social development, leading, on long term, to the raise of the living standards and to an honorable position of Caraș-Severin county in terms of development. The main way of achieving this priority is to develop tourism and other sectors in Caraș-Severin county, according to the principles of sustainable development (increase life quality and manage resources rationally).

In order to develop this county in terms of tourism, the following aspects should be considered:

- Rehabilitating and upgrading the access routes to the tourist attractions of high potential, namely: rehabilitating the road structure to access the tourist attractions; restoring trails markings; rehabilitating the tourism infrastructure (including accommodation) close to tourist attractions.
- Diversifying the tourist offer such as: creating and promoting local and regional tourism products; increasing the quality of tourism services; developing theme and niche tourism; promoting agro tourism connected with the traditional folk events (fairs of traditional crafts, religious holidays).
- Developing mountain tourism through investment projects that do not destroy the natural environment and do not restrict the use of important tourist areas (Muntele Mic, Semenic, etc.); supporting the investors interested in mountain tourism.
- Rehabilitating and developing the infrastructure of spa tourism by: improving accommodation comfort; extending the leisure facilities; upgrading the existing treatment facilities; restoring the access paths to mineral resources and mineral springs.
- Qualifying tourism personnel by supporting the county initiatives in tourism training.

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