

## ASPECTS REGARDING CULTURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN TIMIS COUNTY THROUGH PROJECTS

COSMINA-SIMONA TOADER, DANA SÂMBOTIN, REMUS GHERMAN<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Banat's University of Agricultural Science and Veterinary Medicine from Timisoara  
Faculty of Agricultural Management, Timisoara, Romania*

**Abstract:** *Always practiced, the cultural tourism tends to become in the last decades a true industry, representing an important factor of the economical development but also of the relationship between countries, of peace promotion, mutual knowledge of the cultural values of all countries. Using different documentation sources and as research methods the analysis of statistical data and direct observation, we will try in this study to present all the "premises" which recommend Timis county as qualified to practice cultural tourism, as this county is a multicultural space with a large cultural patrimony, many cultural institutions with an intensive activity.*

**Key words:** *cultural tourism, projects, development, economy, Timis County*

### INTRODUCTION

Cultural Tourism is that form of domestic and international tourism whose object is, among other aims, the discovery and enjoyment of historic monuments and sites focusing on the built (immovable and movable) cultural heritage, including the cultural landscapes, of heritage travel destination areas, to experience places and activities that authentically represent the cultural history of the host communities. (The Malta Declaration on Cultural Tourism: It's Encouragement and Control, 2006)

The increased interest of tourists all over the world for the cultural values, historical and cultural patrimony of Timis County, but also the possibility to develop cultural tourism with benefic effects on the county economy represented a start point for this study. The purpose of the study is to highlight the tourism potential mainly the cultural tourism and its importance for the Timis county economy. The start hypothesis is that Timis county has an important development potential which is still not valuated at maximum quotas and it does not have the proper attention taking into consideration that Timis county has 338 historical monuments (buildings, churches, museums, memorial houses, monuments, strongholds, etc.). The information on which this study is based on is taken from different sources: specialized literature (books, articles, studies and also internet), information obtained through usual means used by operators to present their situation and the problems they have (official reports, statistical reports) and researches related to the studied area. In order to realize this study we went through the following phases: definition of the cultural tourism, analysis of the studied area from economical, demographical and infrastructural point of view, identification of the cultural actors from Timis county, "radiography" of the historical and cultural patrimony, analysis of the tourism development level of Timis county, preparation of some propositions related to the development of cultural tourism through projects. So, in this study we tried to identify some development possibilities of the cultural tourism in Timis County through projects.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Using different documentation sources and as research methods the analysis of statistical data and direct observation, we will try in this study to present all the "premises" which recommend Timis county as qualified to practice cultural tourism, as this county is a multicultural space with a large cultural patrimony, many cultural institutions with an intensive activity.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Analysis of the studied area

Located in the Western part of Romania, in Banat historical region, Timis county is extended on 8.697 km<sup>2</sup> (representing 3.6% of the country area), being the largest county of the country. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2010 the population of Timis county was 679695 inhabitants. After 1990, the population had a decreasing evolution due to the reduced birth rate and to the immigration of some ethnical categories.

From administrative point of view, Timis County has 10 towns where 2 are cities (Timisoara and Lugoj) and 89 communes with 313 villages (Anuarul statistic al județului Timiș, 2010).

The Climate is temperate – continental, with an annual average temperature of 11.6<sup>0</sup>C (in 2010). In 2010 the average annual precipitations was 790.3 mm.

The relief varies from plain, which represents 77.2% of the area (6,700 km<sup>2</sup>), to hills, representing 19.01% (1,650 km<sup>2</sup>) and mountains, 3.45% (300 km<sup>2</sup>). The majority of the soils from Timis County are brown, therefore they are fertile.

Strong and diversified, Timis county economy is sustained by tradition, the location in the western part of the country and the high qualified man power, these advantages are confirmed by the presence of investors, both native and foreign.

The agricultural potential of Timis County is remarkable, due to the large agricultural areas and of the high quality soils. From the total area (869665 ha), 693417 ha represent agricultural area, Timis county is on the first place regarding the percentage of agricultural area, but also the arable area. The agricultural production is concentrated especially on the vegetable production, so from the total agricultural production, the vegetable production represents 73.67% and the animal production represents 26.33%.

The industry represents the most important economical branch of Timis County. The industrial companies which have the head offices in the county realized a turnover representing 49.48% of the total turnover. The extractive industry is poorly developed; the contribution of this branch to the turnover is 0.8%. The production and supply of electricity, water capturing, treating and distribution have a low contribution to the turnover, 1.9%. The main industry branch is the manufacturing industry which contributes with 97.3% to the turnover of the county industry.

The special conditions of Timis county, the enterprise tendency, the western mentality of the population and the initiative spirit, the geographical position, the life quality of the population (higher in the western part than in other parts of the country) and also the relatively high capitalization capacities are favoring the continuous development of the small and medium companies.

Infrastructure. The public communication means – the roads and the railways (km<sup>2</sup>) – of Timis County represent the densest network from Romania but still with many lacks.

Timis County is crossed by two important European roads: E70 which enters from Yugoslavia at Stamora Moravita boarder point and makes the link with the southern part of the country and the capital through Timisoara and E671 which crosses Timis County from north to south ensuring a good link with Hungary and Central Europe. The railway network has a length of 795 km, being built in the last century; this development of the railway network is due mainly to the development of the industry in the county. The railway network is the densest from the entire country. The airway transportation is insured by the International airport from Timisoara, placed in the north-west part of the city.

Health services are provided in Timis County by the health network consisting of public and private units, the primary medical assistance is provided by the traditional system with a tendency to pass to the mixed public and private system.

In Timis county, both the secondary and the higher education is organized in technical, economical and other specialties and offers a solid basis for the training and qualification of the man power: 270 education units, 82934 pupils, 39996 students and 9318 teachers. The public higher education is represented by 9 institutions with 45 faculties for different specialties in: economy, engineering, medicine and pharmacy, agriculture, etc.

**The tourism infrastructure of Timis County**

The tourism infrastructure of Timis County consists in 122 accommodation units. From table 1 we can notice that the number of accommodation units is increasing from 64 in 1995 to 122 in 2010.

**Table 1**

**The accommodation network**

	1995	1999	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Accommodation units (number)</b> - total, wher :	64	56	102	104	115	122
Hotels	19	22	47	46	49	53
Appartment Hotels	-	-	-	-	-	1
Hostels	-	-	-	-	-	3
Hotels for youth	-	-	3	3	-	-
Inns and motels	4	3	3	3	3	2
Chalets	1	1	-	-	-	-
Campings	3	1	1	1	1	1
Touristic villas	29	16	9	11	11	9
Touristic boarding houses	-	-	31	32	37	42
Agro-touristic boarding houses	-	-	4	4	5	7
Camps for pupils	5	4	4	4	4	4

Source: *Breviarul statistic al județului Timiș pe anul 2003, Anuarul statistic al județului Timiș pe anul 2010*

Form the information provided by the table 2 results a reduced usability index of the functional accommodation capacity and in continuous decrease but an increase of the accommodation capacity. This fact is explained by the existence of some accommodation capacities which were renovated. The services are not always of good quality but the new investments are trying to answer properly to the tourists' requests from Timis County. The tourism potential is insufficiently valued and the promotion is still insufficiently attractive.

**Table 2**

**Tourism accommodation capacity in Timis county**

	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Places – total</b>	5724	6335	6550	6857
where:				
Hotels	4057	4237	4338	4603
Appartment Hotels				63
Hostels				98
Hotels for youth	64	74	-	-
Inns and motels	100	100	100	70
Chalets	-	-	-	-
Campings	260	260	260	260

Touristic villas	203	563	513	445
Touristic boarding houses	722	781	806	912
Agro-touristic boarding houses	65	67	83	137
Camps for pupils	253	253	269	269
Accommodation capacity compared to thousands of places and days	1997	2072	2079	2142
Net Usability index of accommodation places - %	32.0	31.6	25.1	23.6

Source: *Anuarul statistic al județului Timiș pe anul 2010*

Also we can notice the continuous decrease of the accommodation usability index, an indicator representing the decrease of the tourists' attention for the usability of the accommodation units, but not necessarily for the decrease of the attractiveness of the area from tourism point of view.

### **Cultural actors of Timis County**

In present days on the cultural stage of Timis county there is a large number of actors, most of them are in Timisoara. County main city with an intense cultural activity and with a large patrimony of historical monuments, Timisoara is considered the cultural pole of the county.

Below we present the main cultural actors of Timis county from Timis County Office for Culture and National Patrimony

1. Cultural institutions: Timis county office for culture and national patrimony, „Mihai Eminescu” National Theatre from Timisoara, Romanian National Opera from Timisoara, „Banatul” Philharmonic orchestra from Timisoara, German Theatre from Timisoara, Hungarian „Csiky Gergely” Theatre from Timisoara, Puppet Theatre from Timisoara, Banat Museum from Timisoara, Art Museum from Timisoara, Banat Village Museum, Timis county library, Timis county Cultural and art centre, House of culture from Timisoara

2. Organizations: Romanian Writers' Union – Timisoara Office, Romanian artists Union – Timisoara Office, Intercultural Institute from Timisoara, Banaterra – Banat Encyclopedia, TRIADE Interart Foundation from Timisoara, 3<sup>rd</sup> Europe Foundation from Timisoara, Orizont magazine from Timisoara, „Orient Latin” Cultural foundation from Timisoara, Artmedia foundation from Timisoara, Banat Cultural Society, Petru Ilieș foundation from Timisoara, “Petre Stoica” Romanian – German Cultural foundation from Jimbolia, Musicians and musicologists Union.

3. Cultural industries (galleries, book shops) - Helios Art Gallery of the Romanian artists – Timisoara Office

4. Artistic education institutions: Arts Faculty Timisoara, Music Faculty Timisoara, Literature, History and Theology Faculty Timisoara, „Ion Vidu” Music College Timisoara and Arts College Timisoara

In present times all cultural institutions from Timis county cover from logistic and functional point of view, the necessary activities to promote culture in its main forms in the cities but without covering the communes and the villages.

In Timis county there are 7 theatres and musical institutions, 10 houses of culture, 276 cultural clubs, 355 libraries (where 89 are public libraries), 38 museums, 3 cinemas, 10 territorial public radio and television studios (8 public radio stations and 2 public television stations) and private radio and television stations.

In the same time, Timis County can be proud with the centers for research and valuation of the popular creation, art galleries, historic and art monuments, which still need restoration and protection. In Timis County there are also folkloric ensembles.

A worth to mention fact is that in 1953 Timisoara became the only European city with three state theatres for Romanian, Hungarian and German languages functioning in the same building. Along with this premier in Timis county, and especially in Timisoara there were many national and international premiers and we are mentioning some of them:

- In 1718 the first Romanian brewery was founded in Timisoara;
- In 1728 – started the canalization of Bega river, the first navigable canal from Romania;
- In 1745 the Timisoara city hospital was built, the first in Romania (24 years before Wien and 34 years before Budapest);
- In 1760 Timisoara is the first city of the Habsburg Empire with lamp lighting on the streets;
- In 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1815 in Timisoara was founded the first public library from Romania;
- In 1819 for the first time in Central Europe, the vaccine against smallpox was administrated;
- In 1847 in the yard of Timisoara brewery takes place the first concert outside Wien of Johann Strauss son;
- In 1855 Timisoara is the first city of Habsburg Empire with gas lighting on streets;
- In 1857 – is inaugurated the first rail road for goods and passengers in Romania, which links Jimbolia to Timisoara;
- In 1869 in Timisoara was inaugurated the first horse – drawn tramway on a 6.6 km route;
- In 1872 the “Farmers association” from Jimbolia is founded – the first of this kind in Banat area;
- In 1884 Timisoara is the first city from the European continent with electric lighting on the streets, with 731 bulbs;
- In 1899 in Timisoara was inaugurated the first electric tramway from Romania;
- In 1989 Timisoara is the first free city from Romania.
- In 1995 in Timisoara was realized the first vitro fertilization and embryo transfer from Romania;
- In 1996 was born the first baby conceived in vitro in Romania and the first baby through embryo transfer to the carrying mother;
- In 2001 in Timisoara is realized the first laser heart surgery from Romania;
- In 2003 in Timisoara is realized the first transplant with hematopoietic stem cells in order to regenerate the heart muscle on a patient with myocardial infarction (the first in Eastern Europe).

#### **The cultural tourism potential in Timis County**

The cultural tourism potential in Timis county is given by the material patrimony (monuments, ensembles, sites, museums, memorial houses), non-material patrimony (customs, traditions, gastronomy) and different cultural events (festivals, expositions, etc), also the attractiveness practicing cultural tourism in Timis county consist in the multi-ethnic and confessional mixture of the area. The practice of cultural tourism in Timis County means the participation to different cultural events, visiting historic and cultural monuments and also visiting the county towns during festivals (annual fetes, church dedication days, different ethnic festivals, etc).

In present days, Timis County has a large historic and cultural patrimony; the proof is represented by the 338 historic and cultural monuments.

Table 3

## Timis county historic monuments situation

	Historic monuments			Historic monuments with national and international value			Historic monuments specific to the local cultural patrimony		
	Total	Timisoara	Rest of the county	Total	Timisoara	Rest of the county	Total	Timisoara	Rest of the county
Archeology	57	4	53	5	1	4	52	3	49
Architecture	235	96	139	97	42	55	138	54	84
Public monuments	27	15	12	7	3	4	20	12	8
Memorial/funeral monuments	19	4	15	2	1	1	17	3	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>338</b>	119	219	111	47	64	227	72	155

Source: author's calculations based on *Lista monumentelor istorice, 2010*

From the 338 monuments of Timis County, 119 are in Timisoara, 111 of the historic monuments of Timis County have national and international value, and the rest of 227 are specific only for the local cultural patrimony. From the 111 historic monuments with national and international value, 64 are in Timis county and among these 4 are archeological monuments (Morisena stronghold – X – XVII century, Faget Medieval stronghold – X – XVII century, Fortified settlement from Herneacova, Jdioara stronghold – XII – XVI century), 55 are architectural monuments, 4 are public and 1 memorial (the Mausoleum of Mocioni Family, Foeni – XIX century).

In Timisoara there are 47 historic monuments with national and international value (1 archeological monument – Timisoara stronghold fortifications – XVIII century, 42 architectural monuments, 3 public – the statue of Sfintul Ioan Nepomuk – 1722, Statue of SF Maria and Sf Ioan Nepomuk – 1756, Sfanta Treime Monument – 1740 and 1 memorial monument – the Austrian Military Monument dedicated to the events from 1848 – 1849).

Named also Little Wien, Timisoara is the city where architecture and history created a mixture of nostalgia and entertainment. From the tourist's agenda when visiting Timisoara should not be omitted the following objectives: Timisoara stronghold – XVIII century, Historical area of Fabric district – XVIII century, Historical area of Iosefin district – XVIII century, Historical area of Elisabetin district – XVIII century, Corso objective – XX century – Victoria place, Hydro-technical Central (1907 - 1910) on Bega canal, Water tours 1912 – 1914, Dicasterial palace of Justice: 1855 – 1860, Barak palace – old prefect's office: 1754 – 1774, Timisoara abattoir: 1905 – 1907, Military Hospital: 1764 – 1766, Old town hall: 1731 – 1734, The military casino: 1788, Huniad castle: 1443 – 1447, The house of Count Mercy, The House of Eugeniu de Savoya Prince.

We can add to this the visit of many parks and museums which give a specific charm to the city. Also, in the area surrounding the communes there are many touristic and cultural monuments and vestiges, like: the Neolithic settlement from Chisoda village (mil. III I. Chr.), Giroc commune, Neolithic settlement (mil. VI – IV I. Chr.), Parța village, Șag commune, the castle from Banloc, built in 1759, Partoș monastery with a chapel from XVI century, the monastery resists from the XIII – XIV century, Serbian Church from Sânnicolau Mare from 1783-1787 and the school from Teremia Mare built in 1823, the Barrage and the House of Barrage, „Casa stavilă” from Coșteiu, a very important hydro-energetic node which marked the regularization works on Bega and Timis rivers and it was built in 1759. In Lugoj city the following objectives are capturing the tourist's attention: the Old Theatre – 1835; the church – 1733, the iron bridge – 1899, the abattoir – 1889 and the Post office Inn – 1726.

With the purpose of not forgetting the local history and the old personalities, but also for respect for them, a large number of streets have their names and also in the Central park of Timisoara was created the Alley of Timis county personalities where we can admire many sculptured busts.

Related to the cultural events organized in Timis county we can say that there are many but here are some examples of events which can be considered an attraction for tourists: Timisoara Muzicala International Festival – a festival realized from the initiative of some great musicians from the Romanian Opera and Banat Philharmonic Orchestra in season 1968 – 1969, Opera and Operetta Festival (in open space) Timisoara, “papricas” and wine festival from Buzias, Brass band festival from Buzias, Jimbolia Music Festival, the concert from Romanesti cave – with a natural special acoustics, Romanesti cave hosted the first concert in 1984.

In order to support and develop the cultural tourism in Timis County and in the historical area of Banat, several projects were finalized or are in progress, most of them are financed from European funds. These projects are focused on the promotion of cultural tourism (e.g.: Cultural tourism development in Banat – a cross border challenge), the valuation of the cultural and historical patrimony (To mark and light up the historical buildings), renovation of historical monuments (Renovation of historical buildings from Timisoara, Cautious renovation and economical revival of the historical districts from Timisoara), the organization of cultural events (International Theatre festival in German language for youth, Plai festival, Eurobanat – cultural identity), promotion of ethnic culture and traditions (Banat communities’ festival, Banat Bulgarian Culture days, the Days of culture of the Romanians from Voivodina, Cultural and linguistic interfaces – link between two cultures), promotion and preservation of cultural and ethnographic values (Hope chest, dying villages, spring customs), attracting the attention of the inhabitants on the value of the historic buildings (Bega Boulevard festival, urban art festival, Bega Day, sTRAdART).

The problematic aspects faced by this type of tourism are related to the access infrastructure to some archeological sites, some monuments need to be restored, and lack of parking places equipped with information and promotion points.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. A county with a history full of premiers, Timis must reveal to the tourist its cultural treasures and to make the tourist to return with pleasure and to discover new things each time.

2. In the present days, due to its potential the cultural tourism can have an important role in the economy of the county, in other terms it is a very precious actor which did not have its performance yet or it is not entirely dedicated to the audience.

3. In order to develop the Timis county economy through cultural tourism it is necessary that all the actors adapt their roles and to perform on the cultural tourism stage, definitely with the help of projects and for this purpose we propose some projects which can represent a real challenge for the cultural tourism development in Timis county:

- Realization of a guide with all the historical monuments of the county, for all towns and interest areas;
- Realization of walking touristic routes in Timisoara, Lugoj, Jimbolia, Buzias, Recas, Sannicolau Mare, Făget so that the tourists helped by the local guides to discover the city;
- Realization of cultural calendar of the county and towns in order to promote all the cultural events during the year;
- Increase of the involvement degree of the Touristic Information Centre from

Timisoara in the promotion of the cultural tourism, its role being as link between tourists, accommodation units, public food units and everything that means culture in Timis county;

- Realization of touristic information networks by creating information offices or points in the towns or areas where historical monuments can be found;

- To put in use the old tramways for touristic purposes in Timisoara;

- Realization of cultural touristic packages in collaboration with the local tourism agencies;

- Realization of cultural and historical circuits with suggestive names "Know/Discover your county, where to include cultural and historic objectives from the county communes – this project was started by the county authorities in collaboration with museums and education units in order to identify cultural and historical objectives in the Timis county and to present them to the students during history, geography, nature hours.

But the greatest challenge for the cultural tourism in Timis county and especially for Timisoara is the nomination for the title of Cultural European Capital, and we consider that the multi-culture, the great number of cultural institutions, the great number of premiers registered during the time, the intense cultural activity recommends Timisoara for the title of Cultural European Capital in 2021.

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