

THE TOURISM IN THE OLTENIA REGION – STRATEGIES OF DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Oltenia is one of the nine regions of Romania. Its tourism potential refers to an ensemble of components like geographical ones, historical, folkloric, religious and cultural, which create the premise for the development of diversified forms of tourism.

Taking into consideration the fact that the region is not one of the most developed regions of Romania it is necessary to attract funds from the European Union to create an image of the destination so that more tourists will come in the area and these tourists will buy different tourism products. Tourism represents an important part in the economy of each country. There are regions in the entire world which have managed to create a unique image by creating a unitary tourism product. Regions like Toscana in Italy, Bordeaux in France, Campania from Italy, Palawan in Philippines. Following the examples of these regions we have in Romania regions like Maramures and Bucovina which attract annually tourists not only from Romania but also from other countries. We believe that the main strategy for Oltenia Region is the publicity so this Region be as well known as the other touristical Regions of Romania (Maramures, Bucovina).

Keywords: region, tourism destination, destination image, tourism marketing.

Classification JEL: M31, L83.

1. INTRODUCTION

Located in the south-west part of Romania, the region Oltenia is the beneficiary of rich geographical landscape, starting with the presence of the Carpathians and the Danube, the presence of the mineral waters, „the most important for the life and health remain the springs of mineral waters with which Oltenia is the most endowed of all micro-destinations of the country, being located in the following resorts: Călimănești, Căciulata, Olănești, Govora, Ocnele Mari – Ocnita, Săcelu and Bala”(Stancioiu et al,2011).

The main tourist attractions offered by the natural landscape allow the development of the rural tourism which combines the beauty of the landscapes with the hospitality based on the traditions and gastronomy of the area.

The presence of the monasteries, churches and hermitages existing from different historical periods, being masterpieces of art, had founded the religious and cultural tourism.

The uniqueness of Oltenia, in cultural terms, is caused by the presence of the works of Constantin Brancusi: the monumental ensemble composed of Târgu Jiu Endless Column, Table of Silence and Kiss Gate and the sculptures exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art in Craiova. Last but not least, Oltenia’s attraction is also offered by the ethnographic treasure and folk traditions, gastronomy, occupations and crafts.

The goal of the paper is to introduce the reader with some of the most important strategies regarding the tourism of Oltenia with the purpose of creating the premise of developing the destination image of Oltenia.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN OLTENIA

Given that tourism is an important source of the economy, it requires high capitalization of all the elements that make tourism in Oltenia. Besides promoting intensive various forms of advertising of tourist attractions, investments are needed in basic infrastructure, and in the accommodation structure (tourism infrastructure).

Thus, in terms of basic infrastructure, the creation of new pathways to access or upgrade existing roads, so as to ensure easy access to the tourist attractions; offer gas supply utilities and sanitation in mountainous areas that have tourism potential but which lack of these utilities; providing public transport to attractions, etc.

Regarding the material base it is needed the creation of new tourist accommodation units in areas that hold potential but do not have enough units; modernization of existing tourism structures; improvement of services provided; creation of recreational facilities, spa, sport; valuing the treatment bases; creating enough parking places; finding solutions for existing abandoned buildings in the tourist area.

2.1. The structure of tourist overnight stays on regions

An analysis of tourist overnight stays per regions is necessary in order to understand which the favored regions of tourists in Romania. Tourists that choose to stay overnight in a location do that because that destination must have appropriate structures of accommodation and a unique tourist product that attracts tourists.

As it can be seen from figure number one the most visited region is the South East one, meaning the Danube Delta, the Seaside with a total number of 4.186.623 tourists, of which Romanians 3.849.833 and foreigners 336.790. The last place in this analysis is occupied by the Oltenia Region, its number show that only 1.567.021 tourists have stayed overnight, from them 1.466.228 Romanians and only 100.793 foreigners.

It is more than obvious that there is a problem with the development of tourism in Oltenia. If we take a close look at the figures we can notice that the number of foreigners which visited the region is a small one. This can only mean that the promotion of the region has not been made properly or that the region does not have a unitary tourism product for its counties.

According to Nicula and Neagu (2013) „tourism development priorities in the South-West Oltenia region aim the medium and long-term development of a complex tourist offer throughout the region that maximize the existing natural and human resources, in line with environmental and heritage conservation. In the long run, this will help increase the standard of living of people, particularly of specific groups with lower chances of reintegration into the labor market (people made redundant from industry, the elderly and so on).

For the analysis of the attractiveness of the region South – West Oltenia we present the official statistics provided by the National Institute of Statistics about the number of tourists arriving but the number of overnights.

Table 1 - Number of tourists arriving but the number of overnights

Region	Tourists' arrivals (number)					
	2014			2015		
	Total	Romanians	Foreigners	Total	Romanians	Foreigners
TOTAL	8465909	6551339	1914570	9930496	7690518	2239978
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	6326198	4599891	1726307	7282484	5291986	1990498
1. North-East - total	812880	713908	98972	939475	822251	117224
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	506456	423376	83080	585093	485522	99571
2. South-East - total	1178132	1091363	86769	1347969	1251822	96147
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	992844	912564	80280	1100156	1013932	86224
3. South Muntenia - total	706229	613588	92641	852652	730491	122161
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	460752	379429	81323	569349	460719	108630
4. South-West Oltenia - total	484860	444126	40734	582142	531301	50841
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	328395	293845	34550	383942	340293	43649
5. West - total	727668	582463	145205	875750	713729	162021
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	518851	389250	129601	593105	454816	138289
6. North-West - total	972856	803075	169781	1140667	931900	208767
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	674317	534242	140075	781711	612252	169459
7. Center - total	1953022	1593685	359337	2340984	1910508	430476
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	1248801	984548	264253	1468498	1161799	306699
8. Bucharest-Ilfov - total	1630262	709131	921131	1850857	798516	1052341
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	1595782	682637	913145	1800630	762653	1037977

Source: National Institute of Statistics

The data table number 1 finds that overall in 2015 were tourists arrivals in accommodation units in Romania namely 9.9 million in 2015 compared to 8.5 million in 2014, meaning an increase by about 25%. It is remarkable that the most numerous tourists arriving are Romanian and foreign but are increasingly attracted to our country recorded significant increases. So in 2015 foreign tourists accounted for approximately 23% of total tourists arrivals, percentage remained constant from the previous year. In absolute number of foreign tourists arriving in Romania is higher in 2015 than in 2014 325 thousand tourists.

Regarding Romania's most visited regions we see that first is the Central region, followed by Bucharest Ilfov region. It also observed that the South West Oltenia is on the last place which demonstrates that it needs a clear strategy to promote and develop tourism in this region.

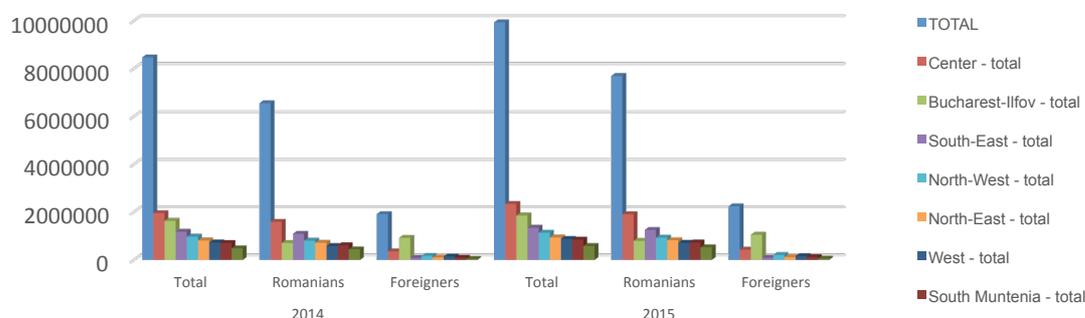
The dynamics can be observed that in 2015 were recorded increases in the number of tourists arriving in South West Oltenia 27% more overall, meaning over the national average of 25%, the vast majority being

accommodated in hotels. Foreign tourists arrived in South West Oltenia are more than 10,000 tourists in 2015 compared to 2014.

For a clear picture of the number of tourists arriving in Romania regions 2015 and 2014 present the figure below:

□

Fig no 1. Tourists' arrivals in establishments of tourists' reception



From Figure No. 1 is observed that the South West Oltenia is in the last place in what concerns those arriving during the analyzed period.

For the detailed analysis we present in the table below the number of overnight stays in Romania and the other regions in the years 2014 and 2015.

Region	Tourists' overnight stays (number)					
	2014			2015		
	Total	Romanians	Foreigners	Total	Romanians	Foreigners
TOTAL	20280041	16511937	3768104	23519340	19047701	4471639
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	15960572	12591648	3368924	18018089	14107069	3911020
1. North-East – total	1710437	1499108	211329	1934306	1699624	234682
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	1155152	981133	174019	1302623	1106238	196385
2. South-East – total	4294722	3970073	324649	4918408	4547330	371078
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	3778225	3469809	308416	4211629	3874213	337416
3. South Muntenia - total	1714876	1488469	226407	1909901	1661086	248815
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	1200754	997930	202824	1348920	1125819	223101
4. South-West Oltenia - total	1537262	1451935	85327	1727528	1615675	111853
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	1233482	1160003	73479	1342585	1245353	97232
5. West - total	1829515	1527517	301998	2233754	1872194	361560
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	1407462	1142572	264890	1600362	1301962	298400
6. North-West - total	2287467	1960651	326861	2713820	2270244	443576
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	1760578	1492538	268040	1985580	1631142	354438
7. Center - total	4244860	3490725	754135	5042039	4122471	919568
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	2823203	2268048	555155	3273864	2620228	653636
8. Bucharest-Ilfov - total	2660902	1123459	1537443	3039584	1259077	1780507
<i>of which: - hotels</i>	2601716	1079615	1522101	2952526	1202114	1750412

No. 2 of table data finds that the number of overnight stays is higher than the number of tourists arriving on the number of nights required for each tourist in part. On average in Romania in 2015 stood tourist stayed 2.36 nights compared to 2.4 nights in 2014. Overall 2.4 year are recorded in a significant increase in this indicator. in South West Oltenia has the lowest amount of overnight stays compared to other regions in the first place, maintaining the Centre region. For foreign tourists finds that the average number of overnight stays is 1.99 per all regions and in the South West Oltenia is 2.2. Also notice that if overall overnight stays in South West Oltenia was a rise of 21% in terms of overnight stays of foreign tourists is increasing by 24% from one year to another. This encourages us to believe that a

viable segment of tourists for the region analyzed are foreigners. Therefore development strategy should take into account this aspect

3. TYPES OF TOURISM IN OLTENIA

As we have noticed in the results offered by the National Institute of Statistics the Oltenia regions is not visited as much as the other regions of the country. Further we shall try to see which the types of tourism offered by this region are.

In a research conducted by Stancioiu and her colleagues in 2010-2011, on a sample of 1887 of people, there have been obtained the results seen in figure number 2. The main reason tourists visit Oltenia is due to leisure tourism, a number of 28,1% of the tourist responded that. This means they come to relax and see the most important attractions in the area.

The second type of tourism chosen by tourists is medical spa and tourism, which show that the mineral waters found in Oltenia still attract a certain number of tourists. A percentage of 22 chose this answer. The third place is hold by visiting friends and relatives which is not essential for our article because it means that these tourists do not take accommodation at a hotel.

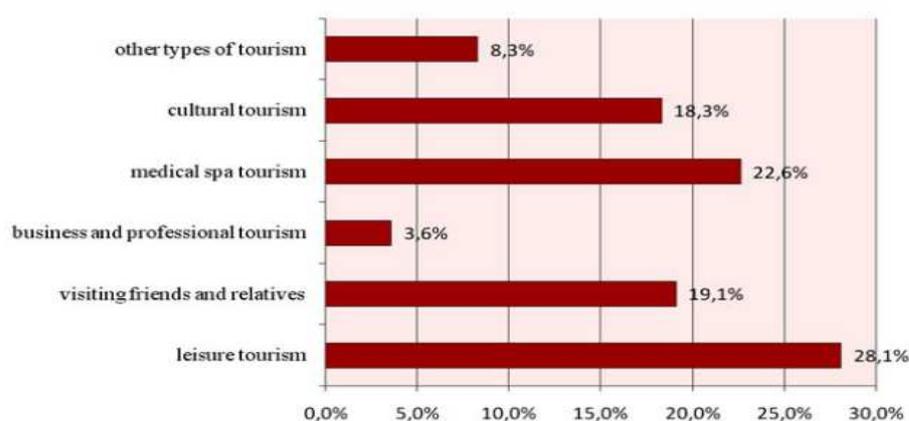


Figure2. Distribution of types of tourism in the Oltenia region

Source: Stancioiu A.F., Pargaru I., Vlodoi A.D., Teodorescu N., Puiu C. , *Oltenia – Micro-destination of Cultural and Medical Spa Tourism**, Theoretical and Applied Economics Volume XVIII ,No. 12(565), pp. 43-58, (2011)

The fact that the most important types of tourism can be found in the region can help the authorities from the counties of Oltenia create the proper strategy to implement a tourism product for the entire region.

4. TOURISM STRATEGIES OF DEVELOPMENT IN OLTENIA

It is very difficult to say which is the best strategy to develop the tourism in Oltenia. We believe that in the next 10 years we have to promote this region so everyone from Romania and from other countries know something about Oltenia as they know now about the monasteries of Bucovina or about the cultural traditions in Maramures. We have to promote the monasteries of northern Oltenia (Tismania, Lainici, Polovragi, Cozia, etc.), the beauties of Olt Vale, the good traditional Romanian food in the area and other things which can create a successful story of the Region.

Regarding to the cultural tourism, C. Brancusi is the main brand that Oltenia Region has to promote.

We believe that the main strategy is the publicity. Public authorities and tourism operators must participate to all the Tourism Fairs in Romania and all over Europe again and again and again until all the tourism operators will advise their clients to come in Oltenia.

In Romania and in the world there are a few tourism televisions. Oltenia must be promoted day-by-day on this channels so everyone hear about this Region.

CONCLUSIONS

The article tries to highlight the fact that although Oltenia has one of the most unique attractions from Romania, tourists do not visit the region as it is supposed to be.

Clearly it is needed the creation of new tourist accommodation units in areas that hold potential but do not have enough units; the modernization of existing tourism structures; the improvement of services provided; the creation of recreational facilities, spa, sport; valuing the treatment bases; creating enough parking places; finding solutions for existing abandoned buildings in the tourist area, and so on.

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