Analysis of the importance of the Merei Parish in the tourism and agrotourism in Buzau County

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20. November 2014

Online at http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/61768/
MPRA Paper No. 61768, posted 3. February 2015 09:10 UTC
**ANALYSIS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MEREI PARISH IN THE TOURISM AND AGROTOURISM IN BUZAU COUNTY**

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**Summary:** The paper is analysing the evolution of the main indicators that characterize tourism and agrotourism in Buzau County, emphasizing the contribution that the Merei Parish has in attracting tourists in this area, by calculating the weight held by the number of the touristic structures, of the housing capacity, the arrivals and overnights of the tourists from the registered total in Buzau County. The Merei Parish represents one of the key points of attraction for both Romanian and foreign tourists, benefiting from many views, a treatment resort, an area that is favorable to the development of the majority of types of tourism, including agrotourism, also being an area where agrotouristical activities can take place and high quality products can be produced in order to trade them in boarding houses.

**Key words:** tourism, agrotourism, Buzău Parish, Merei County.

**INTRODUCTION**

For it’s historical significance and especially for the very beautiful mountain and hill areas, Buzau County is a special attraction for the tourists who come to spend their spare time here. Regarding tourism potential, Buzau County stands out because of some landscapes of a beauty that is rarely seen in Romania. When you say Buzau, you think, first of all about the Mud Volcanoes, about the cave settlements and about Sarata Monteoru resort from Merei Parish.

The Merei Parish has a special sightseeing potential, due to the existence of the Sarata Monteoru balneary resort, of the oil mine, unique in Europe, of the arboretum set in the Monteoru mansion’s yard.

Sarata Monteoru was chosen to be the representative headquarters in Buzau County, because of the fact that it is one of the main tourism attractions in the County, this destination having an enormous potential in attracting foreign tourists, but it’s conditioned by the service offerings which has to be adapted to the international demands and standards.

The resort is famous for it’s salted, iodided, brominated, magnesian, sulphurous, calcic mineral water springs and for the submission mineral mire from the natural sulphurous springs. These are indicated in the treatment of the locomotor apparatus conditions, in the gastrointestinal conditions, hepatobiliary.

Another point of attraction for the extreme sport lovers, is the biggest zip line in the country, 200 meters and another of 40 meters for children. Also, a climbing wall, as well as a bike renting center in order to be able to visit all the attractions in the area.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The indicators that were used emphasize the evolution of the studied data studiate by analysing the period’s averages and growths throughout each year.

**Dynamic analysis** (housing capacity-CC)

Abnormalities in absolute measures: with a fix base: \( \Delta CC = CCn - CC0 \),

Fix base indexes: \( I_{CC} = (CCn/CC0) \times 100 \)

For this one, it is considered one of the variables as an independent variable or a predictor variable (t), and the other variable as a dependent variable or response variable (nr/an).

The formulas that are used to calculate these indexes are:

For the arithmetic mean \( \bar{X} = \frac{\sum x_i}{n} \); in which \( x_i \) = average values on a number of years;

\( n = \) the number of years taken under consideration

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The annual rate of growth \( r_{2003-2013} = \frac{\prod (p_{t}/p_{0}) - 1}{t} \); where:

\[ r_{2003-2013} = \text{annual rate}; \prod p_{t}/p_{0} = \text{growth linked indexes}. \]

**OUTCOMES AND DISCUSSIONS**

1. **The evolution of the tourist accommodation structures**

   The tourist accommodation structures are defined as: Any constructions and appliances intended, by design and execution, for accommodation or for serving meals for tourists, together with the associated specific services.

   The tourist accommodation structures include, apartment hotels, motels, youth hostels, hostels, villas, cottages, bungalows, holiday villages, trailer camps, apartments or rooms for rent in family homes or in buildings with another destination, river and sea ships, touristic boardings and agrotouristic boardings, other units with touristic accommodation functions.

   By analysing the evolution of the tourist accommodation structure types in Merei Parish from Buzau County (table nr.1) it’s found that that from the reference year 2003 until 2013 their number increased by 37.5%.

   **Table nr. 1 The dynamic of the structures types of tourist accommodation and of agrotouristic boardings in Buzau County and Merei Parish during 2003-2013**

   | Structure types of tourist accommodation | County/ Locality | 2003 | 2005 | 2007 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | Medium rate | Annual rate |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------------|------------|
| Total                                    | Buzau County    | 38   | 49   | 57   | 66   | 71   | 71   | 85   | 88   | 160.3 | 8.76       |
|                                           | Merei Parish    | 16   | 21   | 16   | 18   | 18   | 18   | 22   | 22   | 108   | 3.24       |
| % from County total                      | Buzau County    | 42.1 | 42.8 | 28.0 | 27.2 | 25.3 | 25.3 | 25.8 | 25   | X     | X          |
|                                           | Merei Parish    | X    | X    | X    | X    | X    | X    | X    | X    | X     | X          |

   **Source:** Own calculations after data taken from the Romania Statistical Yearbook, data series 2003-2013, NSI

   By analysing the data from table nr.1 regarding the tourist accommodation structure from Merei Parish, we consider that their development trend has been 'sinously' increasing.

   Their share in the tourist accommodation structures total in Buzau County represents only 25%, due to the significantly increasing number of structures at County level by 131.58% in 2013 compared to reference year 2003.

   Agrotouristic boardings represent 25% from the total tourist accommodation structures in 2003 reaching to represent more than a half, meaning 59.09% in 2013.

   Even though the number of boardings increased in the analysed period from 4 boardings in 2003 to 13 agrotouristic boardings in 2012, with an annual growth rate of 12.51%, their share in the total amount of agrotouristic boardings in Buzau County has decreased from 2003 (50%) until 2013 when it registered a share of 29.55% from the total of agrotouristic boardings in the County.

2. **Housing capacity**

   Tourist housing capacity represents the number of accommodations of tourism purpose registered in the last document of reception, ratification, classification of the tourist accommodation with housing fractions, excluding the extra beds that can be installed if necessary.
The previous year was 

S Buzau County Tabl 3. Merei Parish this share reaching 272 reaches a housing capacity of has a significant growth. If in the year 2003 there were 42 accommodations available, in decreases from year of reference being an increasing one where in 2003, 1074 housings were registered. In 2013 it reaches a growth of structures.

Agrotouristic boardings

If in 2003 the number of available accommodations in the agrotouristic boardings had a regarding the housing capacity in the agrotouristic boardings from the Merei Parish’s from the total housing capacity per County, decreased from 40.48% in 2003, to 28.71% in 2012 and 28.15% in 2013.

Regarding the housing capacity in the agrotouristic boardings from the Merei Parish, this has a significant growth. If in the year 2003 there were 42 accommodations available, in 2008 it reaches a housing capacity of 132 accommodations and at the end of the analysed period, it registers 272 available accommodations, representing a growth of 547.62% compared to 2003.

If in 2003 the number of available accommodations in the agrotouristic boardings had a share of 3.91% from the total County accommodation capacity, in 2013 things stand very differently, this share reaching 30%. It appears that a third of the County housing capacity comes from the Merei Parish.

3. Tourist Circulation

Table nr. 3 The analysis of the evolution of the number of arrivals in the tourist accommodation structures in Buzau County and Merei Parish, between 2003-2013

| Specification | Localities | 2003 | 2005 | 2007 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | Medium rate | Annual rate
|---------------|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------|-------------
|               | nr of peop. | nr of peop. | nr of peop. | nr of peop. | nr of peop. | nr of peop. | % | % |
| Total         | Buzau County | 61304 | 63226 | 64584 | 48128 | 5699 | 63593 | 100.7 | 0.37 |
|               | Merei Parish | 6944  | 9127 | 12586 | 12418 | 1199 | 11087 | 163.8 | 4.79 |
|               | % County total structure | 11.33 | 14.44 | 19.49 | 25.8 | 21.05 | 17.43 | 18.12 |
| Agrotouristic boardings | Buzau County | 2322 | 5462 | 9458 | 9809 | 1271 | 12273 | 373.1 | 18.1 |
|               | Merei Parish | 572  | 2632 | 3480 | 3180 | 3168 | 3020 | 502.2 | 18.1 |
|               | % from County total | 24.63 | 48.19 | 36.79 | 32.42 | 24.91 | 24.6 | X | X |
|               | % Merei Parish total structure | 8.24 | 28.84 | 27.65 | 25.61 | 26.41 | 27.23 | X | X |

Source: Own calculations after data taken from the Romania Statistical Yearbook, data series 2003-2013, NSI
As seen in the data included in table nr.3, in 2003 were registered the arrivals of 61304 people. In 2004 their number grew by 11.29%, showing then a decrease until 2007. The biggest growth is registered in 2008, of 16.36% compared to 2003. At the opposite, the year 2011, registers the biggest decrease from the analysed period of 21.49% compared to the year of reference. In 2013 the number of arrivals in the accomodation structures in the County increases by 12% compared to previous year.

Compared to the arrivals in the County, the number of arrivals in the Merei Parish, has a significant growth. In 2012 the number of arrivals increases in a very large percent, 72.77% compared to 2003, but the most important growth in registered in 2010 when the growth percent exceeds 150%. In 2013 there is a small decrease in the number of arrivals by 5% compared to last year.

The agrotourist boardings from the Parish had a number of tourist arrivals of 572 people in 2003, reaching 3168 people in 2012, which means a growth of 453.85% compared to 2003, but, in this case also, in 2013 the number of arrivals decreases by 5% compared to last year.

The share of tourist arrivals in the agrotourist boardings from the Parish has a 24.61% percent from the County’s total in 2013, which means a quarter of the total arrivals at the agrotouristic boardings in the entire Buzau County.

In 2003 the share of arrivals at the agrotourist boardings represented 8.24% from the total of arrivals in the Merei Parish and 0.93% from the total of tourist arrivals from the accomodation structures total in Buzau County. In 2013 the arrivals at the agrotourist boardings represented 27.24% of the total tourist arrivals in the Parish and 4.75% from the total of arrivals throughout the County in all the accomodation structures.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Specification</th>
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<th>2003</th>
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<th>2011</th>
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Source: Own calculations after data taken from the Romania Statistical Yearbook, data series 2003-2013, NSI

Overnights have a growth rate of 0.75% in Buzau County’s accomodation structures in the analysed period.

In Merei Parish overnights in the accomodation structures increase from 2003 until 2012 by 11.37%, but in 2013 there is a decrease of 10% compared to last year. The overnight share in the tourist accomodation structures from the Merei Parish represented, in 2012, 45.63% from the overnight total in Buzau County and in 2013, 35.94% percents.

Regarding the overnight in the agrotourist boardings in Buzau County, they increased in 2012 by 515.58% compared to the reference year 2003. The year 2013 registeres, however, a 28% decrease compared to last year. In the Merei Parish, a spectacular increase of 762.56% is observed in 2012, followed in 2013 by a small decrease of 12% compared to last year. The annual growth rate is 19.22% in Buzau County and 27.17% in the Parish.
If in 2003 the overnights agrotourist boardings share in the Merei County represented 19,72% from the overnights total, in 2012 it owned 27,63% percents, and in 2013 it registeres a share of 25,15%.

Even though boardings have more than 59% from the accomodation structures in the Parish, the hotels in the Parish have the biggest percent with a share of 88,66%, which shows that tourists prefer hotels as accomodation structure in a bigger percent, even though the area has a high agrotouristic potential.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Buzau County represents an attraction for all types of tourists, due to the fact that along the County one can find areas where to engage in different activities of recreation, relaxation, treatment, etc. The analysis on the data shows the fact that, even though the potential is high, there is still the need to develop the accomodation structure basis, to improve the infrastructure considerably and to find new ways of increasing the number of visitors.

2. It also requires working on the development of the tourism offer and of the modern and inovative services in order to maintain and attract new tourists to Buzau County and also Merei Parish’s interest areas. Also, the focused on activities, according to the EU standards are the increase of competitivity by optimising the values chain in the local tourism industry, improving the quality of the touristic services (services that reach the european standards).

3. The analysed data show the special importance that the Merei Parish has in the Buzau tourism and agrotourism, the shares that it had on the analysed indexes evolutions are big enough, reaching even a quarter of the recordings that were made.

4. Agrotourism is still an underdeveloped part, it’s shortcomings are being felt on an accomodation structures level, housing capacity as well as on the people who prefer hotels to agrotouristic boardings.

5. An increase of the provided service’s quality is necessary, as well as the diversification of entertainment. The promotion of the touristic area, and of the Merei Parish especially, should be done better, so that it would bring a change in the tourist preferances, by orienting them toards agrotourism.

BIBLIOGRAPHY