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THE INCENTIVE COMPONENTS OF THE TOURIST OFFER FROM THE ROMANIAN TISA BASIN – MAJOR MARKERS OF THE REGIONAL TOURIST DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT – This paper makes a thoroughly analysis of the main factors which stimulate and define the tourism in the Tisa River basin in concerning both the primary touristic offer (the natural and the anthropic frame) and the infra-structural components, in order to identify the main opportunities of tourism development that are to be found as well as to prefigure the direction of this field's development, which points out a real potential from this point of view. Consequently, after a preliminary identification of the whole range of tourist resources that are implied or can be implied in making the attractive endowment of the analysed region, we establish the main planning priorities, so that – on this basis – to indicate the main types of tourism and the possible tourist arrangements whose practising and, respectively, achievement, would permit the plenary integration of the Tisa River basin into the regional, national, and international tourist circuits.

Keywords: tourist resources, tourism prospective research, attractiveness, assessment, tourist arrangements, types and forms of tourism, strategic coordinates, development strategies

INTRODUCTION

The overlapped geographical space of the Romanian Tisa river basin – integrating entirely ten counties (Alba, Arad, Bihor, Bistrița-Năsăud, Cluj, Hunedoara, Maramureş, Mureş, Sălaj, Satu Mare) and partially other three counties (Harghita, Sibiu and Timis) - has enough arguments from a tourist point of view, as well for the integration into the national tourism, for the involvement in the global – European international tourism, and also for attracting tourist flows from the neighbouring countries (Hungary, Ukraine and even Serbia), as well as from the whole Europe.

The natural background belonging to some major natural geographical units (such as the Carpathian Mountains, the Transylvanian Depression and the Western Plain), together with the richness and the variety of the anthropogenic one peculiar for the historic regions coagulated in time and space (Transylvania, Banat, Crişana and Maramureş) have lead to the individualisation and the enforcement of the natural and anthropogenic tourist potential which is complex, valuable and diversified, as a fundamental factor of tourism development and as primary tourist offer which shapes this geographical space within Romania, within the Tisa river basin, but also of the European space.

I. THE NATURAL TOURIST POTENTIAL, as a whole and by components, exercises a great power of attraction for various categories of tourists, actual and potential, determining the proliferation of a various range of types and forms of tourism. According to the dominance of one component or another, one notices specific orientations for the tourist facilities adapted to the different revaluations of the primary tourist offer.

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1.1 The tourism potential of the relief (the morpho-tourist potential) stands out through the landscape features, its variety and the tourist potential, being closely related to the structure, lithology, tectonics and the impact of the external shaping factors. From this point of view, the Carpathian mountain region is important, through the hypsometric and morphologic contrast in relation with the depression areas and the fields that surround them and through the wide variety of relief forms afferent to this. The attractiveness of the morphological resources is related to their wide variety due to the classification into the varied categories of relief comprised between less than 100 m and over 2500 m, with a long and varied geological structure and past, and with an impact on all the components of the natural environment, through the value and the diversity of the tourist attractiveness.

According to their genesis, lithology and evolution, three morphological mountainous categories are emphasised, each with their different tourist forms and monuments:

1.1.1 The glacial relief contributes to the constitution of an exceptional tourist offer due to the presence of a diversified and extremely spectacular range of sculptural relief forms (peaks, cirques, depressions, steep slopes, thresholds, and glacial valleys) detailed by the subsequent peri-glacial processes. This is located at the highest altitude, being the result of the Quaternary icebergs' action from Riss and Würm interglacial periods. The glacial relief forms are very important in the Rodna Mountains, where all the categories mentioned are found with a special landscape and aesthetic impact: monumental peaks located at altitudes which exceed 2000 m (e.g. Pietrosul Rodnei, Ineu, Gărgălău, Buhăescu, Rebra, Galați, Laptelui Mare, Negoiasa, Repedea, Cormaia, etc.); narrow peaks with frequent ridge sectors (e.g. Piciorul Moşului sector, Pietrosu-Rebra sector, etc.) and especially the simple glacial circuses (such as the ones around Ineu peak and the ones on the upper courses of the Putredu, Bistricioru, Izvorul Cailor, Negoiescu, Puzdrele, Bistrița Aurie valleys) or complex (e.g. Buhaiescu, Repedea), with variable dimensions and holding great relief forms of the slopes, huge trails of debris at the base and water accumulations under the form of glacial lakes (no less than 23 such "sea eyes", e.g. Lala Mare, Buhăescu, Pietrosul, Ineu, Lala, Izvoru Bistriței, Cimpoiasa, Mihăiasa, etc.). In many cases, the contact between the glacial cirques and the glacial valleys from downstream is marked by thresholds and especially by glacial steep slopes which allowed the "installation" of some spectacular morpho-hydrographical components: waterfalls (the most representative being the Cascada Cailor - Horses Waterfall and, of smaller dimensions, the waterfalls Negoiescu, Buhăescu, Repedea, Puzdra, Verde, etc.). The forms peculiat to the glacial relief, but of larger dimensions, are found in the Retezat group of mountains located in the Southern Carpathians, such as: pyramid-shaped peaks covered by peri-glacial deposits (exceeding frequently 2400 m), spectacular peaks (such as the one between Zlata peak in the west and Lazărului peak in the east, 18 km long) and especially the simple and complex glacial cirques (e.g. Peleaga, Zănoaga, Bucura), many of them hosting extremely picturesque glacial lakes (almost 80, the most representatives being Portii, Agatat, Ana, Lia, Viorica, Florica, as well as Bucura, the widest glacial lake in the Carpathians, having an area of over 10 ha, and Zănoaga, the deepest glacial lake in Romania, 29 m deep).

1.1.2 The volcanic and sedimentary-volcanic relief is characteristic of the western part of the central-northern sector of the Eastern Carpathians, the Oaş Mountains, the Gutâi, the Țibleş and partially the Călimani and the Bârgău Mountains, forming the longest Neogene volcanic chain in Europe, whose subaerial evolution corroborated with the action of the differentiated erosion led to the formation of some morphological categories forming assemblies with very special landscapes and a physiognomic impact.

Within these, the most important features are low altitude forests (hammocks) (volcanic necks under the form of forests or isolated piles) separated by epigenetic valleys with short canyon sectors (specific to the low mountains of Oaş); cone type peaks (Gutâi, 1442 m, Igniş, 1303 m, composed of basaltic andesite), erosion outliers of some crater-type volcanic apparatuses, subsequently destroyed

during the last eruptions or by further erosion (e.g. Cocoşului peak formed on andesite as an erosion outlier), steep slopes, depression basins in volcanic agglomerations (such as the one on the Izvoarelor Plateau, on the Runcu Valley or Ştefan's Meadow, at the source of the Mara river) and especially, valleys in canyons, dug into andesite rocks (such as Runcu Canyon, Tătarului Canyon, Mara's Canyon, Săpânța Canyon, Firizei Canyon, all in the Gutâi Mountains) and waterfalls (Covătar, Mireş, Valea Neagră); the great caldera (with a diameter of 10 km) of the Călimani volcanic mountains, the most representative and massive in the Eastern Carpathians (2100 m altitude), is the dominant part and represents a succession of peaks situated in a circular position around the great caldera (Pietrele Roşii, Tămău, Rățitiş, Voivodeasa, Călimani-Izvor, Călimani-Cerbul), to which the vertical walls are added such as the ones in front of the Fence or the sculpted columns in the volcanic agglomerations which form the complex of the 12 Apostles or the columns from Pietrele Roăii and Tihu.

The landscape of the volcanic mountains is completed by the one of the volcano-sedimentary massifs of the Țibleş Mountains (with a dome-like relief, with a central gigantic cupola at 1842 m high, consisting of three twin peaks: Țibleş, Arcer, Stegiorul) or Bârgau (with volcanic necks which detach as stacks over the sandy structures, with spectacular canyons formed in their depth, such as the ones from Colibița), or by the massifs of the Gurghiu and the Harghita, respectively, characterised by the presence of the well-preserved craters and huge calderas (representative is Fâncel-Bătrâna with a diameter of 13 km, continued in the south by Saca, Şoimuş, Ciumani, Harghita cone and Luci), which lie from north to south and are surrounded by a wide volcanic plateau formed of volcanic agglomerations that descend from east to west.

The volcanic relief developed in andesite and basalts is found in the south of the Apuseni Mountains (the Metaliferi Mountains), characterised by the presence of some sharp conic peaks and hammocks (Săvârşin, Corabia, Vața, Căzăneşti), but also by some lava and pyroclastic plateaus or solidified basaltic formations in vertical prismatic columns (such as Detunatele) exhumed as result of subaerial erosion.

1.1.3. The relief on limestones and conglomerates. Although characterised by isolation, this type of relief occupies a privileged position within the morphologic tourist potential and it is defined through a great variety of shapes, many of them characterised by monumentality, resulted from intense differentiated erosion processes correlated with an accentuated tectonic activity or through chemical action on limestones (the dissolution of the waters from precipitations loaded with CO2).

a. In the first case, a great variety of positive relief forms are formed under the shape of structural plateaus and narrow peaks (e.g. Piatra Singuratică in Hăşmaşu Mare) or, even more contrasting, of isolated massifs, narrow peaks, limestone plateaus (in the Trascău Mountains from the Apuseni Mountains). In addition, in the Apuseni, but in the western and central sector (Codru Moma and Pădurea Craiului, Bihor-Bătrâna, respectively), one notices the wide limestone plateaus (such as Vaşcău, Roşia-Zece Hotare, Scărişoara-Ocoale, respectively), as well as the isolated limestone occurrences from Pietrele Ampoiței in the Metaliferi Mountains or the Pietrele Albe from the south of the Vlădeasa Mountains.

b. The karst relief (exo- and endokarst) represents the component with the maximum impact of the landscape, characteristic especially of the Western Carpathians (especially in the Apuseni Mountains and in particular in the Bihor and the Pădurea Craiului Mountains).

The exokarst (the surface karst), less representative for tourism, is important especially for the karst depressions of the hill type (Cetățile Ponorului and the ones on the Karst Plateau of Scărişoara, belonging to the Bătrâna Mountains, stand out through their impressiveness; they also appear in the Pădurea Craiului and the Codru Moma Mountains) and the hills, among which Ponor in the Padiş Plateau is a classical example through its aspect, size, but also through the specific components – the bottom layers and the temporary karst lakes. To these, the dissolution channels are added (present especially in the massifs of the Apuseni Mountains: the Bihor Mountains, the Codru Moma and the Pădurea Craiului, but also the ones belonging to the Şureanu Mountains in the Southern Carpathians).

The endokarst (or the underground karst) is the dominant element of tourist attractiveness in the Apuseni Mountains. Due to the richness of the subterraneous landscape offer, one can differentiate more categories of caves among which *the caves with speleothemes* (Urşilor Cave in Chişcău, Altarului Cave, Pojaru Poliţei Cave, Cioaca cu Brebenei, all in the Apuseni Mountains, then Comarnic Cave, in the Anina Mountains – Banat, Cioclovina and Şura Mare in the Luncani Plateau located in the western part of the Şureanu Mountains); *the caves which impress through the size of the subterraneous* empty spaces and water flows (such as the Vântului Cave, Meziad Cave, the Karst complex of Cetăţile Ponorului, Peştera Neagră); the caves housing fossil icebergs (e.g. Peştera Gheţarul in Scărişoara with the largest fossil ice accumulation – 75,000 mc with ice speleothemes, or the caves of Focul Viu, Borţig, Barsa and Vârtop); the caves which host paleontological monuments, the ones of Ursus spaeleus (the Urşilor-Bears' Cave in Chişcău, Măgura Cave, Zmeilor Cave in Onceasa, Coiba Mare Cave); the caves with traces of inhabitancy of the prehistoric man (Ciur-Izbuc Cave in the Apuseni, the cave in Cuciulat located in the Someş Plateau). Most of these caves hold more attractive components, including lengths of hundreds of metres and even several kilometres, which are suitable for improvement for tourist knowledge and visit.

The largest concentration of subterraneous empty spaces is found in the Apuseni Mountains, over 2500 caves among which several dozens present a potential tourist interest and at least five caves offer conditions for improvements at international standards, together with and compared to the Urşilor-Bears' Cave in Chişcău (the Iceberg Cave of Scărişoara, Vântului Cave, Altarului Cave, Pojarul Poliţei Cave, etc.). In the Apuseni Mountains, there are several concentrations of caves presenting tourist interest, especially the one in the Bihor Mountains, where there are the areas of Cetăţile Ponorului and Padiş Plateau in the centre, the Urşilor-Bears' Cave in Chişcău, in the western part, and the sector of Sighiştelului Canyon, the area of Scărişoara-Ocoale Plateau in the south (with the Peştera Gheţarul - Iceberg Cave of Scărişoara, Pojarul Poliţei Cave, Ionele's Gate, the village of Casa de Piatră, as well as countless springs), the Someşul Cald Basin in the east, with a high concentration of karst phenomena, as well as the so-called Someşul Cald Bazaar, the caves of Ponor, from Firii Valley, Altarului, etc.

The Rodna Mountains, having isolated limestones occurrences and crystalline limestones occurrences, stand out through the longest caves in the Eastern Carpathians, poorly shaped, others with strong tectonic activity and developed on the vertical line, as well as Izvorul Tăuşoarelor Cave, 15 km long, to which the caves of Jghiabul lui Zalion, Izvorul Albastru of Iza, Măgliei can be added.

In the Banat Mountains, the endokarst is represented by 90 caves, among which the most important are Comarnic Cave, the longest and presenting the most important and varied subterraneous landscape, as well as Bohui caves and a large number of springs and karst springs.

Other concentrations of endokarst monuments are in the Luncani Plateau, from the western part of Sureanu Mountains, with small and medium sized caves, developed on more levels and very strongly shaped (the Pălăriei Cave, Tecuri Cave, Şura Mare Cave, Boliei Cave and the karst complex of Cioclovina-Ponorâci).

1.1.4 The tourist potential of the Carpathian canyons

a. *The canyon valleys* represent one of the most spectacular morpho-hydrographic phenomena from the Carpathian region, developed on short sectors of hundreds of metres or several kilometres, strongly deepened on hundreds of metres, most of the times in limestones of karstic origin functioning a long time as subterraneous flows – caves whose ceiling collapsed afterwards or were formed by antecedence.

The most attractive elements are the narrow valleys, most of the times of several metres wide, with steep slopes and the presence of circular excavations on the walls, with filled sectors and ruin like relief, with terraces and floors of trees and grass vegetation, valleys with strong slopes, with waterfalls and white waters, pressure tubes.

The area of the Apuseni Mountains hosts a high number of spectacular canyons, developed on the main courses, as well as on their tributaries, with short lengths, concentrated within the limestone area of the Metaliferi Mountains (on Geoagiu valley and its tributaries the Ardeu, Balsa, Bacâia, Cibului) and especially the Trascău Mountains (with the most representative concentration of canyons from the Carpathian unit: Ampoiței, Feneşului, Galdei, Geoagiului, Râmețului, Roşiei, Rupturii, Tecseştilor, Aiudului and in the north of the Arieş River, Turzii and Turului Canyons) or the Muntele Mare (Borzeştilor, Pociovaliştei, Vălişoara, Runcu Poşaga, etc.). Another concentration of canyons is in the basin of the Crişul Pietros River, where most important are Galbenii Canyon and the sectors of canyons in the Boga basin (tributary of the Crişul Pietros) and Sighiştelului Canyon (tributary of the Crişul Negru).

The presence of the sectors of canyons, on considerable lengths, can be also noticed on the tributaries from the Banat Mountains, such as Timişului Canyons, Minis, Bohui, Gârliştei or Bârzava.

b. *The gorge valleys* are the Carpathian sectors of more complex landscape and morphology, developed on the first rank tributaries of the Danube. These represent sectors of tens of kilometres, deepened by different categories of rocks formed mainly by antecedence and presenting successions of narrow sectors with the steep slopes followed by depressions developed around the confluences. The most representative components belonging to this category are the gorges of Toplița-Deda (on the Mureş), Arieş, Crişul Repede (the sector between Bologa and Vadu Crişului), Crişul Alb, Someşul Cald in Lăpuşteşti, Someşul Canyon (sectors from Turbuța-Jibou and Țicău), Bistrița Ardeleană.

1.2. The tourist and climate potential is closely related to the general features of the temperate continental climate with oceanic and sub-Mediterranean influences to which the climate location and the nuances of the climate features determined by the relief from 100 m altitude to over 2400 m altitude are added.

The main climate elements, especially the thermal component, the humidity and the atmospheric circulation, are very important in the individualisation of the bioclimatic indexes (the thermal comfort, the bioclimatic stress, the air-ionisation of the atmosphere) which form a climatic and therapeutic complex which can contribute to the reactivation of the ability to adapt and strengthen of the persons who suffer from the domestication syndrome (they have lost the ability to adapt and react to the effects of the natural climatic factors). Their features and the effects on the human body, together with other natural factors (as well as the thermal and mineral resources) shape the areas which are favourable for practising the specific spa activities.

The climatic features of the bio-climates are a result of the interaction of the climatic features with the morphological ones, standing out through the therapeutic qualities with an important impact on the human body, stimulating or improving the deficient functions of the body or favouring some of the specific tourist activities such as the climatic therapy or the winter sports. Among these, we mention the plain bio-climate, the hill and the sub-mountain bio-climate and the mountain bio-climate which is very stimulating.

A specific microclimate is the one afferent to the salt mines, recommended to the persons suffering from acute bronchitis and asthma. The effect of the exposure to this type of microclimate is the reduction of what is called “hunger for air”, doubled by the sensation of suffocation of the children and the older persons. The only utility of this type for the treatment of the respiratory affections is at Praid, an example which can be used in the future in the case of the salt mines of Turda and Ocna Dej.

Another important climatic component, with impact on the European mountain tourism, but also on one in Romania, is the snow layer, which through its features (duration, thickness, consistency and stability), limited by the altitude which does not exceed 300 m in the mountain area included in the analysed area, offers normal quantities of solid precipitations during winter, the possibility for practising winter sports and utilities with a complex features for a larger number of Romanian and foreign tourists, under the form of mountain resorts for winter sports and sky areas, spread on variable surfaces and developed until the upper mountain limit. There are natural conditions, morpho-climatic conditions in the Carpathian region that allow the development of this tourism category in

other locations as well, besides the ones already integrated into the profile offer (Borşa, Cavnic, Izvoare, Mogoşa, Şuior, Toplița, Izvoru Mureşului, Arieşeni, Băişoara, Moneasa).

1.3. The hydro-geographic tourist potential is remarkable for the Romanian area of the Tisa basin and is an important factor with impacts on all water categories.

a. The hydro-mineral and thermal resources are the first components of the environment that have been fitted and revaluated, in a certain manner, for curative and leisure purposes from the ancient Roman period, the most famous examples are the thermal waters of Geoagiu Băi (Germisara – Thermae Dodonae) and Călan (Aque), to which we may add the salty waters of Salinae (Ocna Mureş).

The geological and tectonic conditions have allowed a very wide range of phreatic and subterraneous waters within the Romanian Tisa basin, as regards the hydro-chemical composition, the temparature and the used flows. Due to their emphasised therapeutic qualities, they have contributed to their special development, being very numerous, from the point of view of the accommodation units and the curative features of many spa resorts, of different sizes and ranks. Moreover, the potential of the mineral and thermal waters may be considered as a first rank component to the development of the modern tourism, but also as a revival factor of the Romanian tourism, in general, and of the analysed territory, in particular.

Among more than 15 hydro-climatic types (summing tens of subtypes) counted on the analysed territory, we mention some that, through their therapeutic qualities, territorial size, available water volume, have been involved in the promotion and diversification of tourism:

- *The carbonated mineral waters* are the most representative and stand out through the numerous springs, concentrated mainly in the perimeter of the mofette area of the Eastern Carpathians with their two sub-divisions: Oaş-Gutâi-Toroiaga and Călimani-Harghita. They are connected to the dry and cold post-volcanic gas emissions, containing CO_2 which is very dissoluble and to which other substances are added, diversifying the curative spectre of these waters. There are several thousands of natural springs, but also artificial ones, through drainage, found especially in the Oaş Depression, in the eastern part of the Maramureş Depression and on the southern border of the volcanic mountains of Gutâi, in the upper basin of the Someşul Mare and at the border of the Gurghiu and the Harghita Mountains with the intra-Carpathian depression and with the Transylvanian Depression. The deposits in the south of the Apuseni Mountains and several springs at the border with the Western Hills belong to the same hydro-chemical type. These waters are recommended in the treatment of cardiac, circulatory and digestive affections. The mineral waters belong to the same type and have contributed to the development of well known spa resorts, such as Sângeorz-Băi, Buziaş, Lipova, Tinca, etc. or of some locations, less important, but with remarkable useful potential (Bixad, Bilbor, Sâncrăieni, Bodoc, Malnaş Băi, Zizin, etc.).

- *Salty mineral waters* contain NaCl in different concentrations (from several grams to several hundred grams per litre) and are related to the presence of the salt deposits close to the surface. They are found under the form of salty lakes with a high concentration of NaCl, formed on the place of the former salt exploitations (except for the Ursu-Sovata Lake which was formed through the collapse of the land), some from Antiquity, or under the form of salty springs, also very concentrated. The artificial salty lakes are grouped, have reduced sizes, but are very deep (even tens of metres, over 100m). This is the case of the salty lakes of Ocna Şugatag and Coştiui, in the Maramureş Depression, and the lakes formed in the Transylvanian Depression (in Sovata, Ocna Mureş, Turda, Cojocna, Ocna Dej, Ocna Sibiului), including the very concentrated salty springs of Bazna and Someşeni. They are used in the external treatment of rheumatism affections and the locomotive apparatus. Another component resulting from the process of decomposition, in an airless environment, of the organic remains is the gyttja, related to the existence of lacustrine accumulations with concentrated salinity (Coştiui, Ocna Sibiului), used, besides the mentioned affections, in the treatment of gynaecological affections (Sovata). The minimum contribution of the freshwater on the surface of the salty lakes leads to the formation of a thin layer under the shape of a lens focusing the solar beams and leading to the phenomenon of heliothermia (the most important example is the Ursu Lake in Sovata).

- *The thermal mineral waters* were formed as result of the tectonic movement, determining the accentuated geo-thermal grade specific to the western region of Romania. They have a mezzo-thermal and a hyper-thermal feature, a treatment potential, but also a leisure one, which are differently produced, but generally insufficiently used. These are found in different areas: in the Western Plain (springs in Timişoara, Călacea, Oradea, Carei, Satu Mare), at the border of the Western Plain and the Western Hills (the most important springs being Băile Felix, 1 Mai, Marghita, Boghiş, Zalnoc, Zăuani, Meseşeni, Tinca, Tăşnad, Acâş), in the Apuseni Mountains (Moneasa, Geoagiu, Vața de Jos) and in the Hațeg Depression (Călan).

b. The *lakes* stand out through their therapeutic value (the concentrated salty lakes), as well as through the landscape component and the fish fauna.

Among the natural lakes with landscape tourist attractiveness are the glacial lakes in the Retezat Mountains, around 80, such as Bucura, the largest (10 ha), and Zănoaga, the deepest (29 m), which complete and harmonise the alpine mountainous landscape, as well as the glacial lakes from the Rodna Mountains, among which is Lala Mare.

The *reservoirs* appeared after 1970, built for hydro-energetic purpose, water supply, and flood control, but they shortly became important tourist monuments. The most representative are the waterfall system of lakes on the Sebeş and the Someşul Mic rivers (especially Someşul Cald – Tarnița and Beliş), as well as the ones on the Drăgan and the Iada (tributaries of Crişul the Repede), Colibița (on the Bistrița Ardeleană), Poiana Mărului (on the Bistra) or Călineşti-Oaş (on the Tur).

Another category of artificial lakes, of smaller size, but grouped, is the ponds, with a mainly fishing purpose, located in the Transylvanian Plain, in the Fizeş and the Luduş basins.

1.4. The bio-geographical tourist potential is represented especially by the forest eco-system, strongly related to the other components of the environment through its spatial allocation and vegetation diversity (especially relief and climate), which determines altitude terraces with specific features for each major relief level. Within these, the forest, considered the most complex natural eco-system, is spread on large surfaces, especially in the Carpathian region, up to 1600-1800 m, but also in the hilly region of the Transylvanian Depression. This multifunctional eco-system is important due to its beauty and its social impact, especially in the case of the forests situated in the vicinity of the great cities, main destinations and "green lungs" of the cities (Făget and Hoia forest for Cluj-Napoca, Cetate for Deva, Pădurea Verde for Timişoara, etc.).

In the alpine area located above 1800 m, with a glacial, volcanic or sedimentary – limestone scenery, we may add the sub-alpine bushes and the vegetation specific to the alpine meadows as a harmonious component, with its varied chromatics from the blooming period, which integrates into the ensemble of the alpine-mountain level.

The need to protect the natural environment and its components and ensembles has a major tourist impact as well, leading to the individualisation of reservations and natural monuments (benefitting from the protective status afferent to no less than 229 areas and individual monuments, of different genetic categories, typologies, extensions, ranks and tourist impacts), as well as the structure of some parks with multiple functions (including tourist function), such as the Retezat National Park (the first one ever created in Romania, in 1935) and Pietrosul Rodnei, both included in the category of great reservations of the biosphere, or the Natural Park of the Apuseni Mountains, consisting of the rural habitats specific to these regions. Their organisation has allowed the access and the enrolment of tourist activities in a differentiated manner, so as the incompatibility of tourism and environment protection not to exist, based on the educational activities in the spirit of the eco-tourism and the sustainable development.

2. THE ANTHROPOGENIC TOURIST HERITAGE

This is linked to the human civilisation components of material and spiritual nature, gradually integrated into the tourist interest sphere ever since the 19th century and determining the unprecedented

promotion of one of the most dynamic types of tourism, the cultural one, contaminating larger groups of people and determining the entry into the knowledge tourism circuit of new destinations and monuments, besides the initial features and functions, to which the derived function of attractiveness and tourist objective as we understand them today have been added during the last decades.

The anthropogenic potential, in terms of the variety and value, is linked directly to the long evolution of the human civilisation, as well as the interferences between the ethnic mosaic specific to Transylvania and their specific cultures.

Thus, a series of typologies are noticed, each with different shares within the various tourist areas identified in the north-western region, with specific features of the individual geographical areas (see below).

2.1 The historic cultural tourist heritage represents the most valuable component of the entire anthropogenic heritage, being the result of a long history, rich in events, and of human settlements which contributed to the achievement of one of the most varied and valuable legacies with a multi-cultural feature, belonging to some ethnic and religious communities involved in the achievement of this complex ensemble with its own personality.

2.1.1 The archaeological monuments belonging to the Dacian and Roman antiquity are important due to one of the most representative archaeological sites in Europe. Firstly, the Dacian fortresses complex in the Orăştie Mountains with a system of fortifications built around Sarmisegetuza Regia, the capital of the Dacian kingdom of Decebal and the surrounding fortresses (Blidaru, Costeşti, Piatra Roşie).

The monuments resulted following the Roman conquest and colonisation are more numerous and even better preserved. We mention the Roman cities (Ulpia Traiana Sarmisegetuza) or the other cities, municipalities and colonies (Apullum, Potaissa, Porolissum, Napoca, Bologa, Romita, Căşeiu, etc.), as well as the monuments of underground natural resources, valuable for the economy of the Roman empire (including the gold and the silver from Alburnus Major – Roşia Montana or Ampelum – Zlatna, with “Roman fortresses” or the salt exploitation from Salinae – Ocna Mureş). A great part of the Dacian and Roman monuments, discovered in the mentioned archaeological sites, are preserved and hosted by the historical and archaeological museums of Cluj-Napoca, Alba Iulia, Deva.

2.1.2 The historical and cultural tourist monuments from the Middle Ages are much more numerous, belonging to multiple categories and are the result of a complex and tumultuous historical and political and social evolution, to which the local and surrounding communities contributed in a different manner.

a. *The monuments constructed for defensive purposes* are monumental, have large sizes and are important due to the intensely anthropogenic scenery of the analysed geographical space. We mention the fortress type of fortifications built at the end of the first millennium, with very few components preserved within the Romanian pre-feudal settlements (Biharia, Dăbâca, Colți – residence of the princes of Hațeg, etc.).

A second generation of fortresses are the ones built after the conquest of Transylvania by the Hungarian kings (Deva, Colțeşti-Trascău, Bologa, Şiria, Ineu, Chioar, Ciceu, etc.), many of them being destroyed during the great Tatar invasion of 1241 and rebuilt afterwards.

We also mention the towns-burgs, built and developed by the German communities (the Germans colonised in Transylvania during the 13th-14th centuries), with strong fortified buildings, within which the towns flourished during the Middle Ages (Braşov, Sibiu, Sebeş, Sighişoara- the best preserved feudal city in Romania and one of the few in Europe still inhabited, Mediaş, Bistrița). The towns with fortresses or with parts of fortresses preserved over the years can also be added, such as Cluj-Napoca, Târgu Mureş, Făgăraş, or Baia Mare.

The Habsburg conquest of Transylvania led to the achievement of another type of fortifications – stellar fortresses of the Vauban type, made of bricks, the most important one being in Alba Iulia, but also in Timişoara, Arad, and Oradea.

A special category of fortified monuments is the peasant fortresses built by the German rural communities, especially in the south of Transylvania, during the 15th and 16th centuries, among which the most important are the ones in Câlnic, Slimnic, Săsciori, Cisnădioara.

Besides these monuments, the fortified feudal castles located in strategic places which linked the feudal entities and which are important for their architecture, massiveness, position, collection of weapons and furniture, etc. are very famous and important even nowadays. The one that stands out is the castle of Hunedoara, comparable to the similar monuments built in Europe during those times. Besides this castle, there is a series of noble building residences, such as the palaces from the urban environment (the Bruckenthal Palace in Sibiu, the palace of the Bishop in Oradea, Bánffy Palace in Cluj-Napoca, Carei, Şimleul Silvaniei, Jibou, etc.) or from the rural environment (Bonțida – Cluj County, Arcalia – Bristrița-Năsăud County, Brâncoveneşti – Mureş County, Medieşu Aurit – Satu Mare County, Almaşu, Zimbor, Hida – Sălaj County, Pribileşti, Satulung, Coltău – Maramureş County, etc.).

b. *The cultural and religious tourist monuments* present a great symbolic value and are important due to their size, architecture, iconography, collections of religious objects.

Among the oldest Christian orthodox monuments are the ones in the Land of Hațeg (Densuş, Strei, Sântămarie Orlea), followed by the Roman basilicas – churches (the oldest being the one in Cârța-Făgăraş, belonging to the former Cistercian monastery or the one in Herina, Bistrița-Năsăud County), the most important religious objective in Roman style from Transylvania being the Roman-Catholic Cathedral in Alba Iulia (the 12th century).

The churches and cathedrals in Gothic style are present in the majority of the cities of Transylvania, such as Biserica Neagră (the Black Church) in Braşov, Biserica Sfântul Mihail (Saint Michael's Church) in Cluj-Napoca, the Evangelical Church in Bistrița, followed by the buildings in the same style from Târgu Mureş, Sibiu, Sebeş, Sighişoara, Oradea, Miercurea Ciuc, or from rural settlements such as Ditrău, in Harghita County.

The religious buildings of the Romanian Orthodox communities located in the urban environment reveal less significant examples, representative being – for the building period and the role played in the Romanian community, Sfântul Nicolae (Saint Nicholas) in Şcheii Brasovului, Bob Church in Cluj-Napoca. During the inter-war period, in the large cities of Transylvania, Orthodox monuments were built using the neo-Romanian style or neo-Byzantine, impressive in size, style and impact (Cluj-Napoca, Târgu Mureş, Oradea, Timişoara and especially Alba Iulia, the location of the People's Unification Cathedral).

The monasteries as religious complexes, with a continuous monastic life, were the ones that kept the Orthodox spirit alive in less favourable conditions, from the laic power, up to 1918. Some of the Orthodox monuments which were not well treated in the Middle Ages have been preserved in the rural environment (Feleac and Vad – both built by Ştefan cel Mare), together with the monasteries (Râmeț – Alba, Sâmbăta de Sus in the Land of Făgăraş, built by Constantin Brâncoveanu, Nicula - Cluj County, and a more recent one, from the 19th century, Rohia – Maramureş County) and especially the wooden churches (several hundred). These are the true quintessence of the centennial wood civilisation, specific for the intra- and peri-mountain space of the "lands" inhabited by the Romanian communities. In the Land of Maramureş, the churches were built starting with the 14th century and up to the 18th century by the rulers of the Land of Maramureş (Ieud, Bârsana). These are concentrated in the Maramureş Depression, especially in the Iza basin (Vadu Izei, Bârsana, Şieu, Botiza, Ieud – the oldest wooden church in Romania, built in 1364, Bogdan Vodă, Dragomireşti, Săliştea de Sus, Sârbi, Sat Şugatag) and in the Mara basin (Giuleşti, Hărniceşti, Deseşti, Budeşti, Călineşti, Brebu) and, in a low number, in the Vişeu basin (Moisei and Borşa). These monuments are found in the Land of Lăpuş and in the Land of Chioarului (important being the ones in Lăpuş, Rogoz, Libotin, Cupşeni, and in Plopiş and Şurdeşti, respectively). The architectural ensembles of the churches in Maramureş have evolved in time, shaping a certain style which has imposed itself in the beauty of the decorative forms and

motives and would expand in the surrounding areas. Eight of them are included in the UNESCO cultural heritage list, as an acknowledgement of their excellent value.

The second region with wooden churches is Salaj, which copied and adapted the style from Maramureş, and where Fildu de Sus, Creaca, Hida, Purcăreni, Ileanda, Sânmihaiu Almaşului, etc. are the most important.

The Apuseni Mountains is the third region representative for the presence of the wooden churches, these having smaller dimensions, but with a peculiar style of the region. They are located in Lupşa (the second oldest after the one in Ieud – 1429, Vidra, Gârda de Sus, Ponorel, and in Beiuş Depression (Rieni and Lazuri).

The second distinct category of Transylvanian churches is the fortified churches in the Transylvanian Depression – the remarkable and original achievement of the German communities. They are important for their central position within the habitats on dominant places and for their massiveness given by the ensembles of the church and the walls surrounding it. Among the several dozens of such churches, built during the 13th and 14th centuries, some are very well preserved, such as the ones in Biertan, Axente Sever, Moşna, Dârlos, Valea Lungă, Saschiz, Şona, Şeica Mică, Viscri, etc. Many of them have been subjected to an elaborate process of rehabilitation with the help of the German state and communities coming from those regions, but also of different persons (such as Prince Charles of United Kingdom at Viscri).

c. *The urban architectural complexes* are important in the towns with a long history, of centuries, even millenniums, where they developed, in time, urban assemblies shaped by a certain type of street specific to the Middle Ages, with the purpose of housing craftsmen and for trading, having various styles, imposed by the surrounding walls which protected the town and which imposed the manners of development as well. We can include in such a category the Transylvanian towns of Sebeş, Sighişoara, Mediaş, Bistriţa, Cluj-Napoca, but also the central parts of other urban metropolises from the western part of the country (Timişoara, Arad, Oradea), the north (Satu Mare, Baia Mare) or the centre of the country (Dej, Gherla, Zalău).

d. Here, *the most important buildings* for the towns have been organised as cultural monuments of interest for a wide range of persons, such as *museums*, housing and preserving, according to their profile, monument and heritage objects important for the region's culture and history. The most important ones are the art museums and the history and archaeological museums in Cluj-Napoca, Alba Iulia, Deva, Zalău, the mineral museum (Baia Mare), the speleological museum (Cluj-Napoca), the pharmacy museum (Cluj-Napoca), the county museums of Baia Mare, Bistriţa, Satu Mare, the ethnographic museums with open air sections in Sibiu (Astra with Dumbrava Sibiului), Cluj-Napoca (the Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania, with an open air section in Hoia), the Ethnographic Museum of Maramureş in Sighetu Marmaţiei, or the rural ethnographic museums (such as the one in Lupşa, the first one in Romania, the ethnographic museum of the Someş Valley in Năpradea, the ethnographic museums of Agrij, Mesesenii de Jos, Marca in Salaj County, the Hungarian museum of Bogdand and the German museum of Petreşti, both in Satu Mare, and the Merry Cemetery in Săpânţa, unique in the world and mentioned in all the international tourist catalogues). To these, we add an important number of memorial houses, spread all over the analysed area (Matei Corvin, Octavian Goga, George Coşbuc, Lucian Blaga, Vasile Lucaciu, Iuliu Maniu, Simion Bărnuţiu, Ady Endre, etc).

e. *The tourist heritage belonging to the traditional rural culture and civilisation* is preserved in certain regions such as the Carpathian and peri-Carpathian "lands" (Oaş, Maramureş, Lăpuş, Năsăud, Haţeg, Moţilor, Beiuş) or Giurgeu County, Mărginimea Sibiului, Pădurenilor County, etc., where the religious ensembles stand out (especially the wooden churches) and the regular ensembles (settlements with a certain style, building material or location of the components, such as the carved wooden gates, especially the ones from Maramureş, but also from Harghita), but also the aspects related to activities, crafts, technologies and traditional methods of processing different raw materials.

The traditional activities are very well preserved, using the traditional raw materials and folk techniques of processing, among which we mention the traditional ceramics using shaping, burning and painting, as well as carving techniques and materials (centres in Bixad-Oaş, Săcel and Baia Sprie -

Maramureş, Corund – Harghita, Beiuş-Leheceni, Selişte de Vaşcău, Criştioru de Jos, Vadu Crişului-Bihor); the wood processing, specific for the entire mountain area, the household tools, the elementary housing components and especially the most important products of this craft – the wooden churches; the textile processing for the clothing objects and folk costumes (Chişcău, Pietroasa, Remetea-Beiuş, Bratca, Borod in Bihor, Târgu Lăpuş – Maramureş, Ciumărna-Sălaj); the religious painting on glass preserving the traditional Byzantine icons (centres in Nicula-Cluj, Laz-Alba, Sibiel-Sibiu, etc.), the knitting of straws (Salonta – Bihor), egg painting (Drăgoteni, Remetea-Beiuş), etc. We add to all these the spiritual component related to the traditions and customs of the Hungarian communities from the eastern part of Transylvania and the ones belonging to the German population (most of them emigrants to their country of origin).

The traditional spiritual rural component is linked to the same territorial entities and it is represented by manifestations related to the main moments of the year, of the human existence and marks the season cycles of agricultural activities. These are represented by celebrations with fixed calendar dates, but also through village celebrations, fairs, pastoral celebrations, a moment when the neighbouring communities socialise (such the Girls' Fair on the Găina Mountain, on July 20th each year). Among the numerous cultural events which consist of the wide range of musical activities, dances and other manifestations, we mention the Sâmbra Oilor, the Folk Festival in Oțeloaia, Târgul Cepelor (The Onion Fair) – Asuaju de Sus, the Măsurişul Oilor – (Measurement of the Sheep) – Târgu Lăpuş, Tânjaua festival in Mara, Hora (the Dance Festival) from Prislop – in Borşa, both in the Land of Maramureş, etc.

The traditional cooking, extremely diversified and extremely tasty, is very poorly capitalised in the region's restaurants, but it is very well preserved. Among the most appreciated culinary products are the famous slivovitz from Bihor, the slivovitz from Zalău, the wines (Târnave, Alba Iulia-Aiud, Lechința, Recaş, Diosig, Valea lui Mihai vineyards, etc.), the pies (cheese and dill pies, plum, potato pies, etc.), the chicken soup with house made noodles, Transylvanian soups, the ham, the pork sausages, the Pericei onion (Sălaj), stews, cabbage rolls, sponge cakes and many more.

3. THE MATERIAL TOURIST BASIS (THE INFRASTRUCTURE)

The material tourist basis is characterised by a non-uniform territorial distribution and is found in a process of modernisation and diversification, presenting trends related to the attractiveness potential of the mountain resorts, of the rural regions with traditional culture and civilisation, with an original character, and, last but not least, of the urban centres with architectural monuments and ensembles, of great local and international tourist interest.

The current tourist basis is the result of an evolution of the profile phenomenon and activity, during a century (some of the hotels or villas from the resorts being a century old and needing impressive modernisation works) and presents, according to the features of the attractiveness and their level of revaluation, the following types of tourist utilities, of different sizes and complexity:

1. Tourist resorts (32 localities), classified in *national interest resorts* (7 localities): Buziaş – Timiş; Băile Felix – Bihor; Băile Tuşnad – Harghita; Geoagiu Băi – Hunedoara; Moneasa – Arad; Sângeorz-Băi – Bistrița-Năsăud; Sovata – Mureş) and *local interest resorts* (25): Albac and Arieşeni – Alba; Lipova – Arad; 1 Mai, Tăşnad, Tinca and Stâna de Vale – Bihor; Băile Turda, Băile Băița, Fântânele and Băişorii Mountain – Cluj; Băile Homorod, Borsec, Harghita Băi, Izvorul Mureşului, Lacu Roşu and Praid – Harghita; Straja and Vața de Jos – Hunedoara; Borşa and Ocna Şugatag – Maramureş; Bazna, Ocna Sibiu and Păltiniş – Sibiu; Călacea – Timiş.

According to the type of attractive resources which were the basis of the appearance and which support tourism corroborated with the size criterion (the number of accommodation units), they can be classified in:

a. *Spa resorts with complex utilities*, accommodation units exceeding 4,000 places, dominated by hotels (Băile Felix) or with a balanced structure (Sovata); national spa resorts, with an accommodation capacity between 1,000 and 2,000 places: Geoagiu Băi, Buziaş, Sângeorz Băi, 1 Mai, Tuşnad; spa resorts with 500-1,000 places: Moneasa, Ocna Sibiu, Ocna Şugatag, Borsec, Toplița-Bradul;

spa resorts with 100-500 places: Vața de Jos, Bizuşa, Băile Turda, Tăşnad, Praid, Bazna; small local resorts and/or spa utilities in different locations with an accommodation capacity of under 100 places: Ocna Mureş, Ocna Dej, Cojocna, Miercurea Sibiului, Băile Călan, Călacea, Lipova, Tinca, Băița, Băile Homorod, Boghiş, etc.;

b. *Mountainous resorts and complexes for winter sports*, with an accommodation capacity of 100-500 places: Borşa, Colibița, Harghita Băi, Izvoru Mureşului, Lacu Roşu, Muntele Mic, Semenic, Arieşeni, Muntele Băişorii, Stâna de Vale, Straja, Păltiniş; tourist complexes with utilities for winter sports: Cavnic, Piatra Fântânele, Râuşor, etc.

At a regional and local level, there are proposals for the development of new tourist resorts of local importance, which should fulfil the regulations of the National Authority in Tourism referring to their declaration as tourist resorts: Luna-Şes (Satu-Mare), Marghita (Bihor), Vârtop-Arieşeni (Alba), Cavnic (Satu Mare), Izvoare (Maramureş), Cavnic (Maramureş), Mogoşa – Şuior (Maramureş), Valea Vaseului (Maramureş), Coştiui (Maramureş), Boghiş (Salaj), Bizuşa (Salaj), Cojocna (Cluj), Beliş-Fântânele (Cluj), Beltiug (Satu Mare). Even if they are not declared resorts, many of these proposals really function as such as destinations of the tourist request, attracting tourists and offering accommodation facilities, restaurants and leisure activities and services (Mărişel, Cojocna, etc.).

Table 1. *The distribution of the number of accommodation places at the level of the counties (2008)*

No.	County	No. of accommodation places	%
1	Alba	1830	3.0
2	Arad	4256	7.0
3	Bihor	10126	16.8
4	Bistrița-Năsăud	2730	4.5
5	Cluj	7070	11.7
6	Harghita	7063	11.7
7	Hunedoara	3452	5.7
8	Maramureş	3635	6.0
9	Mureş	6138	10.2
10	Satu Mare	2415	4.0
11	Sălaj	829	1.4
12	Sibiu	5123	8.5
13	Timiş	5724	9.5
14	**Total**	**60391**	**100.0**

Source of data: National Institute of Statistics

2. The urban centres with accommodation capacities (differentiated according to the size, the typology, the structure and quality: cities with complex tourist utilities and accommodation units exceeding 3,000 places: Cluj-Napoca, Timişoara, municipalities, county residencies, with accommodation units dominated by hotels, with 1,000-2,000 places: Oradea, Arad, Târgu Mureş; municipalities, county residencies, with 500-1,000 places: Alba Iulia, Zalău, Reşița, Bistrița, Baia Mare, Satu Mare; towns with a population over 20,000 inhabitants and accommodation units with 50-500 places.

3. Rural settlements which are important for the rural tourism having a significant number of rural hostels integrated into the profile networks: Vadu Izei, Botiza, Ieud, Poienile Izei, Săliştea de Sus, Săpânța (Maramureş County), Lunca Ilvei, Şanț, Prundu Bârgăului, Tiha Bârgăului, (Bistrița Năsăud County), Ceuaşu de Câmpie (Mureş County), Praid, Lăzarea (Harghita County), Albac, Arieşeni, Gârda de Sus, Scărişoara, Rimetea (Alba County), Beliş, Bologa, Sâncraiu, Poieni (Cluj County), etc.

4. The tourist units (hotels, motels, camping sites), located along the road networks (of which an important part was built in the newly created or modernised fuel stations) or at the periphery of the large cities (in the leisure and green areas around the cities).

The territorial distribution of the accommodation units reveals inequalities and contrast which are significant at the level of the counties, as a consequence of the differentiated distribution of attractive resources, as well as of the different degree of social and economic development.

The maximum concentration of accommodation units are in Bihor County (which holds 10,126 accommodation places, respectively 16.8% of the total at the level of 2007). The explanation of this concentration comes from the major attraction represented by the treatment based on the revaluation of the hydrothermal resources (Băile Felix and 1 Mai), corroborated with the high number of rural tourist hostels which serve the transit tourism. This is followed by Cluj County (7,070 places) and Harghita County (7,063 places, representing 11.7% of the installed accommodation capacity) and Mureş County (6,138 places, 10.2% of the total accommodation places), which have mountain complexes, hydro-mineral resources, ethno-folkloric resources, facilities for business tourism, congresses and cultural facilities, utilities for winter sports, important curative hydro-mineral resources. The first four counties from the hierarchy have together a share of 50.4% of the existing accommodation places at regional level, situation explicable through the revaluation of the resources within the spa resorts of national and international importance, holders of dimensioned and diverse material bases, with various leisure possibilities (Băile Felix, 1 Mai, Borsec, etc.), a decisive contribution to the shaping of this hierarchy belonging to the contribution of some county seats (Cluj-Napoca, Timişoara, Sibiu, less Oradea and Arad), due to their multiple functions and diverse cultural and historical attractions. At the opposite pole, there are the counties whose territory lies mainly in the hilly or in the plain region, with small resources and, implicitly, with a reduced level of tourist utilities (Sălaj, Satu Mare), etc.

The identification of the whole range of existing tourist resources (revaluated or which can be revaluated) and their confrontation with the concrete situations from the territory has allowed the general definition of the attractiveness conditions of the regional tourist heritage. Based on them, the definition of the revaluation manner of the tourist potential and the definition of the major coordinates of the tourism development strategies shall be possible, endeavour which should start from the consideration of some aspects such as the complete revaluation of the tourist potential with appeal to the tourist complementarity related to the neighbouring regions; the level of development and diversification of the recreational activities and the leisure activities; the features of the accommodation units (number, typology, degree of comfort, spatial distribution, accessibility, etc.); the duration of the tourist season; the information conditions of the tourists related to the regional offer.

As a consequence, the revaluation of the identified tourist potential can be achieved based on the strategic coordinates starting from the natural and anthropogenic potential and on the existing material basis (mentioned in the present study). We can state several major directions of development (starting from the main types and forms of tourism practised or practicable in the region), leading at the same time to some areas with specialised or complex tourist functions, which shall be the object of the policy of revaluation within the region's development strategy: the spa tourism, related to the hydro-mineral resources and the cultural tourism, specific of the western part of the north-west region (the Western Hills and the Western Plain), the Transylvanian Depression and isolated in the Eastern Carpathians; the mountain tourism (leisure, hiking, winter sports, speo-tourism) in the Carpathian mountain area (the Apuseni Mountains and the Eastern Carpathians); cultural tourism focused on the main urban centres (Cluj-Napoca, Timişoara, Arad, Oradea, Târgu Mureş) and the regions with an original rural culture and civilisation (the Land of Maramureş, Oaş, Năsăud, Lăpuş, Chioar, Codru, Beiuş, the Land of the Moți); rural tourism extended on the above-mentioned areas and comprising the rural settlements of Beiuş, Lăpuş-Chioar, Codru, Silvania, etc.

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