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Health tourism contribution to the structural dynamics of the territorial systems with tourism functionality

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Abstract

The study aims to identify the role of health tourism (SPA) in developing the territorial systems, characterized by the tourism functionality, in Romania, for the period 2000-2012, a period marked by spectacular transformations, especially for this economic sector. Tourism has now become a true economic engine, generating an increase in the functional complexity of the territorial system, which is based on exploiting tourism resources. To quantify how tourism has contributed to the economic development of these territorial systems in Romania a database of NACE codes was set up, specific for the tourism activity, for the period 2000-2012, for territorial mainframe systems with functionality resort. Based on this statistical support analyzes on the evolution of the number of companies, number of employees, turnover and profit were made. The results show the important role of health tourism in generating multiplier effects on other components of the economic subsystem. They were defined two categories of territorial systems: territorial systems where tourism plays a complementary role function and territorial systems in which health tourism has a preeminent role in the local economy.

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1. Introduction

Tourism is today an important sector in the world economy, as reflected in the year 2012 in the number of international arrivals, which for the first time exceeded the figure of 1 billion [1, 2]. Moreover, a series of studies confirm that this sector can bring important benefits, both economically and socially [3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8].

Worldwide, health tourism is recognized as one of the oldest forms of tourism, practiced since antiquity and one of subtypes of health tourism. Since this period, the society was concerned with finding some efficient methods for maintaining health. An example of this, it is a series of tourist resort in Europe, which owes its existence from the exploitation of local resources available to the spa [9, 10, 11]. Revenues increasingly higher but also knowledge and technology are becoming increasingly affordable have made that health tourism become increasingly popular [12]. This trend is confirmed by the manner in which mineral and thermal waters are used so that globally, this sector was estimated by Global Wellness Institute in 2014 to 50 billion \$, having a number of over 26.000 establishments [13].

Studying how local economies influence the development of health tourism becomes very important, especially in complex economic influences exerted on the economic system of settlements [14, 15, 16, 17]. In fact, worldwide, there are numerous studies that emphasizes the role that might have health tourism in developing local economies, especially if this type of tourism is promoted through specific programs such as the social tourism [18, 19, 20, 21].

In this regard the establishment of this type of tourism's contribution to the development of local economies is an important element in designing and implementing effective management strategies so that benefits local communities are obvious. Basically, spa tourism, through the efficient management of services coupled with a well thought out marketing strategy can have positive effects in local communities [22, 23].

In Romania, the development of this type of tourism is particularly significant, especially as a mineral water resources ranked 19 worldwide, with estimated revenue for 2013 of \$ 290 million¹³. Along with other natural healing factors is estimated that, nationwide, there are over 100 villages and areas that could develop this type of tourism, at least as a complementary economic activity, 23 of this areas are already confirmed as SPA resorts [24]. Moreover, the importance of health tourism is recognized by the National Tourism Development Master Plan 2007 – 2026, which aims at the overall objective of positioning Romania as a destination valued, one of the secondary objectives are repositioning this type of tourism in Romania, but also in the European context, so as to bring significant economic benefits, both in general and especially local [25,26]. From the point of view of the contribution of this sector on the local economy, SPA tourism can represent a viable development trend in the areas with tourism resources [27].

2. Methodology

The analysis is based on four basic indicators (number of companies, turnover, profit and number of employees), for the period 2000-2012, at NACE code (National Classification of Economic Activities) for each SPA resort. For each indicator, a growth matrix ranking weightings of local spa sector in the total economy, has achieved [28]. This methodology allows the modeling competition between the spa sector and other sectors of the local economy.

For a better understanding of the dynamics of the phenomenon, correlations to the level indicators overall for 2012 were conducted. This have been done with a software for processing and interpretation of statistical data (R-Software), resulting in a series of handy chart correlative understanding of the processes. The study considered the resorts which, according to the National Statistics Institute, held the office resort. The statistical support was provided by databases within the project „Territorial management based on the growth poles theory” (1365/2014).

3. Results

The competition between the SPA sector and all other sectors of the local economy represents key elements in understanding the complex phenomena from that territorial systems with SPA function. Figure 1 shows the relationship between profit and other key economic indicators used in the analysis. So we can see a strong correlation between invariable component - profit and other variable components - number of companies, number of employees and turnover. So we can see a high concentration of small profits, most companies are located in areas with low profits economic, appearing only sporadically some companies with medium and large profits. The same situation is also recorded in the number of employees, but also in turnover, important indicators characterizing the economic situation in territorial systems of this type.

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