

STUDY REGARDING THE POSSIBILITY TO DEVELOP TOURISM AND CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION THROUGH A BUSINESS INCUBATOR AT VADUL CRIȘULUI (BIHOR COUNTY)

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Introduction

This article presents the results of a research that was realized within the framework of the project entitled „*Business incubator for cross-border tourist development*” that runs within the Cross-border Co-operation Program between Hungary – Romania 2007-2013 and it is implemented by the city hall of Vadu Crișului Community, in partnership with the city hall of Hajdúszoboszló city, respectively the Hotel Owners Association from Hajdúszoboszló. The project was submitted within the framework of Priority axe no. 2 - „Enforcement of social and economical cohesion in the border region” respectively has a total budget of 552.633,86 Euro, according to the official website of the Cross-border Co-operation Program between Hungary – Romania 2007-2013 (www.huro-cbc.eu).

According to the documentation of the project, this is shortly presented also in the official website of the program (www.vaduCrișului-hajduszoboszlo.ro), at Vadu Crișului a business incubator will be established, which will be constructed on the old city hall’s emplacement, while in the city of Hajdúszoboszló a tourist information center will be constructed at the main entrance of the Spa area.

The research was realized with the help of a questionnaire that contained 20 questions. This questionnaire was presented and handed to those who offered services in tourism, respectively to the representatives of different organizations/institutions, with the reason to analyze the existing advertising of resources and modalities, respectively the proposed ideas for developing tourism in general and especially the cross-border co-operation.

The methodology of the research

The research method used to conclude this study was the questionnaire. This questionnaire was handed out in the period between 15th of November and 15th of December 2011 in 8 territorial administrative units, of which 7 in Bihor County (Aușeu, Borod, Bratca, Bulz, Măgești, Vadu Crișului and Șuncuiuș) and one in Hajdu-Bihar County (Hajdúszoboszló).

Even though the Romanian side of the study included 7 territorial administrative units, all these gathered at one place do not have a high number of economical agents with tourism activity like in the resort of Hajdúszoboszló that stands alone in the Hungarian side.

Totally 181 questionnaire were filled out, from which 77 in the micro-region of Vadu Crișului and 104 in the resort of Hajdúszoboszló. The questionnaire was applied in the study region first of all to those economic agents whose activity is directly or indirectly linked to tourism, and second of all questionnaires were handed out to some representatives of local administration, with representatives of some institutions or organizations whose activity runs in the area of study. Even though the business incubator will be built in Vadu Crișului, the community however holds a very small number of economic agents with tourism activity. This way we extended the study area in the Romanian side (in Bihor County) from one community to a micro-region composed of 7 communities, located in the north of the Craiului Forest Mountains (Munții Pădurea Craiului).

These are linked one to another through the Crişului Repede River Defile, respectively the E60 European road.

Results of the research

For comparative analysis, we must have taken into account the socio-economic specific at both of the evaluated entity, so while at the community in Hungary the axle was put almost entirely on the economic-agents (hotels, pensions or apartment owners who rent rooms especially during the summer), until in the communities from Bihor County, we must have taken into account the diversity of the actors implicated in the development of the micro-region, not just in the actual moment but also in the previous periods. In this meaning, for the development of the Vadu Crişului micro-region, we identified three big categories of social and economical actors who were questioned:

- The economic agents implicated directly or indirectly in the tourism from the micro-region – different categories and types of housing units, public alimentation units.
- Opinion leaders from the micro-region localities, practically those factors from the public administration, educational system or leaders of a confession who have the possibility to influence the development of the micro-region.
- Non-governmental institutions and organizations with headquarters in Oradea, but whose profile of activity is based in a greater percentage in the study area, and who contributed along the years in any percentage to the development of the micro-region in question.

In this way, the first differentiation of the two zones is observed through the overlapping territorial (administrative) element, with the subjects' profile.

Table 1. Activity profile of those questioned (expressed in percentage %)

	Services	Culture	NGO	Administration	Education / research
Hajdúszoboszló	95	2	3	-	-
Micro-region of Vadu Crişului	57	10	23	5	5

Because of the experience in dealing with foreign partners/clients, the Hungarian locality can be identified with higher numbers not just in length and time, but regarding the number of co-operations.

In this way, among those questioned in Hajdúszoboszló, 87 % have at least one co-operation (foreign clients), in the framework of which Romania was the country most commonly named by 84% of those questioned, being followed by Poland (65%), Germany (62%), Slovakia (42%), Ukraine (18%) and Russia (with 10%). Compared with those questioned in Bihor, 72% have at least one partnership, most commonly named a co-operation with Hungary, and more than 30% of those questioned have an exclusive partnership with this country. Only 6% of those who have a partnership do not have a common history with an economic agent or NGO from the neighbor country.

From the perspective of the cross-border cooperation, the importance of having a webpage was highlighted; a webpage that can be accessed in more than one language, respectively the knowledge of a foreign language. In this way, we mention the fact that in Bihor, only 54% of the interviewees have an own webpage comparing to 71% of the participants in Hungary.

In case of those who answered the questionnaire in Romania, those who own a webpage, in 61% of the cases information can be accessed in another foreign language, while 38% of the web-pages can be accessed also in Hungarian language. In case of Hajdúszoboszló resort 83% of those who own a webpage, the information's can be accessed in at least one international foreign language, while 56% of the web-pages can be accessed in Romanian language as well.

Referring to the knowledge of one (or more) foreign language(s) of an employee, collaborator or members of a company/institution/organization, the numbers are higher from a general perspective.

In this way, among all those questioned in Romania, 88% knows at least one foreign language – mainly English – 75% of all those questioned, while the Hungarian language is at a level of 43%, with the specification that these values are higher in average in Oradea, than in the area of Vadu Crişului. In Hungary, even though the number of those who speak a foreign language is close to the one in Romania, namely 83%, the ratio of dispersion is different, the main language is English – 85%, followed closely by German with 77%. The Romanian language with 21% is very close to the Russian that has a value of 20%.

The situation is changing regarding the willingness to learn a (or another) foreign language, so 45% of those questioned expressed their interest to learn Romanian language, this being the prevailing of this category, being followed by Russian language with 33% and Polish language with 28%. These three languages show us the perspectives from Hajdúszoboszló regarding the international tourist arrivals.

If in the first part I analyzed general data about the subjects and possible perspectives of approach methods in direct co-operation, in the second part, the questionnaire was based on a connection towards the own administrative or regional unit. However, the principal was to give a chance in order to comparatively approach data that will build itself, but the answer possibilities were almost identical in parallel for questions 3 and 4, the differences occurring in the “forte point” of the region.

Referring to the selection of the most important needs, must be noted the necessity to separate the possibilities of answering for Internet services, where for Bihor we added the element of the telephone, comparing to Hajdúszoboszló, where necessity is accentuated towards the wireless internet. But, more importantly, in the field of tourism services, we considered the necessity to differentiate the *extension* and *diversification* of these, taking into consideration the hypotheses of development of the two territorial units and the fact that in Romania the chances covered by this chapter were not totally exhausted.

Even if a differentiation exists among the value results, it is interesting that the base pylon has the same common element in both cases, with the specification that in the Vadului micro-region the sanitation element occurred preponderantly, which in Hungary occupies the penultimate place (see fig. no. 1). Sanitation is an element that differentiates the two regions, but this is now put under a close attention by the actors from outside the defile, mainly from Oradea, and in the same time solving this is seen as a primary element through the implication of local authorities.

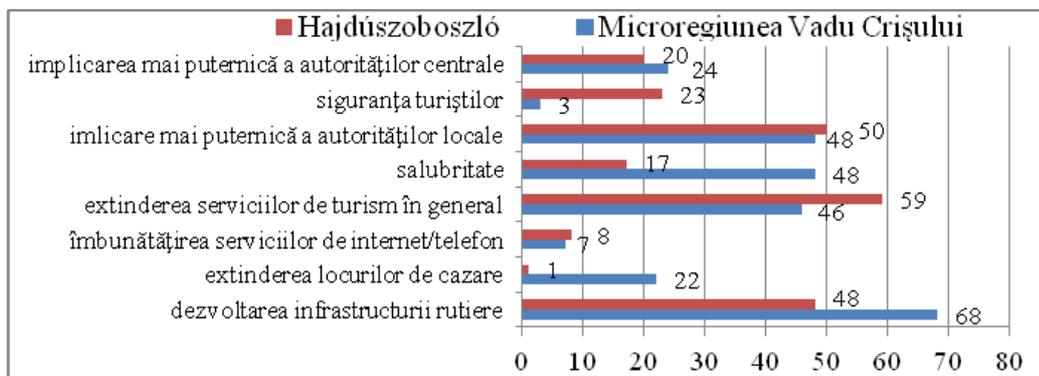


Fig. no. 1 Elements for developing in the study area

Regarding the marketing, however, the differences are essential, even contradictory. The elements most commonly met in the case of one are less prioritized in the case of another, a situation that in the first analysis can be perceived negatively.

As a dominant character of both of the axes, must be mentioned that exactly those (three) elements that describe and internal approach – webpage of the micro-region, tri-lingual tourist signs, tourist destination network are the most commonly met for the situation in Romania (with appearing frequencies of 67, 49 and 46%) while for Hajdúszoboszló, exactly the other three appear as priorities, detaching the companies from advertising through specialized companies (with 73%). The other two, and namely the creation of a web-page having as objective a partnership with another tourist region, but not with the same profile – 32%, respectively, a bi-lingual paper on tourism – with 35%, are written in the elements of communication towards the exterior.

Highlighting the side of the communication towards the other exterior entities, the first and most clear approach of differentiating was imposed at the editing of the questionnaire. All these come exactly from the basic characteristics as tourist zones of both entities and not just from the infrastructure that they possess. Considering those mentioned, those elements must be highlighted, which are considered by the locals to have the most potential of attractiveness in an advertising campaign.

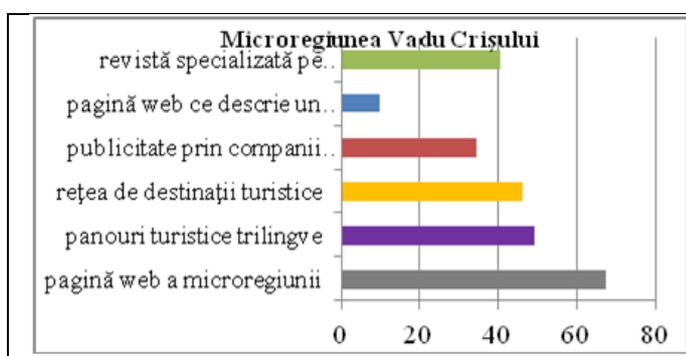


Fig. no. 2 Marketing approach of the micro-region

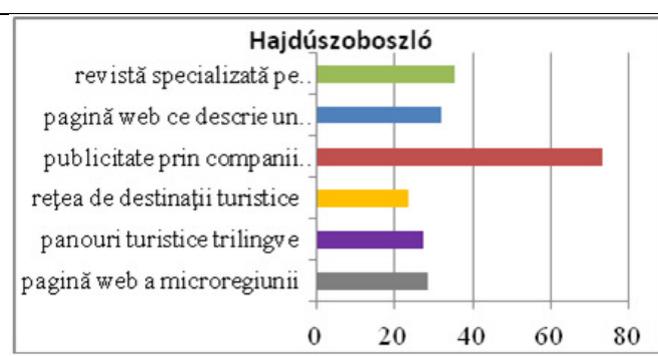


Fig. 3 Marketing approach of the resort

From the perspective of Bihor County, 3 favorite groups are crystallized, of which the most eloquent being the *caves* – with a frequency of 80% followed at a relatively high distance by mountain paths (hiking roads) with 49%, respectively the specific habits of the area that received 43%. With the existing possibility to mention also other themes of promotion, those questioned remembered the most the extreme sports, gastronomical traditions or connected services to the caves.

Regarding Hajdúszoboszló locality, no elements were noted that might unite some overwhelming majority, none of them passing a value of frequency greater than 50%. Sport Center was most often mentioned – 45%, followed by the holidays organized by local authorities (34%) and traditions of the neighbor area with a total of 28%.

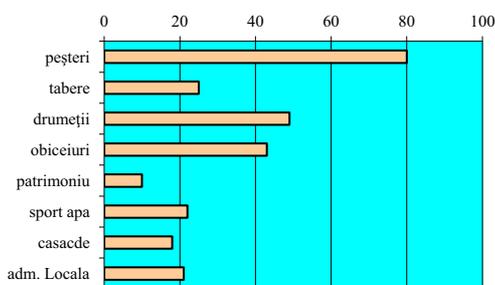


Fig. no. 4 Advertising of the Vadu Crişului micro-region resort

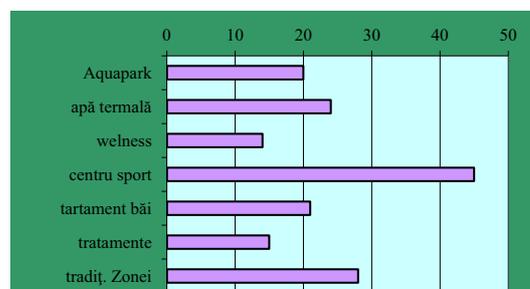


Fig. no. 5 Advertising Hajdúszoboszló

For the micro-region of Vadu Crişului *the extension of the tourism services* must be based on the natural characteristics of the region and on own initiatives, more emphasized than the initiatives and support or the implication of the administrative authorities. Practically, the possibility and request is seen for an intermediate structure between the own necessities and the representatives of those in the issues of extending the tourism services, but this one not to be exclusive, and one of public invoicing.

General diversification of the services in tourism (which appears exclusively for Hajdúszoboszló), is the theme that represents the differences already from the hypothesis of those two entities, infrastructure and investments or the level or services that must be calculated from the beginning as opposed between the balneary resort from Hungary and the region in Bihor County. The frequency of these is 59% and occupies the 1st place among the necessities for future development.

It is clarified an even more stronger tendency that is seen for Hajdúszoboszló locality as a necessity of development first of all in the diversification of the tourism services, highlighted the implication of the local authorities, chance seen in the co-operation of the tourist area without similar characteristics (namely, direct non-competitor), but from the cross-border region (the opening towards the Romanian side is relevant, persuaded on the first place with the wish of learning the Romanian language), however, information and gaining creditability that Vadu Crişului and the surrounding area has a tourist potential needs real improvements.

After an analysis that describes mainly the approach from the perspective of own characteristics and possible form of advertising, respectively basic element of the pylons for development, in the next phase we will evaluate the chances of cooperation from the angle of the partnership with the neighbor region cross-border and formulas for the possible implications.

Table no. 2 Chances of cross-border co-operation (expressed in %)

	Surely they would have positive effect	There could be a possibility	Not really think of it as viable	No way
Bihor	75	18	3	3
Hajdúszoboszló	69	24	6	1

To the question, addressed the actors implicated in the socio-economic or administrative life from the micro-region of Vadu Crişului regarding the methods in which they consider they could be implicated in this type of cross-border partnership, the most common answer was regarding the support of an advertising center of the micro-region, followed by at a considerable distance the answer of accessing some European funds.

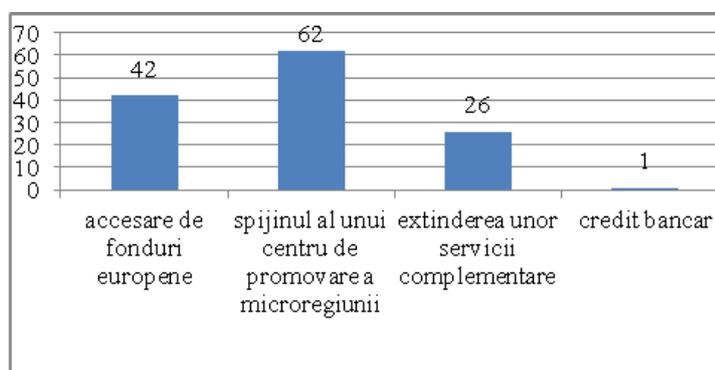


Fig. no. 6 Method of implication of the actors from the micro-region of Vadu Crişului in the cross-border co-operation

From the prism of knowledge in the role of a client in the tourist area of the neighbor country, those from Romania have been more often in Hungary – 83% of them, while referring expressly to the Hajdúszoboszló resort, more than half of those interviewed had already experience (52%). Regarding the services, an average of 4.6 out of a possible 5.0 can be considered as satisfactory. On the reverse side, 11% of those from Hungary have been as tourists in the micro-region of Vadu Crişului, at the appreciation of the received services 46%, while the average awarded regarding the services was 3.5. An encouraging point regarding the development and implementation of the partnerships is the knowledge of the official language of the other country, and the openness towards perfecting this element.

The Vadu Crişului micro-region has a perception on the necessity of re-grouping towards the interior -, while the Hungarian resort shows an opening towards the exterior, but not towards a location that can be a competition in the first place. Hajdúszoboszló tends towards advertising the already existing tourist potential and infrastructure, pulsing through ensuring a diversity of programs. In comparison, in the micro-region of Vadu Crişului, even if the first phases of diversification are observed towards the potential of the area, right now it still needs extension, but lacks that force of grouping around one element or a set of elements that can assume the role of a promoter.

Pursuant to, a basic level for both situation can be described, while with these elements and with those described earlier that can be attached, a new phase can be initiated, somehow under an institutionalized form of the co-operation between the two entities:

The level of Vadu Crişului micro-region

Greater implication from:	Grouping towards:	Basic elements in advertising:
Local authorities (with special reference to the road infrastructure)	Interior / edification of the own potential (creation of a webpage about the region) & the necessity for <i>the extension of the services</i>	Caves

The level of Hajdúszoboszló resort:

Greater implication from:	Grouping towards:	Basic elements in advertising:
Local authorities (road infrastructure)	Exterior: necessity of diversification of the services & advertising through specialized campaigns (of the specific holidays)	Thermal water and the connected treatments

In this way, as solution to the grouping of the micro-region, followed by the extension of the services, the central point should be occupied by an intermediate structure formed between local authorities – mainly city halls -, and organizations who support own initiatives, including NGOs, so one of the solutions could be counted as viable would be the existence of an advertising center of the Vadu Crişului Defile.

Considering however the comparison among the answers to question 9, briefly, the connection method to the diversification of the programs for the tourists, in the first phase can be observed that those from the Hungarian resort gave exact location (Hortobágy, visit to the city center of Debrecen, visit to the Zoo from Nyíregyháza, visit to the viticulture area around the city of Eger, Oradea), while in the case of Bihor, these answers had a more general character (caves, hiking mountain paths);

Conclusion and propositions

Considering that the economic agents from Hajdúszoboszló, at the actual infrastructure and tourist potential, shows an opening towards the diversification of the programs, where as a basic element the implication of authorities can be listed, the creation of a common webpage with a tourist region, but not with the same profile, and last but not least, the allocation of a resource for international advertising foresees the possibility to close a cross-border partnership with a tourist zone/resort/micro-region. From the perspective of Vadu Crişului micro-region, right now a main actor does not exist who could have the coagulation power and resources, but the centering could be based towards the co-operation of the local authorities – including the creation of a common webpage, while the main brand foresees the caves in the area. Around this element the extension of services can be attached that result from the existing tourist potential. With no existing structure of grouping, the establishment of an advertising/promotion center can be conceived or tourist cluster, but, the centrifugal forces that would recognize a center (administrative) as a pylon of advertising are still in an initial phase. As a common point for promotion, and as a pilot project, through the cross-border co-operation – for which maximum support exists, foresees the creation of an advertising center in the Defile, the administration of it, including the representation of the values and interest must come from an actor accepted by all members of such alliance/co-operation. The establishment of an intermediate coalition/grouping must be considered among the actual situation with high level of centrifuge and the institutionalization of the co-operation through a group with local action.

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