

TOURISM - SOURCE FOR DURABLE RURAL SPACE DEVELOPMENT

Ion CERTAN, Iulia BARCARI

Moldova State University, 60 Alexe Mateevici, Chisinau, MD-2009, Republic of Moldova,
Phone:+37369517390, Email: ioncertan@gmail.com

Corresponding author email: iuse4ka13@gmail.com

Abstract

Since independence Republic of Moldova did a lot of efforts to align with the big family of European Union and in November 2013 has made a huge step towards signing the Association Agreement and Free Trade Agreement with the EU. These impose our country to accelerate reforms and take all possible measures in order to reduce the gap of economic and socio-cultural development adjusting it to EU standards.

One of the most sensible issues is rural area development that needs wide types of actions in almost all aspects. In the article we'll consider if and how tourism could be a catalyzer for rural space conservation and further durable development that will be ended by some conclusions and recommendations to be implemented in the Republic of Moldova.

Key words: *tourism, development, rural area, infrastructure, European Union.*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays it is impossible to imagine a big city, or any known place without tourists. The tourism industry has now engulfed the entire world from the warm shores of the oceans to the snowy area of the Poles. In many countries, tourism is one of the three leading industries of the country, which is developing quite rapidly and is of a great social and economic importance. In the tourism sector are employed more than 250 million people. It accounts for 7 % of the total investments, 11% of the global consumer spending, 5% of all tax revenues and a third of the world trade in services. Tourism has a huge impact on key sectors of the economy such as transport and communications, trade, construction, agriculture, goods consumption and many others, acting as a catalyst for the social and economic development. Experts predict that the 21st century will be the one of the tourism. Particularly promising forms of tourism, up to date, are considered the rural, environmental and cultural ones. In our country, tourism also figures prominently in the structure of the economy. Thus, the country has 274 travel agencies providing travel both inland and abroad. According to various statistics, the agro-tourists in the world are from 7 % to 20 % of the total tourists and their growth rate is of about 30 % per year. The relevance of the topic

for the Republic of Moldova is due to the fact that rural, ecological and medical tourism sanatorium has all the possibilities to increase the share of industry in the GDP of the state. In addition, these types of tourism are beneficial not only for the public authorities, they also allow to raise living standards of life in rural areas, create new jobs, increase incomes of the villagers, etc. For this reason, in our country it is necessary to develop these types of tourism, inviting tourists from abroad, but at the same time to open new places for the citizens of our country. In this paper we want to illustrate that tourism - is not only a vacation for the soul, but also an excellent opportunity to develop the rural environment of the Republic of Moldova. We consider the facts that reflect the actual situation in tourism, and also offer a range of measures, which, in our opinion, will ensure long-term socio-economic development through tourism.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to characterize the tourism in rural space of Moldova, the following indicators were used: the number of foreign visitor arrivals in Moldova, number of foreign visitor arrivals with purpose of holiday and business in Moldova.

The period analyzed in this study was 1995-2013. The data, collected from Statistical

Yearbook of the Republic of Moldova, have been statistically processed and interpreted, building diagram.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Thus, briefly about the Republic of Moldova and the tourism performed in it. General data.

COUNTRY AT A GLANCE			
	Population	3.560 million	2012
	GDP	\$7.253 billion	2012
	GDP growth	-0.8%	2012
	Inflation	4.7%	2012

GNI per capita, Atlas method (current US\$) – 2070

Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty line (% of population) – 16.6

Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) – 26.4

Rural population (% of total population) – 51.62

International tourism, number of arrivals – 11000

International tourism, receipts (current US\$) – 262 millions

Travel services (% of service imports, BoP) – 34.078

Travel services (% of service exports, BoP) – 19.89.

Types of tourism in Moldova

Rural Tourism

This type of services allows visitors to learn about the sightseeing of the Republic of Moldova, plunge into country's history, local customs and traditions, and get acquainted with the way of life of the rural population.

Well kept farms, own wine, houses in traditional style, Moldovan food on the table and love for the homeland.

On the territories of interest to tourists are set up specific national tourist zones.

Rural tourism is especially popular. The rural environment of the Republic of Moldova, of the agricultural community and picturesque villages are an important source for:

- Provision of services by the traditional placement to visitors in rural settings;
- Providing them the opportunity to participate in country pursuits and activities;
- Familiarization with the local folklore, entertainment and traditions;

- Displaying handicrafts with the opportunity to participate in these activities;
- Enabling them a chance to purchase items made by folk artists.

Wine Tourism

Vineyards are also an important tourist destination in the rural sector.

The wine produced in the Republic of Moldova, thanks to its quality, has an international demand.

The republic has 142 wineries, 23 of them have experience of reception of visitors, 4 of which have tastings programs (CRICOVA, MILESTII MICI, PURCARI, CHATO VARTELY).

Here the tourists can get acquainted with the technology of the production of wine, watch the process of bottling and, of course, sample the final product.

Republic of Moldova, as a wine country, can offer visitors a rich choice of routes: underground cellars and towns, wineries, wine processing enterprises, those for the production of sparkling wines, Brandy's, balsams, etc.

Wineries in conjunction with the surrounding vineyards are part of the tourist route "The Wine Road in Moldova" and represent an important reason to visit the country.

Cultural tourism

The Republic of Moldova has a rich cultural heritage, which can be successfully used in tourism.

The earliest preserved heritages are the Geto - Dacian sites and Roman fortresses.

The remains of medieval fortresses, archaeological complexes such as the Old Orhei, monasteries, nobles' mansions and peasant houses represent a variety of visitor attractions.

In total, there are 140 monuments of cultural heritage that can be included in tourist itineraries.

In Chisinau there are many cultural heritage sites of domestic architecture from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which can be used as tourist attractions.

Most museums are located in the Republic of Moldova buildings of special architectural significance, and a rich collection of exhibits. A part of the national tourist product is the variety of cultures of different regions of the country.

The Republic of Moldova is a mixture of nationalities and cultures with many traditions, languages, folklore, cuisine, etc. The country has about 880 folk groups. Many of them reflect the distinct traditions of the region, and ethnic origins.

Medical - Health Tourism

The Republic of Moldova has a rich and varied potential for developing medical tourism.

Sanatoriums and resorts offer the necessary conditions for health tourism.

Sources of mineral water in the Republic of Moldova are also important for spa treatment.

The most promising are: "Bucuria-sind", Vadul lui Voda, "Codru", Hirjauca, Calarasi, "Nufrul alb", Cahul.

Mineral waters with curative properties in the Republic of Moldova (more than 47 sources) are the determining factor in the development of health tourism.

Analysis of tourism statistics for 2013 and in dynamics. Tourism activity of travel agencies and tour operators from the Republic of Moldova in 2013

Of those 13.2 thousand foreign tourists who visited Moldova in 2013 and benefited from the

services of travel agencies and tour operators 48.2% arrived for rest, recreation and leisure, 45.3% - business and professional activities, 4.5 % for treatment, 1.9 % - other purposes. The most significant share in the total of foreign tourists arriving in the Republic of Moldova is for the citizens from Romania (17.5 %), Russian Federation (12.2 %), Ukraine (7.9 %), Poland (6.3%), Germany (6.1%), Italy (4.5%), USA (4.4%), Turkey (4.2%), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (3 8%), France (2.8 %), Netherlands (2.6%), Austria (2.3%), Sweden (2.1%), Japan (2.0 %), Montenegro and Bulgaria (each by 1.9%), Switzerland (1.8%), Israel (1.1%). Through travel agencies and tour operators in 2013 went abroad 157 600 tourists and backpackers, with 7.3 % more than in 2012. Most Moldovans went abroad for rest, recreation and leisure (97.9 %). Moldovan citizens preferred to travel mainly in Turkey (36.6 % of total working abroad), Bulgaria (33.5%) , Romania (9.0 %), Ukraine (5.8 %), Greece (5.4%), Egypt (1.6 %) and the UAE (1.2%).

Table 1: The number of arrivals by the purpose of the visits

	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
The number of foreign visitor arrivals in Moldova, total	32821	18964	25073	14239	14722	8710	9189	8956	10788	12797	13150
Purpose: - holiday and rest	3256	7108	7840	6170	5804	5682	6459	5438	5892	7025	6343
- Business and professional reasons	24743	11577	16372	7444	8572	2541	2308	2971	4330	5190	5962
other purposes	4822	279	861	625	346	487	422	547	566	582	845

For Moldova a major interest are the foreign visitors that would contribute significantly to the development of the national economy. The number of arrivals of foreign visitors to our country was marked by reduction from 18964 in 1995 to 32821 in 2000 (Table 1) or with 42.3%. Then in 2005 there was an increase in the total number of arrivals of foreign visitors to Moldova up to 25073 or by 32.2 percent compared to 2000. There followed a categorically decline up to 8956 in 2010, or by 2.8 times more than in 2005 and again a slight increase in the years 2011-2013.

Among the factors that have influenced the dynamics and structure of international tourist

traffic in our country there are identified some with positive character (enhancing integration and international cooperation, globalization and internationalization of economic and social modernization of all sectors of the economy, the rapid development of services, etc) as well as ones with a negative nature (periods of economic recession, expanding poverty and unemployment, the outbreak of conflict whether internal or external) . We believe that the categorical decrease in the total number of foreign visitor arrivals in Moldova most influenced the increase in poverty.

A major interest presents the aim of arrival in our country of the foreign visitors. The number of arrivals with holiday and recreation purpose

increased from 3256 in 1995 to 7108 in 2000 or by 2.18 times and to 7840 in 2005 or by 10.3 percent compared with 2000, then it decreases to 6343 in 2013.

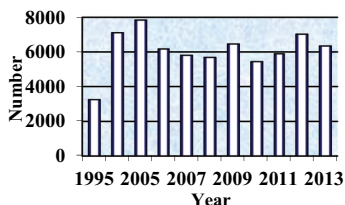


Figure 1. The number of the visitors by the purpose of rest in dynamics

The number of arrivals for business and professional reasons in 2000 is reduced by about 2.5 times, and in 2005 recorded an increase of 14 per cent compared to 2000 and follows the reduction of the arrivals for this purpose up to 5962 in 2013. In general, it should be noted the increasing trend of tourists on a business trip in Moldova, so in 2010 they were in number of 2971, and in 2013 - 5962.

Out of the 13.2 thousand foreign tourists who visited Moldova in 2013 and benefited from the services of travel agencies and tour operators 48.25% arrived for rest, recreation and leisure, 45.35% - business and professional activities, 6.4% - other purposes. If during the years 1995-2007 dominated the number of arrivals for business and professional reasons of foreign visitors to our country, then in 2008-2013 dominated the number of arrivals of the foreign visitors for holiday and recreation purpose. But at the same time, in the recent years, a growing interest in Moldova is from a business standpoint. Of particular interest is the domestic tourism. We will trace the change in the number of domestic tourists from 2008 to 2013:

The table 2 shows that the number of domestic tourists in 2013 decreased sharply compared to 2008. If in 2008 there were 48,456 people, in 2013 they became less than 29.5%. A downward trend is noticed since 2009, although in 2011 the number of tourists slightly exceeded the number of 2009, but continued to decline in 2012-2013.

Table 2. Evolution of number of domestic tourists

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
The number of domestic tourists	48456	37159	35594	37764	34363	34172

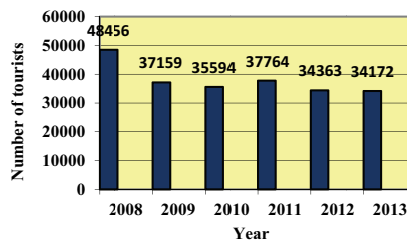


Figure 2. Domestic tourism in dynamics

These statistics clearly show that the decline in domestic tourism – is one of the most important tasks that must be addressed. Of course, the focus on the foreigners is a need, but what about our tourists? Foreigners come to Moldova often in warm holiday season, while ours are tourists in the country for all the year round. Namely the domestic tourists require developing both the summer and wintering tourism, providing a variety of year-round activities, excursions and entertainment.

Problems of tourism in Moldova

The biggest problem is the lack of a tourism infrastructure: bad roads, lack of toilets equipped at the stops, the annoying behavior at customs and more others. Further in details.

1. No roads - no tourism.

One of the obstacles in the way of the tourists is our roads. According to the chairman of the National Association of Travel Agencies of Moldova (NATA) Sebastian Botnari, this is the number 1 problem, because the access to the main tourist attractions is very problematic. "Moreover - he says - in addition to roads, a special need is equipment of the bus-stops for the tourists, like a tourist stop, where the foreigner will be able to drink, eat and visit a clean comfortable bathroom. Even if the last question will be solved in time (the option of building institutions on the basis of roadside service stations is considered), then the problem of the roads will not leave the urgent category pretty soon."

NATA position is sustained by some firms engaged in the inbound tourism to Moldova. "In order for the tourists to come to us and travel through our country, the roads should be repaired - emphasizes the director of the tourism department of Amadeus Travel Lufthansa City Center firm, Alla Grachev. – This should be done in the first place not for

tourists, but primarily for ourselves. After all, every time when a tourist trip to Tipova or Saharna is planned, it is frightening to remember our own local drivers. Anyone pities his own car! If to speak directly about tourists, so a definite problem is regarding toilets, which lack along most of those broken roads, or either are there, but are far from a proper format. They primarily shock the guests of Moldova. Everything else for them - is exotic. "

2. Through thorns to 2-3 stars

As a second barrier for coming to Moldova stands the high cost of the hotels. Accommodation in a Chisinau business class hotel today costs a foreigner from 100 euros per day, and this price includes only breakfast, in the same time in Turkey, you can live in a five-star hotel for 40 euros a night, and all inclusive. "That is why Turkey is visited yearly by 6 million tourists.

In order to solve this issue, NATA tries to establish communication with the 2 -3- star hotels that have recently become fewer.

Another option for accommodation – is the home of people who will gladly lodge tourists. It is really profitable and increasingly popular in nowadays, but there is a BUT! The standalone tourists, who do not use the services of travel agencies, hardly will find the address of the family by themselves, providing low-cost services and conveniences "the house in the village".

Many tourists coming to Moldova prefer to rent an apartment because it is cheaper than to stay in a hotel, and it is for this reason that the hotel sector is suffering.

3. Information for the tourist

Information about attractions: worldwide, even in small towns with a sickly attraction there is a tourist information center, where you will be given a map and answered all your questions. In Chisinau, during the day you will not find even with the candle anything like streets pointers, tablets in English, public transport schemes, drivers of transport speaking at least a foreign language and a lot of things you will not find, too. Even for our residents is difficult to know whether there is at least one driveway to a Nature Reserve from Moldova, a parking lot, the infrastructure, is it possible to take a tour-guide. Of course, there are not many guides through Moldova.

4. Transport

Transport: it is no secret for anybody that in Moldova the air tickets are wildly expensive, because of the monopoly of Air Moldova.

Finely, the tourists decided to come to Moldova by train. But far from it, the site of the railway station is not translated into English, and you will never and for anything be able to buy tickets. The same thing applies in most cases to the buses, just for fun, try to call to the bus station - you will be provided at least half an hour waiting.

5. Home vacation

One of the major problems is the lack of interest of local tourism people to take a vacation in their own country. Hence, few people would agree to exchange a week vacation in Europe or to the sea, on a tour of the sights of Moldova. Periodically are arranged tours to schoolchildren to sites such as Saharna, Dolna, Old Orhei, Capriana, and others, but, as a rule, they are organized by teachers or parents. Speaking about the adults, they are not attracted to visit the memorable places in their homeland. Travel agencies offer this possibility, but do not offer guided tours.

6. Incomes and prices

The most important problem of domestic tourism is the enormous disparity in income and prices for travel services. The problem of the high cost of guesthouses, hotels, cafes and restaurants, and excursions themselves repels domestic tourists from traveling to the country. For example, the cost of a travel to Cricova can reach 1300 lei/person, and to Milestii Mici 1650 lei/5 pers.

How are the problems solved?

The National Tourism Agency has developed a strategy to attract foreign tourists for 2014-2020. According to the document, the number of foreign tourists visiting our country should increase each year by 3%. But this requires investment in rural, sanatorium and religious tourism. On the last place is the cultural and gastronomic tourism.

1) Foreign media

The main target markets for the tourism sector are the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Russia, Romania, Poland. The project supports the participation of Moldovan tour operators in major international exhibitions, as well as inviting foreign journalists in Moldova.

"Articles about Moldova appeared in *Lonely Planet*, *San Francisco Gate*, *Newsweek Magazine*, *Touristik Aktuell*, *Heilbronner Stimme*, *Freizeit Stimme*, *Badische Tagblatt*, *Sudwes Presse*, *Horizon*, *Krasivaya Jizni*. It was also published the first tourist guide for Moldova in German.

2) Information platform

An important role in promoting a new image of the country was played by the site www.moldovaholiday.travel, which today is the only Moldovan tourist information platform.

3) EU investments in infrastructure

A great help for the development of infrastructure is given by the EU that provides grants and loans for the construction of roads and other works.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the above information, it can be concluded that tourism, both external and internal, is not developed in Moldova. Even though, there are created projects, held conferences to address tourism issues, but this is not enough. There is a need for actions that will at minimum cost of time and money to attract maximum number of tourists, both foreign and domestic.

Analyzing statistical data in dynamics, it is evident that the number of visitors has significantly increased in recent years (13.2 million in 2013). A growing interest to Moldova comes from a business standpoint, so the number of visitors for business purposes is growing (5190 thousand - in 2012, 5632 thousand - 2013). At the same time reduces the number of visitors for rest purposes (2012 - 7025 thousand, in 2013 - 6343 thousand), which is a problem for our tourism.

In completion of the paper we would like to suggest a few ways to solve the problems of tourism in Moldova, which require some investment, but will require a short time of achievement.

1) For example, journalists from Italy, Germany and other countries could be in Moldova for a few days, and then write about Moldova as a tourist direction in their newspapers, magazines and other publications. Such things are done by many countries. This is an effective way of tourism promotion.

However, for this purpose the support of the state is needed.

2) It is also possible to attract the tourists who are visiting Romania or Ukraine, to come to Moldova. In these countries, there are many tourists that focus on different types of tourism. Besides, we could conclude an interstate agreement so that the tourists from Ukraine and Romania would also attend the Moldovan attractions. For this, a state decision is needed.

3) Developing some specific programs for domestic tourists based on a flexible system of discounts and benefits, such as for: children, students and pensioners. This enables by reducing prices, to make tourism in the country more attractive for its population. When resting in the country will be cheaper than abroad and no less interesting, a certain percentage of the population will want to spend their vacation here.

4) The development of special tour programs for pupils/students.

5) Cooperation of the Ministry of Tourism with large and small, private and public enterprises. This will allow, for example, every year the best department of the company to go on a tour of Moldova. If everything is organized adequately, employees will want to visit more than one place, taking the rest of the team at the same time or family members.

6) Improvement of infrastructure in such details as the installation of signs, information boards in English, improved bus stops, sanitary conditions on them.

7) Placing more information among foreigners. Many of our compatriots are leaving to work in other countries, where they can advertise our state, calling to the acquaintance with the culture of this small but beautiful country. Cooperation with foreign tourism agencies, placement of posters about the trip to Moldova, etc.

REFERENCES

- Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Moldova, Ed. Statistica Chişinău
Certan, Simion, Management: Order to optimize, Chisinau, CEP USM, 2007
Certan S., Certan I., Reflections on the development of tourism in the Republic of Moldova, The AgroLife Scientific Journal
www.statistica.md
www.moldovaholiday.travel