

**THE UNIVERSITY OF “BABEȘ-BOLYAI” FROM CLUJ-NAPOCA  
FACULTY OF GEOGRAPHY  
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**CROSS-BORDER TOURISM IN THE NORTH-WESTERN PART OF  
ROMANIA: SATU MARE AND SZABOLCS-SZATMÁR-BEREG COUNTIES**

*Doctoral Thesis Summary*

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**Keywords:** tourism flow, cross-border cooperation, tourism infrastructure, touristic polarisation, network, thematic cultural routes, cross-border tourism, health tourism

## INTRODUCTION

The paper entitled “Cross-border Tourism in the North-Western Part of Romania: Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg Counties” aims to highlight the opportunities created by the establishment of cross-border cooperation in order to overcome the peripheral condition and the disadvantages arising from this position. The study focuses on the northern part of the Romanian-Hungarian frontier, specifically on the two neighbouring counties, Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, an area with a strategically advantageous position, bordering Ukraine and on a narrow segment Slovakia, enabling thus the cooperation between these countries.

The research actuality precisely resides in the approached topic, namely the possibility of accessing funding programmes that stimulate cross-border cooperation in various fields, with the purpose of revitalisation and increasing the competitiveness of border regions. The two examined counties are characterised by obvious similarities: they are peripheral areas, presenting a lower quality of basic and tourism infrastructure, frequently facing problems of social, economic and environmental nature, featuring a tourism offer which is defectively exploited and promoted. Against this background, this study aims to emphasize the main areas of the Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cooperation and the beneficial implications of these relationships on tourism.

The study area is characterised by a rich tourist potential; the natural tourism resources are completed by a diverse and valuable man-made heritage, but less known and exploited for tourism. Through the bibliographic documentation, the evaluation of existing partnerships between stakeholders in tourism, data collection and analysis, we aim to outline a clear image on the situation of cross-border tourism in the north-western Romania. In this regard, the study captures aspects of natural tourism resources belonging to the land (relief, climate and its role in tourism, hydrography and the biogeographic component), the material and non-material cultural heritage, as well as main funding sources for viable projects in the field of cross-border tourism. In the present case, the study on natural and cultural values of the region cannot be limited by the borderline. The issue should be rather approached in a cross-border context, in order to highlight the areas of interest, the overlap between subjects, the importance of linking touristic routes, the necessity to promote the area as a common destination to neutralise the increasing competition, the development and implementation of joint management strategies.

The development and spread of tourism phenomenon, the attractive benefits involved, have imposed the need to conduct complex studies at international, national, regional and local level. Thus, research in the field of tourism can become a very useful tool for the public and/or private sector, as it provides valuable information about the state of tourism development at a particular moment, it represents a plan for comparison and a starting point in the development of strategies meant to

promote a particular destination. The studies conducted in the field of tourism regarding the natural and man-made assets, demand trends, opportunities and threats provide a clear image for the stakeholders involved in this sphere of activity. For this reason, we consider that, due to the chosen topic, used methodology and interdisciplinary approach, the paper brings into question elements of topicality and presents a high degree of importance, given that the investigated area requires an identity, adequate marketing and especially the ability to ensure quality services that meet current tourism trends.

## **1. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL GROUNDWORK**

Border issues have always captured the attention of both historians and geographers, due to their role, namely the separation of territories and communities, definition of the national territory, frequently becoming a source of conflict. Whether they are called boundaries, borders, frontiers or limits (Săgeată & Baroiu, 2004), these terms are commonly used when referring to state limits, areas of overlap between the defining elements of the communities that come into contact. Though the term separation is an expression of differences at political, social, economic and cultural level (Knippenberg & Markusse, 1999), the initial border function within the EU, more precisely to set boundaries, tends to diminish in terms of importance. According to latest perspectives (Ilieș, 2003; Popa, 2006; Ricq, 2006; Medeiros, 2010; Milenković, 2012; Veema, 2012), we notice a change in perception concerning the border state functions, these dividing lines are no longer seen as barriers but bridges, contiguity elements between communities on both sides, of cultural and economic interest.

The fulfilment of this study is based on the assumption that cross-border cooperation and tourism development and can be correlated, due to the fact that:

- tourism is a bridge, a proponent of dialogue between the communities on either side of the border. Cross-border projects that have targeted tourism require close cooperation not only between beneficiaries but also between specialists in various domains, consulted during their implementation;
- on the other hand, the establishment of cross-border relations has beneficial implications on tourism as it provides local entrepreneurs a range of financial tools necessary for tourism arrangements or increasing the visibility of the tourism offer.

The subject of the thesis is placed in the sphere of tourism geography, therefore its conduction makes use of a set of methodological tools common to the geographical research in general, along with its own methods. The range of research instruments and methods will be complemented by the

ones specific to social sciences, mathematics and statistics. In order to analyse cross-border tourism along the northern sector of the Romanian-Hungarian border, the research is based on the following objectives (fig. 1):

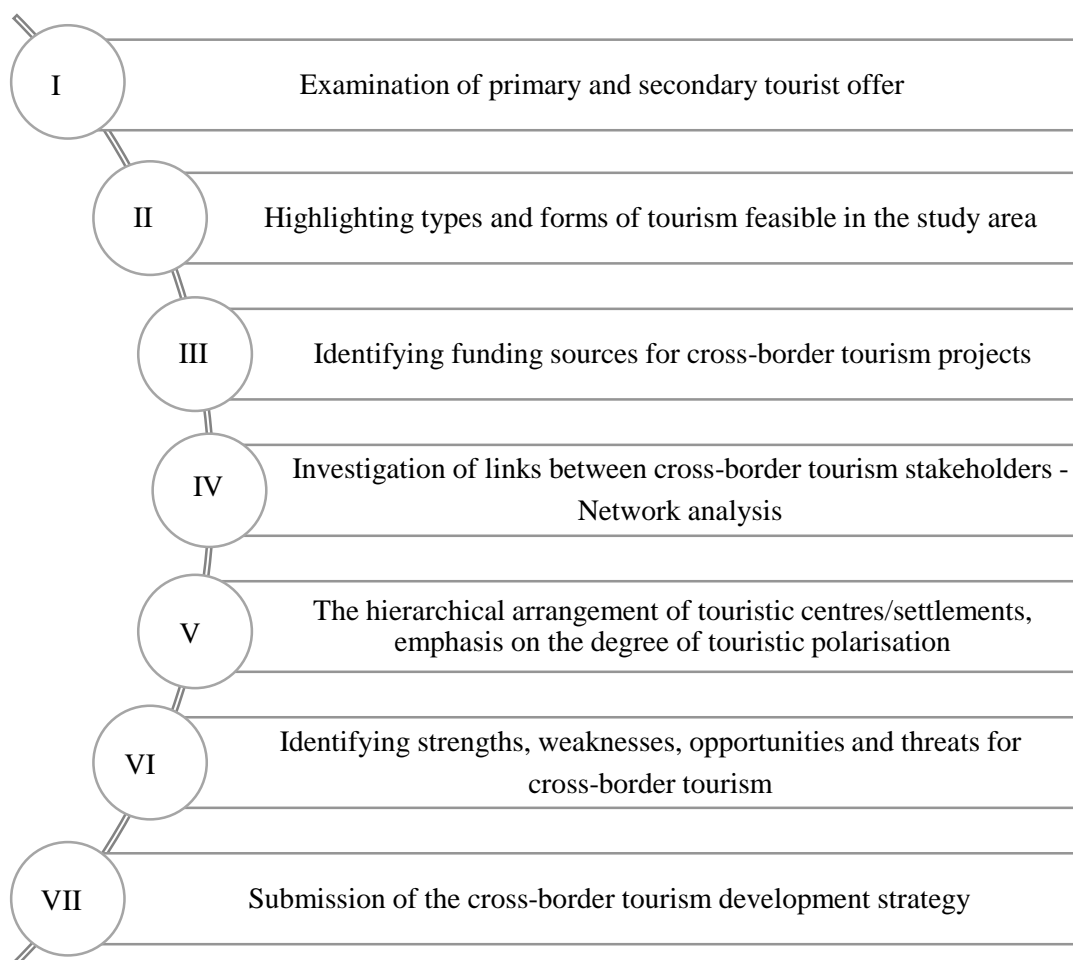


Fig. 1. Primary objectives of the study on cross-border tourism in the north-western part of Romania

The accomplishment of this mirror study relies on the use of a set of methods that facilitate a detailed research on the investigated phenomena. In order to capture aspects regarding the tourism infrastructure (the evolution of accommodation units, its analysis on settlements, units and types) as well as the tourism flow (tourist arrivals and overnights in public accommodation units), the chosen methodology relies on *the longitudinal study*. In this case, the endeavour took into account the period of 2000-2014, focusing on the following set of indicators: number of units and the existing accommodation capacity in Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties, passenger flow recorded at border, tourist arrivals and tourism nights in public accommodation establishments (according to categories of tourists and units) and the average length of stay. The method stresses the main trends and changes affecting certain tourist destinations and the effects that economic, social and psychological factors have on the behavior of tourists.

*The network analysis* represents a fundamental method in researching tourism in a cross-border context. Generally defined as a set of interacting elements, the network launches the idea that collaboration and partnerships are able to create synergies, which entail a superior ability to disseminate creativity, innovation and knowledge (Pechlaner et al., 2002). According to Hall (2004), networks and clusters play an important role in developing the intangible capital, becoming a major point of interest within the context of regional development. Moreover, networking relies on a wide range of cooperative relationships between different organisations, usually competing against one another or institutions linked through economic and social relations/transactions. In the present paper, the use of this method has revealed that the tourism industry in the study area is characterised by a relatively high number of small actors with limited resources, therefore, the desired goal of sustainable development is difficult to achieve.

Given that the tourism product incorporates a number of elements (tourism resources, facilities and services provided at destination, accessibility, tourism brand), its conception requires a combined effort of a large number of organisations, based on cooperation. The role of network analysis is to highlight the importance of establishing cross-border inter-organisational relationships and to facilitate the understanding of the interaction between these actors. To achieve this objective, the efforts were directed towards an assessment of the established partnerships in tourism, using the projects developed with ERDF financial support, the necessary data being collected via questionnaire. On the other hand, the analysis and calculation of network indicators (density, centrality) is based on using the UCINET software, version 6.528 (developed by Borgatti et al., 2002) whereas the graphical representation of data has been framed by using the NetDraw tool, version 2.141, created by Borgatti (2002).

*The real ranks method* is included in the category of multi-criteria ranking methods, highly effective when conceiving territorial studies because it allows the researcher to compile regional classifications, relating territorial units to the average level and revealing the disparities between them. To reach this objective, a number of six indicators have been used, which possess relevance for the investigated topic, namely: touristic potential, existing accommodation capacity, tourist arrivals and overnights, average length of stay and tourist traffic density. The usefulness of the method lies in the major advantage that it confers, more precisely the possibility to assign a specific weight to each variable, according to its importance in the investigated issue. The outcome offers an insight into the competitiveness of all entities under investigation and could constitute a starting point in planning strategies meant to revitalise low-performing units, proving, at the same time, the effectiveness of the undertaken promotional activities.

*The cartographic method*, enabled by GIS technology, allows the centralisation of the information gathered by data accumulation methods, accomplishing the distribution of various



components under investigation and highlighting the relationships between them. In order to achieve the cartographic materials of the paper and conduct the spatial analysis, the ArcGIS software was used, having as a base the existing topographic and touristic maps, together with the gathered information after field investigations, bibliographic documentation and analysis of statistical data.

*The Inverse Distance Weighting method (IDW)* relies on the assumption that the influence of a point in relation to another decreases with distance. The method can be used to estimate the value of an item in a location characterised by lack of data or measurements, based on the weighted average of known neighbouring values. The shorter the distance between the known values and the point for which the calculation is made, the more influence such values have on establishing an appropriate value (Naoum & Tsanis, 2004). In brief, the weighting coefficients are inversely proportional to the distance between the known value and the element for which it is intended to determine the value. In the present study, the inverse distance weighted method complements the results obtained previously by applying the real ranks method. Thus, the territorial units obtaining the best scores also represent polarising centres of the tourism demand and the most competitive settlements in terms of unfolded tourism activities.

*The case study method* completes the network analysis method, being used in exploring the outcomes of the projects implemented with the support of Hungary-Romania CBC Programme 2007-2013 and their impact on tourism. In the present paper, the case study becomes an effective approach because it offers the possibility of examining the cross-border tourism phenomenon in the context in which it occurs, “the case” referring both to the group of stakeholders involved in tourism development and the communities from both sides of the border.

To achieve an assessment of the partnerships established between the actors involved in cross-border tourism, the research followed an inquiry by e-mail, conducted during October-December 2014. Data was collected using an electronic questionnaire, a more preferable tool due to the advantages it confers, namely: the ability to address to a wide range of subjects within a single action, the easy way of sending, completion and return, obtaining higher quality data because the survey respondent may assign more attention to answers without being distracted by other factors.

The main methods used in conducting this study as well as the justification of their utility in the research topic chosen are synthetically shown in table 1.

**Table 1.** The main methods used in the chosen research topic

<b>Method</b>	<b>Utility</b>
Bibliographic documentation	the conceptual framework of the study, literature review and the current state of knowledge
Longitudinal study	highlights the tourism indicators for the period under review (2000-2014)
Network analysis	emphasizes the importance of establishing inter-organisational cross-border relations, evaluating tourism partnerships by examining the characteristics of the network
Real ranks method	a mathematical-statistical tool that proves its effectiveness in developing regional rankings, in our case the results have shown the different degrees of attractiveness and competitiveness of the most important tourist centres/settlements
The cartographic method	the representation of the investigated area, the achievement of cartograms and cartodiagrams that depict the degree of tourism endowment of the study area
IDW interpolation method	making use of the values of each point and the distance between them, the resulting model outlines key trends that define a particular phenomenon, in this case the touristic polarisation of settlements from the study area and its immediate proximity
Case study method	was used in disclosing the results of tourism cross-border projects
The survey method	construction and use of the questionnaire, the results being used to assess cross-border partnerships in the field of tourism
Analysis	centralisation of previously acquired information, its processing, providing answers to the fundamental questions raised by the study
The comparative approach	giving insight into the tourism facilities (both primary and secondary) of two adjacent counties
Synthesis	drawing conclusions and further directions for tourism development in the study area

## **2. TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COOPERATION IN THE NORTH-WESTERN ROMANIA. SATU MARE AND SZABOLCS-SZATMÁR-BEREG COUNTIES**

The second chapter highlights the history and the domains of the Romanian-Hungarian transboundary cooperation, analysing priorities and measures of the three programmes: PHARE CBC / INTERREG III A (2004 - 2006), ENPI Hungary - Slovakia - Romania - Ukraine 2007 - 2013, respectively Hungary - Romania CBC Programme 2007-2013.

Taking into account the changes affecting the tourism industry (transformations in the structure of the demand, increased competition and the need to meet the requirements of a challenging clientele), a growing number of researchers and practitioners recommend cooperation as a strategy for success (Günther & Winkler, 2007). The value and true meaning of partnerships derive from the collaborative relationships linking small and medium enterprises, local organisations, tourism associations, institutions and local authorities (Bădulescu, 2013). Within this context, the research aims to provide an insight into the opportunities created by developing tourism partnerships, in this regard the study uses the results of the Hungary-Romania CBC Programme 2007-2013. The 104 projects targeted nine key areas of intervention and involved the cooperation between local and regional authorities, non-profit organisations and legal entities, all of them being further referred to as actors or stakeholders.

Following the model proposed by Timur and Getz (2008) on the analysis of network stakeholders in urban sustainable tourism development or Durand and Nelles (2013) on the analysis of cross-border transport network in the region Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai, the second stage of the investigation entailed the construction of matrices using as variables the actors involved in supporting cross-border cooperation in tourism. This matrices reflect the connections established between stakeholders, using as parameters for analysis the projects managed by the partners involved in the Hungary - Romania CBC Programme, conducted during 2007 and 2013. In order to highlight the interactions between actors and obtain answers concerning the network stability, density and centrality, the approach followed the elaboration of matrices with the use of UCINET software, where the existence of a relationship was marked with 1 and the lack of contact with 0.

The connection density was calculated using the formula:  $D = \frac{2m}{n(n-1)}$ , where  $m$  signifies the number of existing links and  $n$  stands for the number of stakeholders (Scott et al., 2008). As a general rule, the higher the density of contacts between nodes, the higher the probability of resources being recycled within the network.

The network of actors involved in cross-border tourism projects comprises 40 nodes, partners in 30 projects oriented towards the following areas of intervention: tourism development,

environmental protection (its components representing valuable tourist resources), cooperation between communities, promoting business cooperation and improving cross-border transport facilities. Among these actors 80 links are established, which means a connection density of 0,1025; a network density of 0,062 density and a clustering coefficient of 0,764; the graph centrality being 0,2733 (values found in table 2).

The network analysis results reflect the fact that the interventions regarding cross-border cooperation in tourism are fragmented, less effective and with relatively poor focus. To the extent that there are sufficient financial and human resources, applicants may submit several funding applications and thus run multiple cross-border projects. Therefore, we consider as appropriate a more densely connected network, distinguished by a high level of actors' centrality, aspect which facilitates communication and a fast transfer of knowledge and innovation.

**Table 2.** The main features of the investigated network

	<b>Tourism development</b>
Number of stakeholders	40
Number of links	80
Link density	0,1025
Network density	0,062
Clustering coefficient	0,764
Graph centrality	0,2733

The above features indicate a sparse network, however, we appreciate the centrality of certain actors such as: the Environmental Protection Agency of Satu Mare County, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Regional Development and Environmental Management Agency, Satu Mare County Museum, Town Hall of Carei Municipality and the Upper-Tisza-Region Environmental Protection and Water Directorate, between which bilateral and complex ties are established. These organisations are involved in large projects, aimed at protecting, promoting and enhancing the sustainable leveraging of natural and cultural heritage of the Romanian-Hungarian border region.

With the purpose of assessing the developed tourism partnerships, a further study has been conducted on a sample comprising 40 actors involved in cross-border projects designed to develop tourism in north-western Romania (Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties), which were implemented during the Hungary-Romania CBC Programme, 2007-2013. In this regard, the research was focused on the history and the domains of cooperation between these organisations, the encountered obstacles, the added value of cooperation, the method, reason and frequency for contacting the project partner/partners, the critical factors that can ensure a successful collaboration.

The conclusion drawn from this investigation is that the identified overriding actors already perceive cross-border cooperation as a solution for overcoming common problems, appreciating the opportunities created by such partnerships. The impediments to a successful collaboration are primarily considered to be the demanding procedures for submitting proposals and the difficulties in finding potential partners, in the absence of an integrated system that provides such information. For the organisations involved in this process, the added value generated through cross-border projects is mainly conferred by the establishment of sustainable contacts, followed by the sustainability of the implemented project, the access to innovative solutions and examples of good practice, the development of a positive image and increased confidence in own forces and partners. A successful cooperation requires a common vision and a long-term commitment. The study has also highlighted the desire to create contacts with new partners in the future, the willingness to ensure the transfer of knowledge and experience to partners in order to find solutions for mutual issues.

### **3. TOURISM RESOURCES ALONG THE NORTHERN PART OF THE ROMANIAN-HUNGARIAN BORDER**

The examination of tourism resources and the assessment of the tourism potential of the micro-regions identified in the counties of Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (fig. 2) reveal that the study area possesses an important tourism potential, conferred by the presence of thermal and mineral water resources, complemented by a wide range of historical monuments and traces of history, cultural and religious buildings and traditional events. Nevertheless, the individuality of the region mainly resides in the existence of mineral and thermal springs, highly appreciated for their therapeutic properties but which are yet unexploited according to their true potential, together with a remarkable cultural and religious heritage, ensured by the presence of medieval churches with wooden bell towers, richly decorated pulpits and mural paintings.

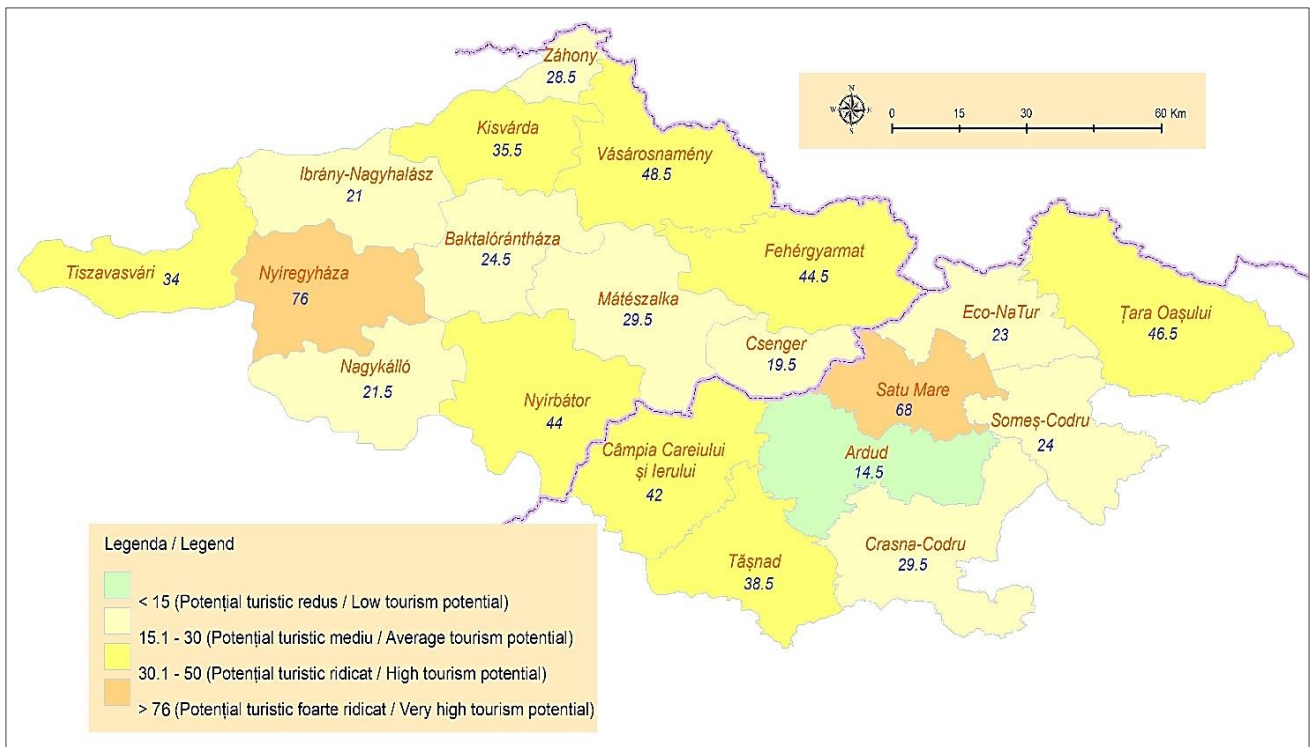


Fig. 2. The touristic potential value of micro-regions from Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties

(Source: Bâtea, 2014a, p. 81)

The estimation of the touristic potential value for all 20 micro-regions identified in Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties has provided a clear image on the assets which lie at the base of tourism product development. In brief, based on the obtained results, one may conclude the following (Bâtea, 2014a):

- the micro-regions of Satu Mare and Nyíregyháza emerge as touristic areas able to sustain the development and promotion of different tourism types (such as curative and recreational tourism based on the existent hyperthermal springs and the related arrangements, cultural tourism which is encouraged by a diverse and valuable heritage legacy: ecclesiastical buildings, synagogues, museums and galleries, urban ensembles);
- the most suitable micro-regions for developing cultural-religious routes are: Vásárosnamény, Fehérgyarmat and Oaş Land (already connected by a cross-border trail entitled The Route of Medieval Churches in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Satu Mare Counties), Nyírbátor (Hungary’s National Sanctuary from Máriapócs, preserving the miracle weeping icon of the Virgin Mary) and also Crasna-Codru (its touristic appeal being based on values such as: the Romanesque church from Acâş, the wooden churches from Corund, Bolda, Stâna and Lelei);
- the curative and healthcare tourism development is based on the (thermo-)mineral waters from Oaş Land, Tăşnad, Carei and Ier Plains, Crasna-Codru, Vásárosnamény, Fehérgyarmat,

Nyírbátor and Mátészalka. This type of product marks a shift towards healthcare tourism, characterised by a growing demand for maintaining a good physical and mental state (through youth, vitality and beauty) by using natural therapeutic means;

- recreational tourism, although of short or medium duration, is highly efficient in terms of the benefits arising from discovering new places and experiences. Mainly exploiting nature-based resources, this type of tourism has found favourable conditions to ensure its development particularly in Oaş Land micro-region (comprising assets such as Oaş and Gutâi mountains, Călinești lake, Tur river), Csenger, Fehérgyarmat and Vásárosnamény (where Tisa river and its affluents become a target for fishing or water sports enthusiasts).

#### **4. TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE**

The 4th chapter aims to underline the relationship between tourism potential and the level of tourism infrastructure development in the study area, a key element which supports the leverage of its attractive resources. In this regard, the study aims to present the current state of tourism infrastructure and its evolution over the 2000-2014 period.

After the examination of the tourism infrastructure from the investigated area it is concluded that, Satu Mare county has more modest facilities in relation to the existing tourism potential and compared with the Hungarian county, this deficiency could be maintained on a medium term. The tourism infrastructure analysis reveals the concentration of accommodation units in the county seat (Satu Mare), more precisely 48 of the 75 units under statistical records, totalising almost half (47%) of the county accommodation capacity. According to the data provided by the National Institute of Statistics, the Romanian tourism sector is characterised by the following achievements:

- an existing touristic accommodation capacity of 1.961 places for the year of 2014, nearly half of them being provided by the hotel industry;
- only 14 localities are endowed with accommodation infrastructure (Satu Mare, Carei, Livada, Negrești-Oaş, Tășnad, Acâș, Botiz, Certeze, Moftin, Orașu Nou, Păulești, Urziceni, Vama and Vetis);
- we also note the downfall of the touristic chalets and school and pres-school camps, due to degradation and lack of investments.

As for the Hungarian tourism sector, the data received from the Central Statistical Office display the following:

- an accommodation capacity superior to Satu Mare county, reaching in 2014 10.670 places (out of which the hotel units have a share of 15% while approximately 55% of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg accommodation capacity is provided by non-permanent structures);
- 43 settlements are endowed with accommodation infrastructure, among them primarily stands out Nyíregyháza, which groups 40 tourist accommodation units with a total capacity of 2.443 places;
- we also note the presence of accommodation units (such as guest houses, campings, villas) in several rural settlements that preserve cultural and historical assets, ethnographic or natural resources: Beregdaróc, Lónyai, Kölcse, Tiszamogyorós, Tuzér, etc.

The analysis carried out on the balneotherapy facilities reveals the competitiveness of these structures in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county, being characterised by a high visibility among foreign tourists, wide range of services and affordable prices, however, the competition from similar establishments in Satu Mare county intensifies (fig. 3).

The examination on the leisure base from the two counties discloses its complementary feature, as thermal parks and wellness centres present in the Hungarian tourism sector are complemented by facilities for winter sports practice at Luna Şes resort. In the case of catering and treatment units, the study results indicate that they are better represented in comparison with leisure facilities, the latter requiring investments to diversify the range of touristic services.



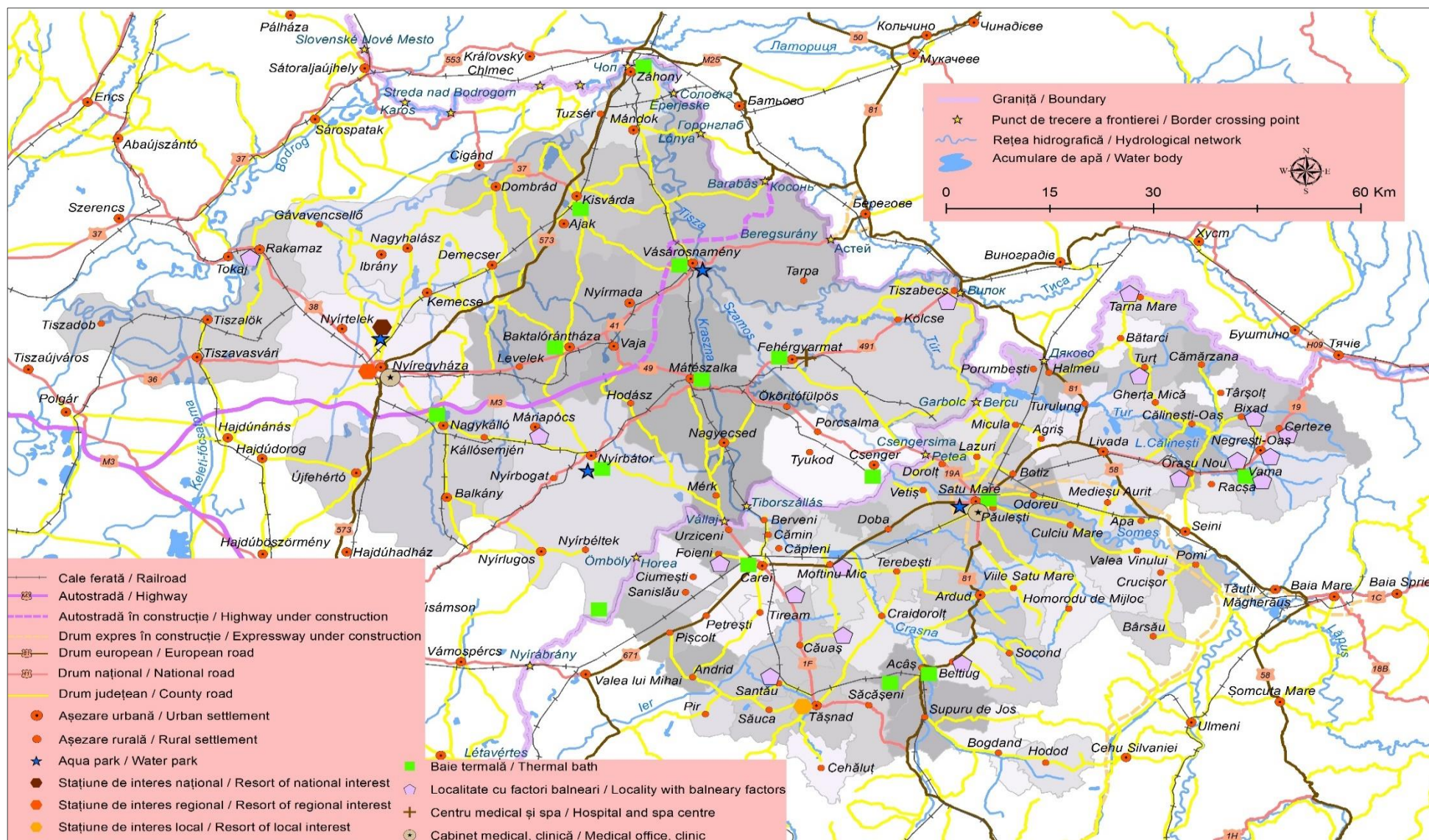


Fig. 3. The distribution of resorts and localities with balneary factors in Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties  
(Source: Bâtea, 2015, p. 505)

## 5. TOURISM FLOW

In order to examine the tourism flow in the study area, the investigation focuses on four main indicators, which supply essential information for developing tourism planning actions, namely: the cross-border traffic of passengers, the tourist arrivals, respectively the overnights in the public accommodation units from Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties and the average length of stay. These indicators allow relevant analyses on the tourism activities carried out in a region because they provide useful information to quantify the tourism phenomenon and its effects.

### 5.1. Passenger flow recorded at border

The analysis of human mobility in the Romanian-Hungarian border specific to Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties (in the three border crossing points from Carei – Ágerdómajor, Urziceni – Vállaj and Petea – Csengersima) for the year of 2014, confirms the overwhelming importance of Petea – Csengersima border crossing point (table 3). We note the great share of Romanian citizens transiting this point, with approximately 76% of total cross-border traffic, also coming from the neighboring counties (Maramureș, Sălaj and even Cluj).

**Table 3.** Transboundary mobility recorded in the three border crossing points, 2014

<b>Border crossing point</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Romanians</b>	<b>Hungarians</b>	<b>Other nationalities</b>
Carei - Ágerdómajor	3.179	174	2.998	7
Urziceni - Vállaj	575.384	414.154	135.143	26.087
Petea - Csengersima	1.623.580	1.235.518	241.956	146.106

(Data source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2015)

### 5.2. Tourist arrivals in public accommodation units

For the beginning of the examined period (between 2000 and 2003), Satu Mare county registers a low number of tourist arrivals, aspect also correlated with the reduced number of units, modest capacity, insufficient utilization and promotion of the attractive resources in the area. Only since the year of 2007 we notice an appreciable increase in the number of arrivals, exceeding 92.000 (79.486 domestic tourists and 13.195 international tourists). However, in 2013 Satu Mare county present a reduced attractiveness for foreign tourists, recording only 4.615 arrivals, but the situation has improved since 2014, that very year representing a growth of 58% concerning the international tourist arrivals.

Data available on tourist arrivals in public accommodation establishments from the neighbouring county show a superior valorisation of its touristic heritage. In this case, the tourism flow is oriented mainly towards the resort of national interest Sóstó, endowed with a diverse accommodation infrastructure, leisure and treatment facilities, as well as towards urban centers with balneary establishments and valuable cultural-historical sites. The maximum values reached by this indicator are specific for the last two years, 141.097 arrivals recorded in 2013 and 147.829 arrivals in 2014 (fig. 4). Overall, the general course is on an upward trajectory (the year of 2014 highlighting an increase of approximately 30% compared to 2000).

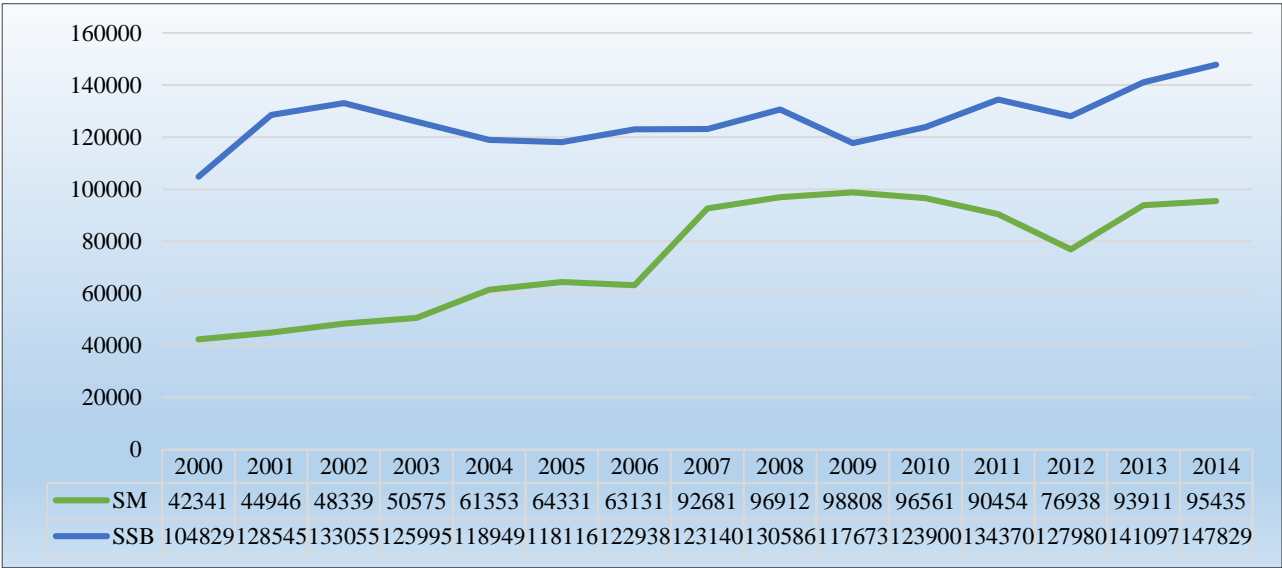


Fig. 4. The evolution of tourist arrivals in the accommodation units of the study area during 2000-2014  
(Data source: National Institute for Statistics and Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2015)

### 5.3. Tourism nights in public accommodation units

The evolution of this indicator is largely similar to the previously mentioned indicator, the analysed period (2000-2014) is generally characterised by an upward trend for the Satu Mare county, but discontinuous for 2002, when recording a decrease by approximately 7% since the previous year and also 2011-2012 (decline by 7% and 13%) as opposed to the previous period (fig. 5). After the recovery in 2013 (161.216 overnights), for 2014 new decreasing values can be noted, although tourist arrivals grow slightly as compared to 2013. Despite these fluctuations, we observe that overall, the values have risen during the period of 15 years, 2014 marking an increase of approximately 46% compared to the beginning of the examined period. In the case of the neighbouring county, the number of overnights has substantially increased, the maximum values being achieved in 2013 (290.302 overnights) and 2014 (304.851).

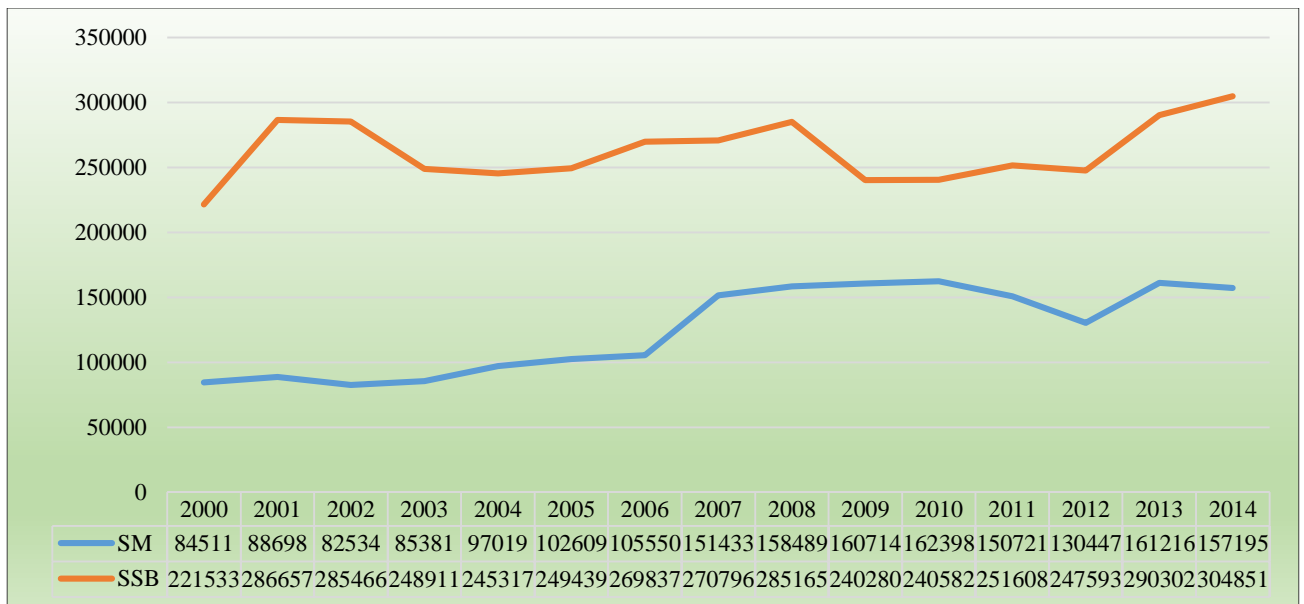


Fig. 5. The evolution of tourist overnights in the accommodation establishments from Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg during 2000-2014

(Data source: National Institute for Statistics and Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2015)

#### 5.4. Average length of stay

The average length of stay is another eloquent indicator for the tourism flow, which expresses the number of days spent by tourists at destination. The length of stay can be calculated by dividing the number of overnights to the number of tourist arrivals. The evolution of this indicator over the period of 2000-2014 reveals that the average length of stay either declines or registers an insignificant increase, rarely exceeding the threshold of 2 days (fig. 6).

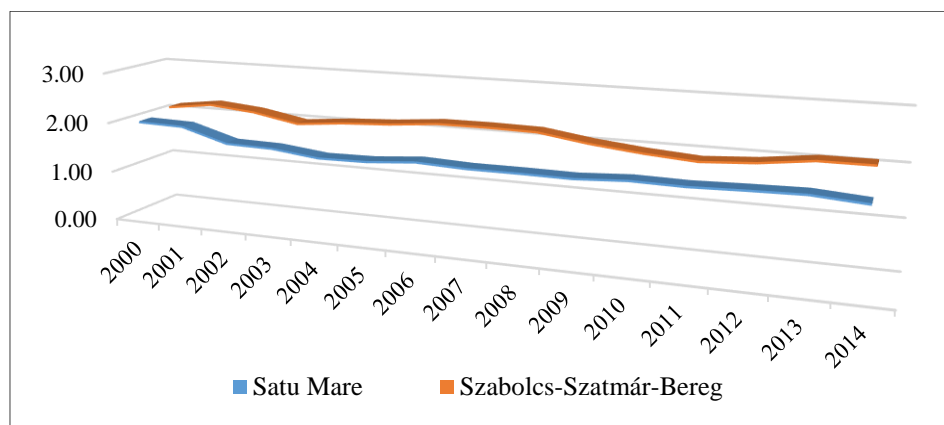


Fig. 6. The evolution of the average length of stay in the study area during 2000-2014

(Data source: National Institute for Statistics and Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2015)

The maximum value for Satu Mare county is registered in 2000, with a value of 2 days, in 2014 the average length of stay reaching 1,65 days. When it comes to the neighbouring county, the

longest stay characterises 2001 (2,23 days). The result leads to the conclusion that the tourist facilities from the study area are not exploited and promoted properly, the average length of stay being too short compared to the region's touristic potential. The correlation between the arrivals registered in accommodation establishments and the average length of stay indicates that, although the number of tourists in the area is constantly increasing, their length of stay decreases or stabilizes, reaching modest values, signaling thus a tourism potential valorisation through weekend or transit tourism. The current state of health tourism, considered the pillar of tourism development in the region, might provide further explanations in this regard. We note, on the one hand, high prices, people with middle and low income, more sensitive to prices, choosing to reduce their stay. It can also be noted that the promotional activities are mainly centered on the ludic component (especially water parks) to the detriment of healthcare and sport.

## **6. TYPES AND FORMS OF TOURISM FEASIBLE IN SATU MARE AND SZABOLCS-SZATMÁR-BEREG COUNTIES**

The examination and presentation of the types of tourism feasible in the study area was submitted using a typology frequently mentioned in literature, the main criterion being the motivation of the journey, namely: recreational tourism, healthcare (curative) tourism, cultural and complex or polyvalent tourism (Dinu, 2006; Cocean & Dezsi, 2009; Rîmboi, 2010). This endeavour was complemented by a series of new types of tourism (including niche), recently emerged as a response to the changes reported in tourism demand.

### **6.1. Health tourism**

Being marginalised and apparently considered obsolete, healthcare tourism constitutes a representative category for the Romanian tourism (Ciangă, 2007), especially addressing to the old age group. Comprising various features of medical, social and economic nature, this type of tourism is situated on an upward trajectory worldwide, the latest trends marking a shift towards health tourism. The latter brings together both the traditional curative tourism, as well as the wellness component (Smith & Puczkó, 2009; Stăncioiu et al., 2013), promoting the adoption of a new lifestyle in which a balanced diet, sport and relaxation play a key role (Firu, 2006). Within this context, the settlements from the study area possessing therapeutic factors undertake this new direction in an attempt to restructure their balneary offer.

### **6.2. Cultural tourism**

The support for cultural tourism development comprises a wide range of objectives, which have become tourist attractions of maximum appeal: archaeological sites, castles, fortresses, manors, churches and monasteries, museums and collections, theatres, venues, memories related

to certain historical and literary personalities. The analysis of these resources reveals that the most significant cultural buildings are concentrated in urban centers (Satu Mare, Nyíregyháza, Nyírbátor and Carei), while the rural world preserves the authentic intangible heritage (traditions and customs related to religious holidays, traditional occupations). The research also highlights the multiplicity of such assets, primarily the large share of worship places followed by cultural and historical objectives. The presence of built heritage components featuring original or unique characteristics, such as the archaeological site of Medieșu Aurit, the land fortress in Szabolcs, the Romanesque church from Acâș, the Calvinist cemetery in Szatmárcseke, the churches with wooden steeples from the Satmar region, along with the intangible patrimony in the study area represent favorable prerequisites for cross-border heritage tourism development (Bătea & Nicula, 2014).

### **6.3. Recreational tourism**

This form of tourism leverages a wide range of resources and is aimed at meeting recreational needs, mainly involving the urban population, entailed in demanding activities. It is practiced by all age groups (especially youth and adult population) and presents a seasonal character, summer and winter being peaks for the tourism demand (Cocean & Dezsi, 2009; Rîmboi, 2010). In the study area the available statistical data confirm the predominance of short distance tourism and of short duration (generally 1-3 days), usually equivalent to week-ends and practised in forested areas, river banks and lakes.

### **6.4. Rural tourism**

In the study area rural tourism encounters favourable conditions for its development, particularly in the Codru District, Oaș Land, northern Szatmár-Bereg and Rétköz, areas which preserve elements of traditional architecture, traditional installations (mills, whirlpools), occupations and crafts (weaving, pottery), beliefs, old customs and folk events. In addition, we note the Swabian villages near Carei (Petrești, Urziceni, Căpleni) and Beltiug, which preserve a series of customs related to religious holidays, traditional households (with pieces of painted furniture and a variety of utensils), particular flavours and noble wine varieties kept in cellars. The rural tourism product in this region may also include, besides accommodation services, the participation of tourists in festivals and celebrations, cycling itineraries, hunting and fishing, hiking, practice of equine sports, visits to artisanal workshops, purchase of local products.

### **6.5. Transit tourism**

Transit tourism is frequently practised in the study area, being encouraged by the peripheral position and the vicinity of Ukraine and Slovakia, as well as by the agreements regarding border traffic. From the mobility and accessibility perspective, the settlements which can successfully be integrated into transit tourism trails are located in close proximity of the following routes: Satu Mare – Petea – Mátészalka; Satu Mare – Halmeu – Vylok; Carei – Urziceni – Nyírbátor; Kisvárdá

– Záhony – Ujgorod or Vásárosnamény – Beregsurány – Berehove. The greatest challenge for transit tourism is whether and in which way it can be associated with the sightseeing tourism developed in the proximity of transport axes, so as to increase its profitability.

### 6.6. Forms of niche tourism in the study area

Niche tourism is able to produce substantial benefits for the community since both counties have the resources to sustain its proper development; yet we noted the lack of a coherent strategy and the limited number of private initiatives focused on this direction. Through the variety of its forms, niche tourism provides viable solutions for extending the length of stay in local resorts and rural areas, encouraging the promotion of agro-foods, eco-tourism, revival of traditions and local festivals, a series of components which are capable to generate added value to the region's tourism offer. The analysis of tourism resources in the study area has revealed a number of activities that can be exploited in the form of niche tourism (table 4).

**Table 4.** Tourist activities which can be developed in the study area

Balneary activities, wellness and SPA	Hunting and fishing
Visiting cultural and historical sites	Camping
Tour of religious edifices	River rafting
Visits to parks and gardens	Motocross
Tasting events	Hiking
Attending events (feasts)	Winter sports practice
Shopping	Photography
Business tourism	Birdwatching

## 7. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR CROSS-BORDER TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SATU MARE AND SZABOLCS-SZATMÁR-BEREG COUNTIES

### 7.1. Hierarchy of touristic centres based on the real ranks method

The investigation sought to highlight the degree of polarisation exerted by the touristic centres identified in the study area, as well as the administrative-territorial units in the immediate vicinity, such as: Debrecen (county seat of Hajdú-Bihar), Hajdúszoboszló (the most popular resort in Northern Great Plains), Hajdúböszörmény, along with several towns belonging to Bihar, Sălaj and Maramureş counties. Following the model applied by Nelea (2006) for the multicriterial hierarchy of the new Member States of the European Union, based on indicators concerning life quality, the use of the method in this research involved the following steps:

- selecting the territorial units (40 in number), both from the study area and the adjacent counties, and the following indicators: touristic potential, existing accommodation capacity in 2014, tourist arrivals and overnights in public accommodation establishments in 2013,

average length of stay (2013) and tourist traffic density in relation to the resident population of the territorial units included in the analysis;

- determining the partial ranks ( $R_j^i$ ) for the six examined indicators, based on the formula:

$$R_j^i = n - \frac{a_j^i - a_j^{min}}{a_j^{max} - a_j^{min}} (n - 1), i = 1, 2 \dots n; j = 1, 2 \dots m$$

where:

$a_j^i$  = the level of  $j$  indicator in the territorial unit  $i$

$a_j^{min}$  = the level of  $j$  indicator in the territorial unit obtaining minimum performance

$a_j^{max}$  = the level of  $j$  indicator in the territorial unit obtaining maximum performance

$n$  = the number of territorial units

$m$  = the number of indicators included in the analysis

Thus, the territorial unit with maximum performance ( $a_j^{max}$ ) will acquire the rank 1 while the territorial unit with minimum performance ( $a_j^{min}$ ) will be placed on the position of rank  $n$ .

- the next step is represented by the partial ranks aggregation  $R_j^i$  for each indicator  $j$ , the process being carried out through a weighted average. The weight  $p^j$  of each indicator  $j$  will have in mind the relevance to the investigated phenomenon. The sum of these weights is equal to unity (or 100% if the indicators are expressed as percentage) (table 5).

**Tabel 5.** Aggregation of partial ranks

Indicator	The weight $p^j$
Touristic potential	28
Existing accommodation capacity	16
Touristic arrivals	18
Overnights	18
Average length of stay	14
Tourist traffic density	6

- calculating the real final rank for each administrative unit  $i$  on account of the weighted average of partial ranks:

$$\bar{R}_j = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^m R_j^i p^j}{100} \quad i = 1, 2 \dots n$$

- achieving the hierarchical arrangement of the 40 settlements according to the real rank value; the classification starts with the lowest value of the final rank (which actually indicates the maximum performance) to its highest value (denoting the minimum performance).



The results achieved after applying the real ranks method (table 6) may represent a starting point in developing sustainable strategies for revitalising the low-performing units.

**Table 6.** The hierarchy of tourist centres according to the real final rank

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Score</b>
1	Hajdúszoboszló	6.06
2	Debrecen	14.07
3	Nyíregyháza	21.32
4	Satu Mare	26.82
5	Baia Mare	28.39
6	Hajdúböszörmény	29.51
7	Vásárosnamény	29.54
8	Nyírbátor	29.98
9	Marghita	30.60
10	Mátészalka	31.55
11	Tiszavasvári	32.05
12	Tășnad	32.65
13	Negrești-Oaş	32.91
14	Fehérgyarmat	32.97
15	Carei	33.06
16	Kisvárdá	33.20
17	Tăuții Măgherauș	33.70
18	Ulmeni	33.75
19	Vama	34.13
20	Șomcuta Mare	34.17
21	Csenger	34.58
22	Cehu Silvaniei	34.84
23	Rakamaz	35.05
24	Tiszadob	35.51
25	Acăș	35.69
26	Tiszabecs	35.72
27	Orașu Nou	36.06
28	Nagykálló	36.18
29	Dombrád	36.24
30	Moftinu Mic	36.35
31	Baktalórántháza	36.91
32	Livada	37.02
33	Certeze	37.17
34	Levelek	37.45
35	Vetiș	37.98
36	Záhony	38.29
37	Botiz	38.33
38	Urziceni	38.48
39	Tuzér	39.20
40	Kemecse	39.28

The ranking of the 40 territorial entities highlights some noteworthy aspects, namely:

- the superior performance and high tourist attractiveness exerted by the area Hajdúszoboszló-Debrecen, from Hajdú-Bihar county, due to several assets: the medicinal thermal water, complex balneary arrangements, accommodation and catering facilities, cultural heritage, reputation of the academic centre in Debrecen;
- the following positions in the hierarchy are occupied by the administrative centres of Nyíregyháza and Satu Mare, their tourist offer mainly focusing on health tourism, recreation and leisure, but also cultural tourism;
- at close distance to Satu Mare lies Baia Mare, the county seat of Maramureş (where natural resources, anthropic tourist attractions and hosted cultural events generated approximately 59.000 tourists in 2013 and about 61.000 in 2014), followed by Hajdúböszörmény (popular among the tourists visiting the Northern Great Plain due to its facilities for health tourism);
- Vásárosnamény ranks the 7th position, the performance reflecting a higher degree of tourism resources exploitation through facilities designed for health, recreation and leisure practice;
- the hierarchy further includes the towns of: Nyírbátor, Marghita, Mátészalka and Tășnad, their touristic appeal resulting from the valorisation of their thermal resources. In these locations investments are made in the following fields: the modernization of treatment and spa establishments, diversification of the recreational and leisure services, the integration of cultural values in cross-border thematic routes, participation in tourism fairs;
- the next position is occupied by Negrești-Oaș, which despite its natural and anthropic potential, is currently characterised by a modest performance: existing accommodation capacity of 134 places and a decreasing number of tourist arrivals in the accommodation establishments. The completion of the Luna Șes resort is included into the stringent priorities of local authorities, the expected results being the revitalization of tourism industry in the entire area;
- Carei ranks the 15th place; in this case we note that in spite of various resources that support the development of cultural, health and transit tourism, the town currently possesses an undersized accommodation offer (with only two motels, according to statistical evidence, but which according to the conducted research, are completed by several guesthouses and campings);
- a low degree of tourism polarisation characterises the following localities: Vetiș (which has a single major attraction, the Reformed Church, and despite the short distance from Satu Mare, is able to absorb an insignificant share of the touristic demand), Záhony (rather representing a transit destination), Urziceni (a border crossing point with a modest passenger flow), Tuzsér (possessing a single landmark, namely Lónyai castle) and Kemece (endowed with two accommodation units, totalizing 16 places).

## 7.2. SWOT analysis of cross-border tourism in the north-western Romania

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the existence of a wide range of tourist resources, both natural (thermal and mineral springs, surface hydrographic network, protected areas) and anthropic (cultural and historical sites, religious buildings, ethnographic resources, cultural events);</li> <li>- valorisation of geothermal resources through establishments intended for balneary activities, which can support a longer stay and be practised outside the summer season;</li> <li>- prioritization of health tourism, sustained by the therapeutical properties of springs and facilities provided at: Satu Mare, Tășnad, Nyíregyháza, Nyírbátor, Kiszvárd, etc.</li> <li>- access to structural funds, their interventions being focused on the goal of integrated sustainable development;</li> <li>- initiatives in promoting cross-border natural resources, the protection and promotion of cultural heritage (tangible and intangible), investment in transport and education;</li> <li>- relatively rich offer in terms of touristic accommodation structures;</li> <li>- intensification of cross-border human mobility, especially at Petea - Csengersima border crossing point, 2014 recording a traffic by 20% higher than in 2012;</li> <li>- the growth of touristic arrivals, both in Satu Mare county (by 24% in 2014 as compared to 2012) and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (higher by 14% in 2014 as against 2012);</li> <li>- cross-border initiatives to create competitive tourist products (thematic routes) and branding by introducing a common brand, exploiting the religious and intangible heritage of the border area:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the advanced degradation of establishments that exploit the mineral springs in Oaş area (Puturoasa, Bixad, Turț-Băi) and also the depreciation of certain objectives, currently at stage of conservation due to lack of investment (Beltiug);</li> <li>- the destruction of historic buildings (the wooden church in Soconzel) and the continuous deterioration of cultural heritage, aspect which leads to costly rehabilitation interventions and unprofitable measures to exploit their tourism potential (Vécsey Castle from Livada, Lónyai Castle from Medieșu Aurit, Domahidy manor house from Kisnamény);</li> <li>- insufficient promotion of niche tourism (hunting, fishing, wine, equestrian or literary tourism) and the lack of specific strategies in this direction;</li> <li>- reduced number and/or lack of tourism promotion and informational structures (lack of regional tourism promotion agencies, insufficient tourism signs and multilingual information panels);</li> <li>- poor quality of infrastructure, especially in the case of county roads from certain micro-regions (Oaş Land, Crasna-Codru);</li> <li>- low level of road infrastructure, utilities and equipment in rural areas;</li> <li>- relatively modest tourism flow, except for county seats and average length of stay limited to only 2 days;</li> <li>- the decrease of accommodation capacity in Satu Mare in 2014 (1.961 places) compared to 2009 (2.629 places);</li> <li>- the seasonality of tourist activities, which is reflected in the use of tourism infrastructure and</li> </ul>

<p>Plum Route, The Route of Medieval Churches, Gastronomic Journey, Mary's Trail.</p>	<p>labour force, with repercussions on amortisation and profitability;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- slow adaptation of accommodation services to EU standards;</li> <li>- the predominance of individual hotels and weak affiliation to hotel chains;</li> <li>- except for Aqua Medica, the Romanian health sector is characterised by a poor development of specialised medical services.</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- revitalization of seasonal resorts of local interest from Oaş area, development of new resorts (Luna Şes);</li> <li>- increased international interest for health and recreation tourism, which address to a wide range of potential tourists;</li> <li>- development of thermal towns: resorts offering outstanding opportunities for recreation, leisure and entertainment, professional medical staff, built heritage and green areas;</li> <li>- development of the infrastructure projects (extension of the M3 motorway to the border with Ukraine, the construction of an expressway Baia Mare - Petea);</li> <li>- ethnic diversity and rural culture still maintained unaltered in rural areas;</li> <li>- promoting occupations and local traditions, culture, gastronomy, built heritage by integrating them into cross-border routes;</li> <li>- the presence of protected areas of community importance in the border area, favours the creation of transboundary natural parks;</li> <li>- cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries (Ukraine and Slovakia) to achieve the objective of economic and social cohesion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reorientation of domestic tourism demand to destinations from the neighbouring counties (Maramureş, Bihor, Hajdú-Bihar and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén), which offer similar tourist products;</li> <li>- fierce competition on the segment of health tourism, due to the attractiveness of the Hungarian resorts (especially from Hajdú-Bihar county), intensively promoted and appreciated due to the diversity and high quality of services;</li> <li>- the erroneous assumptions about the region, outlined by factors such as the presence of the Roma ethnic group (in Fehérgyarmat micro-region, for example, in terms of numbers, this minority exceeds the national average), poverty, remoteness, high unemployment rate in the county of Szabolcs Szatmár-Bereg (16.1% in 2013);</li> <li>- low awareness of the opportunities and benefits generated by the development of the tourism sector.</li> </ul>

### **7.3. Strategy of cross-border tourism development. Proposals, objectives, projects**

In a transboundary context, the sustainable and integrated development of tourism becomes a desideratum that relies on a combination of strengths common to both counties:

- a) price and accessibility;
- b) tourism resources (both natural and anthropic);
- c) authenticity and sense of belonging.

The analysis of strengths and strategic opportunities identified in the counties of Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg indicates that the tourist offer from this area meets tourists' requirements regarding the healthcare component, discovery of a diverse natural and cultural heritage, which if accordingly exploited, it is able to offer multiple experiences. The actions aiming the development of cross-border tourism in this area are based on the sense of initiative of the public and local authorities, business agents, cultural institutions and non-governmental organisations, which, through cooperation and creation of joint projects, have managed to show tourists some of the region's unexpected values, such as:

- The route of medieval churches, capitalizing the particular cultural and religious heritage preserved in the Carpathian Basin (Satu Mare, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Transcarpathia), resulting from the interpenetration of Western Christianity with Orthodoxy;
- Tour of cultural heritage in the Nyírség area, revealing a land rich in history and spirituality, situated on the following route: Nyíregyháza - Máriapócs - Nyírbátor - Carei - Căpleni;
- Gastronomic journey, bringing to foreground the culinary heritage of the area, promoted through travel websites as “field of fairies”, an attribute borrowed from the work of Móricz Zsigmond (Móricz, 1920, quoted by Deák et al., 2012, p. 6);
- The plum route, introducing one of the most valuable resources in Bereg, Szatmár and Oaş areas - a certain species of plum, basis for the famous brandy produced by using traditional methods, of plum marmalade and jams, which delight visitors;
- Discovery of Carei and Nyírbátor through equestrian, cultural, gastronomic, recreational, therapeutic and wellness programmes, combined with study tours.

### **7.4. Strategic goals and priorities for cross-border tourism development in Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties**

The analysis of tourism resources, infrastructure and level of competitiveness in the investigated tourism sector has underlined several priority areas for tourism development, also correlated with the main strategic guidelines from The National Tourism Development Master

Plan of Romania (2007-2026), The Master Plan for Health Tourism Development (2009), The Development Strategy of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (2014-2020) and The Development Strategy of Satu Mare County (2014-2020).

**The general objective** aims at boosting competitiveness in the border region by cross-border tourism development in Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties. A possible strategy proposes as main directions the development and promotion of the following tourism types: health, cultural (religious, sightseeing, creative, connected with cultural events), rural and recreational (week-end).

**The specific objectives** are associated with the revival of tourism along the northern Romanian-Hungarian border, pursuing to increase economic competitiveness through the harmonisation of initiatives in tourism and related industries, the active involvement of public authorities, private sector and academia to improve the quality and diversification of the tourist offer, increasing the number of tourists in the region and hence the tourism income. To face the increasing competition, a possible solution is offered by the cooperation between tourism organisations located on both sides of the border, with the aim of creating and marketing joint tourism products, against the background of the opportunities created by structural funds. The specific objectives of the strategy to relaunch tourism in the study area are the following:

1. Modernization of the tourism infrastructure, investment in development and promotion of new tourist resorts;
2. Rehabilitation of the historical and cultural heritage for the effective valorization as landmark of national, regional and local interest;
3. Foundation of a cluster on the wellness segment;
4. Promoting the tourism brands of the border region;
5. Tourist offer diversification through niche tourism development.

Expected results:

- increasing the number of tourists, the average length of stay and implicitly the tourism revenues (both direct and indirect);
- improving service quality and developing accommodation units belonging to superior category (4 and 5 stars);
- promoting regional tourism brands built on joint projects;
- diversification of targeted tourism segments;
- providing a platform for collaboration between tourism stakeholders to develop superior tourism products;

- attracting new private investment or in public-private partnership, promotion of entrepreneurship.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study results confirm that the Hungarian sector manages a superior valorisation of its tourism potential, being characterised by a higher degree of accessibility, accommodation capacity and high number of tourists, which indicate an increased visibility of its offer among tourists (particularly foreign). The first step for Satu Mare county is to eliminate this disadvantage by exploiting all the strengths it possesses (especially the tourist area of Oaş - Gutâi). Preserving elements of great tourist appeal (picturesque scenery, mineral springs, traditional occupations and wedding customs), along with the investment to expand the recreational infrastructure, Oaş can provide a competitive tourism product, targeting both domestic and international tourists.

The use of the real ranks method has revealed that, despite similar resources, the main tourist hotspots currently remain Hajdúszoboszló and Debrecen, followed at distance by Nyíregyháza and Satu Mare. Therefore, the spread of tourism phenomenon strongly depends on: accessibility, basic infrastructure, convenience, diversity and quality of services, destination image, promotion and distribution of the tourism product.

To cope with increasing competition posed by the neighbouring counties (especially Hajdú-Bihar on the health tourism segment and Maramureş on rural tourism sector), collaboration and partnerships are recommended, a solution which could offer the study area a competitive advantage. The two neighbouring counties, due to certain strengths, such as: nature-based tourism resources, cultural heritage and ethnic heterogeneity, may support the development of specific types of tourism. This direction requires further modernisation of existing baths, accommodation units and access roads, inclusion into the tourist circuit of values that are presently little known but with high potential to attract tourists, along with designing and promoting new products geared towards activities and unique experiences (active tourism), adding thus value to the region's tourism offer.

In conclusion, actions aiming at cross-border tourism development in the study area must rely on initiatives of the public authorities and local entrepreneurs, cultural institutions and non-governmental organisations, which through cooperation and joint projects may promote Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties as a cross-border tourism destination.

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