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PARTICULARITIES OF
ETHNOGRAPHIC TOURISM
FROM "TARA DORNELOR"
AND NEAMT COUNTY

Case
study

Keywords

*Ethnographic tourism,
Țara Dornelor,
Neamț County,
Touristic demand,
Touristic offer*

Abstract

The article contains the results of a case study realized in two distinct areas - the "Țara Dornelor" and "Ținutul Neamțului"- in order to explain the characteristic elements which make them look alike or contrarily, differentiate them in terms of ethnographic tourism. There were observed, therefore, the measure and degree in which the tourists' motivation regarding a geographical area is influenced by variables that refer to natural and anthropic potential of the investigated area or contrarily, by variables related rather to socioeconomic features of respondents. The research methodology aimed to the preparing and applying of a questionnaire in the period April 2015 - February 2016 on a representative sample of 300 respondents, especially tourists encountered in those study areas, and the analysis and interpretation of data base were accomplished through parametric and non-parametric tests of descriptive and inferential statistics. The results show the manner in which the tourists' motivation and the periodicity of touristic phenomenon is generally, different from one area to another.

Introduction

The "Țara Dornelor" and "Ținutul Neamțului" are the most common acronyms encountered both in geographical specialty literature and in belletrist and essay writings, in diaries and travel guides etc., for these touristic areas.

Often monographic (ex. writings of Țăranu, 1999, 2002, Apostol and Ursu, 2004 Calimar and Andreescu, 2006), Minciu (2010), Mureșan et al. (2012a,b) the notes and information that refer to these two areas, succeed to highlight with enough clarity and precision all those elements of the natural and anthropogenic frame which individualizes/particularizes them at regional and national level, in terms of forms and tourism practices found here. In this regard we can mention the relevant information provided by Ciangă (1998) on tourism in the Eastern Carpathians; Căndea (2004) on rural tourism, rural and ecological tourism; Ghiorghilas (2011), Hapenciuc and Năstase (2006) on methods of analysis, challenges and trends in tourism or Ielenicz et al (2010) on Romania's tourism potential.

Of course, the studies and scientific research related to touristic forms, types and practices encountered in these two geographical areas are numerous and complex, among them highlighting those recently accomplished by Mihalca (2015), Cazacu et al (2015) Iașu et al (2011a, 2011b), Muntele & Cruceanu (2014), Cruceanu et al (2015, 2014), Aluculesei & Nistoreanu (2014), (Dincă et al (2014) Dincă (2013), Patrichi et al (2013) Murșsan et al (2012), Gârbea (2014), Condrea et al (2014), Cocerhan & Năstase (2011) etc.

However, we also got relevant information from studies elaborated by Aluculesei and Nistoreanu (2014) on how the Romanian Spas/Water thermal villages are promoted; Brezuleanu (2008) on the sustainable development of rural tourism and agri-tourism in Vatra Dornei microzone; Dimitriu et al (2014) on mineral resources and medical tourism; Briciu & Oprea-Gangevici (2011) on the touristic potential of water resources in Suceava district; Muresan et al (2012, b) on the particularity of tourism demand in Vatra Dornei SPA Resort; Petrescu & Burny (2008) about the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism in Vatra Dornei; Dinu et al (2011, 2010) and Erdeli et al (2011) on medical tourism in Romania or Eva (2011) on the development and socio-economic implications of tourism.

1. Materials and methods

The research methodology used in this case study was elaborated and applied according to the criteria and principles encountered and recommended by the literature and specialized studies, as it follows:

The statistical observation included the preparing and applying of a questionnaire through which relevant information could be obtained, regarding

the main motivations related to the decisions that tourists take when they decide to spend a vacation in the touristic areas. The statistical data processing and analysis were realized through both parametric and nonparametric tests of the descriptive and inferential statistics.

The questionnaire used in this study was designed in accordance with the assumptions, theories and directions of our current research and includes a set of approximately 20 questions intended to bring as accurate, relevant and pertinent information as possible on the main touristic processes and phenomena observed in these two research areas.

This was applied in several steps (April-May 2015, June-July 2015, November - December 2015 and January-February 2016) on a sample of approximately 300 tourists, especially tourists encountered in Vatra Dornei town (including bordering localities in which the touristic phenomenon is more obvious - ex. Ciocănești, Dorna Arini, Șaru Dornei, Poiana Stampei etc.) and touristic places situated near Târgu Neamț town (Agapia, Văratec, Vânători, Pipirig, Petru Vodă etc.).

There were observed, therefore, the measure and degree in which the tourists' motivation regarding a touristic area (ethnographic in our case) is influenced by variables that refer to natural and anthropic potential of the investigated area or on the contrary, by the variables related to the socio-economic features of the respondents.

The experimental design of the study contained several *working hypotheses* for identifying and as much as possible to explain the relationship between the tourists' motivations and the questionnaire's items that measure those attributes of ethnographic tourism.

2. Results and Discussion

The relationships and statistical correlations that we have identified in this study are quite numerous but we will refer in particular to the most representative ones for the ethnographic touristic phenomenon present in these two study areas, namely:

- the ethnographic area and the touristic periodicity

For the ethnographic zone Neamț, the respondents opted more for visiting this area during festivities (Easter, Christmas, New Year) or other periods of the season compared to the ethnographic zone Dorna, where the respondents choose to spend the touristic sojourn, mainly in the hibernal season (with explicit reference to the winter break), followed by the summer season. The latter is an option with a relatively similar frequency for both ethnographic zones, but it can be seen a clear distinction between the investigated areas - for hibernal season - characteristic therefore to the mountainous region of Suceava.

- duration of touristic season

For the number of days of touristic sojourn, it can be observed that the period of 2-3 days is rather specific to the ethnographic area Dorna compared to the ethnographic area Neamț where a duration of sojourn of 5-7 days seems to be more specific. For the other options (1 day, 3-5 days, several of them) there have not been reported significant differences statistically speaking. So tourists who choose to spend a holiday in the Neamț area, tend to "set up camp" here for a longer period compared to those who choose Dorna area for a shorter period of time than in the Neamț County area. However, we believe that these results can't be extrapolated on medical tourism and thus on people who are opting for this form of tourism (present exclusively in the Dorna area), because the duration required for the period of rehabilitation is much longer in this case (between 10 and 18 days), resulting thus, a duration of stay of tourists correlated with the type of tourism (medical, ethnographic, business, scientific, etc.).

- gender and representativeness of touristic destination

In this case, the variable gender registers differences in most provided answers, thus: if for the Dorna area, the landscape, the traditions and the customs are the main attributes conferred by the women for this touristic destinations, for the ethnographic Neamț area, the cities and the monuments seem to represent a feature often invoked by tourists (especially by the females). This can be explained by the emblematic "the Fortress of Neamț" in Targu Neamț city, which can be in the collective mind, a "land of fortresses" in this case, or "purifying" mountain landscape for the Dorna area. It is also noted, as frequency of responses the presence of memorial houses in the Neamț area (for both genders), which is also explained by the Memorial House "Ion Creangă" from Humulești (jud. Neamț).

- Dietary preferences (I-alcoholic drinks)

Also for the question *Do you know any specific drink of this area / locality?*, the frequency of responses is generally different from one gender to another and from one ethnographic region to another. Thus, it can be seen that alcoholic drinks such as bilberry drink and cherry drink are given as examples of drinks mainly in the Dorna area (especially by women) compared with brandy / vodka, wine, grape must, fragile and cornices, which are given as examples of specific drinks for the Neamț County. For the blueberry drink, that fact can be explained by the large amount of berries collected and sold by the locals in this mountain ethnographic area.

- food preferences (II - traditional recipes)

The composite responses stand out the easiest way (especially for women), but some differences can also be signalled for prepared foods such as: stuffed cabbage with polenta, traditional dish made from

pork (such as drums, "chișcă", sausages, pastrami), pies-n lap belt, feed, "tocinei" - mentioned especially by respondents for Neamț area, - and traditional recipes like - "Moldovan stew with polenta - for Dorna habitat. Overall, however, it can be seen that the frequency of responses regarding preferences / knowledge cuisine is superior for Neamț ethnographic area (for both genders) compared to the Dorna ethnographic area, reason why, we tend to believe that a favourable social representation of "culinary art" would rather be characteristic for Neamț area, and less to Dorna zone- associated, we believe to the "collective mind" with thermals "therapeutic landscapes", mountain tourism, ecotourism etc.

- traditional customs

For the Dorna ethnographic zone, tourists have noted that traditional customs - carols, bear and masked (especially women) and for the Neamț ethnographic area, there were particularly mentioned customs like "masked", "the hatred" (especially by women), and carols (equally to both genders). Composite responses can be seen in this case, which shows the complexity and multitude of traditional customs found in these study areas.

- architectural objectives

The architectural objectives like churches and monasteries are mentioned with a frequency superior to the other, for both ethnographic areas and especially by women. Even if the number and prestige of monasteries from Neamț county are higher (the classic example of the monastery Neamț, Agapia, Văratec, Secu, Petru Vodă), the frequency of responses for these traditional objectives is - in our case - higher for Dorna area. This can be explained by the presence of the Monastery of Ghiorghiteni (from Dorna Arini locality placed inside the complex / balneal establishment "Procopius and Elizabeth"), monastery built by the architectural design of those from Maramureș, and that enjoy currently a great prestige.

- choosing souvenirs

Even if women generally tend to choose souvenirs as varied as possible, but which don't lack pieces/outfits and accessories (earrings, bracelets, necklaces etc.), the ethnographic area visited/ accessed may influence (in a lower degree however) their preferences, as in the case of carved objects - like spoons, whistles, etc. - in the Neamț ethnographic zone. For Dorna area, these sculpted objects seem to be rather preserved by men, where women's preferences "follow" generally the "caste women" (accessories and clothing items)

- traditional dances

The folk dances are present in all over the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic area, indisputable fact, but their form of expression, the frequency and their perpetuation are the elements that define the degree in which they may be "levers" of

cultural identity in general and of local identity in particular. Also this time, the two ethnographic areas record similarities and differences in terms of the variables, but a worrying fact is that a large percentage of the tourists surveyed responded that "they didn't see during their stay, such dances". Of course, we can't blame only the lack of interest of tourists for such cultural and artistic events, but rather the low frequency of these events in the studied ethnographic areas, the result of lower investments for such events and / or high costs imposed by such cultural practices. In general, however, it can be seen that the traditional dances as well as "hora" (including "big hora" and "beat hora") is most often exemplified (especially by women - for Dorna area), followed by "Brașoveanca" (mostly referred to by women), "callus" (mentioned only by men) and "games of masks" (equally referred to by both genders) and "sârba" is present only for females answers who chose Neamț area as a touristic destination.

- The importance offered to cultural and artistic events

Even in this case, the variable represented in this study by the existence of cultural and artistic events during the summer season held close to landmarks (such as festivals, book launches, concerts, fairs, competitions, celebrations) seems to be extremely important for tourists surveyed and interviewed. As in the previous case, women are the ones who put more credit on this issue with a relatively equal intensity to the two ethnographic areas analysis, which is why we consider it necessary to adapt the existing supply to the psycho-social and gender characteristics of the present and potential tourists (Figure no.1 and Figure no.2).

- Ethnographic region, gender and the area of origin of respondents

Generally, the tourists who choose as a tourist destination one or both ethnographic areas generally have a higher education level (Bachelor, Master, PhD, post-doctoral studies) and choose different periods of the year for leisure time, especially during the holiday season, the Easter holidays and the traditional customs of trade and with different thematic. The average length of stay for tourists in these areas is generally 2-3 days for Dorna area and 3-4 days for Neamț area and the favourite accommodation for tourists with higher education is the hotel for Dorna area and tourist villa for Neamț area.

Conclusions

The number and intensity of statistical correlations between variables is generally different for the two ethnographic areas studied. Even though there were found some explanatory variables for both geographical areas, in general, these two destinations have well differentiated attributes in

the representations of tourists who came into contact with these areas.

If "Țara Dornelor" is generally associated with thermal/spa resort (especially balneo-climatheric health resort Vatra Dornei) with mountain tourism, ecotourism and snow, the "Ținutul Neamțului" seems to be particularly associated with "the land of monasteries" (i.e., the monasteries of Petru Vodă, Secu, Văratec, Agapia), the memorial houses (ex. The Creangă's Humulești), the "beautiful flowing waters" (river Ozana), fairs and craftsmen.

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Annexes

Figure No. 1

Importance of festivals and fair for ethnographic tourism

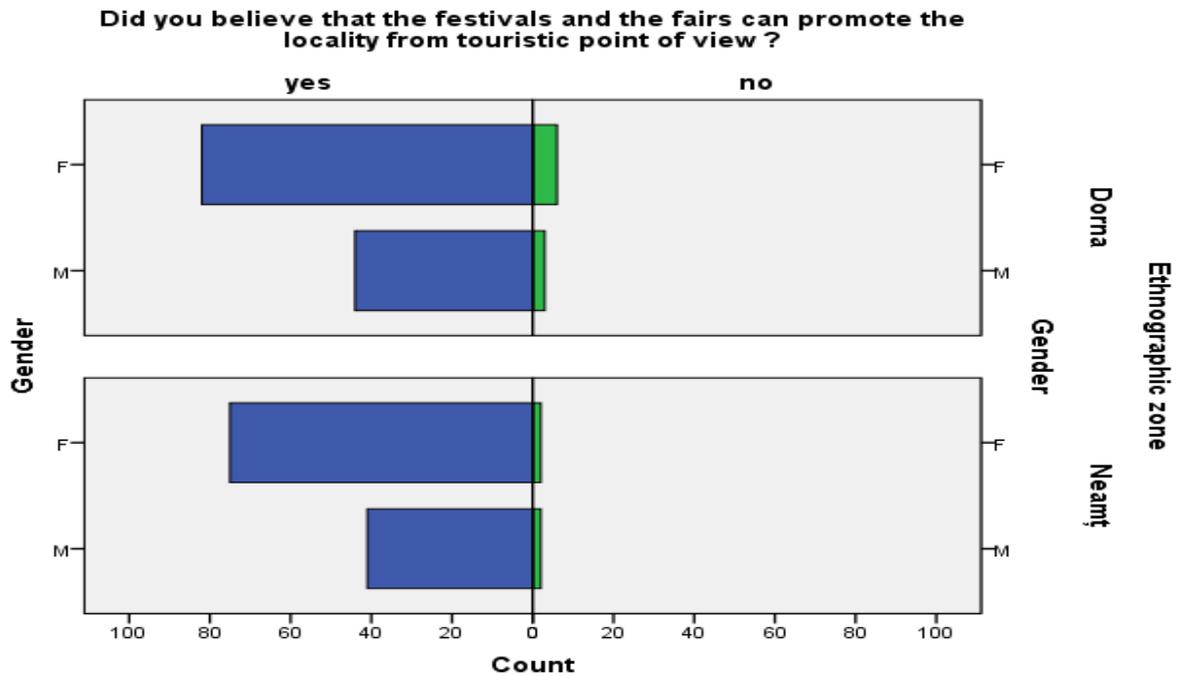


Figure No. 2

"Did you recommend the locality/county other tourists?"

