

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE KNOWLEDGE AND CAPITALIZATION OF SPA POTENTIAL FOR TOURISM: BĂILE BUZIAȘ RESORT

IRINA CÎRCIUMARU¹, T. CIOBAN², L. MILEA³

Abstract: Contributions to the knowledge and capitalization of spa potential for tourism: Băile Buziaș resort. Romania is a country that has rich spa resources that consist of **natural healing factors**, scattered over the entire country: mineral and thermal waters, mud and therapeutic gases, lakes and therapeutic salt. Spa tourism resources generated since antiquity the oldest and most characteristic form of tourism in Romania - **health tourism**. Spa sector is one of the six elements (called health and wellness) within the **national touristic brand**. Băile Buziaș is one of the oldest spa in Romania, known in Roman times as the Centum Putei [4]. Due to favorable natural conditions, with rich mineral springs and a mild climate, Buziaș may be the "spa pearl" of Banat, framing the resort in a **strategy** to exploit the spa potential, which is a necessity that needs to be solved rapidly. Strategy construction is realized using strategic questions: What are our resources? How can we improve the spa resort? How can we develop a spa product? What are the promotion techniques of this product on the Romania' resort market and abroad?

Key-words: potential, health tourism, Băile Buziaș, indices

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism as a social and economic phenomenon, was defined since 1880 by E. Guy Teuler as "the phenomenon of modern times, based on increased need to restore health and environmental change, the training of receptivity sense to natural beauties resulted from the development of trade, industry and transport improvement." Tourism actively participate in maintaining the balance in the distribution of human capital by creating new jobs, by its contribution to the social organization process and sustainable development. Today, tourism is the world's most dynamic economic sector and the biggest sector that highlights the human capital in its various levels.

¹ University of Bucharest, Faculty of Geography-PhD student,

² Babeș - Bolyai University, Cluj – Napoca, Faculty of Geography-PhD student

³ Babeș - Bolyai University, Cluj – Napoca, Faculty of Theatre and Television- PhD assistant Professor

The strategy for potential spa development is a process carried out in several stages, which mainly aim is the increasing of life quality of the local communities and the sustainable development of the territory, which can be achieved through collaboration between public/private actors, materialized in a Medium and long term intervention plan. [1]

For a strategy to be effective, it should be clearly structured (clear vision) and contain several lines of research and development. The strategy for potential spa development is built using a process that takes into account the main aspects of land planning (the current situation in the SWOT analysis) and possible solutions that will be converted into development projects. [1]

After the archaeologist Liviu Mărghitan, the resorts Herculane and Buzias: were picked in the Daco-Roman Period for their special, curative conditions. Archaeological remains (water pipes, stone monuments, tiles, artefacts and coins), identified here since the previous century, show the existence of curative activities of the XIII century - century e.n

In 1811 were used for the first time the mineral waters for treatment by the Romanian balneologist Gheorghe Ciocârlan. In 1816 he began the development of the first springs, the spa resort bases being built in 1819. In 1839 Buziaş was declared resort. The swimming pool was opened in 1874 and is the first European mineral water swimming pool. During the Austro-Hungarian period, residents of Timișoara preferred as a destination the Buzias resort. [15]

Buziaş stands out in Europe through the quality of its mineral waters, which are unique (carbonated, ferruginous, chloride, magnesium, calcium, sodium and bicarbonate), beneficial for cardiovascular diseases, degenerative rheumatism post-traumatic, peripheral nervous, digestive and hepatic-biliary disorders.

Between 1903-1907 are drilled 12 deep springs and is constructed a mineral water bottling plant, and in 1909 the mineral water was sold under the name Muschong Phönix. The plant became operational in 1907, had an area of 700 sqm and a bottling capacity of 1 million bottles per year and 1000 kg of carbon dioxide. Due to its quality, Buziaş mineral water was awarded at international competitions, winning eight medals, including a gold one at the Bratislava competition in 1920. [15]

Increasing resort awareness was given by the visit of Emperor Franz Josef in September 1898 and of the heir to the throne, Prince Franz Ferdinand.

The spa town Buzias (Hungarian Buziásfürdő, German Busiasch), with its famous carbonated water, is located in south-western Romania, in Timis County and includes, from 1968, the localities Buziaş (residence), Silagiu and Bacova Village as belonging village (Figure 1). Located at 35.5 km from Timisoara and 24.5 km from Lugoj, both being linked by the DJ 592 road and by the Timisoara-Lugoj-Buzias Railway. [15]

Buziaș is situated at 79.3 km from the Romania's borders - Stamora Moravița Customs (border with Serbia) and at 115 km from Cenad Customs (Hungarian border).

The region is a transition unit between the Banat Plain and the Western Hills at an altitude of 128 m. The northern latitude is 45°40' and the eastern longitude is 21°36'. In the south-western part of the city, the altitude reaches 300 m in the 'Silagiului Hill', where large vineyards appear. [8]

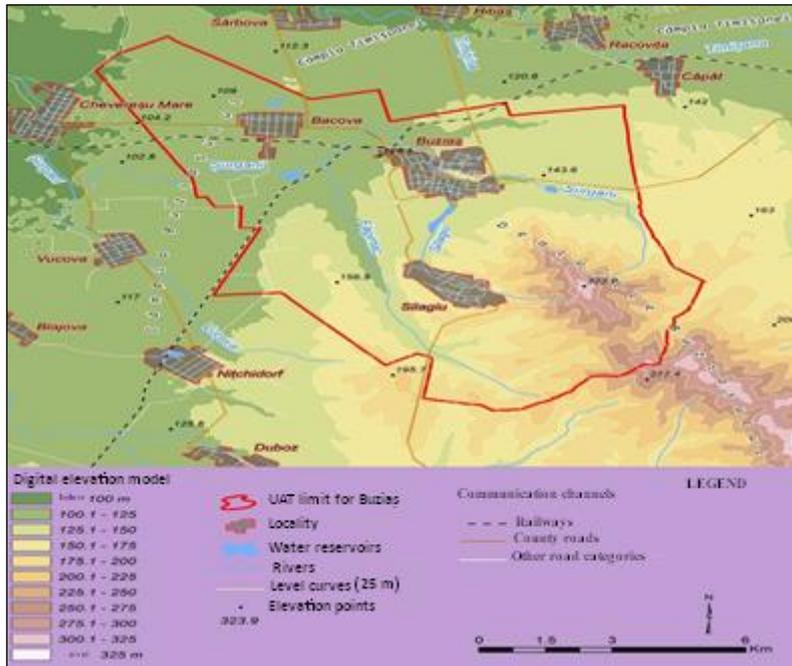


Figure. 1. Position and physical-geographical limits of the studied area

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

Buziaș, with an area of 104 km², it is bordered to the north by the town of Racovița, in east by Boldur and Darova, in west by the municipalities Chevereșu Mare and Nițhidorf, and in south by the county limit with Caraș Severin. Buziaș Resort is located on the upper terrace of the Timis River. [7]

Buziaș Spa Resort presents a plain climate with moderate continental character, under the influence of air masses of Mediterranean origin. [9]. The cartographical support was conducted based on digital elevation model SRTM (Shuttle Radar Topography Mission); the other layers were vectored using Open Street Map Basemap with the help of ArcGIS 10.2.2 software.

Plain climate, with mild winters and pleasant summers, makes Buziaş Resort an attractive place for both those wishing to undergo treatment, and for those who just want to rest. [5]

The annual average precipitation ranges between 600-650 mm, maximum values being recorded in June and November. Snow thickness reaches 0.9 cm (November) and 18,0 cm in January. Relative humidity has annual rates of 75.7% and, due to water evaporation loaded with CO₂, absolute humidity is lower in the morning and higher in the daytime. The annual average cloudiness measures the values of 5.6 tithes and is higher in winter. The dominant winds in cold seasons are those from south and they are bringing warm air, which makes autumn and winter to have a gentler climate.

Tourism climatic index, developed by French researchers R. Clause, A. Guerault (1955), is commonly used as the reference instrument operating in the field of tourism climatology and is based on the relationship between the duration of sunshine in hours (S), the average monthly temperature in 0 C (T) and the duration, in hours, the rainfalls during daytime, (D) [2, 10], according to the relation:

$$I = \frac{S+T+5D}{5} \quad (1)$$

The value of this index graded on a scale between 0 and 100, allows emphasizing the optimal duration of the touristic season and air cures practicing outdoors [11, 17].

Tourism climatic indices were evaluated based on climate data from the Lugoj meteorological station. The values obtained for July 2016 are between 10.52 (July 3rd) and 4.5 (July 17th).

In January the tourism climatic index is between -1.06 (January 3rd, 2016) and 7.5 (January 31st, 2016).

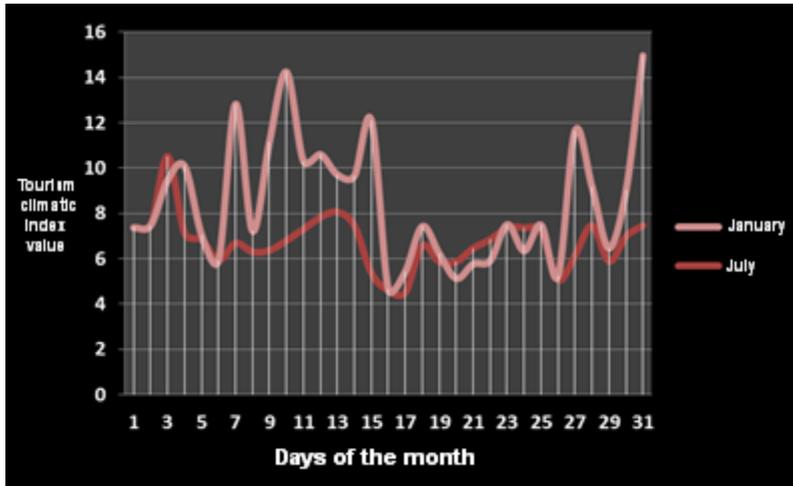


Figure 2. Tourism climatic index chart.

The variation of daily tourism climatic index values highlight the favourable conditions of outdoors cure in early July (Figure 2).

Geological representative formations of the area Buziaș belong to Pliocene and Quaternary. In these formations appear 3 layers of minerals:

- Aquifers, located at a depth of 6-10 m. At present are missing the sources that collected the waters into the phreatic layer.
- First profound layer, located between 17-70 m, containing carbonated waters with ascending character, which were used for bottling
- Artesian layer immediately above the contact between sedimentary and crystalline layers, collecting waters that are most mineralized and rich in CO₂; it was first captured by 4 sources (wells no. 1, 2, 3, and 4). Spa treatments use mineral waters collected from this layer, being among the most valuable carbonated waters in the country.

Final development vision adopted in the Buzias's Local Development Strategy for the years 2016-2020-2030 summarizes the resort's main attributes that can be capitalized as follows: "BUZIAȘ – The Pearle of Banat, eco-resort of national interest, smart and touristic, modern, youthful and prosperous town, marked by history and tradition, with a high quality of life and attractive for living, working, tourism and business."

Tourism activity as a social and economic phenomenon is subject to some commercial nature risks (currency fluctuations, failure to execute the contract, failure to pay the price, etc.), non-commercial risks (state of war, political regime change, natural disasters, restrictions on currency transfers). [6] If in the case of commercial risks can be found solutions to prevent, limit and even exclude the

effects, in the case of non-commercial risks are taken preventive measures since the hazard level is reached [3]. The real risk of tourism nature for Buziaş resort consists of the low occupancy of the accommodation.

3. DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

The SWOT analysis is the first strategic step by which a community can use its strengths to take advantage of opportunities, but also an effective method to defend their weaknesses against external threats.

Strengths	Wicknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The "Alley of negative ions", known for air quality. Clean air together with the effect of spa treatment is the main premise of developing spa tourism in the area. - Presence of some dendrologic parks - Natural cure factors: mineral waters - Reduced air pollution - Spa tourism - the oldest form of tourism, resort with rich history - Very rich natural potential (spa potential) which can lead to tourism development - Existence of architectural, cultural, tangible and intangible heritage, favourable to the development of tourism - The diversity of accommodation, of 2, 3 or 4 stars - High quality public alimentation services - Existence of two treatment centers for disease in the hotels Parc and Silvana - The existence of a ER unit in the resort, belonging to the Timisoara County Hospital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor reevaluation of spa resources - Is missing PUG and marketing strategy to promote the resort on the tourism market - High degree of degradation in which the arhitectural heritage is - Baia 1, Baia Bacova, Silagiu (7 churches on a distance of 1 km) favorable for the development of ecumenical tourism, Colonada, Casino, the springs in the park - Weak development of leisure tourism - High degree of degradation of the resort' park, which previously represented one of the main sights -Presence an ageing population (major share) -The level of training is on average, 10% of the population having a higher education -Lack of specialization for students (missing classes of professional profile - tourism, services) -Absence of a research centre -High insolvency/bankruptcy rate of companies that have invested in Buziaş. Insufficient financial resources, limited investments from local entrepreneurs. -Lack of an information portal on European funding that could be absorbed for the resort modernization. -Lack of specialized human resources in tourism - Insufficient exploitation of mineral waters
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The lack of differentiation of the accommodation depending on the financial possibilities of each category of tourists. - Quality of service and lodging offer is still below the average of the EU and national space - There Is no tourism brand for Buziaş resort - low financial potential for tourism development - The springs from the park are not modernized, alleys are unequipped, the lack of bike trails - Lack of an amphitheatre for outdoor performances -Lack of treatment possibilities for weekend tourists

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE KNOWLEDGE AND CAPITALIZATION OF SPA POTENTIAL FOR TOURISM:
BĂILE BUZIAȘ RESORT

Opportunities	Dangers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic location in the area of cooperation border with Serbia and Hungary, at a distance of approximately 700 km from 13 European capitals. - Physical and geographical conditions (climate, hydrogeology, soil) favorable for tourism development - The inclusion of Buziaș city in the future Arad-Timisoara Metropolitan Development Zone - The acquisition or expropriation heritage buildings from the Dendrological Park for renovation and inclusion in the tourist circuit -Attracting European structural funds to modernize landmarks - Approval of strategic planning documents for Buziaș city development - Capacity of unused accommodation (accommodation in a family) -enlargement and modernization of the two treatment bases - Reinvention of Buzias historic brand, rearranging the resort and treatment base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased degradation of the historical heritage of the city center -Existence of limited European funds - Reduced interest for the central authorities to rehabilitate the Buzias resort - Climate change due to atmosphere CO₂ emissions generates city floods. - Increase and intensification of risks hazard for natural disasters - Existence in neighbouring areas of higher quality offers which lowers the flux of tourism in Buziaș and their reorientation towards other destinations Lack of legislation to support investment in tourism and development

In the process of outlining an overall vision on the spa resort presented in the SWOT analysis were quantified factors identified in the study area for each of the four columns (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), presented in the SWOT analysis thus plotted to form a chart radar: The Buziaș Resort SWOT Analysis (Figure 3).

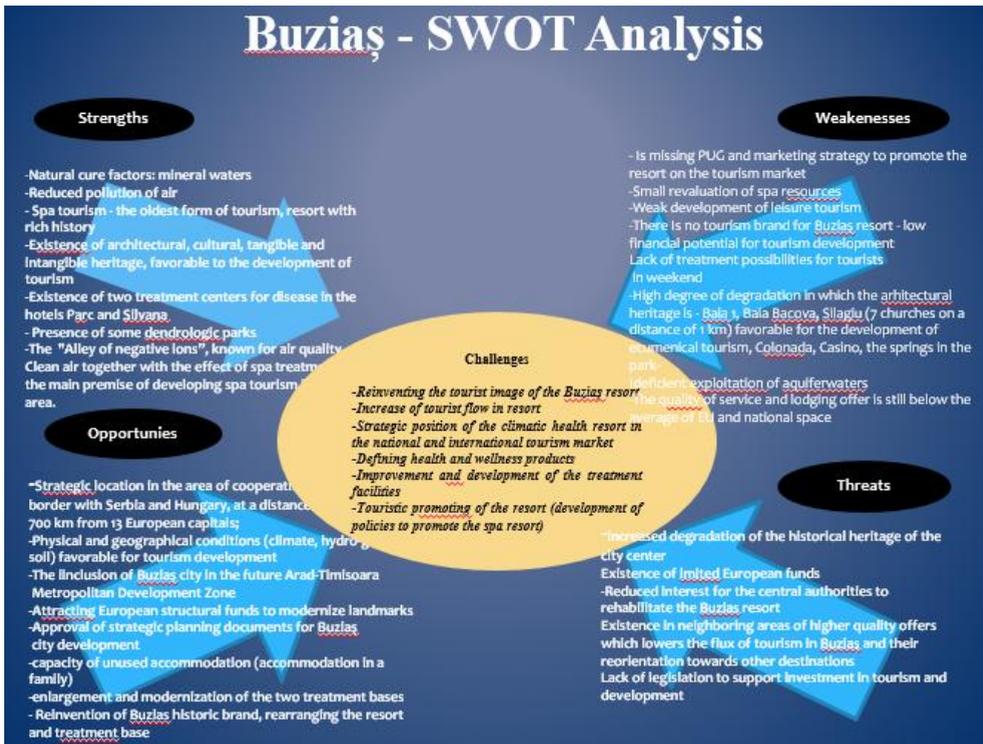


Figure 3. SWOT Diagram for Buziaș (remade after KPMG)

Existing national strategy, Master Plan for Spa Tourism Development (2014-2020) and the local development plan of the Buziaș city (2016-2020/2030) about the possibility of developing spa tourism, has allowed to formulate of some economic use lines of the existing spa potential in Buziaș Resort (Figure 4) . [13, 14, 16].

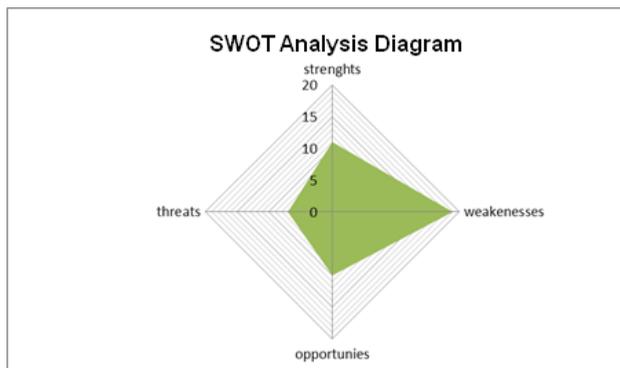


Figure 4. SWOT2 Diagram for Buziaș

The main strategic directions that sustain health tourism strategy are represented by three development projects: [1]

1. The research project of the current situation in the spa sector (SWOT analysis).

2. The improvement project of Buziaș Resort includes: upgrading of the resort accommodation and of the public alimentation base, building up leisure facilities for spending the free time and for diversification and attractiveness of the touristic offer, modernization and reconstruction of spa infrastructure appropriate for health tourism (modernization of spa facilities to capture, distribution, transport and recovery of natural therapeutic factors), development/modernization of on-road roads from Dealul Silagiului and Dumbrava Forest for recreation and outdoors exercise.

3. The promotion project of Buziaș Resort (policies to promote tourism) through the development and promotion of the Buzias resort tourism brand.

In addition to protective measures against the limitations and/or deficiencies highlighted in the SWOT analysis, stakeholders should consider the commercial risks identified in international tourism, which must be inserted as contract clauses; tourism enterprises can and must find protection commercial solutions against the risk phenomena appearance using risk transmission solutions over insurance companies; when the probability of loss can be determine, it includes a risk bonus (0.5%) at the level net foreign currency of tourism products for export.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The alert pace of modern society life has gradually influenced people's health and their reorientation towards practicing spa tourism. In these conditions, nowadays medicine researches and provides remedies to prevent and combat the consequences resulting from a busy life rhythm. Thus, health holidays, respectively spas holidays, have become an integral part of the health care system.

Natural remedies are the main factors in achieving therapeutic prophylactic, therapeutic and recovery effects.

Buziaș is one of the oldest resorts in Romania, as spa baths development dates back to 1870, when were executed most of the works to spa tourism specific equipment. [4,12]

Buziaș Resort is a very important touristic area on the Timis County from all points of view (geographic location, continental Mediterranean plain climate, valuable spa resources recognized in the successful treatment of various diseases, cultural and historical values).

Analysing the SWOT chart can be see that in the Buziaș Resort, even if the opportunities are very high (15), prevail the weaknesses (18), among them being significant barriers in the development of spa tourism at European standards, e.g.:

lack of PUG and of a marketing strategy to promote the resort on the tourism market, low capitalization of spas resources, the architectural heritage is in an advanced state of decay, lacking financial resources for the redevelopment of the resort, weekend tourists cannot benefit of spa treatment.

The existent treatment base is in a state of advanced decay, and medical professional personnel is less and less numerous.

Because Buziaș Resort can provide a complex system of spa treatments at European standards, it requires a redevelopment of the resort and a promotion on the tourism market.

Romanian spa tourism is very important for Romania as it has several major advantages compared with other products, namely: is not influenced by seasonality, has a wide range of natural treatment factors, duration of treatment products is varied.

Lately, more and more tour operators, especially those operating in the mountains and in spa area, to protect against the effects of different types of risk, promote a way of working that involves a Statement of participation and risk-taking by tourists through abandonment and disposal of rights for travel agencies. The tourist's statement disclaims any responsibilities and obligations, of loss, property damage, material damage or personal injury (including death), that they may suffer as a result of their participation in specific activities with mountain guides ("tour with a mountain guide") for all agency staff, guides, instructors, etc.

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CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE KNOWLEDGE AND CAPITALIZATION OF SPA POTENTIAL FOR TOURISM:
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