The Importance of Cultural Landscape for Sustainable Development of Tourism in Bucovina

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Abstract:

Cultural tourism is considered a well-established field of study and a focus for many destinations that wish to encourage international visitation. Yet, there is little research published on cultural landscape, a concept that refers to the interrelation between landscape, nature, human culture, and the people who populate a specific region (Buckley, Ollenburg, & Zhong, 2008). Cultural landscape is, however, a very important component of the Romanian tour operators' and travel agents' offer to potential visitors, particularly when it comes to historic regions such as Bucovina.

Bucovina is located in northeastern Romania and is considered to be one of the most important destinations for cultural and heritage tourism in the country. The region is well known for its customs and traditions, beautiful landscapes, and, most importantly, for the medieval monasteries famous for their painted exterior walls included among the UNESCO World Heritage sites. The most popular and famous such monastery is located in Voronet, and therefore this rural area will be the focus of this study.

Following the fall of the Communist regime in 1989 and the opening of the borders to western visitors, over the past 20 years there has been a considerable increase in the number of tourists in Bucovina. As with many other destinations, the development of tourism in the area brought not only benefits but also negative impacts, in particular for the cultural landscape. Among the most noticeable are the rapid changes in the style and architecture of local houses and accommodation units which threaten the authenticity of the area. As highlighted by many researchers, authenticity is a very important motivator for visitors to travel to destinations, in particular for those who are interested in the local cultures and traditions, or in heritage tourism (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010).

This study aims to better understand the importance of the cultural landscape for the sustainable development of tourism in the region of Bucovina, Romania. In doing so, it adopts a case study methodology, which allows the researchers to analyse the destination from more than one perspective by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. It also allows the collection of data from different stakeholders involved in tourism development in the region, such as visitors, the tourism industry, and the local authority. As this is work in progress, the authors expect the findings to contribute to the limited knowledge that exists on tourism development in Bucovina, a popular region among international tourists who visit Romania. Moreover, it would help policy makers to find solutions in implementing sustainable measures for the development of tourism in this region while protecting the authenticity of the area.

References:
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