

# Spa Tourism Economy Băile Felix Balneoclimateric Resort - short presentation-

~ Ph. D. **Adina Maria Moțica** (*Advanced Studies, Romanian Academy, Calea Victoriei, Bucharest, Romania*)

E-mail: [adinacohut@yahoo.com](mailto:adinacohut@yahoo.com)

**Abstract:** *Treatment tourism is a specific form of leisure treatment, that has increased due to certain illnesses, stress and professional illnesses. Because of this, treatment tourism is tied to many resorts known for their therapeutically properties, their mineral and thermal waters, muds, mofettes, that are situated in an exemption climate.*

*It is also the reason why it is one of the most constant forms of tourism, with a relatively stable clientele, which contributes to the increase of the coefficients of the use of the accommodation capacity and to the achievement of increased average daily /tourist revenue. In years to come, this form of tourism will become even bigger, constituting one of the biggest sources of income, especially for our country, one of the wealthiest countries in balneoclimatic resources in Europe. The main natural cure factors contributing to the development of spa tourism are: climate, mineral waters, mud and therapeutic gases (mofettes), therapeutic lakes, bottling waters etc.*

*Since antiquity, balneal treatments have occupied a place in the therapeutic arsenal of both "academic" and traditional medicine. Passing of time and technological progress in the field of medical sciences have failed to diminish the significance of balneotherapy.*

**Keywords:** *tourism, spa potential, therapy, resorts.*

## 1. Introduction

Mineral waters and therapeutic muds are known from ancient times. The first practical, therapeutic, and more randomly applied applications expanded rapidly, so that the ancient Greeks and the Romans were well acquainted with mineral waters, and especially the thermal ones. Herodotus, the father of history and balneology, 2500 years ago set the duration of a treatment to 21 days, an opinion that lasted in the minds of the public and doctors.

The Greeks and especially the Romans knew how to value mineral waters because, for over 600 years, as Plinius shows, they did not use another medicine to treat rheumatic diseases than baths. Besides, the ruins of the works for the capture of mineral springs, show stone inscriptions everywhere in the Roman Empire, in which the healers thanked the gods for the benefits of the waters.

The research and capture works carried out by the Romans to acquire curative water are known in France, Germany, Austria and especially in Italy. The beginnings of most of the spa resorts in Europe date back to the time of the Romans.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, mineral water sources were still used for the same curative purposes by locals, but the old abstractions deteriorated, leading ultimately to reduced use possibilities and even loss of water sources by landslide. This "disinterest" manifested in the Middle Ages was due to two important causes: the resorts became the place of spreading the epidemics that destroyed populations at the time, under the pretext of immorality, the church generally banned the spa treatment.

With all the superstitions that dominated the Middle Ages, people made observations

on the effectiveness of mineral waters, which they since then noted and transmitted from generation to generation. The accumulated data led to a new blooming period of the resorts during the 16th-17th centuries.

From the time of the Renaissance and the Baroque, spa treatments have gained a dignified connotation, and since the nineteenth century these cures have been integrated into everyday life, not only in a medical, but also in the social sense. Now chemical analysis is made for mineral waters, analytical observations are made on the indications and contraindications of the spa treatment, hydrotherapy ultimately having a scientific basis.

Today balneotherapy or more comprehensive balneoclimatology has become a medical specialty involved in the process of public health improvement, with prophylactic and rehabilitation possibilities, but also a branch of tourism with an important role in the national economy.

Most cure factors, especially mineral waters, have been used for balneal treatments almost two millennia ago. Thus, the Romans, after conquering Dacia, discovered and used for therapeutic purposes the mineral and thermal waters from Baile Herculane, constituting here spa baths, public baths, which were also called Ad Aquas Herculi sacras or Thermae Herculis. Such settlements of the Romans are also found at Geoagiu, Baltic Calan, Ocna Sibiului, God, Buzias, Calimanesti, Caciulata Baths, many of which are already confirmed by the archaeological evidence found in these places.

Also based on the evidence found, it is assumed that these baths as well as other mineral springs were used by the local population for therapeutic purposes even after the

withdrawal of the Romans throughout the Middle Ages.

An organized exploitation of the natural treatment factors in our country can only be mentioned starting from the 17th century when a series of mineral springs have been rediscovered, and also new ones are discovered, research is done and mineral waters are being tested, their healing effect is recognized and rudimentary settlements are build, that will form the basis of the construction of future spa resorts of the nineteenth century.

During this time spa resorts such as Bazna, Borsec, Olanesti, Sanraieni, Saru Dornei, Valcele, Zizin appear and in the old resorts such as Herculane, Baile Felix, Geoagiu Bai continue to be exploited. Starting with the 19th century there is a development of the spa activity in our country.

During this time, most of the mineral water sources are captured, the scientific bases of water exploitation are being made (spa research, chemical-chemical analyzes, hydrological research, etc.). Planning and building of spa resorts such as: Cozia, Calimanesti, Govora, Baltatesti, Strunga, Oglinzi, Borsec, Buzias, Moneasa, Malnas, Sangiorz Bai, Lipova, Tusnad, Tinca etc, starts. Other older resorts are being developed and modernized.

Also during this period therapeutic mud and salt lakes begin exploitation in the plain and on the seashore (Lake Sarat, Balta Alba, Techirghiol). The mud will be introduced into spa treatment at Bazna, Slanic and Sacelu-God.

During World War I, most of the resorts were degraded or destroyed, especially those from the Eastern Carpathians, Moldova and Muntenia, but also from the Apuseni, Slanic Moldova, Tusnad, Zizin, Vatra Dornei, Sovata, Borsec, Olanesti, Sarata Monteoru, Moneasa, etc.

The reconstruction of these resorts was carried out under the patronage of the Society of Hydrology and Medical Climatology, which was reinstated in 1932, which included resorts with tradition in spa tourism: Baile Herculane, Baile Govora, Techirghiol, Sovata, Vatra Dornei, Amara, Baile Olanesti, Baile Tusnad, Pucioasa, Lake Sarat.

As part of this reorganization and development of spa resorts, in the period 1926-1928 there were about 80 spa resorts, many of them having an average of 80,000 to 180,000 baths each year. The bottling activity took place during the interwar years in 26 units of various capacities.

Romania currently has 160 state and local spa with natural treatment factors, of which 60 important resorts, 18 of them were promoted in the international tourist circuit.

In many of them the accommodation base has been modernized, modern cure hotels and modern sanatoriums were built, where accommodation, meals, diagnosis and treatment are offered in the same building, as is the case in the world interest spa resorts such as Baile Herculane, Baile Felix, Sovata, Baile Tusnad, Covasna, Calimanesti-Caciulata, Mangalia, Slanic Moldova, Vatra Domei, Eforie, Govora, Olanesti, Buzias.

In the established treatment bases optimum conditions for the extensive use of natural cure factors have been created on scientific basis. Alongside natural procedures or physiotherapy, a wide range of therapeutic procedures are used. The bases of treatment have specialized compartments equipped with modern appliances and installation.

The therapeutic and natural factors in the spa resorts in Romania

The spa tourism is in connection with the balneotherapeutic resorts and through

them with the therapeutic factors, generously spread in all the geographical regions of our country. The main natural factors contributing to the development of spa tourism are: mineral waters, mud and therapeutic gases (mofettes), lakes with therapeutic properties, water for bottling etc.

Mineral waters represent an inexhaustible wealth for our country. Due to their therapeutic qualities and climatic conditions, the spa resorts in Romania contribute greatly to the improvement of the health state, thus rivaling to well-known foreign spa resorts.

The mineral waters in Romania due to their therapeutic value and their physiological quality are similar to or even superior to the mineral waters of the most famous European spa resorts.

The mineral waters in our country have a complex value: internal cure, external cure, inhalations, aerosols, physiotherapy pools, hydro thermotherapy, swimming pools and solariums, extraction of salts or gases etc.

Pentru imbuteliere ca ape dc masa sunt folosite zacamintele de la: Bai, Bodoc, Borsec, Tusnad, Caciulata etc.

Principalele tipuri de ape minerale terapeutice sunt:

- Alkaline mineral waters - contain more than 1g / kg water dissolved solids, most of them rich in sodium and potassium bicarbonate. Directions - internal cure. Main effects: reduces stomach secretion, acidity and motility; streamlines the gall, favors glycogen deposition, lowers cholesterol, alkalizes urine, relieves secretions of the mucous membrane of the airway. Resorts and spas: Bodoc, Malnas, Slanic Moldova.

- alkaline, calcium and magnesium mineral waters - have a mixed character with free CO<sub>2</sub>, Fe<sup>2+</sup>, Cl<sup>-</sup> or SO<sub>4</sub><sup>2-</sup>, important

cations are Ca<sup>2+</sup> and Mg<sup>2+</sup>. Method of administration: internal and inhaled cure. Main effects: desensitizing, neuromuscular. Resorts and spa resorts: Borsec, Covasna, Sangeorz, Valcele.

- arsenic mineral waters: contain 0.7 mg% arsenic. Method of administration: internal cure. Main Effects: Reducing oxidative metabolic processes in favor of assimilation. Localities: Sarul Dornei ~ 3 springs, one of which is bottled.

- carbonated mineral waters: contain min. 1g / kg of CO<sub>2</sub>; Effects: Hyper migrant and trophic action on respiratory system, anti-inflammatory effect on vaginal mucosa, decreases viscosity of airway secretions. In the external cure (baths) is stimulating the circulation of the skin through chemical mediators; influences neuro-vegetative reactivity. Resorts and spas are very numerous: - for internal cures: Sangeorz Bai, Slanic Moldova etc. For external cure: starting with Black Sea water and ending with water in some saline lakes or some borehole water that exceeds 250-300 mg%.

- ferruginous mineral waters: contain at least 10 mg / kg of ferrous water; Method of administration: internal cure. Main effects: Favorable metabolic-enzymatic processes; Resorts and spas: Baile Tusnad, Buzias, Lipova etc.

- Iodine Mineral Water: contains 1 mg / kg of iodine; Method of administration: inhalations, injections, external baths. Main effects: mucosal action and local trophic effect; influences the metabolism of fats in a favorable sense; tropism for the thyroid gland; Spa and swimming pools: Bazna, Baile Govora, Baile Olanesti, Baltatesti, Calimanesti-Caciulata, Sarata-Monteoru, Vulcana etc.

- oligo mineral waters: contain less than 1 g of mineral substances per kg of

water. Method of administration: internal cure, external cure (baths). Main Effects: cold baths increase diuresis favoring the elimination of salts and uric acid, preventing microbial flare from climbing to the kidneys; warm ones have antispasmodic, sedative anti-inflammatory, muscle relaxant; Spa resorts and localities: Olanesti, Calimanesti, Baile Felix, Baile 1 Mai, Sangeorz, Moneasa etc.

- radioactive mineral waters: contain variable amounts of radioactive elements. Method of administration: external cure. Key impact: affinity for fatty tissue, nerve sheaths, endocrine tissue. Spa resorts Baile Felix, Baile 1 Mai.

- Sulfur mineral waters: contain at least 1 g / kg water dissolved solids. Method of administration: internal cures under medical supervision. Main effects: choleric (stimulates gall secretion); colecistokinetic (favors the removal of bile from bladder and gall); increase the peristalsis of the intestinal wall favoring the evacuation of the intestine (purgative effect). Resorts and spa resorts: Amara, Baltatesti, Sarata-Monteoru.

- Moffetes - are the natural emanations of CO<sub>2</sub> encountered in volcanic areas. Primary effects: Vasodilatation on arterial circulation (predominantly cutaneous); hypotensive effect; effect on the plates. Indications: heart and peripheral vascular diseases, varicose ulcer, cardiovascular disease, digestive tract disease, hepatic-biliary disease, nutritional diseases, respiratory diseases. Spa resorts: Buzias, Borsec, Covasna, Tusnad etc.

#### Salt lakes.

Of the mineralized lakes in our country, the greatest therapeutic value is, undoubtedly, the salt water lakes, which are found in an appreciable number. In balneal-therapy

treatments, an important role is not only the spa and climate, but also the landscape, the locality, which affects the activity of the patients, and obviously their mood. Or, the distribution of therapeutic salt lakes in areas with altitude and in different climatic conditions, in characteristic areas of relief and vegetation, offers wide possibilities for individualization of balneal-therapy treatments.

In terms of organizing health care, today in our country, saline lakes are used increasingly for prophylactic and curative purposes. The side of prophylactic use of saline lakes in various climatic zones of the country is a particularly important achievement. Parallel to the expansion of the accessibility of the balneal-therapy, the possibilities of using hot springs have also increased, in the facilities set up near the salt lakes.

The prophylactic value of salty lakes is manifested in increasing the body's defense and resistance; their curative value is reflected in the modification of the patients' reactivity, which leads to the influence of chronic inflammatory processes, the normalization of the neuro-endocrine system, the amelioration of trophic and metabolic disorders, maintained by certain diseases with chronic evolution.

- Salt lakes along the Black Sea:

- > Techirghiol lake - the resorts around Lake Techirghiol have developed both for treatment

as well as for rest - Eforie Nord, Eforie Sud; Lacul Agigea, Lacul Costinesti, Lacul Agighiol,

Lacul Nuntasi.

- Salt lakes from Romanian Field:

- >> Amara lake, Sarat lake, Balta Alba, Caineni, Movila Miresii, Fundata.

- Salt lakes from Subcarpathians and Transylvania: ‘

- > lakes and mineral springs in the sub-Carpathian region: The Ocnele Mari anthropic lake, the lakes of Slanic Prahova, the lakes of Telega, Tintea etc.

- >> therapeutic mud - contributes to increasing the competitiveness of the Romanian spa tourism offer. According to their origin and their qualities, the therapeutic muds are divided into: sapropelic, black, sulphurous by chemical processes of rotting in the absence of oxygen. These types of mud are found in Amara, Lake Sarat, Techirghiol, Ocna Sibiului, Ocnele and the Black Sea (deep); mineral spring muds are found at Sangeorz Bai, Baile Felix, Someseni and clay sediments, chemically degraded peats and vegetal remains. Therapeutically, they are used in the same diseases as salty lake waters, administered in the form of mud packs, infusions with dry peat etc.

Salt works - the main factor in the cure of chronic respiratory diseases, and bases of treatment in Targu Ocna, Slanic and Praid, they are also required by tourists from abroad. Medicinal plants - spread in our country are increasingly used in balneal tourism, in external cure, as herbal baths, but also in making medicines.

Climate-therapy - as a result of the researches carried out on climatic factors, several categories were discovered (bio climates with therapeutic qualities):

- ▶ bio climate of the seaside and plains - exciting associated with chlorosodic or sulphurous mineral waters or with mud from the area;
- ▶ steppe bio climate - has therapeutic qualities from May to September;

- ▶ bio climate of the seaside with therapeutic effect also in the cold season due to the large amount of saline aerosols;

- ▶ Sedative bio climate exists in the West Plain and in hills and plateaus up to 600 - 700 meters. It includes the most spa resorts in the country and, along with the main balneal factor, has an important role in the therapeutic effect.

- ▶ the tonic-stimulus bio climate, characteristic of the high altitude zones (800 - 2,000 m)

coordinates the acclimatization of the organism to the external environment and requires neuro-vegetative and endocrine functions.

Mountain hiking is very often used by tourists who come to spa resorts for treatment because it has positive effects on the human body (stimulating effect, tonicity) as well as in alleviating disease states - anemia, convalescence, rickets etc.

#### Ionization

Research by specialists has demonstrated the beneficial influence of the aero electric climate on the human body. Thus, a rich, negative natural aero ionization has sedative effects in various diseases (hypertension, neurosis, bronchial asthma) which leads to an increase in the spa and medical value of a resort. Aero ionization values are much higher at high altitudes. In most spa resorts in Romania, aero ionization has moderate values that do not exceed 700 ~ 1,000 ions / cm<sup>3</sup>, but there are also situations above this average: Sangeorz Bai, Baile Felix, Moneasa, Borsa.



### Spa resort Baile Felix

It is one of the largest spa resorts in Romania with permanent operation. Baile Felix resort is located in Bihor county, 8 km away from Oradea and 22 km away from Borş border crossing to Hungary.

Here are thermal waters, an optimal treatment base, relaxation conditions. the thermal water temperature is between 20-49 degrees Celsius. In Felix you can see the White Water Lily, here are the thermal artificial lakes where there are several acclimatized lotus species after they have been brought from other countries where they grow naturally. In the artificial lakes of the resort, there are many species of fish with different sizes and colors.

### History and objectives

### Resources treatment and equipment

► Bathtubs, mud and paraffin hot water installations, thermal water pools, underwater elongation installations, electrotherapy and hydrotherapy facilities, sauna, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, medical gymnasiums.

### Climate

Felix has a moderate continental climate with mild winters and temperate summers with Mediterranean influence, ideal for treatment, rest, balneal tourism.

### History

In various documents is written about the spa treatment in Baile Felix, that begins in the 18th century, and since 1857 a treatment fee is introduced for people who stay for baths more than four days. The resort grew spectacularly only after 1951.

### Touristic sights

► Apollo thermal water pool (1 900).

► The Karst phenomenon on Simleu Hill, the Betfair Pit, or the Hudra Bradii Pit (improperly named by the locals "Betfia Crater"). It has a depth of 86 meters, its well having an almost vertical drop of 54 meters).

► The Water Lilies Reserve in Băile Felix

► The Chapel of Haieu, an impressive church of medieval origin (XIV century), where you can see Romanic, Cistercian and Gothic architectural elements (restored in the year 1977);

► Sanifarm, a former monastery belonging to the monastic order of St. Vincent, a baroque architectural building, built in the 18th century.

► Orthodox Church in Rontau (sec. XV)

► The united (Greek-Catholic) church of Haieu (1906);

► The wooden church of Brusturi and the Greco-Catholic Church of Băile Felix.

Factors affecting the dynamics of tourism in general and especially health tourism

The evolution of the tourism in our country in general and of the spa tourism in particular reflects both the extensive development and the technical material base. Especially after 1970, a permanent ascendant evolution, which was connected by dimensions and structure to the dynamics of the consumers' demands, as well as the decrease which followed the economic and social changes that took place in Romania after 1989<sup>1</sup>.

Achieving macroeconomic stability, starting in 2000, materialized in 2005 through

<sup>1</sup> Cristureanu C., Zadig R., Baron P.- Tourism economy, Publishing House ASE, 1982, PAG. 95

a good average annual growth rate, is a favorable prerequisite for reviving the demand for tourism products and investments in this sector; and a good dynamics of arrivals and receipts will have the effect of increasing the contribution of tourism to the gross national product, creating new jobs and accentuating the multiplier effect by involving the economic branches whose activity depend on the touristic phenomenon.

Though effective results in maintaining and strengthening health and recovery of the energy potential, spa tourism has become one of the forms of tourism whose position on the domestic and international tourist market is constantly increasing. The dynamics of spa tourism is under the influence of a multitude of factors and in its analysis statistical indicators at macroeconomic level will be used, which synthesize the evolution of this form of tourism in time.

Tourism evolves into a number of factors, different in nature and role, with global or customized action on a form or component of tourism activity. Due to its peculiarities, balneal tourism is influenced not only by the many factors that act on tourism as a whole, but also by a number of factors specific to the development of spa tourism.

Generally, economic growth, coupled with the penetration of scientific progress in all areas of economic and social life, is the essential condition of prosperity, which generates the increase in money availability, free time and implicitly the manifestation of tourism demand.

The diversity of factors affecting tourism and the need for their quantification entail their structuring in relatively homogeneous categories, and from the many ways of classifying we refer to one of the most important

and comprehensive one, which has as their criterion their content and nature<sup>2</sup>:

- the economic factors - the incomes of the population and their modifications, the tourist offer and the prices of the tourist products;

- the technical factors - the performances of the means of transport, the technical equipment of the hotel and food units or the agencies;

- social-urbanization factors, leisure time, fashion;

- the demographic factors - the quantitative and numerical evolution of the population, the modification of the average duration of life, the structure by age, by socio-professional categories;

- Psychological, educational and civilization factors - training level, culture thirst, craving for knowledge, temperament, individual character;

- natural factors - geographic location, position on the main ways of communication, landscape, climate;

- organizational and political factors - formalities at borders, visa regime, facilities or priorities in organized tourism, typological diversity of arrangements, social, ethnic, religious conflicts.

The determinants of tourism can be structured in relation to the orientation of their influence on the two correlative chains of the market: factors of touristic demand - incomes, urbanization, leisure time, factors of supply - diversity and quality of services, cost of services, natural conditions, the material basis and factors of confrontation of demand-offer-distribution of travel agencies, infrastructure quality, monetary circulation,

---

<sup>2</sup>Minciu R.- Tourism economy,Uranus Publishing House,2004, pag.38



legislative system<sup>3</sup>.

This enumeration of several groups of factors, from the many existing ones, illustrates the large number of the variables of the tourist phenomenon, the influence of a good part of them being difficult to separate. For the representative factors there is a well-established methodology, measuring the intensity and effect of their action on tourism and balneal tourism.

Thus, the incomes of the population are in the opinion of the majority of specialists, the main condition for the manifestation of tourist demand and thus the objective material support of the development of tourism. Revenue growth also drives absolute shifts from one group to another, or from one selection to another.

Population revenues synthetically express the level of economic development of a country and, indirectly, the possibility of allocating more or less money to tourism. One of the indicators that eloquently characterizes the level of economic development is the gross national product per capita.

Revenues represent a factor with complex action that quantitatively influences the tourist traffic, by modifying the number of tourists but also by qualitatively influencing the duration of the trip, the distance on which the journey is made, the intensity of the holidays, the organized or particular character of the performance, the trip inside or outside country, the option for a particular means of transport.

Prices and tariffs are an important factor in the consumer's decision to do spa tourism. Demand is in fact the relationship between the various possible prices of a product and the quantities that will be bought at each of

the prices offered to them. A good pricing policy that reflects the quality of the benefits, coupled with a facility system, can ensure the stability of tourist flows, a good use of the capacity and efficiency of the activity.

Quantification of price inflation is also done with the aid of the elasticity coefficient, which has negative values due to the usually opposite reaction of the two phenomena (the increase in prices generates the reduction of the demand).

Specialists believe that prices and incomes must enter as a formative element of strategies that would ensure the creation and determination of an effective demand level. The tourist offer is made up of attractions, equipment and workforce, also known as factorial endowments - acts directly on tourism consumption and the phenomenon as a whole.

Technical progress is a factor that continuously influences the development of tourism, either directly, by increasing the technical degree of hotel, food, treatment and leisure facilities, or indirectly through its action on urbanization, industrialization, improvement of roads and means of transport, environmental quality.

On the other hand, the technical progress, industrialization, urbanization, the current conditions of life bring, besides positive aspects, some negative aspects such as stress intensification, food imbalances, qualitative and quantitative imbalances, intensification of the pathogenic action of the environment on human body due to physical and chemical pollution that has a negative impact on the health of the population. To diminish the impact of these negative effects, more and more tourists choose as holiday destination spa resorts.

<sup>3</sup> Minciu R.- Tourism economy, Uranus Publishing House, 2004, pag. 39

Another general factor influencing the dynamics of tourism and spa tourism is the demographic evolution, respectively the dynamics of the population and its mutations on age, professions, social environments. This factor has a special significance for spa tourism because the segment of third-age people is growing and is an important source for the growth of this form of tourism. Increasing the average life span and a system of facilities from the state, together with the need for care and rehabilitation of the state of health, transforms a large part of the persons included in this age category who also benefit from another factor that determines the leisure time tourism, in clients of spa resorts.

The process of urbanization through its negative effects on the environment and the increase of stress leads to an increase in the number of those who feel the need for restoration in a resort or spa treatment.

The actions of these general factors are complemented by the factors specific to the development of the spa tourism, of which we mention:

- the current global trend to replace, in some chronic illnesses, the treatment by medication with natural factors treatments, more appropriate to the overwhelmed body;
- combining tourism itself with balneal tourism, which provides the tourist with the opportunity to take care of their health during rest leave and to relax visiting a town or a foreign country;
- the development of social balneology, which makes the number of those who benefit from spas completely or partially paid by social insurance to be constantly increasing;
- the quality and efficiency of the facilities available to the resorts have an important role in their choice as a spa resort and can be

an attraction factor for the return of the tourists in the resorts;

- the development of medical techniques related to external cure procedures, (hydro-thermo-therapy, balneal-therapy);

- the therapeutically value of the natural factors of treatment in the climatic spa resorts in Romania and the multitude of diseases that can be treated.

The influence of these specific factors makes the spa tourism the form of tourism with the most individualized preferences and demands, the multitude of diseases involving various balneal-medical treatments and the making of an appropriate offer.

## **2.Recovery and revival of spa tourism in Romania**

Nowadays, tourism is characterized by a strong contender between destinations. Some of them manage to cope with international competition and others fail.

In these conditions, the destinations are increasingly in need of a new model of tourism policy that will improve their competitive position in the conditions of global competition. Measures that can be taken at central level can improve the competitive position of their own destination or cause damage.

Important measures in this regard:

- interest rate and interest rate policy;
- revenue policy;
- policy and investment encouragement structure;
- the fight against environmental pollution;
- competition law;
- structure and objectives of national / regional / local tourism bodies;

- relative labor market policy;
- policy in the field of training and research.

In today's competitive environment, tourism strategy needs to help creating a favorable environment for this sector; it is a "multidisciplinary enterprise" that needs a bold sector-specific strategy, set up with the help of operators at the operational level, to provide a vision, a model capable of guiding the production and marketing of tourism products.

The starting point in establishing the strategy for improving the competitive position of the destination is the decisive elements of competitiveness, which are given mainly by:

Factorial conditions, respectively:

- natural and cultural resources (landscape, watercourses, lakes, beaches, climate, population, monuments, historic cities, traditions, works of art, cultural heritage, art collections etc.);
- capital and infrastructure resources; tourism needs infrastructures and developed superstructures, means of transport, accommodation, regional and local arrangements;
- the capital of a country and the national and international investment potential significantly influence the competitiveness of the destination in question.
- human resources.

Another key element is the quality and structure of the bidders who represent the destination and the related experiences. The competitive position of a destination is determined to a large extent by its diversity, its degree of specialization and last but not least the quality of the bidders.

An important competitive factor is the quality of tourism products which, in turn, is given by:

- natural quality (environment conditions);
- quality of materials (hotel, transport, commerce, cultural, sport equipment).

### 3. Suggestions for the development of spa tourism

The objectives of spa tourism development in the west of the country can be:

► extra-economic objectives that pursue the values of the mineral, thermal, therapeutic gases and mud resources, bio climates and other factors, as well as the natural and anthropogenic potential of the country;

► economic objectives that aim to increase the domestic and international tourism circulation in the national and local health resorts, the increase of the revenues in tourism and in the adjacent branches, the increase of the employees' incomes, the employment, the economic development of economically poor regions, but with special balneal valences, etc.

It is necessary to design strategic plans for the development of spa tourism, starting from an interrogating vision and training all the factors involved in its development.

Achieving such a major objective requires the achievement of specific objectives such as: increasing the competitiveness of the spa tourism product, re-launching the Romanian spa tourism product on the local, regional, national and even international market, upgrading the infrastructure, improving the organized legal framework necessary for the development of the competitive balneal tourism.

## REFERENCES:

1. **Drucker, P.**, 1969, *The Age of Discontinuity*, New York, Harper & Row;
2. **Dubois J.L.**, 1995, "Intégrer le social et l'économique: recherches méthodologiques", Les travaux en cours, OCISCA, n.3.;
3. **Faas, Ronald, C, Bradley, Ed. B.**, 1986, "Policies to develop economic alternatives for farm people and rural communities." Increasing Understanding of Public Problems and Policies;
4. **Fridmann, J.**, citat in L. Needleman, 1968, *Regional analysis - selected readings*, Ed. Penguin Books;
5. **Georgescu-Rogen, N.**, 1975, *Energía y mitos económicos*. Southern Journal;
6. **Glasmeier, A.K., Fuellhart, K.**, 1991, "What do we know about firm learning?" in *Innovation and International Business*, Proceedings of the 22-th Annual International Business Academy University Press;
7. **Isard, W.**, 1975, *Introduction to Regional Science*, Englewood Cliffs, New York, Prentice Hall;
8. **Lazonick, W.**, 1984, *Business organization and the myth of the market economy*, Editura Cambridge University Press;
9. **Lionel Robbins**, 1932, *Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, London: Macmillan, First Edition;
10. **Maskell, P., Malmberg, A.**, 1995 „*Localised Learning and Industrial Competitiveness*“, Brie Working Paper, California, Berkeley;
11. **Matei, L., Matei, A.**, 2002, *Specific Issues of the Structure and Relations between Executive and Legislature at Local Level in Romania*, Executive and Legislature at Local Level: Structures and interrelations in countries of South-East Europe, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Zagreb;