

DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS FOR THE LOCAL RECREATIONAL SERVICES SECTOR IN ROMANIA

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The main objective of the doctoral thesis is identifying potential directions for the development of the local recreation services sector in Romania. Research shows that, in Romania, the local recreation industry is an economic structure facing a period of growth as compared to other industries in the country, as well as in the European context. However, the analyzed sector is marked by some shortcomings caused by, among other things, the lack of a unified strategy to govern the sector's current operating way. The development directions designed in the thesis propose a bottom-up approach – in which the individual effort of each enterprise may lead to the cumulative effect of development in the analyzed industry. Moreover, the need to adopt appropriate strategies appears not only in terms of economic advantages that it can generate, but also in terms of the benefits that a recreation services offer adapted to current market requirements can bring to the quality of life.

To achieve the main objective were used predominantly quantitative research methods ranging from macroeconomic analysis (at the country level and between countries) to microeconomic analysis (centered on business representatives and consumers). The first are substantiated in processing statistical data collected from secondary sources and include: designing a heterogeneity index for measuring the degree of specialization of countries' local recreational services sectors, making predictions based on longitudinal analyzes of time series, and verifying the existence of a correlation between labor productivity and use of free time. The latter use quantitative survey results based on questionnaires conducted during the studies, three of which were addressed to consumers and one to business representatives.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The research begins by investigating the importance of studying aspects of *recreation and leisure time use*. In the first chapter is explored the concept of recreation in general, then presented a brief overview of the history of leisure practices, and concludes with highlighting the need for recreation in the contemporary society. The next chapter refers to the conceptual *delimitation of commercial local recreation*.

The third chapter opens the *analysis of the local recreational services sector in Romania*. In this chapter is advanced an index that allows measuring the relative degree of specialization of a country in terms of local recreational services. The analysis made on a number of 31 European countries (including Romania) considering the timeframe between 2004 and 2014 reveals a potential for growth of the local recreation services sector in Romania, showing a moderate in intensity upward trend since 2008. Investigating development directions for the sector concerned, at the end of the same chapter are presented the results of a cluster analysis whose aim was identifying countries that have similar characteristics as Romania and that can serve as models and subsequently are presented strategies implemented in these countries.

The fourth chapter outlines the *diagnosis on the local recreational services sector in Romania*. In the beginning, it presents the evolution of the main macroeconomic indicators related to the local recreation sector and foresights are made regarding future developments. Next is presented a short overview of the influence of macroeconomic factors to explain the evolutionary trends previously observed, and then the analysis moves to microeconomic level, where the local recreational sector in Romania is examined from the perspective of business representatives and consumer preferences.

Finally, the fifth chapter concludes the research conducted by formulating actionable recommendations on *directions and strategies for the development of the local recreational services sector in Romania* based on the results. Thus, given the development prospects of the sector, this chapter presents possible strategies to achieve this goal and an estimation of the potential impact that the development of the sector can have on the population. The exploration of the local recreational services market in Romania has resulted in the identification of two dimensions on directions of development of the analyzed sector. On the one hand, the *analysis of external factors* – including the analysis of the macroenvironment, the competitive environment and demand – has led to finding new prospects for development of the sector. On the other hand, the analysis of internal factors highlights possible strategies for the development of the local recreational services sector in Romania.