

CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT LAGOON TOURISM IN EUROPE

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ABSTRACT

The main theme of this article is to present the capitalization in terms of lagoons in Europe. European countries have realized the importance of tourism to the economy, the advantages and the benefits that it brings. The lagoons, intermediates areas between sea and land with unique ecosystems and wonderful landscapes have a major potential. It has been made a desk research using existing resources like the Internet, books, articles in the press, statistical publications and analytical reports. It has been found that many countries in Europe have one or more lagoons on their territory and how those capitalized them. In this moment, there aren't enough studies on the topic, but the competent authorities should take into account this major potential on tourism activity.

Keywords: *lagoon, tourism, Europe, travel, ecosystem*

JEL Classification

L83, P48, Q01, Q26, Q57

1. Introduction

In the last century, tourism has a spectacular development. In many European countries, tourism is an important sector in the economy, the incomes obtained from this activity accumulating considerable values. Seen as a form of leisure and recreation, tourism is also considered a factor of progress and development. Experts and international organizations underscore the positive role that tourism brings and considered that it should be encouraged. European countries that have lagoons on their territory should take advantage of the lagoon, turning that advantage into a business opportunity and a way to increase the country's incomes. Lagoons are significant in a country's economy, those could be very productive not only by diversity, also the richness of the population of this environment.

2. European countries with coastal areas and their lagoons

European countries have used in different ways the potential of having a lagoon on their territory.

Countries like Greece, Malta and Turkey took advantage of lagoons present on their territory, exploiting the full potential offered by them. In Greece, Balos lagoon is famous for its turquoise clear water, fine white sand, wild natural beauty and exotic scenery. In many places, the sand is pink because of crushed seashells. The lagoon and surrounding area have rare species of flora and fauna such as cormorants, Eleonora hawks, caretta turtle protected by the Program called Nature 2000. This lagoon strongly valued in terms of touristic is included in all packages circuits provided by travel agencies. It is one of the best places for swimming in the Mediterranean and is among of the most photographed beaches in Crete. Also in Greece, in Corfu we can find clear waters of the Blue Lagoon, where tourists can take an unforgettable tour by boat, admiring the natural beauty of the place. Comino in Malta is famous for its Blue Lagoon. This impresses by the turquoise water, rich marine fauna and golden beach. It is suitable for diving, snorkeling and swimming. The lagoon is surrounded by beautiful rocks formations carved with lots of paths and trails, frequented by those who are not only interested in spending time on the beach. Blue Lagoon (Kumburnu) in Turkey is suitable for families with children and it is part of a protected national park.

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Some European countries including Iceland, Portugal and Spain have managed in different ways the lagoons on their territory, some of them are more developed than others. Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon is considered one of the natural wonders of Iceland, offering exceptional views. On its waters floating icebergs of different sizes, some covered by volcanic ash coming from eruptions, that changes the color by the sky or by the time of day. Icelanders have taken advantage of this unique wonder of nature and have used it in terms of tourism. Here you can make boat rides through the icebergs or tourists can relax at the cafe on the banks of the lagoon, admiring the magnificent landscapes. Blue Lagoon is located in the south-west of Iceland, in Reykjanes Peninsula and is among the most visited tourist attractions in the country. It is positioned in the middle of a lava field formed by strong volcanic activity. It is a natural pool with an area of 5,000 m² and its geothermal water is naturally heated by volcanic activity. Here Icelanders, using what nature has provided, succeeded to exploit this place. Visitors can bathe the entire year, because constant water temperature is about 40°C. Water has certain beneficial and curative properties, it cures certain skin diseases such as psoriasis, due to silicon and sulfur mineral wealth. The lagoon offers for accommodation cafes and bars, restaurants, a spa center and a clinic specialized in dermatology. The spa inside the lagoon is one of the best around the world, five years in a row winning Blue Flag. Aveiro lagoon from Portugal with a length of 45 km is a haven for many species of birds. Tourism and aquaculture are the principal activities of Aveiro lagoon. In recent years, the lagoon was threatened by deterioration of water quality due to the influences of industrial, urban and agriculture, but because of the importance of economic, environmental and cultural aspects of the lagoon, there is a strong impulse to preserve its ecosystem. It's a place where cycling (in family) is practiced with success, the area having trails that allow this type of sporting activity. Formosa lagoon is located in the Algarve, in the south of Portugal. Represents a system of barrier islands that communicates with the sea through six inlets. The lagoon has an important role in the regional economy. Besides tourism activity, there are other economic activities like seafood farms. Tourists can practice here bird-watching, since this region serves as a migration corridor and contains Europe's last remaining nesting of birds. Annually, approximately 30,000 species of birds can be seen here. Obidos lagoon is located in Leiria and is the largest seawater lagoon in Portugal. The lagoon offers the opportunity to practice many sports and adventure activities. Is the best place for windsurfing, kitesurfing, canoeing, wakeboarding and water skiing. At the intersection of the lagoon with the sea, sandy beaches extend around both sides and tourists can enjoy the waves of the Atlantic or lagoon waters, all on the same beach. Around the lagoon are designed cycle lanes. In Spain we find Albufera lagoon, a freshwater lagoon that is part of the Albufera Natural Park with rich flora and fauna. It is valued in terms of tourism. Fishing is the main activity carried out in the lagoon. Also, here tourists can practice bird-watching. Fuente de Piedra lagoon, located in the north of the province of Malaga, is a paradise for birds with over 170 different species recorded. Here we find the largest colony of flamingos in the Iberian Peninsula. Mar Menor lagoon, one of the largest lagoons in Europe located in the province of Murcia is a saltwater lagoon. In 1994, the lagoon was included on the list of the Ramsar Convention for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.

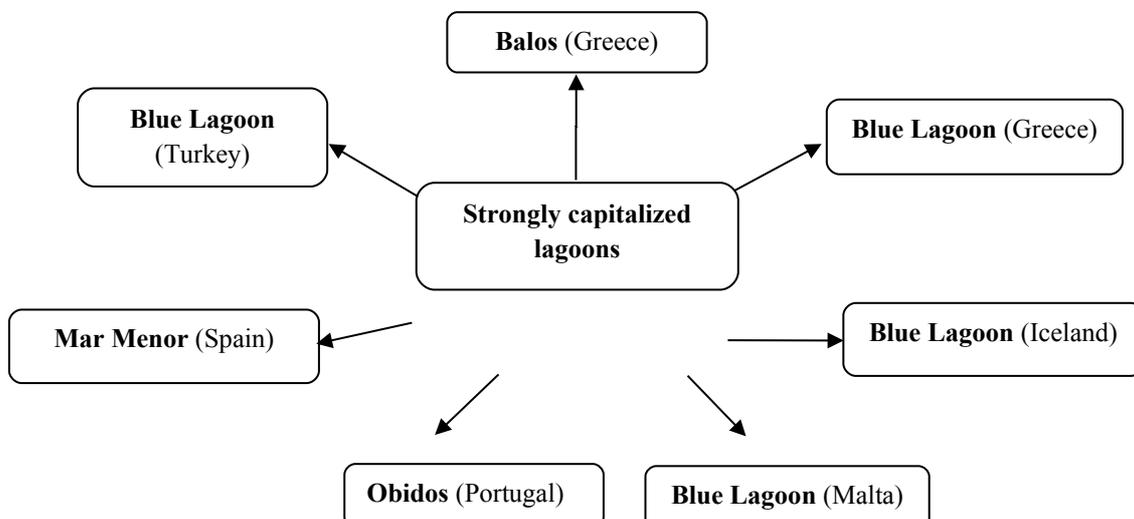


Figure 1. Strongly capitalized lagoons from european countries

Source: realised by author based on the research on the Internet

Germany and Romania are also among the countries that were able to capitalize in terms of tourism lagoons which are part of the landscape's country. Szczecin lagoon is a lagoon located in the Oder estuary and is split between Germany and Poland. The lagoon provides tourist boat trips, numerous water sports and several beaches. Also, you can go hiking, biking, visit museums and castles. There is also a small village that preserves the lifestyle of former slave settlements. Despite these strengths, Germany is trying to capitalize on tourism Szczecin lagoon advantage using everything it offers. In Romania, Razim-Sinoe is located in the south of the Danube Delta, in northwest of Dobrogea. Regarding the tourism in the area, tourists are advised cycling. The bicycle is the most appropriate way to discover the mainland of Razim-Sinoe lagoon. Cycling tourism in Northern Dobrogea is not just about pedaling in itself, but involves a variety of other activities, such as stopping and visiting tourist attractions (monasteries, museums, etc.), photography and bird-watching. There are different areas where you can fish and camp.

In Italy there are two lagoons: di Marano and Valli di Comacchio lagoon. The state has invested a little more in only one of them. Therefore, di Marano lagoon is poorly touristic exploited, impressing by the natural beauty and is populated by migratory birds and rich marine life, while Valli di Comacchio lagoon is more developed. It is classified as a Site of Community Importance and Special Protection Area. Also is evaluated internationally by Ramsar Convention for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.

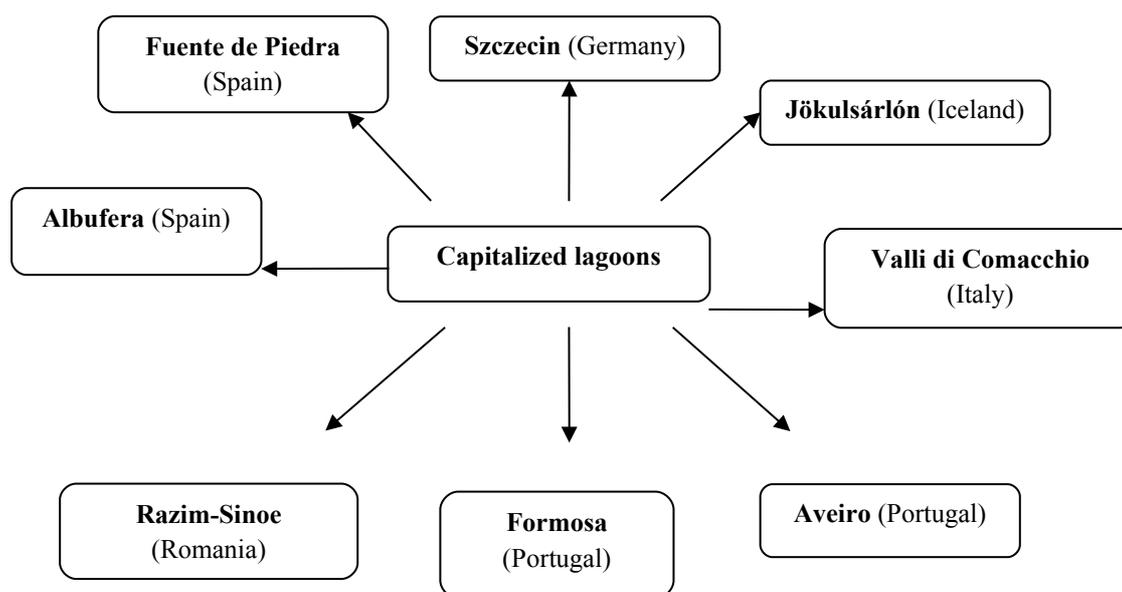


Figure 2. Capitalized lagoon from european countries

Source: realised by author based on the research on the Internet

Low valued in terms of tourism are lagoons from Albania, Lithuania, Norway and Poland. Karavasta lagoon from Albania is known because the Dalmatian pelican makes nest here and is one of the largest lagoons in the Mediterranean. Curonian lagoon is located on the Baltic coast. It is classified

as less salt. In Norway, the sandbar that separates the great Richard lagoon is one of the largest sites inhabited by walruses in Svalbard. Vistula lagoon is a fresh water lagoon located on the Baltic coast. If in present the lagoon is insufficiently valued, in the future this might change if its natural conditions with an unique climate and outstanding scenery are exploited.

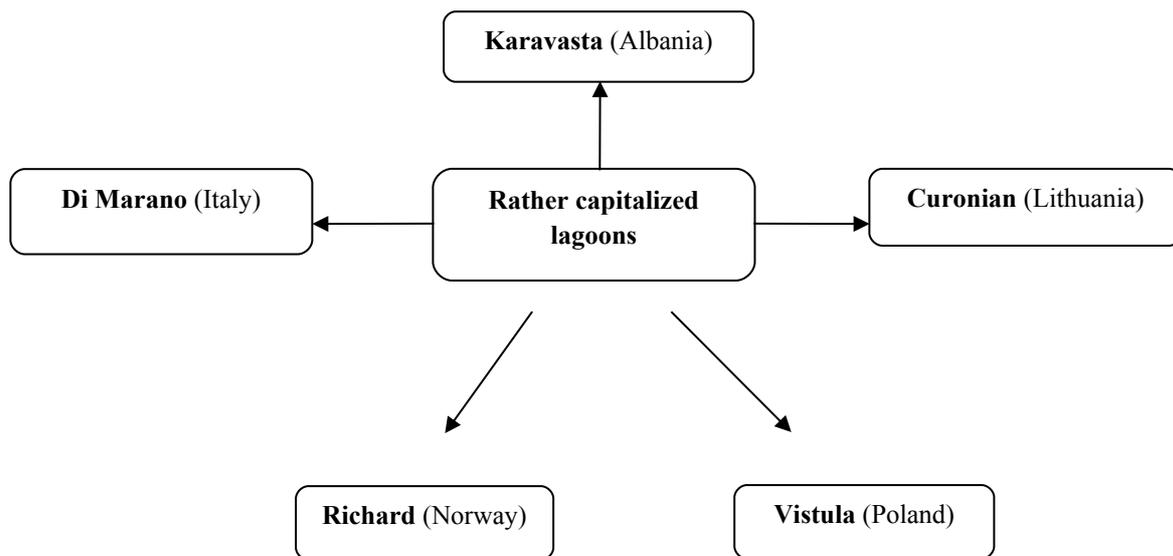


Figure 3. Rather capitalized lagoons from european countries

Source: realised by author based on the research on the Internet

Each european country have used in different ways the potential of having a lagoon on their territory, most of taking advantage of holding such a resource.

Total contribution of travel & tourism to GDP and to employment for the european countries having lagoons on their area (2013)

Table no.1

Current issue	Country	Total contribution of travel & tourism to GDP 2013		Total contribution of travel & tourism to employment 2013	
		Billions	%	Number of jobs	%
		1.	Albania (ALL)	239.8	16.7
2.	Germany (EUR)	129.9	4.7	2,093,500	5.0

Current issue	Country	Total contribution of travel & tourism to GDP 2013		Total contribution of travel & tourism to employment 2013	
		Billions	%	Number of jobs	%
3.	Greece (EUR)	28.3	16.3	657,000	18.2
4.	Iceland (ISK)	389.1	21.6	38,000	21,9
5.	Italy (EUR)	159.6	10.3	2, 619,000	11.6
6.	Lithuania (LTL))	5,427.2 (millions)	4.6	57,000	4.4
7.	Malta (EUR)	1,798.8 (millions)	25.5	45,500	26.4
8.	Norway (NOK)	189.6	6.4	22,000	8.5
9.	Poland (PLN)	85.7	5.3	792,500	5.1
10.	Portugal (EUR)	25.6	15.6	818,500	18,2
11.	Romania (RON)	33.1	5.1	500,500	5,7
12.	Spain (EUR)	161.1	15.7	2,655,500	15.8
13.	Turkey (TRY)	192.6	12.3	2,317,500	9,1

Source: realised by author based on WTTC, Economic Impact Research, Country Reports, 2014

According to the table above, it is noted that Malta and Iceland have the highest contribution of tourism to GDP with 25.5 % and 21.6 %. A middle position regarding this contribution goes to countries like Albania, Greece, Portugal and Spain. The last places are occupied by Germany and Lithuania and at a short distance Poland and Romania.

Regarding the total contribution of travel and tourism to employment (%), Malta and Iceland hold first place. In contrast, with a poor employment of workers in tourism is Lithuania and Germany.

3. Conclusions

It was noticed that a potential tourist resource is the lagoon, a particular form of relief, which only a few European countries have.

It has been emphasized and developed the tourist offer of European countries possessing one or more lagoons on their territory and how they have used, distinguishing strongly capitalized, capitalized and rather capitalized lagoons.

In Romania, Razim-Sinoe is an opportunity to exploit the Romanian tourism potential. In the future, the competent authorities should take steps for a better exploitation of this area which offers fresh perspectives in tourism.

Countries that have harnessed lagoons and aiming to do should take into account sustainable development.

Investments and concern for tourism development should continue, protecting and preserve the environment, to maintain the ecological balance of tourist areas, controlled exploitation of resources, the cultural heritage, customs and traditions of each nation.

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