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**THE ROLE OF TOURISM IN THE STRUCTURAL DYNAMICS
OF AN ECONOMIC PROFILE.
CASE STUDY: BĂILE OLĂNEȘTI RESORT**

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Abstract

Over the past few years, there has been a growing interest in building a territorially balanced economic and social development. In certain areas, developing the basic local infrastructure and improving the existing services represent an essential part of any effort to help the region achieve its growth potential and to promote its durability. Balneary potential has often facilitated the economic development of certain towns in Romania. This has definitely been the case for the Băile Olănești Resort - a small town that has become famous due to its hydro-mineral potential, thus turning into an ever growing settlement, over the centuries.

In order to develop balneary tourism one must have, firstly, hydro-mineral resources and, secondly, an adequate set of material resources. The economics of the Băile Olănești Resort revolve around tourism and hotel services, with an aim to attract as many tourists as possible, on the one hand and to create jobs for the local population, on the other hand.

Keywords: *balneary tourism, mineral springs, positive impact, Getic Sub-Carpathians.*

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the main components of international trade. Due to its multiplying effect, tourism engages other economic areas, whose evolution depends on tourism, among other things (such as constructions, transports, food industry, services, etc.). Thus, the role and impact that tourism – as a tertiary sector branch – can have on the economic development

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of a region, require its inclusion among any local strategic objectives related to economic development.

Romania has a wide range of naturally therapeutic factors, such as: mineral waters, sapropel mud, gas emanations, etc. The large number of such factors as well as their territorial distribution are a result of the country's geographic position and geological structure. These have generated more than 150 Balneary Spa Resorts and numerous towns with beneficial therapeutic elements, spread across the entire country (Roangheș Mureanu 2012, p. 21).

When it comes to the use of concepts, there is a wide range of principles employed in balneary tourism such as thermalism (Stănciulescu, Lupu, Tigu 2000), balneo-therapy (Rouzade 1995), health tourism (Gartner, Williams 2000, Clifts, Page 1996, Dinu et al., 2011) or balneary spa therapy (Berlescu 1982).

If for Italians, Frenchmen and Spaniards, thermalism refers to the use of any kind of water for therapeutic purposes, including cold water, in Romania, specialists define thermalism as: *"the totality of all activities related to valorising and using hot mineral waters for healing purposes, on tourists coming to a thermal resort"* (Stănciulescu, Lupu, Tigu 2000, p. 177).

The term balneo-therapy also has different meanings in different geographic areas. In Romania, this designates the use of curative baths in certain treatments while, in France, it designates the use of running water (not mineral, thermal or seawater) for therapeutic purposes (Rouzade 1995).

The term "health tourism" has also been used over the past two decades. And once again, the meaning of this concept can also be diverse, representing everything from: *"caring for one's state of health using the country's natural resources, mainly mineral waters and the climate"* (IUOTO Publications 1983, p.32) to *"the free time spent away from home, when at least one of the objectives is to improve one's state of health"* (Clifts, Page 1996, p.199) or *"the spare time, recreational and educational activities carried out away from work or from home, the tourism products and services designed to help and allow clients to improve and maintain their health and wellbeing"* (Gartner and Williams 2000, p.165).

However, the most comprehensive term is the term of balneary-climatic-therapy, which implies: *"the use of an entire complex of natural factors: climate, balneary factors (mineral waters, salty lakes, saline areas, mud,*

therapeutic gases, beaches) existing in a resort or a balneary town, for prophylactic, curative or medical recovery purposes" (Berlescu 1982, p. 25).

Regardless of the terminology used, health tourism is conducted via balneary spa resorts. Currently, the institute in charge of carrying out and coordinating research activities in the field of balneary medicine is the National Institute for Recovery, Physical Medicine and Balneoclimatology.

In balneary tourism, researching the existing natural resources is essential for the development and promotion of a balneary resort. This way, one can promote information related to the therapeutic features of each mineral resource found, and their effects on the human body.

There can be no balneary tourism without natural therapeutic resources and an adequate treatment facility, that would allow the medical procedures to be conducted. Using thermal and mineral springs for health and treatment purposes has been a traditional practice since the ancient times (Badea and Rusenescu 1970).

The first, incipient forms of using the therapeutic features of various natural factors were thermal water baths. During the Greek-Roman era, certain scholars and healers used thermal-mineral waters to treat illnesses. The Ancient Homer was the first to praise the beneficial effects of bathing in thermal waters. In the times of Hippocrates – who is considered to be the founder of natural therapy, using thermal-mineral waters to treat various diseases - the Greeks believed that the Gods had blessed those waters with healing powers. Temples were built in Greece, around hot springs. The same happened in Northern Italy. Thus, some Gods were given names such as *Burbo* – the God of Mineral Springs or *Eschilbious* – the God of Health (Routh 1996, p. 553).

Besides, we must also mention the work titled: *"Mineral Waters and Climate Spa Resorts in Romania"* written by Doctor Al. Saabner Tuduri, known as "the father of Romanian balneology". In 1990 he stated, in his works that: *"those who drank the water... were healed. Besides, every year, on the 6th of August patients would come to this spring, which we now know that has a high iodine content."* (Pricăjan 1999, p. 16). In time, research works started taking various forms: either they referred to the mineral waters in a certain area or they focused on therapeutic gases or on therapeutic lakes or mud.

2. Case study: Băile Olănești Resort

Located in the central-northern part of the Getic Sub-Carpathians, the town of Băile Olănești lays on both sides of the Olănești Valley and its tributaries (such as Tisa, Valea Argelelor, Valea Adanca, Valea Cheii). It has a total surface of 16,834 ha, of which, 485 ha are located inside the built-up urban area and 16,349 ha are located outside the built-up urban area. With a surface of 164 square meters, the town itself comprises 8 different settlements: Olănești, Livadia, Comanca, Gurguiata, Cheia, Pietriș, Tisa, Mosoroasa.

The town of Băile Olănești shows the particular characteristics of a SubCarpathian area. These refer, on the one hand, to the natural resources discovered here and, on the other hand, to the existing traditions.

The first documented record of this town dates back to 1579, when the then ruler, Radu de la Afumați, consolidated the Deeds of Ownership held by Radu Goran, in Olănești. Old documents from 1760 mention the “healing waters” located in Băile Olănești on the estate held by Master (*in Romanian: Clucer*) Toma Olănescu, who also built the first bathroom there. That’s where the name Băile Olănești (*in translation: “the Olănești Baths”*) comes from (Catrina, Catrina 1982, p. 12).

However, the first actual research related to the chemical composition and the benefits of this water, were conducted in 1527. Over the following period of time, the chemical composition of the water was analysed periodically, by a series of well known specialists such as (Catrina, Catrina 1982, p. 12):

- 1830 – first tests made by dr. Karl Friedrich Siller.
- 1853-1854 – Petre Poenaru and later on, chemistry professor Alexe Marin.
- 1869 – Dr. chemist Bernath Leodway at Dr. Carol Davila’s suggestion.
- 1873 – The mineral water was sent to the Vienna Exhibition where it was granted the Gold Medal.
- 1922 – Dr. Knott – General Inspector of Mineral Water in Austria and professor Krizan from the Prague Chemical Institute allowed 22 sources of mineral water to be captured.
- 1966-1975 – research carried out by the Institute for Physical Medicine, Balneoclimatology and Medical Recovery in Bucharest.

- 2011, October 12 – Decision no. 1016 was issued, under which the town of Băile Olănești was declared a Balneary Spa Resort.

In terms of landforms, the town of Băile Olănești is located *“at the intersection between the Căpățânii – Cozia Mountains and the Sub-Carpathian hills, interrupted by the Călimănești – Jiblea and the Cheia Olănești Depressions.”* (Ielenicz et al., 2003, p. 16).

Geological composition is also crucial to the town’s evolution. According to certain renowned geologists (Popescu 1954, Alexandrescu 1956, Airinei 1959, Popovici 1959, Dragos 1953, 1955, etc.) the resort is located at the edge of the mountain, being part of a series of depressions (Călimănești – Căciulata, Băile Olănești, Bărbătești, Horezu, Bistrița, Pietrari, Costești).

Geologically speaking, the Olănești Basin has developed on a very diverse territory from a geological viewpoint. This structural, lithological and tectonic diversity has left a visible print on the region’s overall morphology. The area corresponds to a zone flooded during the upper cretaceous period.

“Geological works covering this zone mention the layout of the sedimentary formations, as layers, generally oriented from west to east, almost parallel to the edge of the mountains. This is also revealed by the layout of the main landforms, which are mainly conditioned by their petrography features.” (Dinu 1999, p. 36)

The hydro-mineral potential of this town has helped its development and the settlement was declared a Balneary Spa Resort in 2011. This is one of the largest Balneary Spa Resorts in Romania, being well known, both nationally and internationally, for the wide range of illnesses that it can treat and for the significant number of mineral springs used within it (more the 30 mineral sources).

3.Methodology

The growing interest in territorially balanced economic and social development, has led to certain surveys being conducted, to analyse the

various opportunities that the Local Councils had at their disposal and possible ways to turn such opportunities into practice. The purpose of this study is to analyse the economic profile of the Băile Olănești Resort (Figure 1).

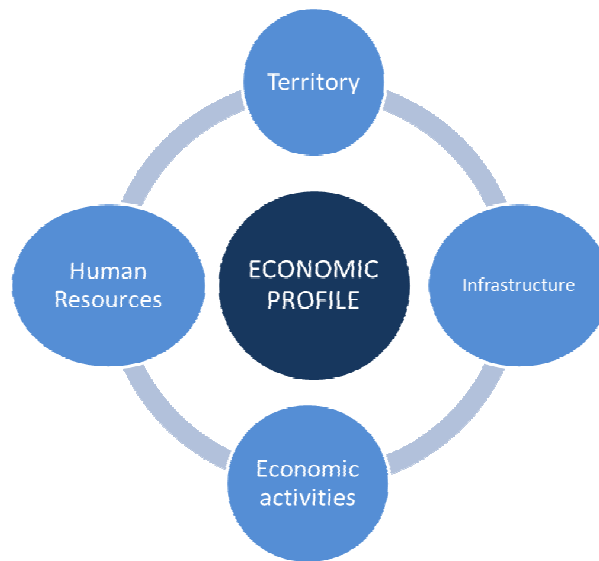


Fig. 1. A town's economic profile
(Source: Data processed from a study made by ASE, 2014)

Starting with the assumption that a town usually develops based on its strong points, a series of methods have been used to make this survey, such as: documentation from national publications related to the resort, international documents related to the impact tourism can have on economic development, access to an international database (Tempo online). The authors have analysed the relevant indicators providing information on the economic activities, the population, the territory and the natural resources of this area.

4. Results

The socio-economic development potential existing in the town of Băile Olănești has been analysed taking into account the four main

reference indicators: the territory, the population, the economic activity and the infrastructure (Figure 2).

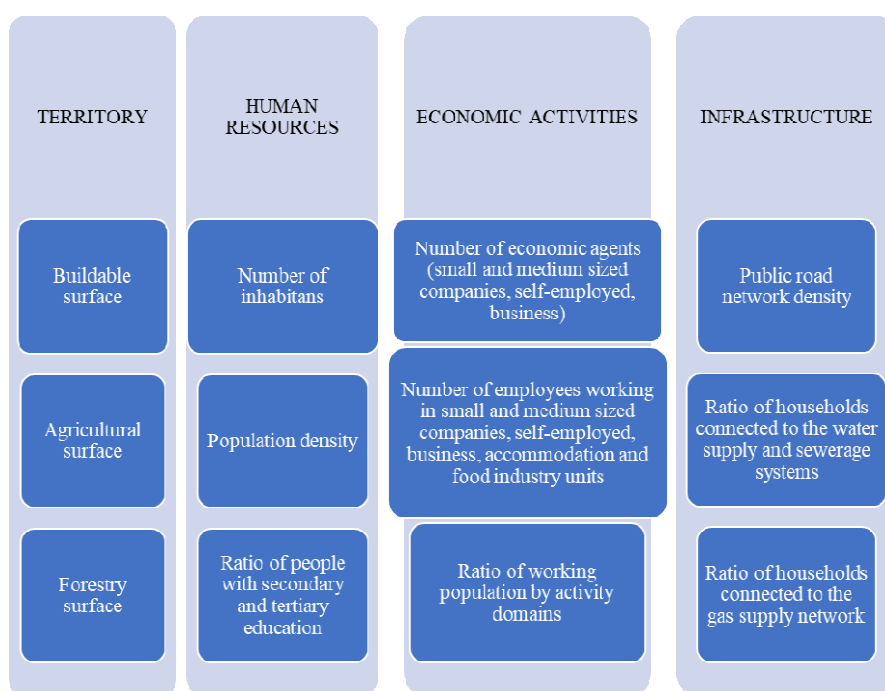


Fig. 2. A Town's socio-economic development potential and its indicators
(Source: Data processed from a study made by ASE, 2014)

Indicator 1. *The territory held by the town of Băile Olănești.* The total surface of the town measures more than 16,000 ha, split into: 97% located outside the built-up urban area and 3% located inside. The largest part of the land located outside the built-up urban area is made of forests (68%), although deforestation has started to gain space in the area lately. Agricultural lands make up approximately 16% of the town's terrain, being split into: orchards, pastures, meadows, arable lands. Pastures and meadows represent the largest part, of approximately 13% (Table 1, Figure 3).

Table 1

Surfaces of land existing in the town of Băile Olănești

		1992	2000	2016
	Total	16.434	16.434	16.434
A	Constructions	53	58	140
B	Agricultural (Ha)	3259	2626	2626
	Arable	118	136	136
	Pastures	1974	1826	1726
	Meadows	769	34	434
	Vineyards	1	-	-
	Orchards	397	230	330
C	Forests	12519	13417	13274
D	Lakes, ponds, rivers	138 ha	138 ha	138 ha
E	Unproductive lands	195 ha	195 ha	195 ha

(Source: INS data)

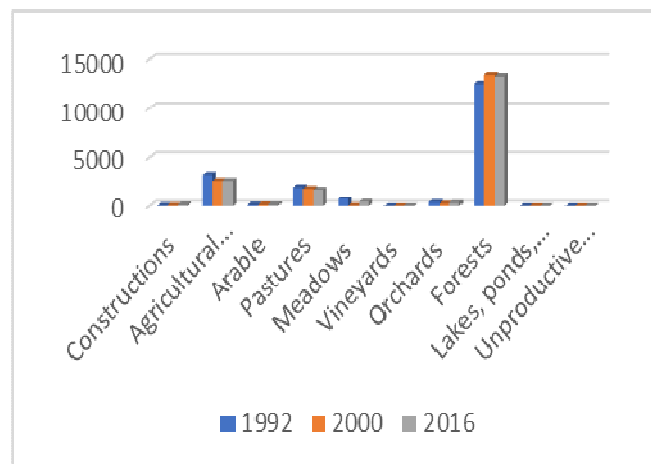


Fig. 3. Categorisation of land in the town of Băile Olănești
(Source: INS Data)

a. Built area. Construction and storage activities are carried out in small, adequately equipped units. The built surface has been continuously growing, doubling from 1992 to 2016.

These construction works have been done both on the local population's dwellings and on public institutions such as: City Halls, schools, kindergartens, medical clinics, police precincts, post offices, banks, accommodation units, treatment facilities, public alimentation structures (restaurants, terraces), etc.

According to the data made available by INS, in 1992, the built surface measured 53 ha, in 2000, that grew to 58 ha and, in 2016, the built surface reached 140 ha.

b. Agricultural surface. Since 2000, the town of Băile Olănești has been holding 2626 ha of agricultural land; this includes pastures and meadows (86%) on the one hand and orchards and arable lands (14%) on the other hand.

Pastures and meadows are ranked first in this hierarchy, with a total surface of 2260 ha, followed by orchards, with 230 ha (9%) and arable lands, with 136 ha (5%).

In these orchards, there are usually apple trees, plum trees and sour cherry trees and, although their surface is decreasing their production is growing (Tables 2, 3).

Table 2

**Distribution of surfaces
and quantities occupied
by orchards in Băile Olănești**

	Quantity – tons	Surface – ha
1992	144	397
2000	428	330
2016	1682	230

(Processed INS data)

Table 3

**Distribution of surfaces
and quantities occupied
by arable lands in Băile Olănești**

	Quantity – tons	Surface – ha
1992	245	118
2000	252	136
2016	84	136

(Processed INS data)

c. Forestry surface. The Forestry land existing in the town of Băile Olănești had a surface of 13,274 ha in 2016, slightly higher than the surface recorded in 1989, i.e. 12,841 ha.

Out of this total surface of forestry land, recorded in 2016, 46% was state-owned (i.e. 6110 ha), while the remaining 54% (or 7164 ha) was under private property. Regardless of their type of ownership, forestry lands are considered national interest assets.

According to some surveys made by Rădoi Traian, holder of a PhD in Biology, there is a wide range of vegetation in the town of Băile Olănești. This is due to the town's geo-morphological position, at the junction point between two landform levels: hills and mountains.

On the higher crests located in the western part of the town, there are bushes (mountain pines, juniper, bilberry, mountain cranberry tree, *Rhododendron kotschyi*, etc.) and pastures (covered in alpine bellflowers, Breckland thyme, *Dianthus tenuifolius*, etc.)

At altitudes between 130 and 1,700 m, the predominant vegetation is made of fir and spruce forests, as well as bellflowers, wild lilies, fern, creeping buttercup, etc.

Between 300 and 1,494 m, beech, sycamore, elm, ash, birch and sessile forests are all well represented. Among the plants growing there, we can mention the Crown Imperial, the *Corydalis cava*, the Cowslip, the Common comfrey, the Snowdrop, the Greater celandine, etc.

d. *Surface occupied by ponds, rivers and lakes.* These cover a surface of 138 ha, representing 0.84% of the total surface of land.

e. *There is also a significant surface of unproductive land* (195 ha), representing approximately 1.2% of the total surface of land. These are mainly precipices, cliffs, ravines, etc.

Indicator 2. Human Capital. The human capital is the most important resource of a society, being a decisive factor in the economic development process of a town (Stănciulescu, Lupu, Țigu 2000). The population is both the consumer and the beneficiary of such development.

By analysing its human potential, one can draw up an overall characterisation of a community, as the locals are both the consumers and the workforce in a certain area.

The number of inhabitants has been decreasing over time (Figure 4). According to the INS statistics, the overall population in the area, has

shirked by 7 percent, due to various reasons: higher number of deaths, lower birth rate, more population mobility, towards other, larger urban centres.

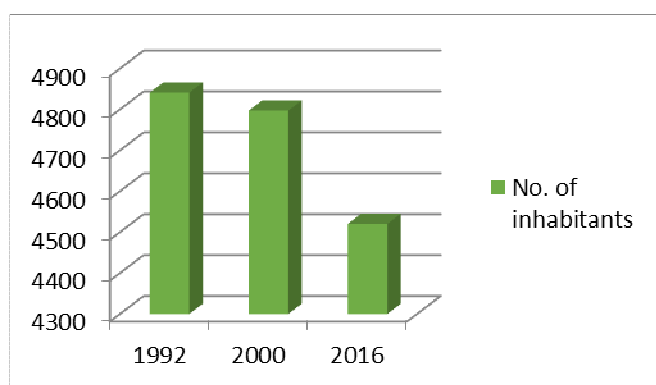


Fig. 4. Evolution of the number of inhabitants living in the town of Băile Olănești
(Source: INS statistical data)

Indicator 3. Economic activity. The resort's economic activity revolves around the use of the town's balneo-tourism potential.

Tourism ranks first in this hierarchy, comprising hotel services, public alimentation services in tourism and medical assistance. "*Balneary tourism... is particularly important, both for the development of the resorts practicing it and for the economic development of the entire region*" (Roanghes-Mureanu, Tudoricu 2014, p.112). The Băile Olănești Resort, in Valcea County, is ranked first among the Balneary Spa Resorts in Romania, in terms of: number of springs, their total daily debit, the variety of their composition and the concentration of their mineral water (Roanghes-Mureanu, Tudoricu 2014, p. 112).

There are more than 35 hydro-mineral sources within the resort's premises, either natural springs or springs created artificially by way of drilling and mining activities (wells and galleries). There are 17 mineral springs (number 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 24, 30) captured to be used in internal therapies (crenotherapy); another set of three hydro-thermal sources (mineral springs no. 3bis, 4 and 27) can also be used for internal cures (Roanghes-Mureanu Ana 2012, p. 176). Besides, there are other ten hydro-mineral sources, which have not been captured

yet, but they might have the potential to be used in internal cures; these are springs no. 6, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 28, 29 and 31 (Figure 5).

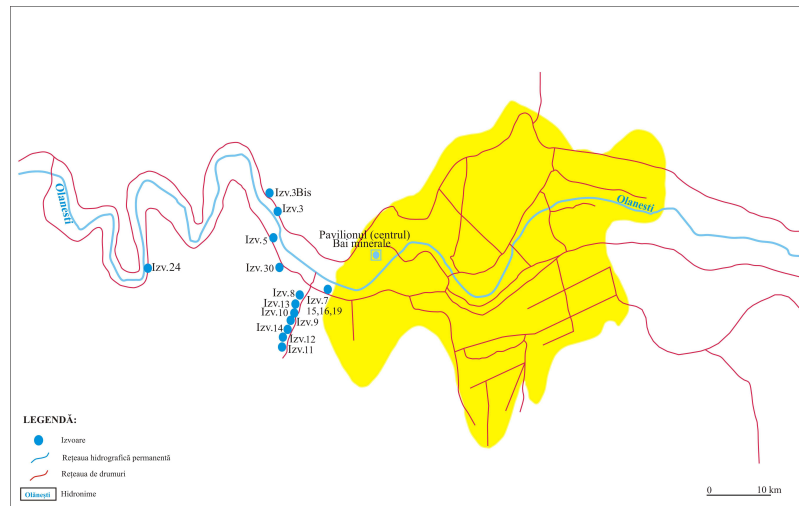


Fig. 5. Distribution of hydro-mineral sources across the Băile Olănești Resort
(Source: Roangheș-Mureanu Ana, 2012)

Two mineral springs (number 1 and number 2) are used for external cures (bathing) along with four probes: Number 1-IBF, number 2-IMFBRM, number 1001-ISEM and number 2-ISEM (Pricajan 1999).

An analysis of tourist circulation in the town of Băile Olănești, between 1992 and 2016, can be made using the number of accommodation facilities, the number of places available in such facilities, the number of people arriving and the number of nights spent in these facilities.

Table 4

Analysis of the number of accommodation facilities and the number of places available in such facilities in the town of Băile Olănești

	1992	2000	2016
Number of facilities	27	17	37
Number of places	2199	2076	2622
Number of arrivals	-	32.901	38.231
Number of nights	-	432.858	314.873

(Source: processed INS data)

A detailed analysis reveals a fluctuating curve when it comes to the number of accommodation facilities available in the area; this number dropped from 27 units (1992) to 17 units (2000). This was due to the retrocession operations made after 1990, and the fact that all the existing accommodation facilities became private properties. In 2016, the number of accommodation facilities grew continuously, reaching 37 units. The number of places available in these facilities went through the same fluctuating curve. On the same time, the number of tourists arriving in town grew while the number of nights spent there, went down.

As the touristic demand for this resort has always been high, the touristic services could be developed and diversified. The other economy branches - industry and agriculture – play a less significant role in this area (Figure 6).

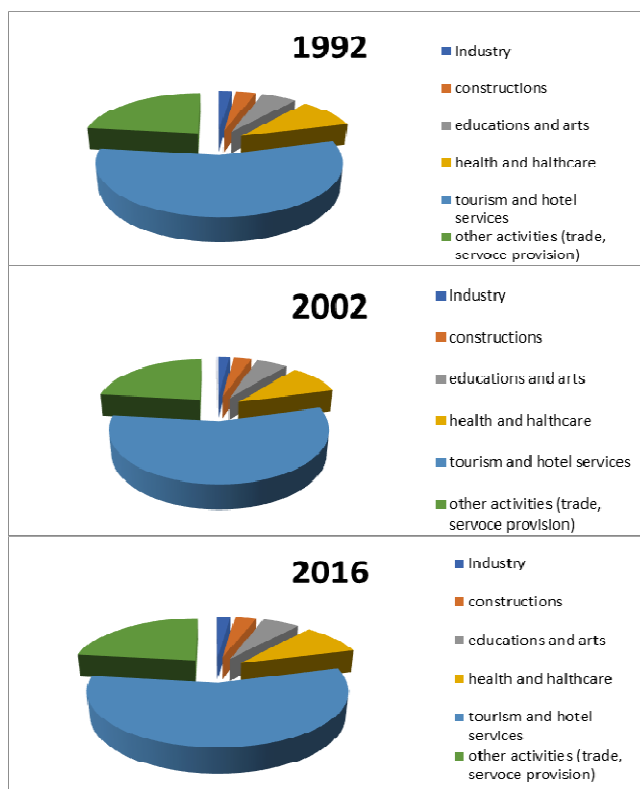


Fig. 6. Evolution of the number of employees per activity in the town of Băile Olănești (1992, 2000, 2017)
Source: Processed INS data

The main economic functions (in order of their importance) are: tourism and hotel services, trade and service provision, health and healthcare. Out of a total number of 950 economic agents existing in this town, 38% operate in the field of tourism and hotel services, 8% in the field of restaurants and public alimentation, 18% in the field of health and healthcare and the remaining 36% in other fields.

When analysing the number of employees, the statistical data reveals a fluctuating curve, with its peak in 2000, when the total number of employees reached 1687 people, according to the statistical data provided by INS, followed by a drop, all the way to 2016. This was due to seasonal working (Figure 7).

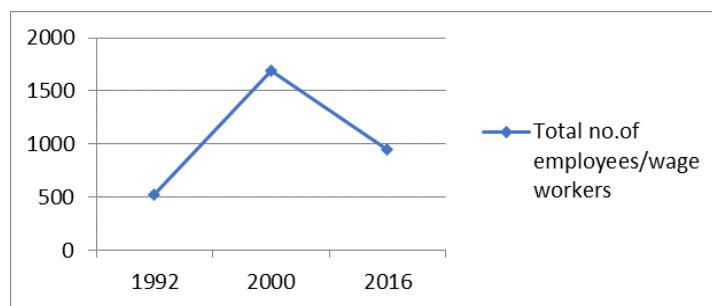


Fig. 7. Evolution of the number of employees in Băile Olănești
(Source: processed INS data)

There was a significant increase in the number of employees working in tourism, in 2000 – from 25% (in 1992) to 48% (in 2000) and then, to 56% (in 2016).

From a turnover perspective, in 2016, tourism made up more than 65% of the turnover recorded in the entire town (more than 100 million lei) and its profit was more than 20 million lei (representing over 50% of the entire town's profit).

On the other hand, the unemployment rate decreased, from 124 people in 2010 to 97 people in 2016. There are no clear statistics available on this evolution, before 2010.

The other economy branches – industry and agriculture – played a smaller role.

Indicator 4. *Infrastructure* also plays an important role in the analysis of a town, especially if we are talking about a tourist resort. The town of Băile Olănești can be accessed as follows:

- Bucharest – Râmnicu Vâlcea – Băile Olănești: E 81 – National Road 64A
- Sibiu – Râmnicu Vâlcea – Băile Olănești: E 81 – National Road 64A
- Tg. Jiu – Râmnicu Vâlcea – Băile Olănești: National Road 81 – National Road 64A
- Drăgășani – Râmnicu Vâlcea – Băile Olănești: National Road 64 – National Road 64A

There is also a set of local, secondary roads (village paths) making the connection between the public roads mentioned above and the other settlements making up the town of Băile Olănești.

There are no railways available in the area and, unfortunately, there is no way to connect the zone to the national railway network.

The water supply system which has been in place since 1958, was constructed around a water treatment plant located in the northern part of the town. The system takes its water from the over ground water sources available in the area, i.e. the Olănești River and its tributary Răpuroasa. The villages of Comanca and Pietrisu, have their own, individual water supply system; it collects water from several underground springs and stores it into a tank, before distributing it gravitationally. The total length of the drinking water distribution network was 21.4 km in 1992 and 20.6 km in 2016.

The sewerage system is only functional in Olănești and Livadia. A wastewater treatment plant, that works at reduced capacity (up to 30% of its full power) cleans the wastewater by way of mechanic purification, before discharging it into the Olănești river (Economic-social development strategy drawn up for the town of Băile Olănești, for 2014-2020). As for the total length of the sewerage ducts, it was 0.2 km in 1992 and 27.1 km in 2016.

The electricity supply comes from two sources: P.A. Ostroveni and the Vâlcea Nord Transformation Plant. There are 3 energy conversion facilities in Olănești, 8 in Livadia, 2 in Cheia, 1 in Tisa and 1 in Pietrisu. The villages of Comanca and Mosoroasa are not connected to the electric grid.

Heating is provided locally, with wood burning stoves. Apart from that, there are also two heating plans, that provide heating to the households in the area and to some of the public buildings existing there.

The gas supply system has been under construction since 2010, with the consumption growing constantly, from 71 cubic meters, in 2010 to 1352 cubic meters in 2016. As for the total length of the gas distribution pipes, in 2010, there were 22.7 km of pipes in the town of Băile Olănești while, in 2016, this length grew to 30.2 km (INS data).

Conclusions

This study focused on analysing the main economic indicators in the studied field. Our data revealed the share of each economic sector, based on the minimum and maximum values recorded during the analysed period.

The results obtained are useful in revealing the economic fluctuations recorded in the area and in identifying the activities that triggered growths and decreases in the local economy. The graphs are a representation of the reality surrounding each economic element found in the analysed town; each such element has both a representation of its activity and one of its evolution in time. Although forestry and agricultural lands occupy the largest part of the town, tourism activities are the ones that produce the best results. This is proven by the higher number of employees working in this field (over 50%) followed by other activities such as services, trade (slightly over 23%) and health and healthcare (over 9%).

All these results underline how important tourism is for this town, especially for its local economy; on the same time, they can also be seen as a suggestion on how to reinvigorate/ refresh the issues that are still unresolved (infrastructure, marketing programmes, etc.) in the event of economic instability.

Starting from the existing natural resources and taking into account the existing tourism infrastructure, it is essential to support a balanced social and economic development both in the town of Băile Olănești and in the surrounding region.

One crucial step in supporting the economic development of this town, is the improvement of its infrastructure and its business environment, in view of generating economic growth; this step should be taken in a research, development and innovation environment designed to find the

best use for the natural and human resources existing in the area, in order to properly fructify the opportunities created by Romania's accession to the EU.

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