

PhD Thesis Abstract

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**Tourism as a Breakout Point in Transcarpathia  
(Values, Hopes and Possibilities in Ukraine's  
Westernmost Region)**

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# 1. Introduction

In today's globalizing world economy tourism has become its most significant feature. Its importance is due to the fact that 935 million (2010) tourists on the Earth are involved in foreign tourist trips yearly ([www.unwto.org](http://www.unwto.org)). Tendencies of the international tourism are being examined by several world organizations and the development of tourism is projected to be longer and accordingly, its growth rate even exceeds later the general economic indicator.

The characteristic feature of tourism – despite its dynamic development – is that its effects concentratedly occur in time and space. Crowdedness is frequent in the Mediterranean and tropical resorts as well as at cultural sites of outstanding universal values resulting in environmental damage. However, numerous countries, regions and areas on the Earth that provide excellent opportunities for tourism are left out of the tourist traffic and they can in the future provide opportunities for tourism growth. Transcarpathia, in Ukraine is one of such places. Being aware of the harmful effects of tourism, it is common knowledge that tourism development is of great responsibility in such areas and a high degree of caution is required to implement tourist projects.

Considering the global trends in tourism development the region's tourism future still has good chances on international level as well – among other things – there is a growing demand for non-traditional, authentic destinations, customer loyalty is decreasing at the same time and the second, third holidays are becoming more frequent. The historical past of Transcarpathia, its peripheral location, national diversity as well as developing its specific cultural and natural values into tourist attraction can provide excellent basis for creating an adequate image. In addition, it should be kept in mind that in present day Ukraine inland tourism demand, the tourism 'culture' is being formed now and it certainly affects the future of Transcarpathia.

The framework for tourism in the region is shaped by the special effect of two very important elements. One of them is the historic rural past while the other is due to the unique development characteristic of Ukraine. Because of the latter and despite the variety of resources the trend of tourism in Transcarpathia is rather questionable since the ideas, concepts are mostly professionally unsettled. It is no coincidence, since Ukraine that became independent 20 years ago is nowadays seeking its identity whereas

the scientific basis of tourism that is becoming integral part of the economy is being laid down now.

Contradictions existing in the tourism industry of Transcarpathia pose the greatest challenge to the present thesis. A good indication of the size and significance of the task is the fact that frequently the local conditions, data and information cannot in many cases be interpreted at all or with difficulties only according to the internationally accepted standards of tourist industry. In the background processes are sometimes specific features characteristic for Transcarpathia, Ukraine only.

## 2. Objectives

Considering the structure and content of the present paper it is intended to analyze the specific development of tourism in Transcarpathia. Accordingly, one of the most important aspects regarding the goals was to achieve these goals through comprehensive approach. This point is particularly important since becoming familiar with the Transcarpathian tourism at its initial stage of development requires a multiple and complex approach. Therefore, the basic research objectives can be summarized in the following points:

- ❖ study the peculiarities of the Ukrainian tourism industry which on the one hand explores the political and legal background of tourism and discusses the related development plans as well as deals with the arising general problems. On the other hand, it places the Transcarpathian tourism industry within the Ukrainian system of tourism considering the significance of the former;
- ❖ characterize the tourism attractions in Transcarpathia including its geographical features and cultural places; discuss the socio-geographical environment of Transcarpathia and the factors influencing tourism;
- ❖ examine tourism traffic data in Transcarpathia, analyze the region's tourist goods, define the product development problems as well as present the spatial differences characteristic to the region's tourism and disclose their harmful effects;
- ❖ discuss the specific relationship characteristic for the people mainly of the Hungarian-speaking population on both sides of the border and examine the specific features of the journeys along the Hungarian-Ukrainian border

- ❖ arbitrary case studies reflecting the peculiarities of tourism development in Transcarpathia and their critical analysis which in turn can shed light on similar problems

### **3. The research methods**

To achieve the variety of research goals formulated in the present thesis several research and analysis methods were used. Secondary research involving gathering literature of sufficient number and depth on the subject was of key role. High standard professional data research on the subject is in some cases completely absent from both the Hungarian and Ukrainian – language literature. In case of the numerous Ukrainian-language sources and statistical data non-linguistic factors caused the biggest problems. On the one hand, the specific context and argumentation background of the sources and data and the rather modest amount of the State Statistical Office data on the other hand, caused problems. In addition data of statistical publications and data from websites operated by various government bodies were also used. However, in many cases even these data do not allow the continuous data and information tracking.

The primary research results of the present thesis were achieved by means of two questionnaires, site visits and interviews. Poll takers were involved in conducting the questionnaire surveys. One of these surveys reflects on the problems of shopping tourism along the Transcarpathian border. As a first step I needed to seek answers to the most significant questions of this tourist activity to make the presence of shopping tourism in Transcarpathia unequivocal. In the due course of the research questionnaire method was applied resulting in 345 filled out questionnaires.

Another survey reveals the Transcarpathian borderland residents' travelling habits during which a sampling of six Transcarpathian settlements was carried out and a total of 420 subjects enrolled in research. The common feature of these settlements is that the majority of the inhabitants is of Hungarian nationality and all the settlements are located in the Hungarian-Ukrainian border zone.

The field survey has become an important part of the research, which sometimes was done several times and whose prior aim was to replace the lack of information by direct experience. In doing so I had an opportunity to talk to local experts, tourism operators and local residents. Being on site in Aknaszlatina to deal with its problems in-depth interviews were carried out. This fieldwork experience was documented in the form of photos which were used then in the present research.

The results of the research of the present paper as well as the information and data gathered in secondary research are presented by thematic tables, graphs, charts and maps. The Microsoft Excel 2007 and SPSS 8.0 Windows software were especially important in demonstrating the results of primary research. A significant part of the figures presented in the paper was edited and translated on my own since demonstration material of the kind is not available in sufficient numbers yet. In the process of editing apart from the above mentioned softwares the CorelDRAW (demo) version was applied.

The material and results generalized in the thesis were first systematized and afterwards evaluated by thematic SWOT – analysis. This analysis produced a genuine image of the present day tourism in Transcarpathia showing both its strong and weak points. Based on the results of the thematic evaluation conclusions were drawn and recommendations put forward on the possible development directions.

## **4. Summary of the results**

### **4.1. Peculiarities of tourism in Transcarpathia**

The framework for tourism development in Transcarpathia has been permeated by features characteristic to the Ukrainian economic and social environment as well as peculiarities of tourism. Without revealing these specific features the understanding and transparency of tourism development in Ukraine according to the internationally accepted and common tourism knowledge is not possible. Of the particular circumstances experienced in Ukraine I would emphasize the following ones:

#### *Economic and investment conditions*

The late – in relation to neighboring (mainly western) countries – economic transition of the country is still in progress. The economic and investment conditions are constantly changing, moreover the instability of the home affairs is worsened with a rather corrupt and bureaucratic system. Following the turn of the millennium a development, that is also well observed in tourism, has began and in certain cases produced spectacular results which are mainly due to the previous aggravating situation. The significance of tourism is now well detectable in Ukraine's economy and prior to 2008 crisis there had been a steady growth in revenue, investment and sales data. However, the Ukrainian capital constrained economy and tourism has received foreign capital mainly from off-shore business

accounts. Owing to the unfavorable conditions the 'genuine' foreign investors still keep away from Ukraine.

### *Tourism policy and legal background*

The first, initial steps of tourism policy have been made relatively early (setting up tourism related offices, fundamental law, joining the international organizations). Subsequently, management and legal provisions slowed down, the inevitable changes (as they claimed the transformation of the whole system) failed to come about and in many respects the tourism concept and system preserved from the Soviet past became permanent. The current legislative and regulatory shortcomings are too great and part of the formulated laws is based on an outdated system.

The main tourism policy issues can be summarized as follows:

- incomplete state tourism system;
- obsolete categories of tourism, vague concepts;
- fragmented tourism institutional governance;
- laws affecting tourism development are not sufficiently detailed;
- low state support from methodological, information and financial points of view;
- low practical utilization of innovative projects and scientific research aimed at developing tourism perspective products;
- skills shortages in the tourism sector;
- a rating system that does not meet the European standards and expectations.

### *Peculiarities of interpretation of official statistics and tourist operators*

A significant part of the specifics of Ukraine can be traced back to the Soviet past as well as isolated development framework. This is reflected in official statistics used in tourism and in the strict wording of the tourism service providers as well. In official statistics data is available only about tourist businesses, health tourism, and trade of commercial accommodation possibilities and these are not a uniform system and it is not known whether any overlap between the data exists. The rather narrow interpretation of the officially registered tourism enterprises excludes several services from the scope of tourism services. Being frequently part or component of the tourism service, tourism service providers offering additional services have a simple (non-tourism) operational license. Individuals and hosts providing accommodation in their privately owned property are not considered as tourism entrepreneurs since with less than nine guests every kind of official entries and records have been discharged. Because of the shortcomings

complete tourism products remain beyond the system, the tourism business operation and the regional development cannot be either planned or their effects verified, and therefore everything is carried out spontaneously.

### *Tourist traffic*

In recent years, there has been a continuous increase in the cross-border traffic in Ukraine and despite the recession in 2009 the number of border crossings exceeded 36 million. The high in and outgoing traffic is not yet coupled with the officially registered high turnover of tourism enterprises since the tourism operators catered for 2 million 290 thousand tourists and 1 million 909 thousand hikers. The rest nearly 31 million tourist traffic accounts as private (self-organized) trip being a good indicator of Ukraine's transit nature and revealing the shortcomings of the tourism related statistics. Private trips are only partly motivated by relative and friends visit. Significant are the numbers of private, business trips and trips often coupled with relaxation organized by 'gray', 'black' economy.

In the turnover of travel agents and tour operators significant fluctuations have been experienced from year to year and this fact serves indirectly as an indicator of the country's uncertain tourist system. In the majority of cases in the background of these fluctuations are not the tourism market changes but the regulations being introduced in legislation, as well as external political and economic factors. The effects of the Ukrainian tourism policy on official tourist traffic are short term effects and due to the 'daily policy' changes are forced to the background. This instability alongside with the aforementioned 'weak' legal, economic and statistical background in particular, has regressive impact on the country's tourism development.

## **4.2. Tourist regions in Ukraine**

The characteristic feature of tourism in Ukraine is its high territorial concentration. While occasionally in cases of some territorial entities (Kyiv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Crimean AR) strong dominance can be detected in other parts of the country the presence of tourism is almost undetectable. The countries large spatial extent, the diverse natural and cultural attractions as well as differences in statistics also justify the development of regional tourism.

In the proposed tourism regions designation the previously published experience was used, and the primary concern was that broader, more complex methods are to be used in the division of areas. Accordingly,



statistical data evaluation related to territorial units was important. In case of natural geography conditions places producing sufficient turnover in international tourism like waterfront areas (mainly the Black Sea coastline) and the mountainous regions with indented surface (Carpathians, Crimea) were highlighted. This was complemented by map data containing information about the country and recreational resources and taking into account the unique natural values as well as data of ecological state of certain territories. Based on the aforementioned I suggest to designate five tourist regions (figure 1).

1. *Crimean tourist region*
2. *Central tourist region*
3. *Carpathian tourist region*
4. *Black Sea tourist region*
5. *Eastern tourist region*

*Figure 1. Priority tourist regions in Ukraine*



*Edited by: Berghauer S.*

As opposed to countries with developed tourism in Ukraine the whole of the designated tourist regions do not cover the entire country as in some areas we cannot talk about tourism at all. The selected regions have the 80-95% of the tourist resources within which Transcarpathia is part of the

Carpathian region (along with regions of Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsy, Lviv.

Considering Transcarpathia as a region it is often overestimated as a tourist area of Ukraine both in public consciousness and guidebooks. In the territorial unit ranking list (regions) based on the significance of tourism Transcarpathia is ranked 10-11 (1,5-3% of the national total) which is acceptable in the light of the 27 territorial units. Taking into account the region's economic and demographic indicators the region is a significant tourist area but the most important fact is that tourism development opportunities are wide-ranging.

### **4.3. Tourist attractions and characteristics of the social geographic conditions in Transcarpathia**

The geographical position of Transcarpathia is considered advantageous at present as it is the western gateway to Ukraine bordering four countries and the „farthest western” territory for the citizens of the former Soviet countries accessible without visa. This advantage can be supported by a variety of morphological features of the region, a dense network of water and its unique attractions. The nature reserves of the region can be considered as a priority area which due to its previous isolation, and low anthropogenic impact deserved international recognition (UNESCO) and at the same time offer an excellent opportunity for eco and alternative tourism development in Transcarpathia. The region's mineral and thermal water supplies enrich the range of natural features. Health tourism in Transcarpathia is based partially on its use but especially because of its unique medicinal water supplies it can become an international destination for a narrow layer of visitors.

Transcarpathia in the line of man-made attractions excels in the area of outstanding architectural heritage, especially castles. For the present only two castles can be important for tourism (Munkács, Ungvár). There are only plans and ideas for the use of castles and fortified castles still in ruins.

The diverse festivals and programs with an annual turnover of 750 thousand (2009) have become a special attraction in the area. The programs inviting crowds are rather low level and with rare exceptions of regional and district significance only.

The local culture which is an important element of national diversity is of special value in Transcarpathia. Occasionally we can speak about a unique, authentic culture which is enriched by Rusyn wooden churches found in the countryside, two of which – in Kőrösmező and Uzsok – have

good chances for inclusion in the UNESCO heritage list. The future of the local cultural man-made attractions depends in many respects on their protection and 'nurture' since the unprofessional attitude, in case of the wooden churches their 'tin roofing', and effects of globalization indicate that their preservation requires special attention. Based on international experience (Hollókő, Holašovice, Vlkolinec) recommendations on inclusion of certain settlements or their parts (Alsókalocsa, Felsőszinevér) to the UNESCO heritage list can be made.

Part of the problems in Transcarpathia is due to shortages of capital experienced in the country as for the further development of economy including tourism a proper infrastructure is essential.

In this respect, neither the roads nor the rail network in the region can be considered of acceptable quality. The region's economy is also low-level, however part of the existing sectors can be developed. At the same time economy in particular industry, like tourism is characterized by one-sided and annual noticeable fluctuations.

Among the social geographic conditions the demographic situation of Transcarpathia's population can be considered a positive element as it does not follow the general negative trends in Ukraine and a stagnation or a slight growth can be experienced in the number of its population. On the other hand, the region has a relatively large labour surplus, only part of which is appropriately qualified. Tourism training (at all education levels) is quite new and human resources training is also slow to respond to changing economic needs. A major concern is that the country is not yet engaged in adult training and although 37% of the population speaks a language other than their mother tongue it is the knowledge of a local language. The knowledge of the English, French and German language together makes only 1,13% of the region's population. In the border areas, especially based on Hungarian models and by means of EU tenders there are initiatives to solve these problems.

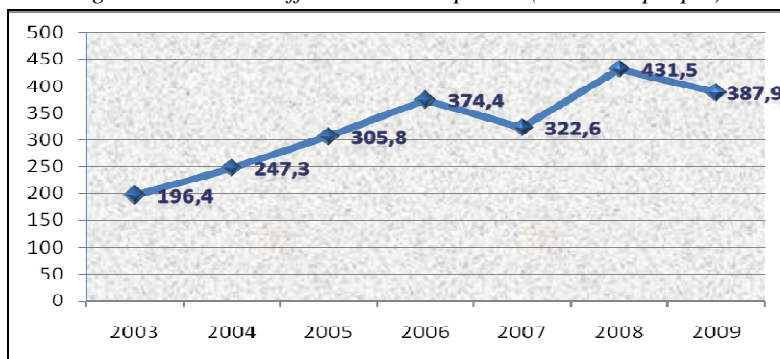
#### **4.4. Tourist traffic analysis in Transcarpathia**

The uncertainty experienced in the country is also characteristic for tourism in Transcarpathia although in recent years along with the official statistics, the Tourist Department for European Integration of the Transcarpathian Region State Administration has also been publishing figures about the region's tourism industry. The 'semi-official' data revealed by the Head Department refer to the 'total' tourist traffic but they lack details of the official statistics. Another problem is that the published

information does not have sufficient statistical background since the private tourist operators are not obliged to submit their data.

According to the Head Department of Tourism tourist traffic in Transcarpathia is close to 400 thousand (figure 2), but taking into account the influence of the tourism-related 'black' and 'gray industry' its numbers are estimated at around 500-600 people annually.

Figure 2. Tourist traffic in Transcarpathia (thousand people)



Source: Sochka, K. 2007., Birkovich, V.I. 2009. Edited by: Berghauer S.

328 tourist facilities cater for the tourists arriving in Transcarpathia and their number has increased by 55 in the last five years. This increase is primarily due to the growing numbers of the smaller, private institutions. The foreign capital owns a very small fraction of the market (2%) and it can be explained by the existing specific investment background of the country.

Two seasons, the summer and winter are characteristic of the Transcarpathian tourism. The greatest traffic falls in the summer period, as 40% of the tourists arrive during the three summer months, and within it July is at its peak (with an annual turnover of 15-18%). The winter season is much more unstable since the arrivals depend on the amount of snow with the period between Christmas and New Year at its highest. The seasonal character concerns primarily the smaller units in mountainous areas whereas turnover of the big commercial accommodation possibilities (hotels) and sanatoriums is less volatile.

The public officials consider data about tourist traffic published by the Regional Statistical Office to be the official one. However, their interpretation of the data turned out to be rather narrow. According to their data 112 tourism businesses were registered in 2010 and they catered for 52 thousand tourists (!), 22 thousand hikers (!) during the year (table 1).

*Table 1. The activities of tourism enterprises in Transcarpathia (1999-2010) (Based on data of the Transcarpathian Regional Bureau of Statistics)*

	<b>1999</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Number of tourists (1000 persons)	218,9	71,1	91,1	63,8	73	56,3	52,1
Number of excursionists (1000 persons)	52,5	53,9	67,6	45,7	44,1	28,4	22,1
Total value of services (million hrivnyas)	n.a.	11,6	19,4	22,1	28,5	27,5	28,2

*Source: Transcarpathia- Sanatoriums and tourism 2006; 2010; 2011.*

*Edited by Berghauer S.*

In the last 10-11 years the number of tourism businesses in the region doubled, while their turnover dropped significantly. In the background of these changes (like those seen in Ukraine) is not simply a change in tourism demand but the combined effect of external and internal factors. This was the 2004-2005 period when strict laws on tourism and the Schengen visa were introduced by the European Union. These dramatic changes (Table1) were also greatly influenced by the different aims of the tourist travels, hence at present the tour operators role has changed completely. Prior to the turn of the millennium, these companies were involved in the local process of 'hawking' since many Transcarpathian residents could travel abroad on conducted tours only. The changes in border crossing order and amendments introduced in legislation has transformed the role of travel agents and tour operators and they were faced with 'real' tourist tasks. Accordingly, following the turn of the millennium these changes brought a spectacular fall in the tourism turnover.

#### **4.5. Tourist Products**

##### *Health Tourism*

Taking into account the volume of Transcarpathia's tourism, its main tourist product is health tourism and the term "product" is only complete in this sense. The foundations of health tourism were laid in the Soviet era which preconditions the quality of the services offered.

There are 62 health resorts in Transcarpathia; their number has been increasing in the recent decade (table 2). However, the number of berths in health resorts has decreased significantly caused by the fact that nowadays

high quality service is by far more important than it was before, thus multi-bed apartments have been liquidated and redesigned.

*Table 2. Health resorts in Transcarpathia (1990–2010)*

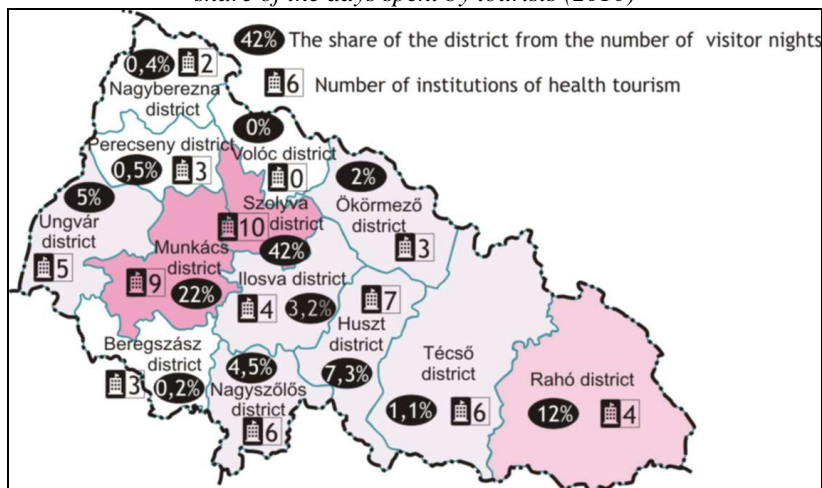
	1990	1995	2000	2003	2007	2009	2010
Sanitarium	14	15	15	15	22	20	19
Preventive sanatoria	14	14	14	11	6	7	7
Pensions, holiday resorts and convalescent hospitals	23	29	36	43	41	33	36
<i>Total</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>62</i>

Source: *Tourism in Transcarpathia 2002; 2005; www.stat.uz.ua;*

Edited by: Berghauer S.

The most important features of health tourism include a low level of seasonal variation and the long stay. The number of days per patient is 12.5, which is not accidental for the emphasis in these resorts is on healing and the recommended courses last 21–24 days. In 2010 tourists spent a total of 1.03 million days in Transcarpathian resorts; Szolyva (42%) and Munkács (22%) districts had the highest patient traffic (figure 3).

*Figure 3. The territorial distribution of health resorts and the districts' share of the days spent by tourists (2010)*



Source: *Transcarpathia – Sanatoriums and tourism 2011; Edited by: Berghauer S.*

The negative characteristics of health tourism include the fact that an ever increasing number of resorts remain closed from year to year due to financial reasons and renewal. This concerns mainly private small-size holiday homes and convalescent hospitals. The above-mentioned facts lead us to the conclusion that Transcarpathian health tourism is functioning on a quite low level and reflects the spontaneous improvements that have been done until now.

The offer of health tourism is set up only to satisfy the national demand, the region does not have health promoting services that are related to active tourism and have become increasingly popular (fitness, wellness, spa, theme parks). Further development is expected in the future on the national and regional levels, while on the international level health tourism has a lot of untapped possibilities.

#### *Peculiar Problems of Health Tourism in Aknaszlatina*

In the past centuries Aknaszlatina was closely related to salt and salt production, however, the salt that made this settlement famous has become a serious ecological problem nowadays depriving the region of its unique natural appeal. In the Soviet period during the extraction of salt attention was not paid to the principles of extended and safe production. The previously carefully maintained water channel system was sacrificed for the sake of record-high production levels. During the 20 years of independence the seemingly permanent financial problems only aggravated the situation leading to a present catastrophic condition.

There were two forms of treatment side by side with salt-mining making use of the mines' specific climate and the healing properties of the salt lakes that emerged as a result of salt production. The functioning and the technical state of the hollows of the Aknaszlatina mine was of utmost importance for the Ukrainian Allergy Hospital and the Transcarpathian Regional Allergy Hospital and it was established yet in 1968 to treat respiratory diseases 300-320 meters deep under the ground. The 8th and 9th mines rendered treatment services to 5 000 patients a year; in the period 1976–2007 over 100 000 people underwent medical treatment. After the mines were closed these unique circumstances and possibilities “went underwater” as well.

Another important element of Aknaszlatina's health tourism is the healing water of the salt lakes that can be found there. Two out of four salt lakes (Kunigunda, Albert) emerged in the place of former small lakes, while the lakes known under the name of 18 and 19 served formerly military purposes. Specialists compare the water of these lakes to the water from the Dead Sea and the mud on the waterfront is used for treatment as well.

Unlike the mines the utilization of the healing properties of the lakes was not organized on the central level, but spontaneously and in a disorderly way numerous small buildings emerged there. The peak of traffic was in the period 2002–2008 when 100 000 people came there a year (Szedlák Gy. 2011). The majority of tourists visiting Aknaszlatina salt lakes stayed in the nearby houses, flats, thus, the official statistics as well the authorities did not experience significant amount of traffic.

The settlement's major problem, the emerging and ever increasing in size craters in the mine area, became a public concern only in the winter of 2010/11. The situation being chaotic, the controversies in planning and design only intensified it. The former and current confusion of events lead us to the following conclusions. Firstly, salt as a natural value in Aknaszlatina, serves more as a disruptive factor than as a developing one. Secondly, the handling of the former and current situation demonstrates that rational development and cultivation of land are still at the initial stage in Ukraine. Thirdly, it can be clearly seen that decisions can easily be influenced and are made imprudently. Moreover, there are no normative foundations and objective statistical background to serve as bases for planning, development, therefore, the future of Aknaszlatina's health tourism, despite its unique peculiarities of international character seems now more that doubtful.

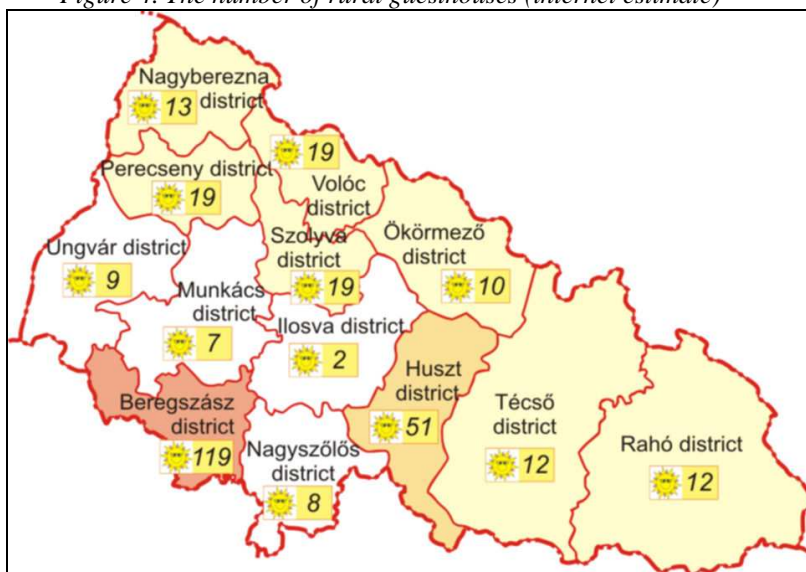
### *Rural tourism*

The formation of Transcarpathian rural tourism was greatly influenced by the low level of the offered accommodation in the period after the political transformation. Despite the fact that the supply and reliability of commercial accommodation has increased significantly in recent years, rural tourism still flourishes due to favourable prices and local hospitality reviving traditions that are so characteristic of the countryside.

The development of Transcarpathian rural tourism is centrally supported for it covers underdeveloped territories. However, there are only estimates of the region's condition and development of rural tourism. The number of known rural guesthouses is believed to be 500 at the most.



Figure 4. The number of rural guesthouses (internet estimate)



Source: Gönczy S. et al. 2011; Edited by: Berghauer S.

In Transcarpathia the present level of rural tourism means mostly rural accommodation. The majority of visitors are attracted to Transcarpathia not by the rural way of life or its traditions, but by the beautiful, unspoilt scenery, historical places of interest; they do not spend much time in the lodging they stay at, but tour the countryside.

Taking into account the peculiar characteristics of rural tourism in the region I can single out two areas that differ in their level of development and organization:

- *lowland rural tourism with predominant Hungarian population;*
- *highland rural tourism with predominantly Ukrainian villages.*

The main future task of rural tourism is its development into a high quality product. One of the relatively easy means is the further training of people coordinating tourism in particular territories. The training should concentrate on practice and exchange of experience with the EU's close regions. Firstly, this could give ideas, inspiration to local organizers; secondly, it would inspire them to introduce traditional cultural activities as tourist attractions. This, combined with the locally held active recreation,

handicraft, cultural elements could lead to the complexity increasing visitors' stay and making rural tourism a product.

### *Skiing tourism*

In Transcarpathia skiing tourism is one of the most significant tourist products which can be developed in the role it plays on the national level for the region has the most variable morphologic facilities in Ukraine. At present there are 77 ski-lifts in the region, however, the length of ski-runs does not usually reach one kilometre. The majority of ski-runs have ski-lifts and the equipment can be rented nearby.

The development of skiing tourism is hindered by the fact that there is little information on the possibilities, services rendered and there are no officially published statistics on the tourist traffic. The innovations around the ski-runs, the renovation of the previously unused large accommodations as well as the active participation of the population in the nearby villages has a specially favourable effect on the economy of the highlands. However, future innovations of tourist premises should take into account the possibility of their combination with other tourist conveniences, possibilities and products (multi-season use of ski-lifts – touring, paragliding) and to build the network infrastructure accordingly. The wider tourist supply can decrease skiing tourism's seasonal character and extend the period tourist infrastructure is used over the year.

### *Touring, hiking*

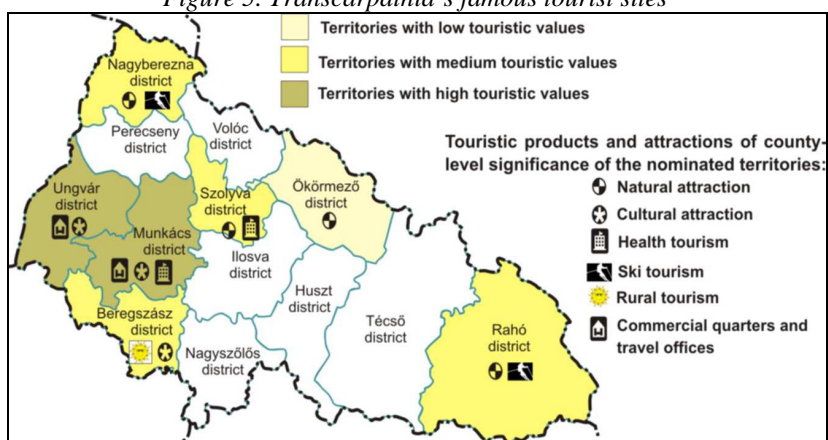
Due to Transcarpathia's peripheral position its territory has extensive unspoiled lands combined with favourable morphologic facilities. In case of touring there are no data on its size from the visitors, but due to low cost it can be considered a tourist product with a potential for development.

Nowadays touring and hiking often complement other tourist products and are thus regarded. The best-known hiking tours are to Szinevér National park and to Csornohora massif. Climbing Hoverla (Ukraine's highest mountain peak, 2061 m high) is considered to be a pilgrimage. Following international trends and providing for the rational use of the nature's heritage in Transcarpathia we should focus on the development of alternative and ecological tourism, products related to it for this is a real opportunity to save and protect present natural resources and to preserve the region's unspoiled image. Rational planning of tours to protected territories, national parks that satisfies professional needs can lead to the development of an international level product to please specific tourist needs in Transcarpathia.

#### 4.6. Tourist Attractions and Products: Territorial Peculiarities in Transcarpathia

Despite various tourist resources Transcarpathia's tourism is characterized by differences in development. The development of some tourist products covers only smaller areas. Taking into account the region's tourist resources and products we can state that Munkács district offers the most versatile tourist facilities in Transcarpathia (Figure 5). Highly valued by tourists is also Ungvár district. Though it offers less versatile services, here we find a high concentration of commercial accommodation, travel agencies and man-made artefacts, not to speak of Ungvár's outstanding status.

Figure 5. Transcarpathia's famous tourist sites



Source: Molnar, A. Sz. – Marcsenko, A. I. 2009; [www.transcarpathiatour.org](http://www.transcarpathiatour.org); *Transcarpathia – Sanatoriums and tourism 2010*; Berghauer S. 2010; Edited by: Berghauer S.

We can single out four more districts that are valuable for tourism – Szolyva, Beregszász, Rahó and Nagyberezna. Szolyva district is well-known for its health tourism, Beregszász district with its Hungarian population is famous for rural tourism. Rahó and Nagyberezna districts belong to Ukraine's notable skiing resorts and have a potential for the development of ecological tourism and hiking. The other districts have low tourist value and though they have tourist potential, its use has not yet been measured or elaborated (Figure 5).

It would be plausible to mention two more Transcarpathian districts (Volóc and Ilosva). Their tourist perspectives cannot be realized in the short term. Their disadvantageous social geographic situation can only be relieved by rational regional management. However, the development plans for tourism have not yet been properly elaborated, rationalized for the ever increasing differences in the territorial development are not taken into account even today.

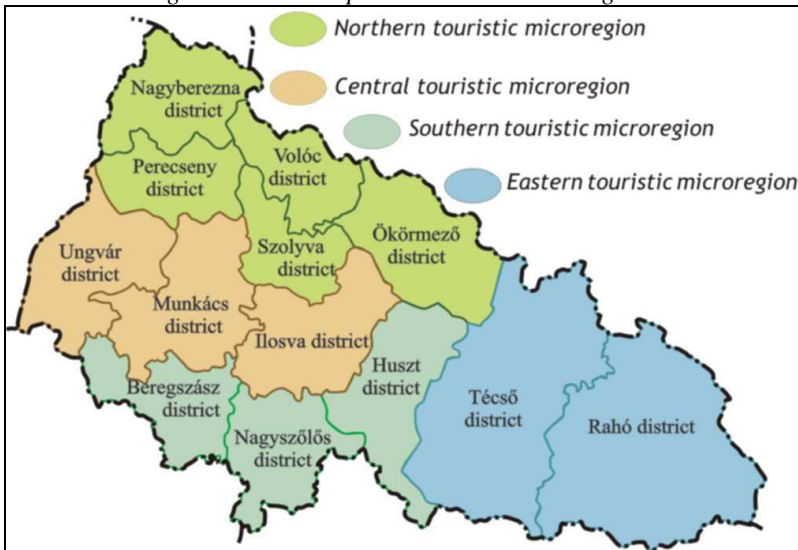
#### **4.7. The Formation of Tourist Microregions in Transcarpathia**

The territorial discrepancies and idiosyncrasies found in the supply, demand, appeal and problems that are characteristic of Transcarpathian tourism predetermine the division of the region's territory into tourist microregions. There were theories on the establishment of tourist "units" in health tourism, on the division of the region into tourist "zones" in the past, however, they have not yet been elaborated. The suggested microregions would be expedient to be presented on the tourist market with their own, unique and uniform image, the microregions' settlements would cooperate in the sphere of promotion, marketing, realization (e.g. accommodation, marketing, maintaining a website, establishment of a tour information agency, participation in tourist fairs, etc.), they would submit mutual applications and so on. In the long run they could form a basis for the launch of a system similar to the Hungarian TDMs. I have singled out tourist microregions taking into account tourist appeal, peculiarities, present and improvable tourist products, basic and tourist infrastructure, social geographic and economic characteristics, as well as their role in the tourism of territorial units.

Making use of the above ideas and thesis results I suggest establishing the following tourist microregions (Figure 6):

- *Northern tourist microregion;*
- *Central tourist microregion;*
- *Southern tourist microregion;*
- *Eastern tourist microregion.*

Figure 6. Transcarpathia's tourist microregions



Edited by: Berghauer S.

#### Northern tourist microregion

Northern tourist microregion would include the territories of Perecseny, Nagyberezna, Szolyva, Volóc and Ökörmező districts. The five territorial units would intercept the Carpathians along the rivers Ung, Latorca and Nagyág. The microregion's tourist (and economic) development is highly hindered by the underdeveloped infrastructure for the valleys' roads are in poor condition thus localizing the whole territory. In the Northern tourist microregion the basic tourist product can be health tourism and ecotourism due to its natural resources. Health tourism in Szolyva district is of utmost importance, in Ökörmező district its mineral waters provide similar facilities. Expanding supply is possible by supplementing health tourism with the development of other products (wellness, fitness, spa). Ecotourism can be provided for by the two national parks that are situated in the microregion. Szinevér National Park is visited mainly due to Szinevér Lake, while Ung National Park famous for its global values (World Heritage) is by far less visited, thus its use for ecotourism still remains in the background.

The supply of the Northern tourist microregion is made complex by the available regionally important skiing tourism and the planning of

thematic touring and hiking paths. Emphasizing local (bojkó and lemκό) cultural values by rural tourism could add unique image to the microregion's tourism.

#### *Central tourist microregion*

The central tourist microregion would encompass Ungvár, Munkács and Ilosva districts' territories (Figure 6). In terms of tourism two districts – Ungvár and Munkács – out of the three are most developed in Transcarpathia and are of utmost importance for the region (Figure 5). In Ilosva district the situation is quite the opposite for catching up with the more developed districts is the most important task there. In this microregion the basic tourist product can be cultural and conference tourism. The castles (Munkács, Ungvár), exhibitions (village museum, local history museum), unique historical cityscape and frequent festivals bring about significant tourist traffic even nowadays.

It would be plausible to develop other supplementary products like program tourism, wellness, spa. In Ilosva district golf- and equestrian sports can be introduced, there is a possibility to hold outdoor and group programs, then if there is demand for hunting / game ambush tourism they can be implemented as well.

#### *Southern tourist microregion*

Southern tourist microregion would combine the territories of Beregszász, Nagyszőlős and Huszt districts (Figure 6). There are similar tourist values like ruins of castles (Huszt, Nagyszőlős, Királyháza), various styles of architecture of churches from the Middle Ages (Beregszász, Nagyszőlős, Huszt, Bene, Csetfalva, Visk) and from the point of view of rural tourism there is the rural community preserving the traditional way of life. Rural tourism is first and foremost characteristic of Hungarian villages mostly visited by tourists from Hungary.

In this microregion the main tourist product can be rural tourism with Beregszász district as the most developed in the region. Rural tourism in this area is limited to providing accommodation, it can be developed by adding programs which would positively influence the length of visitors' stay. Southern tourist microregion's hidden values include thermal water (Beregszász and partly Kaszony) which is only superficially used nowadays.

#### *Eastern tourist microregion*

The suggested districts for the Eastern tourist microregion are Técső and Rahó (Figure 6). The common feature of these districts is that they are

mountainous causing the problem of underdeveloped road network. The microregion's famous values include extensive unspoilt lands and articulate area. The Eastern tourist microregion is now well known for its available skiing tourism, its image should be supplemented with hiking and touring. In the Eastern part of the microregion we can find Fagyalos and Csornohora mountain ranges with many ski-runs functioning that are well-known all over the country.

The area along the Romanian border is yet to be developed. Many Transcarpathian Romanians live on the boundary of Rahó and Tecsó districts. It is to be expected that border crossing points and tourist relations will be developed like it is done along the Hungarian border, thus increasing tourist traffic.

Another tourist product in the Eastern tourist microregion is nature which can supplement skiing tourism provided it is properly organized, thus expanding the season-dependent supply. Other important sights in the region include Hoverla (2061 m) near the Eastern border, extensive protected territories, especially the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve that is part of UNESCO natural heritage. The hucul culture can make the image of the tourist microregion unique.

#### **4.8. The Role of Cross-Border Hungarian Population Territories in Transcarpathian Tourism**

That part of the region that borders on Hungary has peculiar development tendencies. The Transcarpathian Hungarian population living in the 15-25 km area ethnically and economically is different from the rest of the Ukrainian territories. Tourism and travelling in these territories show peculiar features. Right after the political transformation people crossed the border for living. Nowadays tourism is more stable, more civilized. On both sides of the border people nowadays prefer shopping tourism, maintaining relationships. It is important to analyse the reasons of tourism for besides the above-mentioned ones there are others, and taking into account the nationality component we can consider these cross-border relations Hungarian-Hungarian relations and it is important to know their real state for maintaining and taking care of the common future.

Since 2004 there came about a significant change in shopping tourism in the borderline territories. Before 2004 Ukrainian citizens were more active, the introduction of the visa system and stricter control brought about the increase of Hungarian visitors. I analysed the shopping tourism of Hungarians visiting Transcarpathia on the basis of questionnaires and the

results were as follows: shopping tourism was characterized by its classic features (short stay, frequent return, peculiar spending structure) (table 3); and what is more, these visits were limited to the borderline territories. After the initial upheaval shopping tourism decreased in intensity mainly due to the instability of the forint–hryvnia exchange rate. Now shopping tourism to Transcarpathia is driven by the great difference in the price of gasoline in the two countries.

*Table 3. The Frequency of Shopping Tourism in Transcarpathia*

<b>Several times a week</b>	<b>Weekly</b>	<b>Monthly</b>	<b>Quarterly</b>	<b>Semi-annually</b>	<b>Yearly</b>	<b>Other</b>
7,4%	10,4%	35,7%	19,1%	11,4%	7,4%	8,6%

*Edited by: Berghauer S.*

An important part of travels from Hungary to Transcarpathia is VFR tourism with its main aim to visit relatives (parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents). The majority of VFR tourists visit the region four times a year, do not use the region's tourist infrastructure and spend quite a lot on shopping (44%) (Bolyog B. 2009). Travels of this kind are capable of attracting tourists in the long run as well which is favourable for the visitors have a positive image of the region and are emotionally related to Transcarpathia.

I have analysed the travelling habits of the Transcarpathian Hungarians living along the Hungarian border making use of questionnaires. Hungary for Transcarpathian Hungarians is a special destination for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the population living along the Hungarian-Ukrainian border has cross-border relations. Moreover, the research proves that Transcarpathian Hungarians prefer maintaining human relationships when they are travelling in their free time. A specific feature of Transcarpathian Hungarians is the fact that they not only visit their relatives, friends, acquaintances, but also have these people help them in providing accommodation, meals and travelling arrangements. The interviewed people very rarely (2%) make use of travel agencies' services. Thus, it shows that the region's population not only has low travelling culture, but is also forced to do so because of limited financial means. The low discretionary profit is characteristic of the country's whole population, and provided there is at least a small economic rise it may be enough for the region and the country's population to become active tourists.



#### **4.9. Summary, the Most Significant Findings, Advice**

- In the Ukrainian economic environment and tourism policy Transcarpathia's tourism is characterized by a basic level of development which is the main barrier for improving tourism in the region.
- Changes in the tourism system are under way; however, the remaining Soviet mentality and planning are hard to get rid of. The changes are unsystematic and do not follow the demand of the tourist market.
- The official statistics in the country has a limited scope of analysis of the information related to tourism. The central authorities publish only the data on health tourism, commercial accommodation, travel agencies / tour operators.
- The drawbacks of the tourism system and statistics in Ukraine hinder the activity of tourist business, regional innovations cannot be planned, their influence cannot be controlled, thus causing their spontaneous and unsystematic character.
- A specific feature of the country's tourism is the serious territorial concentration of tourism which accounts for the formation of tourist regions in the country. While some territorial units (Kijev, Ivano-Frankivszk regions, Krím Autonomous Republic) are intensively promoting tourism, in other parts of the country tourism is not even realized.
- On the basis of the previously published research results, statistic data, geographic peculiarities, recreation resources, special natural values, ecological conditions I suggest singling out the following tourist regions in Ukraine: Krím tourist region; Central tourist region; Transcarpathian tourist region; the Black Sea tourist region; Eastern tourist region.
- Transcarpathia's tourist significance within Ukraine's tourism is often overestimated. On the basis of statistic data out of the 27 territorial units Transcarpathia occupies the 10th-11th place which can be considered good. However, the possibilities for development in the region are rather extensive.
- A region's tourism attracts visitors due to the unique nature, authentic cultural values which are mostly just potential appeals. Of special interest are the protected areas that form part of the world heritage, ruszin wooden churches and famous mineral and medicinal water.
- Transcarpathia's only complete tourist product is health tourism, which serves mainly to satisfy the demand of the national consumer. Its development according to international trends can be done by promoting

health and introducing active recreation products (fitness, wellness, spa, theme parks).

- Rural tourism in the region mainly focuses on providing accommodation, however, taking into account their peculiar components, character, arrangement two kinds of rural tourism can be singled out in the region: highland rural tourism (mainly in the villages with Ukrainian population) and lowland rural tourism (mainly in the villages with Hungarian population).

- Skiing tourism in Transcarpathia can count on the increase of mainly national demand. The region's morphologic, climatic peculiarities limit the possibilities causing a strong seasonal character. That is why innovations have to be made in a complex way in combination with other tourist facilities and products.

- Due to the region's peripheral position there are extensive unspoilt or nearly unspoilt areas. Rational planning of tours to protected territories, national parks that satisfies professional needs can lead to the development of an international level product to please specific tourist needs in Transcarpathia.

- Transcarpathian tourism can be oriented at the national market for in Ukraine demand is not yet satisfied, the population's satisfaction level is lower than in the neighbouring countries. The main barrier for the increase of the national demand is the population's low level of discretionary profit and the economic crisis.

- Transcarpathia's tourism is characterized by differences in its development. Taking into account the region's tourist resources and tourist products I have come to the conclusion that that the two most developed tourist districts in Transcarpathia are Munkács and Ungvár.

- The territorial differences in the region's tourism justify the division of Transcarpathia into tourist microregions. The suggested microregions would be expedient to be presented on the tourist market with their own, unique and uniform image, the microregions' settlements would cooperate in the sphere of promotion, marketing, realization, they would submit mutual applications and so on. In the long run they could form a basis for the launch of a system similar to the Hungarian TDMs. As a result in this paper I suggest the following microregions to be distinguished: Northern tourist microregion; Central tourist microregion; Southern tourist microregion; Eastern tourist microregion.

- The last two decades showed a change of reasons for travelling in the Hungarian-Ukrainian borderline area. The previously popular tourism for

living was substituted by a more “civilized” shopping tourism and VFR tourism.

- The future of Transcarpathia’s tourism and its greatest threat is the continuation of spontaneous innovations. The superficial handling of the problems – and Aknaszlatina is a good example – poses a serious threat that might lead to the loss of tourist appeal and potentially hinder the region’s marketing.

## **5. Research Perspectives**

Tourism in Ukraine, Transcarpathia and its territories has only scantily been researched in Hungarian scientific literature. This work is just the first step in the study of issues related to the area’s tourism for there is still a great number of unanswered questions.

I would start investigating these issues by revealing Ukraine’s tourist peculiarities for the country’s tourism system is still at the initial stage of development and its specific character could only partially be analysed here. Moreover, it is a very challenging job to study the territorial peculiarities of the country’s tourism. The latter is conditioned by the fact that administrative units, like Transcarpathia, have great territorial differences in Ukraine’s tourism. While in some territories tourism is of outstanding significance, others do not even recognize its importance.

In conclusion, I would like to classify the perspective research themes on Transcarpathia’s tourism into four main groups:

- development of tourism and tourist products;
- the issues of structuring and managing tourism;
- revealing territorial units and their peculiarities;
- cross-cultural cooperation and tourism.

And finally, I would like to stress that the continuation of local researches, public revealing of problem issues taking into account their deep and complex character is highly topical.

## 6. List of Publications

### 1. Publications of which the dissertation was based on

#### 1.1. Studies, book chapters, etc.

1. AUBERT A. – **BERGHAUER S.** – BOGNÁR A. – GELÁNYI N. – GYURICZA L. – MÁRTON G. 2011: *A Szovjetunió és utódállamai turizmusának területi különbségei*. In: Bokor L. – Szelesi T. – Tésits R. (szerk.): *Dimenziók térben és időben. Tanulmánykötet a 60 éves Rudl József tiszteletére*. IDResearch Kft./Publikon Kiadó, Pécs, pp. 143–162.
2. **BERGHAUER SÁNDOR 2011**: *A határmentiség és a turizmus sajátos összefüggései Kárpátalja magyarlakta területein*. In: **Tér és Társadalom / Space and Society** 25. évf., 4. szám, pp.148–164
3. **SÁNDOR BERGHAUER – LÁSZLÓ GYURICZA 2011**: *The Peculiarities of the Development of Tourism in Ukraine*. – *Acta Beregsasiensis* X./1. pp. 213–221.
4. **BERGHAUER SÁNDOR 2010**: *Turizmus Kárpátalján*. – **Modern Geográfia**, 2010. 2. szám, 23 p. [http://www.moderngeografia.hu/tanulmanyok/nemzetkozi\\_turizmus/berghauer\\_sandor\\_2010\\_2.pdf](http://www.moderngeografia.hu/tanulmanyok/nemzetkozi_turizmus/berghauer_sandor_2010_2.pdf)
5. **BERGHAUER SÁNDOR 2009**: *Turizmus. (IX. fejezet)*. In: Baranyi B. (szerk.): *Kárpátalja*. MTA Regionális Kutatások Központja, Dialóg Campus, Pécs–Budapest, pp. 337–353.
6. LÁSZLÓ GYURICZA – **SÁNDOR BERGHAUER 2009**: *Probleme der Bewertung der Naturbedingungen im Tourismus*. – *Acta Beregsasiensis* VIII./1. 213–221.
7. **BERGHAUER SÁNDOR 2008**: *Cross border relationship and tourism. Shopping tourism in Beregszász*. – *Acta Beregsasiensis* VII./2. pp. 214–222.
8. **BERGHAUER SÁNDOR 2006**: *Gyógyturizmus Kárpátalján*. In: Baranyai G. – Tóth J. (szerk.): *Földrajzi tanulmányok a pécsi doktoriskolából V*. PTE TTK FDI, Pécs, pp. 49–59.

#### 1.2. Publications based on conference presentation

1. **S. BERGHAUER – L. GYURICZA 2011**: *Tourism as a possible land use form in Transcarpathia*. In: I. Dombay – Zs. Magyar-Sáska (Eds): *The role of tourism in territorial development*. IV. International Conference October 7–8, Gheorgheni, Romania, presa Universitara Clujeana, Babes–Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of Geography, Gheorgheni University Extension, pp. 7–17.

2. **БЕРГХАУЕР О. О.** 2009: *Прикордонне розташування і туризм. Шоп-туризм на Закарпатті*. In: Географія і туризм: європейський досвід. Матеріали III. Міжнародної конференції. Видавничий центр ЛНУ імені Івана Франка, Львів. (*ukrán nyelven*), pp. 14–18.
3. **BERGHAUER SÁNDOR** 2008: *Bevásárlóturizmus Kárpátalján. Закупівельний туризм на Закарпатті*. In: Lácza Magdolna – Balogh Zoltán (szerk.): *A határon átívelő együttműködés perspektívái – a munkaerőpiac az Európai Unió határán*. Nyíregyházi Főiskola Gazdasági és Társadalomtudományi Kar. Nyíregyháza, pp. 117–146.
4. **BERGHAUER SÁNDOR** 2008: *Határmentiség és turizmus. Bevásárlóturizmus Beregszászon*. In: Szónoky Ancsin Gabriella (szerk.). *Magyarok a Kárpát-medencében*. Nemzetközi Földrajzi Konferencia, 2008. március 6., SZTE Gazdaság- és Társadalomföldrajz Tanszék, Szeged. pp. 455–463.
5. **BERGHAUER SÁNDOR**: *A gyógyturizmus mai helyzete Kárpátalján*. In: *Határok és Eurorégiók*. Nemzetközi Földrajzi Tudományos Konferencia, Szeged, 2005. november 16–17. Szerk.: Szónokyné Ancsin G. Jatepress, Szeged, 2007. pp. 521–531.
6. **BERGHAUER SÁNDOR** 2006: *A Szolyvai járás gyógyüdülési-rekreációs potenciálja*. In: Aubert A. (szerk.): *Fejlesztés és képzés a turizmusban*. II. Országos Turisztikai Konferencia tudományos közleményei. PTE TTK Földrajzi Intézet. pp. 207–212. (CD)
7. **BERGHAUER SÁNDOR** 2004: *Kárpátalja turizmusának kutatástörténete*. In: Barkáts J. (szerk.): *Fiatal kárpátaljai magyar kutatók a természettudományi kutatásban*. PoliPrint Kiadó, Beregszász-Ungvár, pp. 79–84.

## 2. Other publications

1. **BERGHAUER SÁNDOR** 2009: *Kereskedelem és külkereskedelem. (VIII.2.3.)* In: Baranyi B. (szerk.): *Kárpátalja*. MTA Regionális Kutatások Központja, Pécs–Budapest, pp. 328–332.
2. **MOLNÁR JÓZSEF. – BERGHAUER SÁNDOR** 2008: *Vízföldrajz. Oktatási segédanyag a gyakorlati foglalkozásokhoz*. Rákóczi-füzetek 47. II. Rákóczi Ferenc Kárpátaljai Magyar Főiskola, PoliPrint, Ungvár, 60 p.
3. **BERGHAUER SÁNDOR – FODOR GYULA – GÖNCZY SÁNDOR – IZSÁK TIBOR – MOLNÁR JÓZSEF – MOLNÁR D. ISTVÁN** 2007: *A földrajz írásbeli felvételi vizsgák néhány tanulsága a II. Rákóczi Ferenc Kárpátaljai Magyar Főiskolán*. – *Acta Beregsasiensis*, VI. évf., 1. kötet, pp. 111–121.
4. **BERGHAUER SÁNDOR – GYURICZA LÁSZLÓ** (megjelenés alatt): *The role of the borderland position in the tourism of Transcarpathia*. „Cohesion and

Disparities – Regional Management, Peripheral Areas and Sustainable Development in Eastern Europe” – Temesvár, Románia. 2010. május 13–16., 9 p.

5. **BERGHAUER SÁNDOR** (megjelenés alatt): *Kárpátalja turizmusának fejlődési sajátosságai*. In: Kárpát-medence turizmusa. Budapest, 2011. május 9–10. Konferenciakötet 12 p.