

Characteristics of Tourism in San Francisco de Sales, Colombia (a doctoral thesis summary)

The country areas of Departamento Cundinamarca, which creates the background of the nine-million-inhabitant capital city of Bogotá and thus represents the most important Colombian region, have shown a significantly decreasing production and effectiveness of both primary and secondary economic sector since the second half of the 20th century.

Consequently, since the end of 1990s, an economic alternative has been sought in various regions of Colombia. Ecotourism, which has been found as a reasonable solution, appears to be a suitable economic alternative also for the town of San Francisco de Sales.

Active tourism in Colombia, i.e. tourists coming to the country, has decreased recently as a result of the problematic situation of the country. However, despite the economic crisis, domestic tourism remains the moving force of development on both local and regional levels in many areas.

This research does not include one of the significant phenomena of the Cundinamarca region countryside, i.e. "the second home".

The main purpose of this research is to identify and characterise tourism developing in the town of San Francisco. The author researches possibilities of sustainable development of the town provided by its hotel infrastructure. Furthermore, he presents some advice and practical mechanisms aimed at the improvement of the town's planning strategy with respect to tourism.

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first part serves as the conceptual support (geographical thinking development, institutional framework of tourism activities in Colombia, tourism as an alternative development strategy for the rural sector of Colombia; general information about the Cundimarca region, the Gualivá province and about the town of San Francisco de Sales). This conceptual support contributed greatly to the research itself.

The second part focuses on characterizing the hotel infrastructure and attractive prerequisites of San Francisco tourism. In addition, it provides a detailed analysis of the current situation of the town, based on questionnaire surveys and interviews. Moreover, this part includes a SWOT analysis – the town's tourism development perspectives. Finally, the thesis presents suggestions and recommendations aimed at optimum development of tourism in San Francisco. It is assumed that in the near future tourism could represent a significant source of the town's income (due to its convenient climate and natural conditions, the proximity of the capital city, quiet surroundings etc.)

The purpose of the thesis is to provide the region and the Ministry of Tourism of Colombia with practical and reliable instructions for tourism planning.

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