SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF VAIDEENI LOCALITY, VÂLCEA COUNTY AS A RURAL TOURIST DESTINATION

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Abstract: The scientific paper illustrates the strategy of sustainable rural development of Vaideeni locality from Vâlcea county, as a rural tourist destination, almost half a century since the locality was declared a “tourist village”.

The favorable geographical position of the locality accentuated the development process of agrotourism in the area, which has changed in recent years, thanks to the initiatives of locals, who understood that it must highlight both the extremely picturesque area and its cultural richness.

The strategy of sustainable rural development of the locality includes besides the construction of several pensions or the transformation of the old houses into accommodation spaces for guests and the establishment of the mountain resort Ursu-Ursulețul, in the Căpățânii mountains.

Key words: Sustainable rural development, european funds, mountain resort, agrotourism pension.

INTRODUCTION

The first attestation found in the historical documents of Vaideeni is from the 16th century, when it was written “Vai de Ei”. A more analytical explanation of the name of the village would be that it was first called ”Vaideni” (derived from its own name ”Vaida”) and, by deformation, reached the form used today [14].

Vaideeni is a commune in Vâlcea County, consisting of the villages of Cerna, Izvoru Rece, Cornet, Vaideeni and Marița [15].

Vaideeni village is the residence of the commune, being located in the basin of the river Lunca, a tributary of the Olt [11]. The administrative territory of the commune extends to the north to the main ridge of the Căpățânii Mountains [5]. The Căpățânii Mountains are a mountainous group of the Șureanu-Parâng-Lotrului Mountains, belonging to the mountain range of the Carpații Meridionali. The highest peak is Nedeia Peak, with 2.130 meters [13].

Positioning the locality in a depression at the foot of the Căpățânii Mountains, with a climate protected from strong winds, excessive heat and frost (creating convenient conditions for the appearance of certain spontaneous mediterranean elements, such as: sweet chestnut, bat wild), all this forming the optimal setting for a tourist oasis [1].

Numerous other attributes are added to this natural setting, all of which plead in favor of the locality from a tourist point of view, first of all, the picturesque natural that is kept original, totally devoid of other elements [2].

The annual pastoral Nedeia from Vaideeni, “Învârtita Dorului”, from the Sânziene period, in which tens of thousands of visitors from the country and often from abroad participate every time, besides the main purpose, that of preserving, of cultivates and defends the traditional national specificity, in the port, in crafts, in the musical folklore and choreography, offers in the subsidiary a happy and efficient promotion in favor of the knowledge of the locality and of its tourist valences [6].

The national, county and communal roads, well maintained and asphalted recently almost completely, the proximity to the main cities (6 km from Horezu, 50 km from Râmnicu Vâlcea), are elements that favor tourism in the area [12].
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Nearby are the oltenian monasteries, Hurez, Bistrița, Polovragi, the caves in the area, Liliecilor Cave, Polovragi Cave, Muierilor Cave, cheile Bistriței Oltenii, cheile Oltețului, the pyramids of salt sediments from Slătioara, trovanții from the sand quarries in Costești, culele from Măldărești, the Buila-Vânturară National Park, the ceramics from Horezu and the countless museums [7].

The proximity of the numerous spa resorts of Vâlcea County, Băile Govora, Băile Olănești, Călimănești and Cozia, Ocnele Mari, are also important tourist values, which can be taken into account [3].

Vaideeni is also about 70 km from Avincis Winery in Drăgășani, on the Vila Dobrusa wine estate, which produces wines appreciated at famous international fairs. Avincis is a family story, a story that began to be written almost 100 years ago [8]. Vila Dobrusa estate, where Avincis wines are born, is a family vineyard located in Dragașani, a sub-carpathian region, located near the monasteries in northern Oltenia [9]. At the Dobrusa Domain, wine lovers or those looking for an authentic moment of relaxation, can visit the winery that stands out through its modern and unique architecture, can take part in wine tastings and exclusive events or can spend a weekend in one of the 14 modern rooms, available for guests [4].

Also from Vaideeni commune start 10 marked tourist routes, intended for hiking and 2 off road routes for the owners of off-road vehicles, which make the connection between Oltenia de sub Munte and Valea Lotrului [10].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To carry out this study, the case study method was used, which involves a thorough and detailed examination of the information about the rural area and the ways to promote it. Includes study data, data analysis and presentation.

RESEARCH RESULTS

About 50 kilometers away from Râmnicu Vâlcea to Târgu Jiu, on DN 67, you reach following the road signs, in one of the communes at the foot of the Căpățânii Mountains, a wonderful place, a land full of legends.

Almost half a century after declaring itself a "tourist village", Vaideeni, the locality in Vâlcea county, relies again on mountain and cultural tourism, building a holiday village at over 1,600 m altitude.

Today, the famous community of shepherds from Oltenia de sub Munte, descendants of the Ardeal shepherds from Transylvania, is oriented towards tourism. They want to take advantage of what they have more valuable: nature, the settlement being at the foot of the Căpățânii Mountains, but having important areas on the mountain massifs, a land full of legend and rich in dream landscapes, but also traditions and customs. In the immediate vicinity of the Horezu resort Varful lui Roman in Vâlcea county, it is intended to set up a mountain resort in the Căpățânii Mountains.

The local administration wants to follow the austrian example of development, which is why it has started the authorization and accreditation procedures as a tourist resort. The community makes a holiday village on the ridge of the mountains, but develops its tourist infrastructure starting from the base, from the settlement itself.

Together, the two mountain resorts in Oltenia de Sub Munte would compete in size and potential with others better known in the country, even if at least in the beginning they will be only resorts of local interest.

The future resort Ursu-Ursulețul received this name after the two mountain massifs on which the ski area would develop. Work is currently underway to rehabilitate the road infrastructure to the future resort, but also to expand the electrical infrastructure. The Ursu-
Ursulețul resort would be developed on an area of 90 hectares of land that will include both the 500 plots of land of 1000 square meters each, which were put up for auction three years ago, along with the projects of three ski slopes. The surface also includes the road that comes from Vaideeni, reaches Ursu-Ursulețul, and connects with the already existing resort: Vârful lui Roman-Horezu. In fact, one of the slopes will be right in the vicinity of this resort.

![Alina Maria Monastery- Varful lui Roman](https://www.tribunavalceana.ro)

The establishment of Ursu-Ursulețul resort in Vaideeni would be an extraordinary opportunity for the whole community, for the Oltenia sub sub Munte region, but also for Vâlcea county, which is extremely sought after by tourists who want something other than Prahova Valley and Bucovina, with which they can compete in both beauty and tradition. For example, Vâlcea is the county with the most churches and monasteries historical monument in the country. On November 16, the UNESCO World Heritage Day in Romania is celebrated. Vâlcea county can be proud of two important objectives included in the UNESCO World Heritage: Hurezi Monastery (in 1993) and Horezu ceramics (in 2012), both in the beautiful town of Horezu.

On this occasion, the importance of their protection and conservation is highlighted, offering an extra image at the international level.

Also, the establishment of the resort encouraged the locals, who came up with the idea of rehabilitating and transforming their old old people's homes into accommodation spaces, following the model already successfully patented in Ardeal. Among the spaces that will be accredited as accommodation units are those included in the project "Caselor albastre", of the Asociația Culturală Moștenitorii din Vaideeni, volunteers who decided a few years ago to do everything possible to save and preserve as much of the specifics, traditions and customs of the place.
Vaideeni commune is a land full of legend, organizing for those who step on their doorstep, trips on the old transhumance trails, to the sheepfolds on the mountain, but also to places full of stories such as: Balota Lake, Moara Dracilor Waterfall, Tribunalul Haiducilor, where once stood the troops of Iancu Jianu and other outlaws, where the traitors were tried, and those found guilty were thrown empty from a rock.

Also here, we find a climbing and climbing route in the area of Cheile Cerna-Sohodor, in Vaideeni, has a height of over 80 meters and the fourth degree of difficulty, given that the most difficult routes in Romania reach the sixth degree of difficulty.

The route is called "Salvamont 1" and has already been provided by the members of the Vâlcea Mountain Rescue Service. Hiking lovers who have not climbed before can spend their time on the Valea Cernei, a wild area that stretches on either side of the creek of the same name. In addition to the spectacular landscapes, tourists will have the opportunity to explore the galleries dug by the water in the rocks that guard the Valea Cernei.

Agrotourism in Vaideeni has changed in recent years, thanks to private initiatives. The locals understood that they must highlight both the extremely picturesque area and its cultural richness.

In Vaideeni, especially on weekends, guesthouses work at full capacity, the whole area being in high demand both due to the beautiful landscapes and the richness of traditions and customs hundreds of years old, not yet exploited to its full potential.

One of the locals, for example, opened his Cerna tourist boarding house, and in order to promote his business and area, he also initiated a festival of carvers, sawmill sculptors, which in time became the largest profile event in the country, organized by a private initiative, with international participation. Thanks to the chainsaw craftsmen, a unique amusement park for children was born here, in which all the furniture is carved from wood and where you meet life-size fairy tale characters, a Maramures gate at the entrance to the pension perimeter, but also an adventure park, the largest in the area, also with carved wooden elements, as well as an artificial salt mine.
Figure 3. Cerna Guesthouse in Vaideeni, Valcea County

Source: https://www.revista-ferma.ro

Vaideeni has become a town known not only for the cheese and traditional products prepared here, but also for the Carverilor Festival, the largest event in Romania dedicated to sculptors with wooden chainsaws, at the Cerna Pension, which organizes it every year.

For the "Balul Oierilor", a tradition over a century old, but also for another great event "Învârtita Dorului", for the "Casele Albastre" project, started by the Asociația Moștenitorii which is involved in other projects dedicated to preserving traditions and customs in area such as: "Traista de Vaideeni în lume" and many more.

Also in Vaideeni, the largest volunteer project in Europe was started: Big Build 2019, which consisted of building several houses for the citizens affected by the floods, and the examples on this topic can continue.

CONCLUSIONS

The location of Vaideeni commune near the main tourist attractions in Oltenia de sub Munte has allowed it to know in recent years a rapid and safe development in terms of demographics, economy and infrastructure. The development of tourism in the commune also means the development of other economic branches.

The plan of sustainable rural development of Vaideeni locality from Vâlcea county as a rural tourist destination, is mainly based on the use of European funds and the development of projects that contribute to refresh and revitalize the image of the Romanian rural space.

Economic development can be achieved on the basis of a well-prepared economic-financial analysis but also by implementing projects with european funds or funds from the local budget to improve the infrastructure in the locality and in the future in the mountain resort Ursu-Ursulețul.

If you feel romanian and in addition, you are attracted by everything that means traditions and customs, Vaideeni locality in Vâlcea county and its surroundings must be on the list of places you want to see.

The tourist potential of Vaideeni commune can satisfy the requirements of any rural tourism consumer by participating in the existing educational-fun rural activities.
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