

## FAVORABILITY ASSESSMENT OF SICHEVITA AREA FOR AGRITOURISM ACTIVITIES

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**Abstract:** Sustainable development of rural environment through agritourism is a necessity currently and continues to be a current issue of great importance. This article aims to stimulate interest in this possibility of developing the rural environment and represents an attempt to provide a more complete picture of the advantages and limits of tourism in the rural environment in the researched area.

**Key words:** rural environment, agritourism, Sichevita area

### INTRODUCTION

In last years, has increased the interest in spending free time in rural areas in our country. [4,6,13] These trends align with the European ones [9] to spend holidays in the middle of nature enjoying the diversity of local healthy products. [11,12] The development of this activity would allow the knowledge of the rural environment, agritourism [10,14,15] being able to become an invisible ambassador, facilitating the attraction of investors for this branch, but also the development of the analyzed area.

The development of agritourism activity is required in rural areas, for economic and social reasons :[5]

- The development of the local community and the possibility of becoming a support for new businesses; [5,7,8]
- Economic development of the locality through jobs and additional income. [1,2,3]

Sichevita commune is located in a special natural setting, on the Danube Gorge, in a hilly and mountainous area on the valleys of the rivers Valea Oravita, Valea Sichevita, Camenița, Valea Liborajdei and Crusovita, on the slopes of the Almaj Mountains. The localities of Sichevita, Gornea, Crusovita and Liborajdea are located in the hilly area. In the mountain area are the localities of Ogasul Podului and Liborajdea, Valea Oravitei, Valea Sichevita, Valea Ravensca, Cracul Almaj, Zanou, Camenita, Cirsie, Curmatura, Frasinis, Straneac, Martinovat, Lucacevat and Zasloane, all these villages are components of the Sichevita commune.



**Figure 1. Sichevita commune-location**

Source: own source

Sichevita has remained a traditional village from Banat, where there is one of the most sought traditional tourist attractions of the Danube Gorge: the Sichevita mill ensemble. Just as old as the mills from Rudaria, the mills from Sichevita (existing since 1809) are still operating today.



**Figure 2. Old mills from Rudaria**

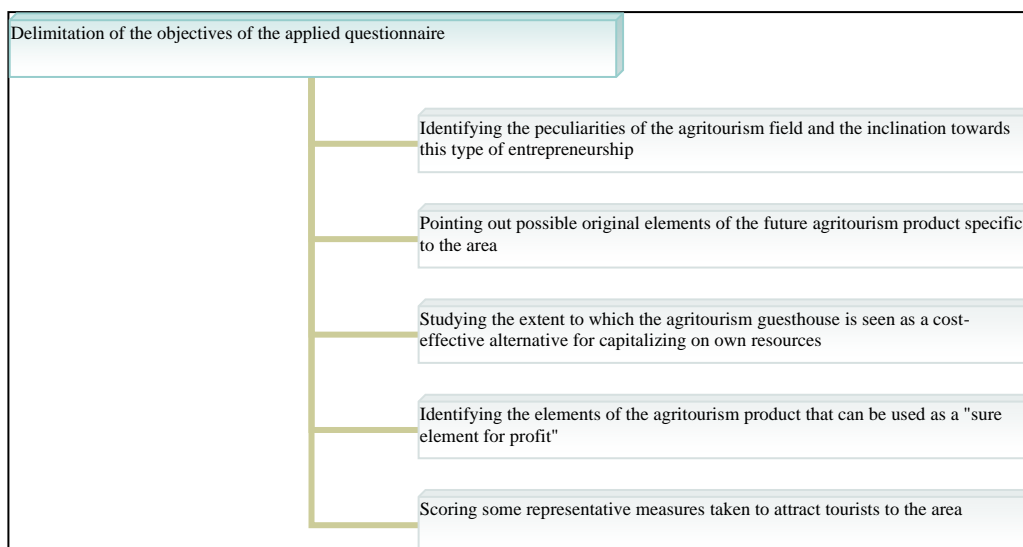
*Source: own source*

Tradition is part of the life of this village, and it is a unique chance to participate as tourists in: Measuring the sheep, Slaughter of the pigs, Dans of the bride, Game of alms, Releasing the water, Turks, The feast of the house, The prayer of the village with the old man's game in the open air, or others.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The objective, proposed in the article, involves carrying out a study regarding the evaluation of Sichevița area's favorability for agritourism activities in the eyes of the locals.

It was considered appropriate to apply a questionnaire, through which we tried to obtain the information that would emphasize the existence or non-existence of the potential for the future development of some agritourism activities, the objectives pursued being detailed in the figure 1 below.



**Figure 3. Favorability evaluation of Sichevita area for agritourism activities - objectives pursued**

*Source: own source*

The questionnaire was provided with six questions, either open questions or questions with certain answer options. It was desired to apply as many questionnaires as possible, which is why it was decided to send the questionnaires by e-mail, and 76 completed questionnaires were received. Later the information was centralized, using EXCELL and the results are presented in the following.

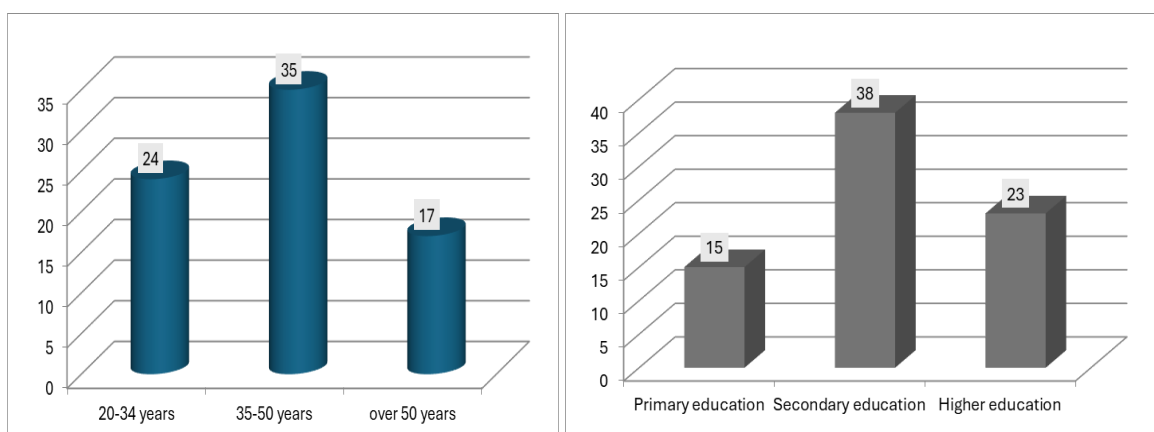
Aspects related to respondents highlight aspects such as those detailed in table 1 and figure 2:

- from the point of view of the gender of the respondents, predominates the male gender;
- 77.63% of respondents fall into the 20-50 age category, which underlines the potential for future support of this activity;
- also in terms of studies, the findings are gratifying, in the sense that 80.26% of respondents have secondary and higher education, in other words, the interest in this field of activity from these categories is gratifying and is sustainable in the long term.

**Table 1.**

**Brief presentation of the characteristics for the participants in the study**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Ladies</b>		<b>Gentlemen</b>			
	44		32			
<b>Age</b>	<b>20-34 years</b>		<b>35-50 years</b>		<b>over 50 years</b>	
	24		35		17	
	<b>Primary education</b>		<b>Secondary education</b>		<b>Higher education</b>	
15		38		23		



**Figure 4. Brief presentation of the study participants characteristics**

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### *The peculiarities of the agritourism field and the inclination towards this type of entrepreneurship*

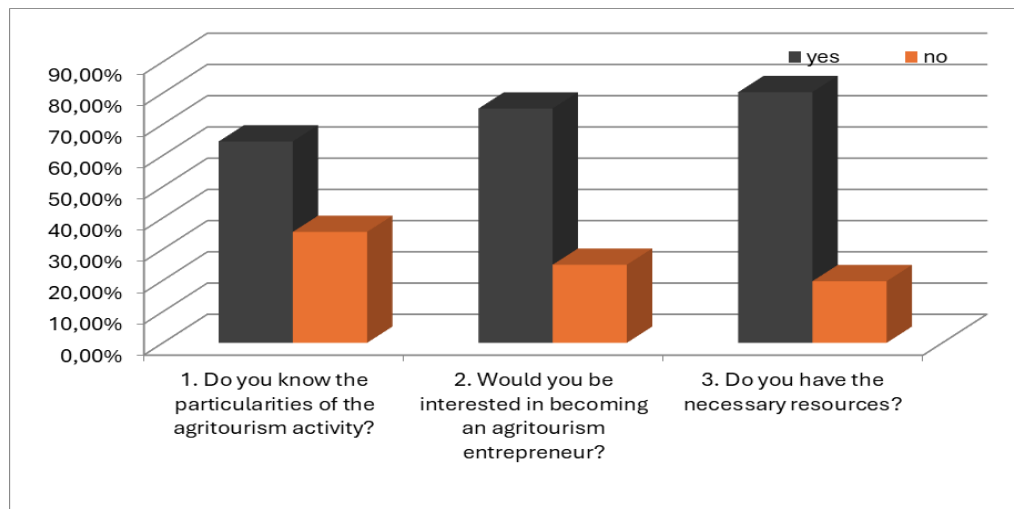
One of the questions contained in the questionnaire referred to the peculiarities of the agritourism field and the identification of the inclination towards this type of entrepreneurship. The question was divided into three other questions and the answer possibilities were predetermined:

- knowledge of the peculiarities of the agritourism activity;
- the existence or not of the desire to become an entrepreneur in the agritourism field;
- the availability or not of the resources necessary to carry out the agritourism activity.

Table 2.

**Identifying the particularities of the agritourism field and the inclination towards this type of entrepreneurship in the area under study**

Tipul de informație dorit a se afla	Yes	No
1. Do you know the particularities of the agritourism activity?	49 64.47%	27 35.52%
2. Would you be interested in becoming an agritourism entrepreneur?	57 75.00%	19 25.00%
3. Do you have the necessary resources?	61 80.26%	15 19.73%



**Figure 5. Identifying the particularities of the agritourism field and the inclination towards this type of entrepreneurship in the area under study**

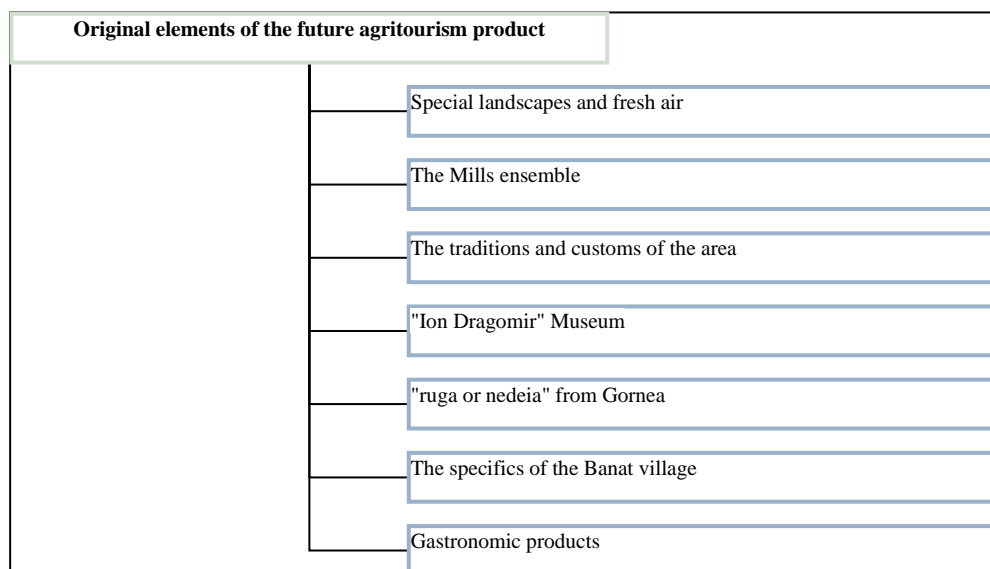
The findings reveal several aspects:

- an important percentage 64.47% of those questioned declared that they know the particularities of the agritourism activity, which is a proper aspect for the future development of this type of activity;
- an important aspect is also the existence of the desire to become an entrepreneur in the field of agritourism among 75.00% of the respondents;
- 80.26% of those surveyed do not have the necessary resources to transform the household/farm into an agritourism household, which is a negative aspect.

***Original elements of the future agritourism product specific to the area***

The fact that the area under analysis is favorable for agritourism activity, emerges from the words of those interviewed.

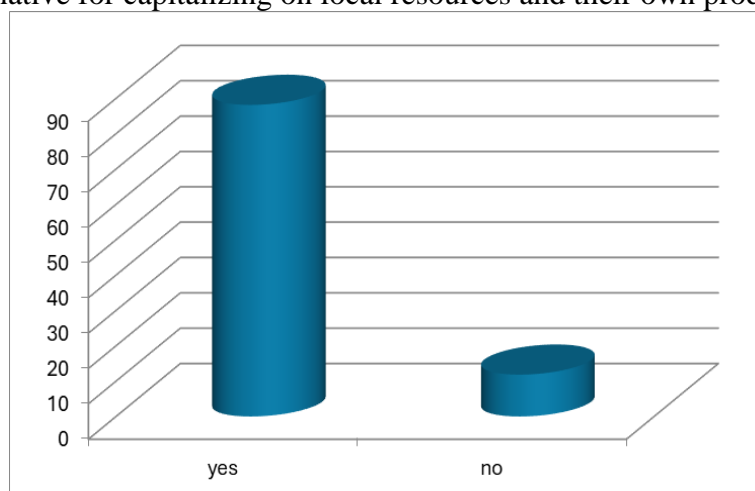
The question was not provided with answer options, being requested to mention three original elements that a future agritourism product from this area would have in order to be easily promoted and known on the market, and the answers received highlighted as unique resources of the area, the landscapes, the clean air, the Mori Ensemble, the traditions and customs of the area, the "Ion Dragomir" museum, the "ruga or nedeia" from Gornea, the gastronomic products, or simply put, the specifics of the Banat village.



**Figure 6. Original elements of the future agritourism product**

***Studying the extent to which the agritourism guesthouse is seen as a cost-effective alternative for capitalizing on own resources***

Through the fourth question of the proposed questionnaire, the purpose is to identify the extent to which the respondents/locals see the agritourist guesthouse as a profitable alternative for capitalizing on local resources and their own products.



**Figure 7. The extent to which the agritourism guesthouse is seen as a cost-effective alternative for capitalizing on own resources**

The good news is the large extent to which the respondents consider that the agritourism activity could be a chance to ensure first the possibility of capitalizing on their own products, and then to ensure the profitability of the peasant household, and as a long-term perspective of the Sichevita area. From those surveyed, 88.15% believe that the agritourism guesthouse is a cost-effective alternative for capitalizing on local resources and own products, and 11.84% believe that the agritourism guesthouse is not a cost-effective alternative for capitalizing on local resources and own products. This supports the answer to a previous question, namely the existence of the desire to become an entrepreneur in the field of agritourism.

The arguments mentioned by those who answered that the agritourism guesthouse is a profitable alternative for the capitalization of local resources and own products went

towards: the existence of a surplus of agricultural products, whether vegetable or zootechnical, the possibility of obtaining a complementary income to agricultural activities and wages, the desire to be one's own boss and to provide jobs for family members, long-term development of the village, the commune and implicitly the increase of living conditions.

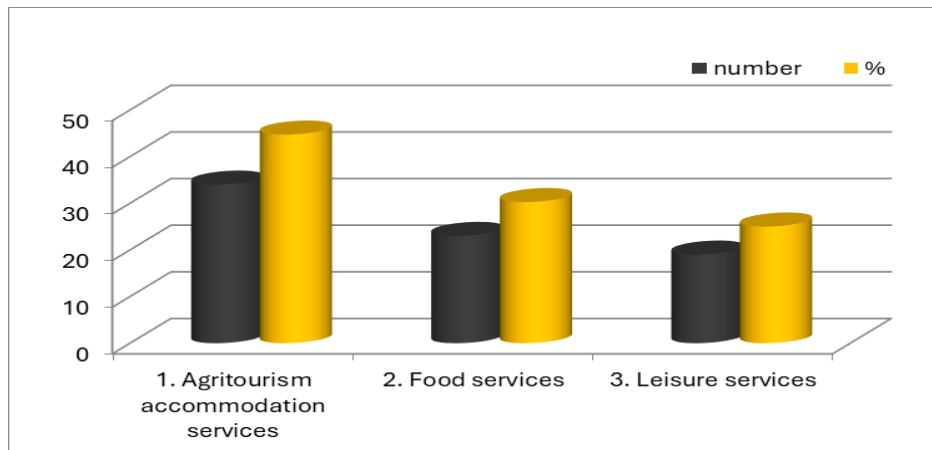
***Identifying the elements of the agritourism product that can be used as a "sure element for profit"***

The agritourism product, like any tourist product, has three components, accommodation, food and leisure, with specific characteristics.

**Table 3.**

**The elements of the agritourism product considered as a "sure element for profit"**

	Number	%
1. Agritourism accommodation services	34	44.73%
2. Food services	23	30.26%
3. Leisure services	19	25.00%

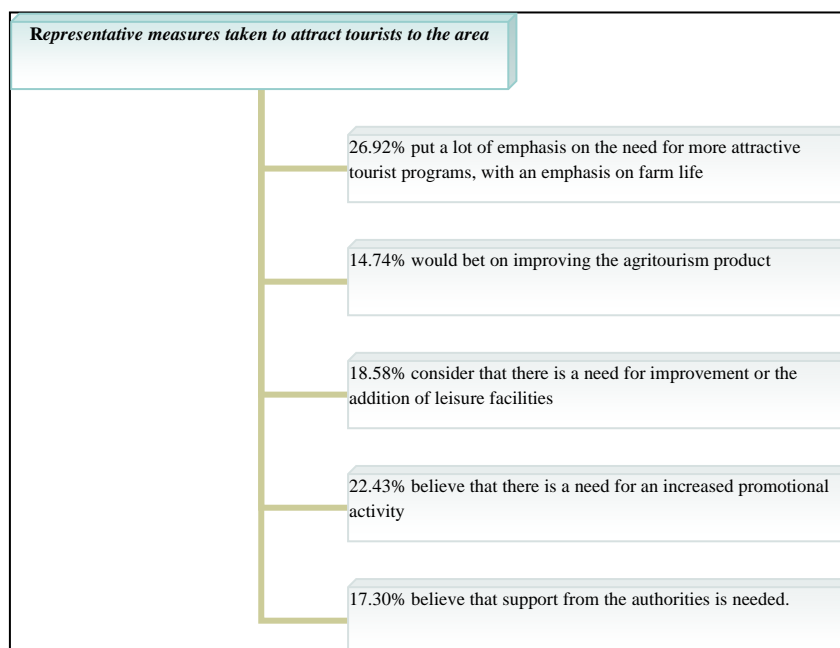


**Figure 8. The elements of the agritourism product considered as a "sure element for profit"**

44.73% of those surveyed would use agritourism accommodation services as a "sure source for income", 30.26% on food services and 25.00% on leisure. The answers to this question shows the beginner stage of the entrepreneurs from this area, but also the lack of specialized knowledge, necessary to bet on the leisure side as a "sure element for profit" when we talk about the agritourism field.

***Representative measures taken to attract tourists to the area***

The sixth question from the questionnaire sought to translate the surveyed household owners into future agritourism entrepreneurs and to come up with 3 actions/measures, as guesthouse owners, they would take to attract tourists. The question has no answer options, leaving a free answer to the respondents. Each of the interviewees had one or more answer options. The answers to this question were oriented towards:



**Figure 9. Representative measures taken to attract tourists to the area**

- 42 responses, respectively 26.92%, were oriented towards a strong emphasis on a series of more attractive tourist programs, with an emphasis on life on the farm;
- 23 responses (14.74% of the total) were aimed at improving the agritourism product;
- 29 responses, respectively 18.58%, were oriented towards the need for improvement or the addition of leisure facilities;
- 35 responses, meaning 22.43%, believe that there is a need for an increased promotional activity;
- 27 responses, meaning 17.30%, were oriented towards the need for support from the authorities.

The conclusion drawn is that currently the area is not developed for agrotourism, but the potential is enormous.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Romanian rural area, but also the one from Sichevita, is characterized by a high degree of extension and diversification, once representing the prime location for authentic and qualitatively special gastronomic products, then the place where are at home traditions, customs, crafts, culture as a whole. These particularities are obviously also found in the case of Sichevita, the place of our research.

The proposed purpose of the work was to carry out a study regarding the evaluation of the favorability of the Sichevita area for agritourism activities in the eyes of the locals. The conclusions drawn emphasize aspects such as:

- 64.47% of those surveyed declared that they know the particularities of agritourism activity, but 80.26% of those surveyed do not have the necessary resources to transform the household/farm into an agritourism household.

- 88.15% believe that the agritourism guesthouse is a profitable alternative for capitalizing on local resources and own products, and 44.73% of those surveyed would use agritourism accommodation services as a "sure element for income", and 26.92% they put a lot of emphasis on the need for more attractive tourist programs, with an emphasis on farm life.

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