

DEVELOPMENT OF AGRITURISTIC POTENTIAL IN ARAD COUNTY

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Abstract: *Worldwide, there is a strong competition between tourist destinations, which should take care of the adaptation of modern, aggressive policies, and the increase of service quality.*

The practice of agrotourism development in Romania highlighted the fact that, due to the lack of an unified strategy of local development, it could not be realized within the general urbanism plan, which is why it came as the sites, with tourist function, to achieve incidentally, without basic market studies, based on the principle of creating objective in order to stimulate interest. This principle has caused malfunctions by achieving goals, outside the general tourist framework. This practice endangers a large part of investments made until now, considering that the development of rural areas involves structuring of infrastructure elements into other perimeters.

Key words: *agritourist potential, tourist destination, hospitality, visitors*

INTRODUCTION

People who live in rural areas should be the main actors in agrotourism activity in order to be the main beneficiaries. However, the traditional hospitality of peasants must be accompanied by specific training of tourist accommodation activity giving to the visitors the satisfaction of civilized accommodation and, in the same time, the possibility to discover new places and people. The basic equation of agrotourist product is:

Accommodation at the farm = vacation spent at the farm + leisure at the farm and in rural areas.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The authors of the paper were used as methods of work: data collection, processing, analysis, observation and their interpretation. This work was a part of the research during the contract *POS DRU/159/1.5/S/132765*.

RESEARCH RESULTS

For an agrotourist area of Arad County to be rationally harnessed and exploited, we have to establish the criteria for identification of rural settlements and to determine the potential of available resources. For this purpose, we take into account the following criteria:

- 1) tourist value criteria, which takes into account the natural elements, such as:
 - landscape aspects;
 - mineral water resources;
 - cultural and historical resources;
 - social and economic resources in order to enable the completion a diverse tourist offer;
 - other tourist resources.

2) ethno-folkloric value criteria takes into account ethnographic and folkloric traditions, specific traditional occupations of the village, unchanged over time, popular architecture, etc.

3) criteria of existence and quality of agrotourist farms, namely the existence of strengthened farms that comfortably provide accommodations and food, equipment and hygiene, respecting the standards developed by the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism, according to international standards.

4) criteria of technical and municipal equipment, regarding the endowment with energy, water, sewerage, etc.;

5) criteria of accessibility at agrotourist farm or tourist attractions, on modernized or gravel roads and the proximity of national roads, main railways, airports, etc.;

6) criteria of geographical position of the area, as a tourist destination, in relation with the main centers issuing by tourism.

Although there is a great tourist potential, a large part of tourist farms do not exploit the full capacity for several reasons:

- economic and comfort conditions do not allow it;
- seasonality of practicing tourism;
- lack of education and training of local people in agrotourism field.

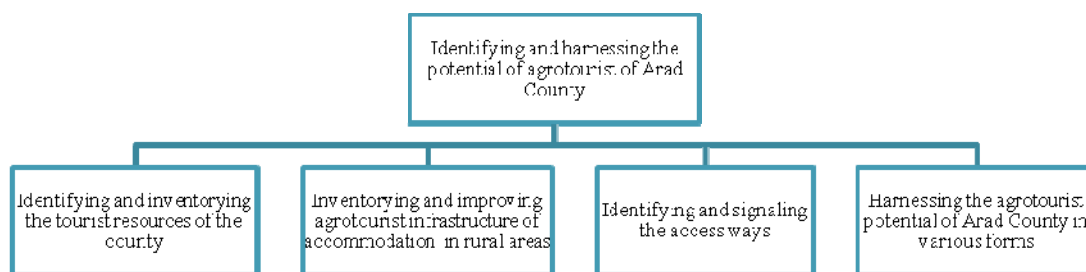


Fig.1 - Identification and exploitation of agrotourist potential of Arad County

Tourism, in rural areas, provides the opportunity for people to get closer, to know the material and spiritual living conditions with those who come into contact. From the experience of other countries, especially European ones, it has been noticed that rural areas are suitable for tourism and they have, from many points of view, necessary conditions for developing tourism activities. If the question is about the exploitation of agrotourist potential in the studied area, then it can be proposed several possibilities to achieve this goal.

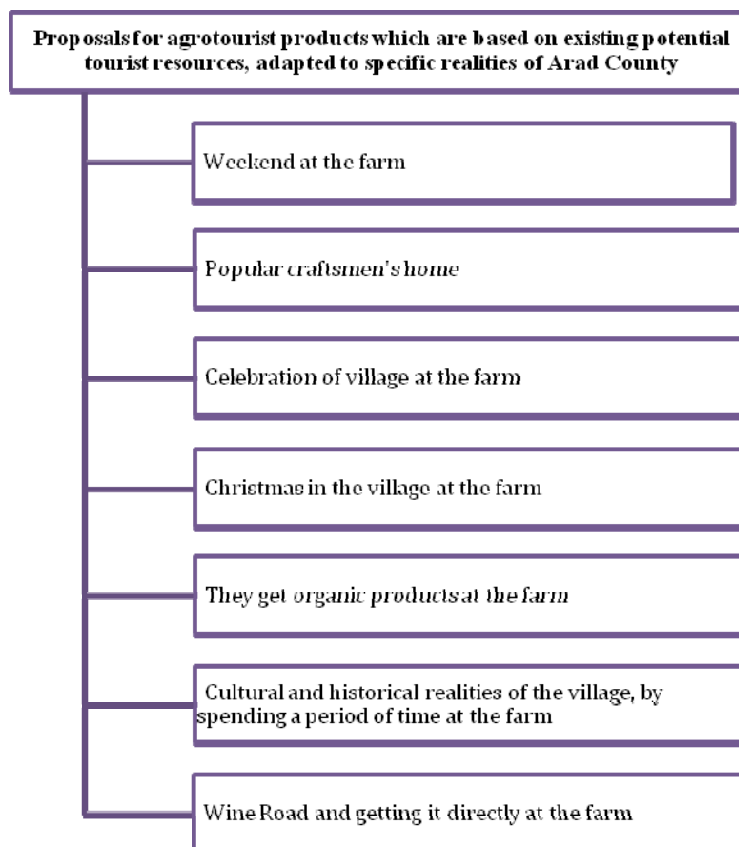


Fig.2 - Proposals for agrotourist products which are based on existing potential tourist resources, adapted to specific realities of Arad County

Once the inventory of existing tourist resources is realized, we can draw a few ways to incorporate them in agrotourist products. What could be more wonderful than a breakfast with fresh milk, a walk on the paths of the mountains or valleys, unique views to watch a sunset or sunrise, hear the murmur of a fountain or a waterfall noise, a walk on village street, wait a few moments in front of an exhibition or popular craftsmen's house, ride a horse-drawn sleigh, a few hours dreaming in front of the stove? Here are some resources from the life and universe of Romanian village, which must be aggregated in order to result a real agrotourist product, by the beauty, simplicity and novelty of components.

The offer of agrotourist product is special, as follow:

- benefiting from features and mysteries of farm life, crafts and specific food;
- tourists can explore the diverse architectural heritage, secular and religious edifices as well as the rich folklore of the area. All of them are rooted in many cultures and civilizations, because, besides Romanian, Hungarians, Swabians, Serbs, Czechs, Slovaks, Bulgarians also lived here throughout the centuries;
- as an overview of the main cultural and tourist attractions, Arad County can convince to explore an area not very famous but very interesting, due to landscapes, richness of folklore and legacy of folk customs of people living in this region.

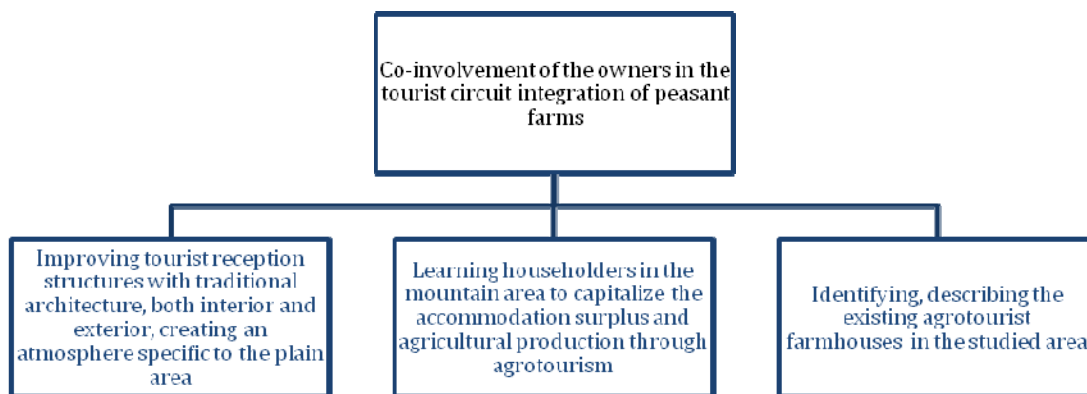


Fig. 3 - Inventorying and improving agrotourist infrastructure of accommodation in rural area

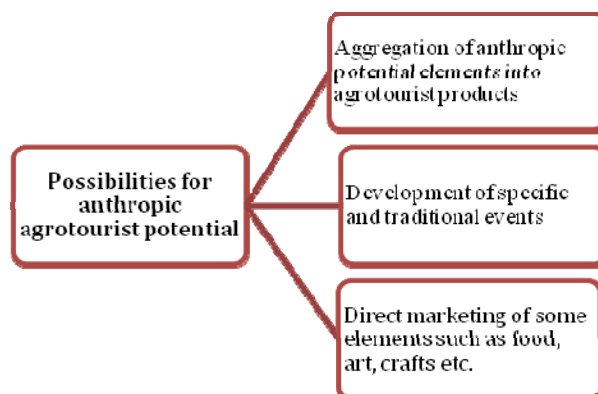


Fig.4 - Possibilities for anthropic agrotourist potential

CONCLUSIONS

Capitalization of resources in the villages from Arad can be done by various fairs, festivals, contests, which must complete the favorable image of the village. However, the main way and most important in the use of these resources is the rural tourism/agrotourism, contributing to the introduction, in the national and international tourist circuit, of various natural conditions and to the capitalization of traditional and contemporary culture of the entire cultural and historical potential in the rural area.

In terms of farmhouse, if there are financial opportunities, it is recommended that each of them possess their own guide or brochure, in which they present both the farmhouse and surroundings, with all areas of attraction. In concerned advertising material, the village must be also presented, which includes the farmhouse.

For agricultural products, the customers prefer the authenticity of natural products, especially after seeing on the spot how to obtain them. Often, at the end of the holiday, they even show a desire to buy some products for their home. It's about cheese products, sausages, wine and other alcoholic beverages, products made by craftsmen, olive oil, fresh pasta, sweets, biscuits and honey. Usually, the agrotourist entrepreneur sells products at the market price, with the advantage of immediate sale, with a net gain higher than that obtained by selling products to local wholesalers. In conclusion, the activity is profitable, that's why, more agrotourist farms, which do not have space needed to provide

accommodation and meals services, are limited only to sell products of their own farm. It is possible that these farms should be mentioned into a catalog, by correspondence orders. In order to accomplish this, there must be a capacity to organize, well established and efficient which must edit that catalog to a trusted printing house, to promote it, to obtain a list of addresses and to solve, at the same time the problem of sending and cashing the equivalent value of subscription, by post or courier.

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