

**TRENDS REGARDING TOURISM IN RURAL AREA AT EUROPEAN LEVEL.
ROMANIAN RURAL AREAS POSSIBLE TO BE CAPITALIZED
THROUGH TOURISM**

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Abstract: *Rural areas will have to define new ecological and recreational functions, increasingly important, being new development alternatives for those from agricultural field. In this context a major role it will have also the development of a variety of tourism activities in rural area. The new in this area is manifested by the expansion of the tourism phenomenon in rural area. This expansion is explained, on the one hand, through the relaunch and development of rural regions, and on the other hand, through the diversification of the practicing forms of mass tourism. One of the concepts of increasingly circulated, within this form of tourism, is represented by the "tourist village". From the territory of Romania, 87.1% is found in the rural area, which provides for rural tourism an extra chance. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the trends of tourism in rural area at European level and highlight that also at national level there are some villages, which in the future may fulfill the function of tourist village.*

Key words: *tourism, rural area, Romanian village*

INTRODUCTION

Many specialists [1,3,5,6,7,8,9,10,11] have analyzed rural tourism activity, the conclusions being summarized below:

- Most states have managed to pay to the agrotourism the largest share from rural areas;
- It was encouraged and promoted the action of peasant farms development in rural area;
- They were granted facilities (loans, financial aid) to households from rural area who started the activity in agrotourism;
- Coverage of the activity from rural area of the agrotourist farms and of the peasant way of life have encouraged tourists to turn to this environment. By introducing some financial facilities, such as introducing the holiday checks with the destination agrotourism, which are in certain percent subsidized by the state or by companies at which work the potential tourists, are encouraged urban inhabitants to move to the rural area for spend their holidays and spare time. Switzerland has introduced the "vacation certificates" obtained by buying shares in tourism field;
- the states of European Union were involved also indirectly in agrotourism, by building holiday homes or rebuilding and modernizing of the existing ones. This action is specific to France and Portugal and was realised with the support of local authorities. So were reintroduced in the sphere of agrotourism many abandoned houses, transformed into modern private agrotourist farms rented to tourists in different periods, this paying a fee for stay to the community;
- Agrotourism activity was diversified including a growing number of tourists;
- Was focused on emphasizing the national peculiarities, traditions and customs from the rural areas concerned. In Austria agrotourism is characterized by quiet rustic character with a rich folklore and ethnographic tradition, therefore an agrotourism village must be away from urban areas with intensive traffic. Germany focuses on beer festivals, France

focuses on specific and original menus, Portugal has restored old mansions bearing the print of the ancient civilization.

- All states have paid a particular attention to the use, conservation and sustainable development of the environment. They have signed protocols for assuming the responsibility for the protection and care of the environment, landscaping the abandoned spaces, of care the adjacent spaces. The owners assume in writing their responsibilities for the care and conservation of the environment;

- They have been sought effective ways to make known on tourist market the efficiency of agrotourism activity. Each country released specific slogans summarizing the promotion policy. Portugal has the motto "A tourist is a friend, smile";

- Price policy is common in the European Union, agrotourism being considered the most advantageous form of tourism. The system that protects low-income families and allows them to spend their holidays at reasonable prices is the checks holiday system and was adopted by all European countries.

Coming to meet the tendency to search the natural, it appeared the necessity for recreation or to create rustic-rural ambience, under many forms: holiday villages, holiday farms, villages club, rural villages for youth, rural resorts for rest and tourist village, which in recent years holds a priority place.

Integrating in the rural tourist product, both human resources with rural specific, like: traditions, crafts, architecture, customs, etc., it is as important as it is the adding of these through the sustainable management of the natural resources, such as: topography, vegetation, hydrography, often combined in the form of parks, reserves, in a word of natural protected areas. From this point of view there are few the European examples that have capitalized these natural resources through rural tourism with special value, through them the value of tourism product being very high.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The authors of the paper were used as methods of work: data collection, processing, analysis, observation and their interpretation.

RESEARCH RESULTS

It requires tourism in rural area which presents also an important social dimension due to lower prices and its specificity, mostly family tourism, camping tourism and youth tourism, a tourist market in continuously development and specific trends:

- 3/4 from those who appreciate rural tourism are family practitioners;
- In a ranking of the favorite activities in rural holidays the first position is held by visiting the locality and monuments (23%), hiking on foot (16%), spas and then leisure stays;
- Rural holidays lovers advertise resolutely measures for:
 - More information on the visited region;
 - Better signage of the resting places and of the tourist interest objectives;
 - In case of holidays of four days more concern for animation.
- Witch is the image of Romania as a tourist destination on the market from each country;
- Which specific Romanian tourism products would be most interesting for travelers from 11 countries.

From all the studies analyzed result that Romania *has considerable natural resources*, with a great development potential for tourism, respectively rural tourism (figure 2).

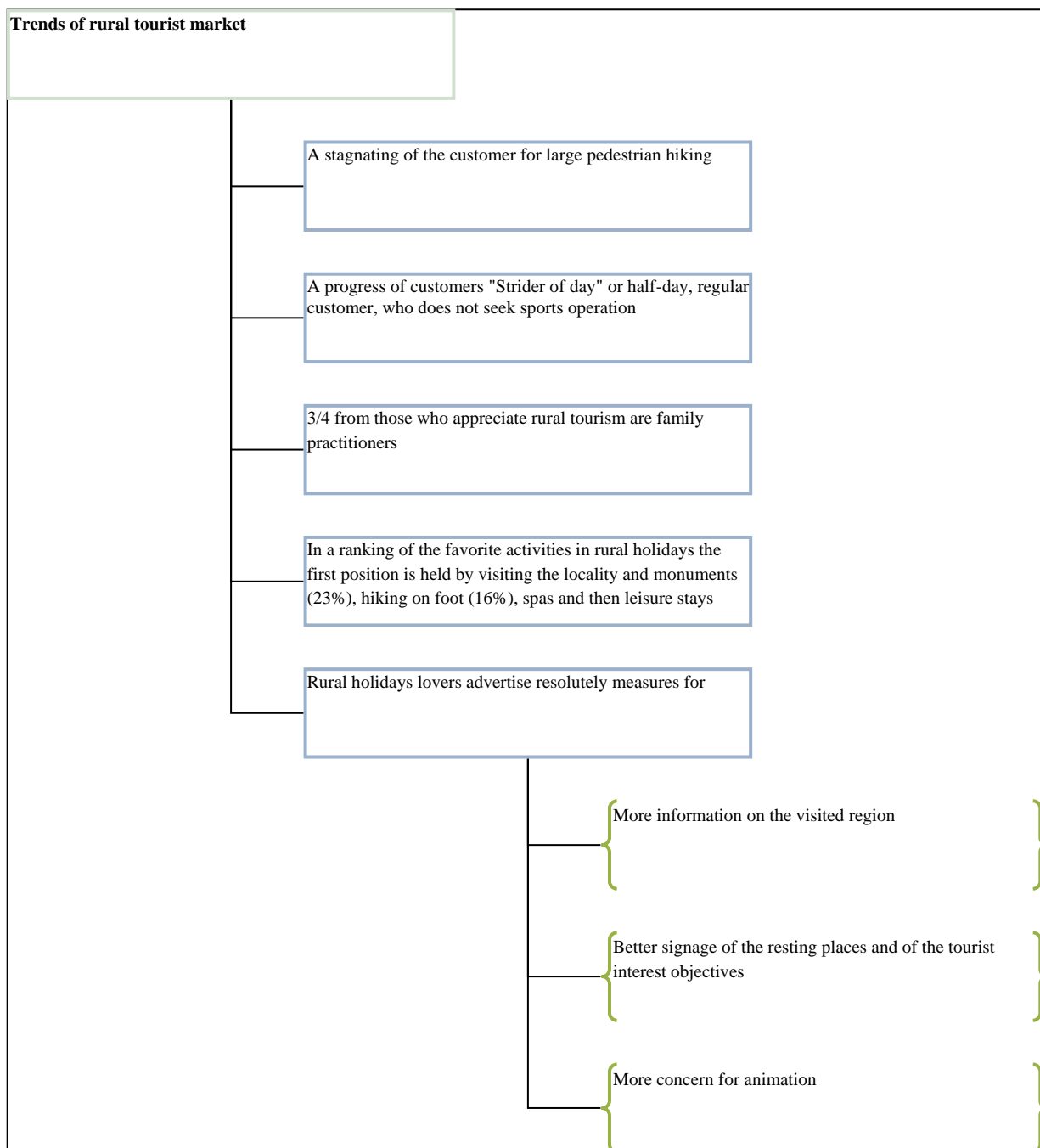


Figure 1 Trends of rural tourist market

Studies made by the National Tourism Authority from Romania [2] made by a number of specialized institutes from 11 countries in which Romania has tourism promotion offices, namely: Austria, Germany, Italy Finland, Hungary, Norway, Sweden, UK, Spain, France and Denmark have highlighted a number of important issues regarding the perception of Romania as a tourist destination. The studies were commissioned by Romanian offices and had as main objective, for almost all countries:

- How Romania is perceived, as a potential tourist destination, by the tourists from each 11 countries;
- What are the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the Romanian tourism products;

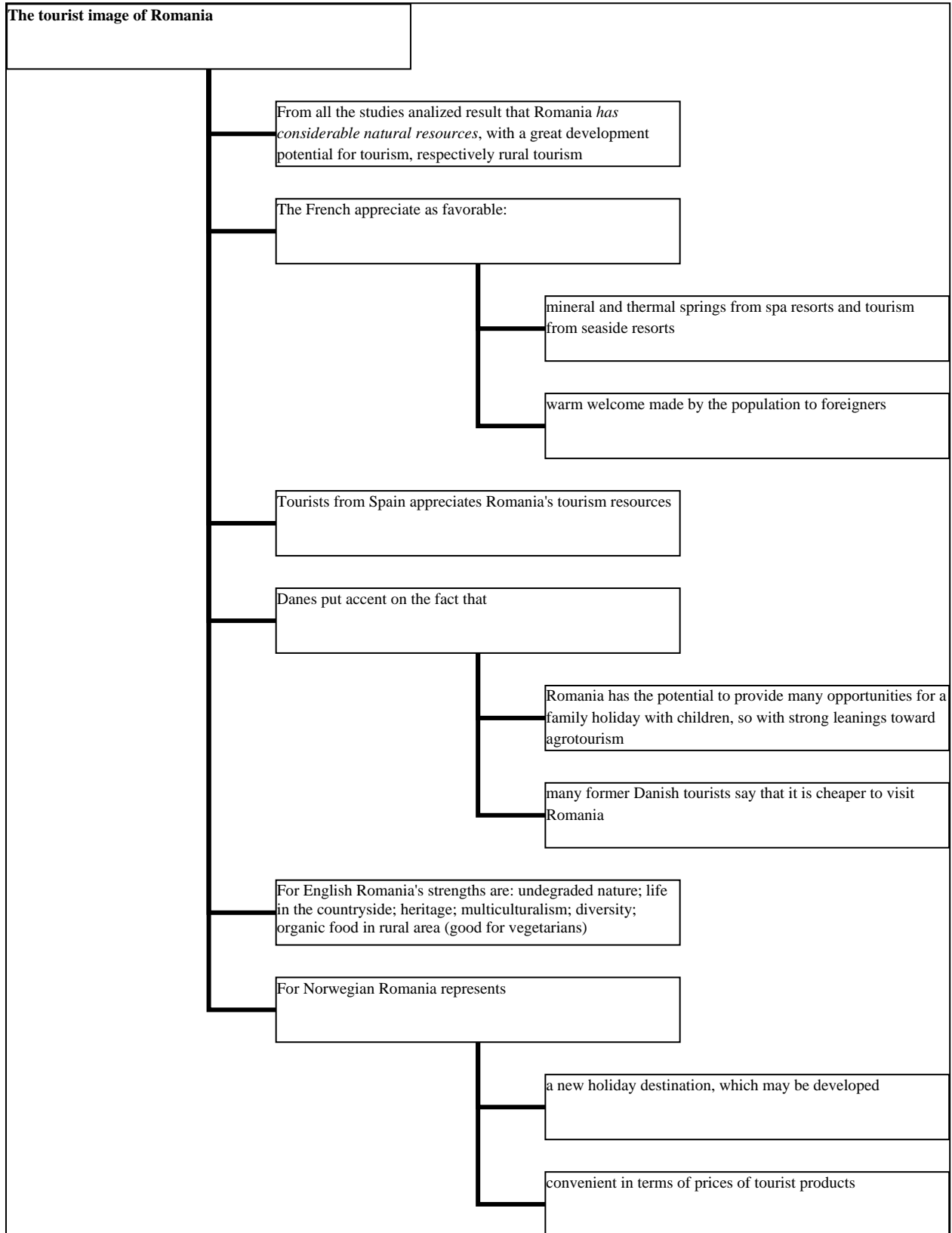


Figure 2 Studies regarding the tourist image of Romania

Also in our case there can exist the new possibilities of introduction in rural tourism product of many natural resources with uniqueness character, of some parks, reserves, so that the product obtained to fits in the current category of interest. Tourism, in our view, is

the only economic branch that capitalize the natural and historical heritage, cultural and artistic potential. The importance of tourism resources, like factorial facilities is justified by their original or unique character, case in which the country that has them acquires the "monopoly" position within a certain specializations. [4] Romania's tourist vocation is determined by the variety and complexity of the landscape, the richness of surface or groundwater waters, by the transitional continental climate, by the rich and varied vegetation and fauna, by the millennia history of the Romanian people, by the hospitality of the people.



Figure 3 Specific elements of the most beautiful villages from Romania

Source: <http://cele-mai-frumose-sate-romania.webs.com/>

- The Ciocănești museum village, Suceava County is unique in our country, almost every house here resembling with painted eggs specific for the area and is decorated on the outside with different traditional Romanian folk motifs. [12]



Source: <http://adevarul.ro>

- Rametea village from Alba County is famous for the magnificent mountain landscape, its popular port absolutely unique and its special architecture. Trascau Depression, with a splendid panorama, is one of the most interesting depressions from the Apuseni Mountains. On the territory of the locality is situated the massive Trascau with various karst caves, natural bridges, old abandoned mine galleries. [13]



Source: www.oco.ro

- Carpinet locality from Bihor County has the advantage of settlement near the Apuseni Mountains. Cherished natural resources available here are: Calugari Izbuca, The Campeneasca Cave, where is found the largest underground waterfall from Romania, which has a height of 40 m.



Source: www.ratt.ro

- Carlibaba locality from Sibiu County is located very close to the Pietrosul Rodnei Biosphere Reserve that offers an admirable example of flora and fauna unique in the country.



Source: <http://www.ghiduri-turistice.info/>

- Breb locality from Maramures is best known for: Rooster Ridge, Morareni Lake and Chendroaie Pond, all natural reserves. Besides these things Breb is special also for Wood Church from 1300 and for social Maramures specific gates.



Source: <http://www.ghiduri-turistice.info/>

CONCLUSIONS

In the past 20 years it has been a continuous decrease in foreign tourist demand for Romania. To exit in the international tourism competition is necessary to upgrade, restart and development of Romanian tourism and creation of modern and competitive tourist products on tourism market. Trying making a comparative analysis based on the experience of European tourism, we believe that the sphere of tourism activities from the Romanian rural area must be enlarged from simply providing accommodation to the:

- Display of the most popular gourmet products;
- Entertainment and animation specific from rural areas;
- Transport with traditional means;

Tourism integrated in rural areas and is an alternative to solve in the same time, problems relating, on the one hand, to the village and on the other hand to the city.

Starting from the reality that rural tourism brings a considerable contribution to the development of rural areas, to creating new jobs, to updating the application on various local products, we propose that:

- "rural areas should not be seen as a problem but as an opportunity."
- for foreign visitors, Romania to show much interest, by introducing in tourist circuit some of the villages mentioned above.

The rural settlements that provide unique products on the market are less numerous. Keeping a brand image for tourism services require the existence of an optimum balance between the nature of the supply, the services quality and the price perceived. Rural areas offer a lot of profitable tourist elements: border houses, campsites and accommodation in farmhouses or peasant households can support a wide range of activities such as pedestrian walks, cultural tourism, river tourism, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, winter sports, cycling etc. So it solves a first requirement, tone one of the number of accommodation spaces.

It remains open the problem of accommodation conditions from these spaces. While boarder houses with tourist destination only improve their services, but make unfair competition, accommodation in peasant homes remains an alternative.

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