

CHARACTERIZATION OF RURAL TOURISM ACTIVITY IN THE MOUNTAIN AREA

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Abstract: Natural tourism potential of Romania indicates large development possibilities of mountain tourism, either classic one or niche, throughout the whole year. However, currently, Romanian mountain tourism offer indicates an inconsistency between the value and high attractiveness of tourism potential and its low capitalization level, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The high demand of the tourists for mountain area has generated a closer involvement of the specialists in order to tourist exploitation, more efficient, of this area, given the satisfying of the complexity and diversity of tourist needs.

Key words: rural tourism, agrotourism, tourism, mountain area,

INTRODUCTION

Starting from the existence of some diverse and complex needs, in the past decade there has been seen a growing demand for rural tourist products from this area. In this regard, local communities and the residents of these areas has come to meet tourist demand, by diversifying the tourist offer and introducing in the tourist circuit of the specific elements of agrotourist offer (traditional gastronomy, ethnography and folklore, fairs, but also cultural elements, religious etc.) Arranging for tourism purposes and why not agrotourist, of the mountain area indicates significant contributions to the capitalization of natural tourist resources but also of socio-cultural riches of these areas. [2,3]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present paper is a characterization of rural tourism activity in the mountain area. For this scope we used as sources information of the statistical yearbooks and tourism breviary. Also we used a series of books in the field.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The demand for mountain tourism experienced, throughout the world, an upward trend, but also important changes in terms of traveling motivation under the influence of various factors – such as economic, socio-demographic, psychological, political, etc.

The roots of mountain tourism lie in some particular places. And when it comes to this, there are considering both the spatial location of the offer and the basins of demand. The diffusion of mountain tourism at social level and the extension of mountain massifs facilities are practically the two main and interrelated phenomena that constitute the essence of mountain tourism. [4, 5]

The demand within mountain tourism has evolved under the influence of various factors, common, as well of general or specific tourism. Revenues had, undoubtedly, a strong influence on the demand in mountain tourism, practicing winter sports being considered an expensive way to spend the vacation. The increase of living standards over time, with higher rates in developed countries had made possible to practice mountain tourism activities by more and more people. This phenomenon correlated with the relative reduction of tourism tariffs has led to so-called tourism socialization or to its transformation into a mass phenomenon.

The changes in tourism consumption habits may be considered a psychological factor, but they are also due to economic or circumstantial causes. Today, customers are diversifying and fractioning their vacations. One can no longer talk about customers of a certain resort, but of categories of clients whose characteristics, culture, behavior, requirements, expectations are very various. Thus, many mountain resorts had to adapt their offerings to very different market segments. Another trend is to split holidays usually within summer holiday and winter one; therefore, the average stay has decreased currently to 7-8 days and at the same time there has increased the frequency of weekend departures within nearby mountainous areas. [1]

The current diversification of motivations and practices, following a long period faithful to some mountain tourism models, raises for professionals serious problems of adaptation and guidance to the so-called "customers niche." The preferences of tourists are also moving more and more toward rural mountainous areas, where besides the motivation for rest or practicing trekking and certain sports, there is the possibility of integration into the activity of local people, of communication and intercultural change - needs that are manifested today more strongly among people of all ages.

Table 1 shows the situation of tourist arrivals by tourists categories in the mountain area, within the main structures of tourist accommodation. In the year 2015, the most tourists were registered in hotels with a share of 72.74%. Tourist boarding houses accounted for 9.05% of total tourists and agri-tourism boarding houses 6.76%. For both accommodation establishments there are recorded significant increases, 190.12% in the tourist boarding houses and 295.36 for the agritourism ones.

Table 1.

Arrivals of tourists in accommodation structures, from mountain area by tourists categories

| | | 2005 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total | Total | 5805096 | 6072757 | 7031606 | 7686489 | 7943153 | 8465909 | 9930496 |
| | Romani | 4375185 | 4726414 | 5514907 | 6030053 | 6225798 | 6551339 | 7690518 |
| | Foreigners | 1429911 | 1346343 | 1516699 | 1656436 | 1717355 | 1914570 | 2239978 |
| Touristic boarding houses | Total | 310035 | 406632 | 479590 | 586119 | 653464 | 704129 | 899494 |
| | Romani | 263230 | 363956 | 433475 | 529236 | 590069 | 635182 | 806696 |
| | Foreigners | 46805 | 42676 | 46115 | 56883 | 63395 | 68947 | 92798 |
| Agro-touristic boarding houses | Total | 170164 | 289923 | 360696 | 447113 | 501746 | 549302 | 672756 |
| | Romani | 152521 | 270246 | 336005 | 416939 | 463563 | 507868 | 622187 |
| | Foreigners | 17643 | 19677 | 24691 | 30174 | 38183 | 41434 | 50569 |

Source: www.insse.ro [7]

Although in the latest period there are registered significant increases in foreign tourists arrivals in both tourist boarding houses and agritourism ones, however, the share of overnight stay within the two accommodation establishments remains quite low. In terms of foreign tourists accommodation in tourist reception establishments with accommodation functions in the year 2015, 0.93% of them were accommodated in tourist boarding houses, 0.51% in agritourism boarding houses and the rest in other types of tourism structures.

At national level tourist activity in the mountain area is characterized by the existence of a single peak season, corresponding to month of August. In this month there was recorded a number of 1,145,722 Romanian tourists and 274.411 foreign tourists. In what concerns tourists arrivals in agri-tourism boarding houses for the months of 2015, there also indicates the existence of a single peak season, the month of August.

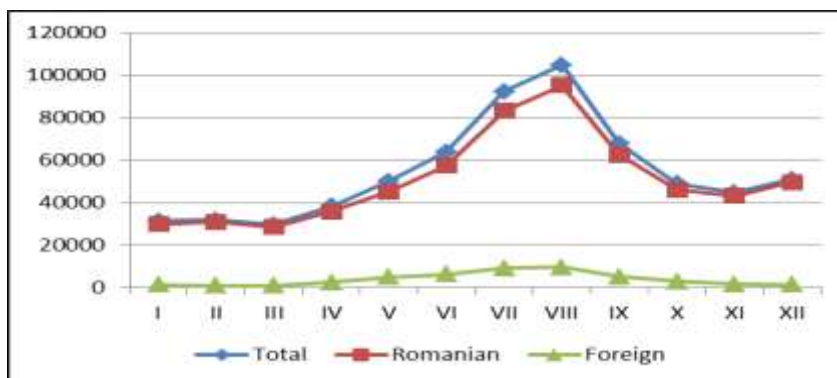


Figure 1. Arrivals of tourists in agri-tourism boarding houses, by type of tourists, for the months of the year 2015

The analysis regarding tourists overnight stays within agri-tourism boarding houses, in the mountain area, indicates the fact that in the year 2015 the overnight stays of foreign tourists increased by 10.47 times, compared to the year 2000, and Romanian tourists' overnight stays increased in 2015 by 23.34 times compared to the year 2000. [5, 7]

Regarding tourists' overnight stays in accommodation establishments, the highest value is recorded by hotels, 75.74%, otherwise a normal value given the fact that this accommodation structure predominates in mountainous areas. In tourist boarding houses the overnights indicate a value of 7.08% and within agri-tourism boarding houses a value of 5.81%. In the year of 2015, overnight stays of foreign tourists in tourist boarding houses had a share of 4.69% and overnight stays in agri-tourism boarding houses accounted for a share of 2.52%.

Tourist offer represents the totality of natural and anthropic attractions that can motivate the movement of tourists and of components designed to capitalize, to satisfy the demand. It is perceived by the demand as an image built by gathering and synthesizing of information received through various means and filtered according to specific characteristics of each segment of consumers.

The characteristics of tourist offer and production, the disparity in time and space, with tourist demand can generate some economic and social effects of large-scale, which translates into: inappropriate satisfaction of tourists' expectations, failure in using tourist equipment and therefore the extend of amortization period of these and the slowdown of replacement rhythm of capacities used physical or moral, etc. [5, 6]

In Table 2 there are presented the types of accommodation establishments from the mountain are and the comparison of their number in the year 2000 and 2015. Through the combined efforts of the organizers and tourism service providers, through a better understanding of underlying trends in tourism demand, there can take advantage, within certain limits, by another characteristic of tourist offer: the possibility of substituting a certain type of offer by another one.

Table 2.

Tourist accommodation structures by types of structures in mountain areas

| | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Total | 702 | 828 | 1038 | 1154 | 1376 | 1497 | 1609 | 1822 |
| Hotels | 74 | 93 | 118 | 144 | 172 | 172 | 180 | 199 |
| Touristic villas | 186 | 135 | 130 | 131 | 152 | 162 | 171 | 183 |
| Touristic chalets | 90 | 67 | 75 | 82 | 87 | 95 | 107 | 116 |
| Touristic boarding houses | 42 | 147 | 206 | 258 | 285 | 327 | 339 | 382 |
| Agro-touristic boarding houses | 193 | 288 | 432 | 459 | 592 | 646 | 703 | 820 |

Source: www.insse.ro [7]

This fact assumes, however, tourist motivations to be a substitute too, at some point, but especially to the component elements of the offer to have a multifunctional character, to satisfy various consumer alternatives.

In terms of usage degree of capacity in service on the whole of accommodation structures there can be noticed a maximum usage degree in the month of August (42.5%). The use index of accommodation units of hotel type exceeds the average recorded for all accommodation units. The other categories of accommodation establishments, considered for the study have a lower value compared to the recorded one on the whole.

CONCLUSIONS

The mountain tourism includes a wide range of recreational activities, spiritual and economic that take place in various mountainous regions. It is an important economic source of many mountain communities, by creating jobs, incomes that, finally, allow to local people to organize and continue their living according to their own traditions and cultural roots.

Romania has great possibilities to develop mountain tourism, its practice is not only possible but necessary in the current stage. Financial incomes realized will result in a higher level of civilization of mountain resorts and its inhabitants, by the particular hospitality, could radically change Romania's image in the world.

Mountainous areas from Romania are identifying on the national and international tourist market through a set of components, natural and anthropogenic, that provide real prospects of development and viable opportunities for launching the offensive in the current competitive context. Without proposing to enter into direct competition with mountain tourism from the tradition countries, mountain tourism from Romania can access further towards Romanian consumers loyalty, to strengthen foreign markets gained and to attract tourist consumers from neighboring countries, for which moving to Romanian mountain resorts does not involve financial effort and time.

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