

AGRITOURISM-A POSSIBILITY OF CAPITALIZING THE RESOURCES OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY

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Abstract: *At present, there has been a somewhat massive awareness of the importance of the rural environment, coming both from the locals and from future development in various ways, one of which may be agritourism. The agritourism activity represents one of the few possibilities of almost complete capitalization of the agricultural, forestry, tourist, economic, human resources, why not, thus contributing to the support of the development at local or regional level of the rural community starting from its own resources.*

Key words: *agritourism, capitalizing, resources, rural community*

INTRODUCTION

It can be stated that at present there has been a somewhat massive awareness of the importance of the rural environment, coming from both the locals and the authorities, which is a beneficial aspect. Against the background of this awareness comes the need to identify alternatives for sustainable use of the resources of rural communities, so as to ensure their future development, one of these alternatives being agritourism.

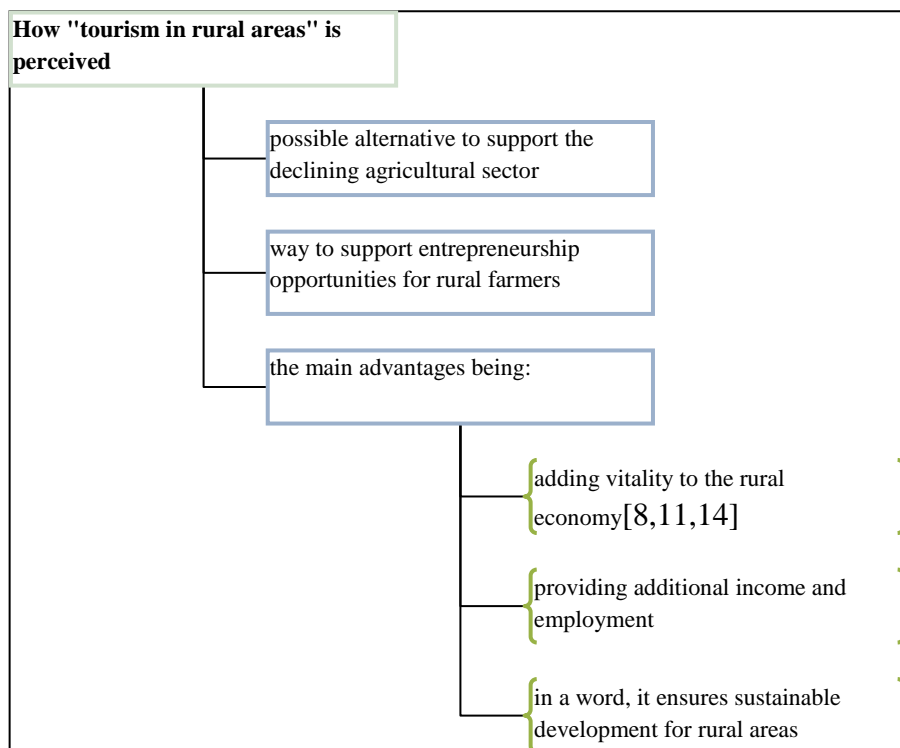


Figure 1. How to perceive tourist activities, included under the term "rural tourism"

At the international level, tourism activities, included under the term "rural tourism" have emerged and are supported as:

- possible alternatives to support the declining agricultural sector, unable to support the living needs of people in rural areas;[12]
- as a way to support entrepreneurship opportunities for rural farmers, ensuring the stability of the population, especially the young in rural areas, through the new jobs created;[16]
- the main advantages being: adding vitality to the rural economy, characterized by high poverty, capital transfer, providing additional income and employment, in a word, ensures sustainable development for rural areas.[17]

Table 1.

The differences between classic tourism and agritourism

Classic tourism	Agritourism
- In the case of classical tourism, the tourist structure is one of medium size, to large, the management of this business belonging to a company; The size of the tourist unit is generally between 10 and 100 rooms.	- For the agritourism activity there is the particularity of carrying out the activity at the owner's home, being a family business; The size of the agritourism unit cannot exceed 8 rooms, according to the legislation in force.
- Analyzing the tourist structure in terms of start-up investments, in the case of classic tourism, important resources are needed to start the activity.	- Speaking of the agritourism business, in order to start the activity, modest investments are needed, usually only for improvement, if we start from the premise of the agritourism activity (that it is a complementary activity, so the owner owns the pension/household/farm).
- Bringing in the light the incomes obtained as a result of the activity, in the case of classic tourism the incomes obtained enter into a specific circuit, the classic one, so they do not remain in the locality.	- In the case of agritourism, the income comes primarily from the farmer/owner of the agritourism structure, but also reaches other businesses in the locality. Due to the fact that this form of tourism engages other branches of activity can be considered a sustainable activity for the rural environment.
- Speaking about the location of tourist units, in the case of classic tourism, there are usually changes in the area, leading to changes in the landscape, traditions, customs, etc.	- The location, in the case of agritourism structures, does not generate changes in the landscape, customs, traditions, on the contrary it supports them, promotes them, ensuring their continuity somewhat.
- Through its centralization it tends to isolate tourists from the local population.	- Prevents or reduces "tourist apartheid", the tourist structures determining the proximity to the community.

Source: processing according to different sources [6,9]

Why agritourism? could be the question. A possible answer could be: because it can combine this form of tourism several activities (agricultural, handicraft, gastronomic). Another possible answer could be: because agritourism can capitalize at the same time tourist resources, agricultural resources, economic resources, whose mixing, combination supports the future development of the rural environment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The purpose of this paper is to review the particularities of the agrotourism activity, which is really between tradition and modernity, at the base of this desideratum stands as the method of multicriteria analysis, a series of theoretical documents, and several objectives:

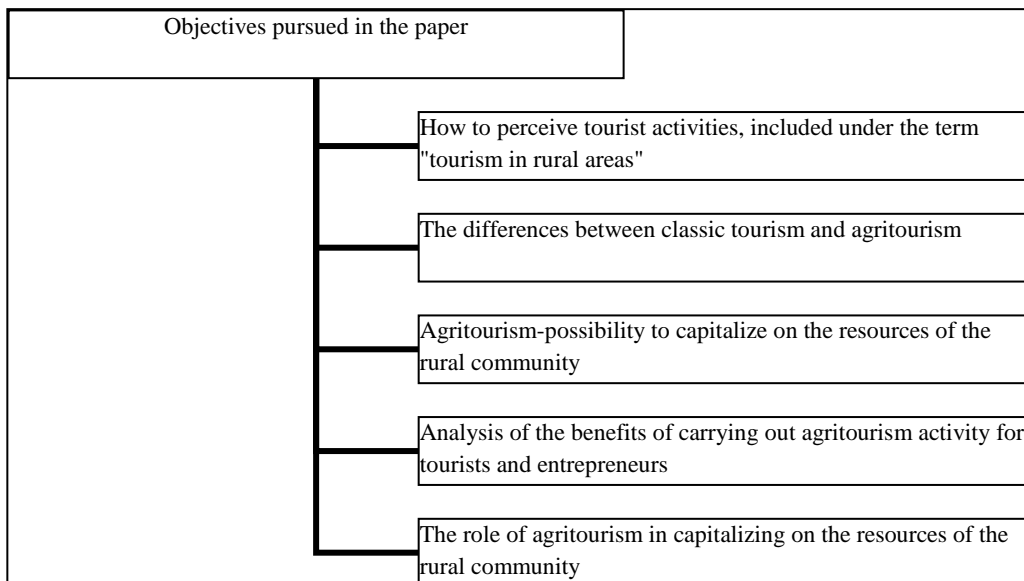


Figure 2. The objectives pursued in the paper

RESEARCH RESULTS

The development of agritourism depends on the innovative solutions introduced in this field. Innovation in the agritourism field starts from the creation of the tourist product, which starts from scratch and involves the combination of several resources, which creates a professional marketing environment for natural and cultural values in a rural community, thus being a sustainable innovation activity [7,13] for the rural environment. It can be said that agritourism is a special type of innovative solution, starting from the initiative and involving whole local communities and many entities locally and non-locally [15], whose task is to cooperate and create agritourism products, to create a network of specialized farms that provide tourism services (for example farms for care), the creation of tourist clusters or themed villages.

Table 2.

Agritourism-possibility to capitalize on the resources of the rural community

Why agritourism?	What is capitalized from the local community through agritourism and agritourism product?
	Quiet
	Healthy food
	Participation in agricultural activities
	Return to craft activities
	Rural way of life with specific principles
	Local traditions and customs
Participation in the life of the rural community	

Source: author's processing

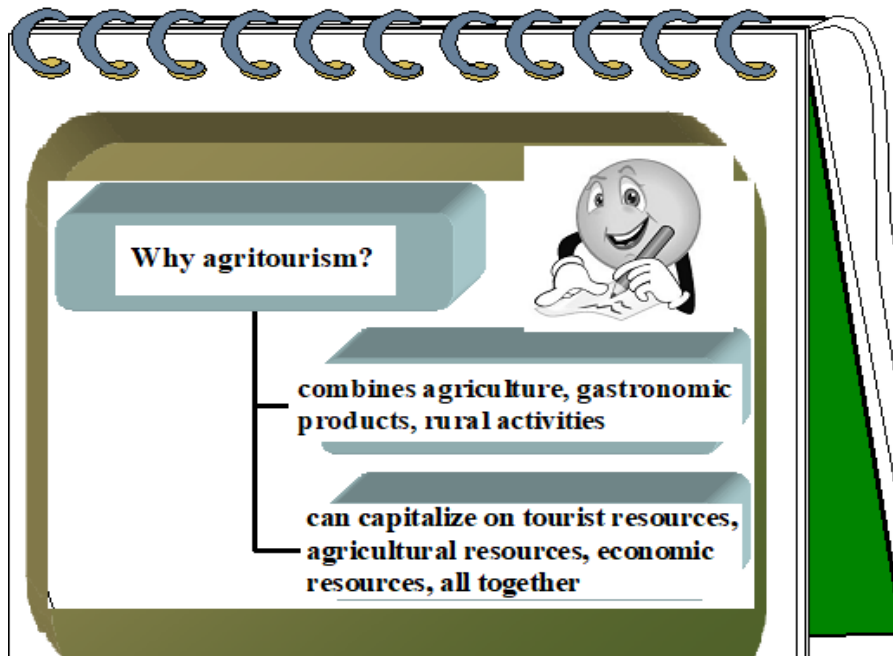


Figure 3. Why agritourism?

For tourists, the benefits of agritourism activity could be:

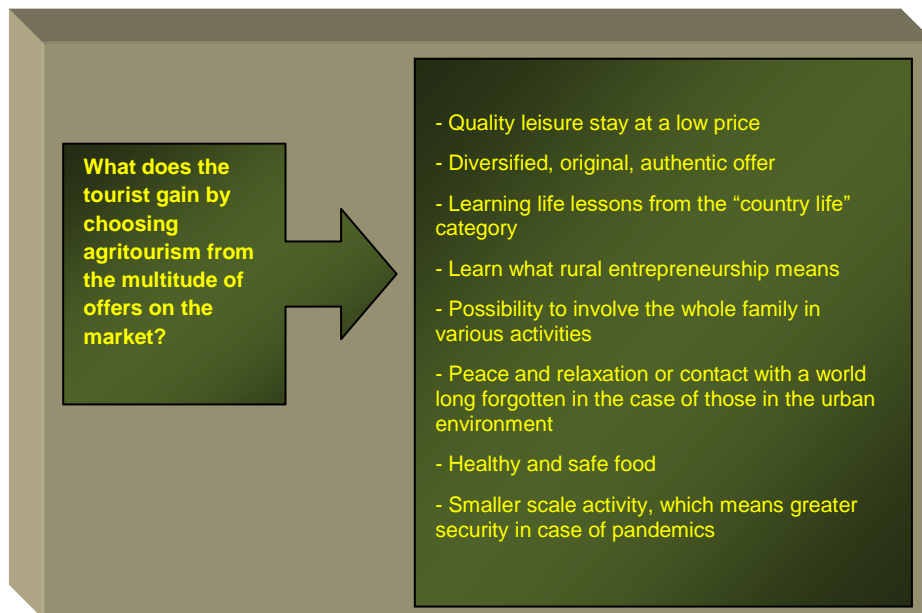


Figure 4. Analysis of the benefits of developing agritourism for tourists

- The prices or tariffs practiced in rural tourism are lower, which ensures the possibility for those with modest incomes, to benefit from a decent vacation, or simply a good value for money.
- Also the reception places are spread over the whole rural area, the accommodation being particularized by a rustic character, so the tourists can enjoy the diversity. Good and varied accommodation conditions allow the tourist the possibility to

choose the accommodation according to the financial possibilities, the degree of culture.

- The agritourism offer is characterized by a diverse distribution in space, practically no offer of similar products, so the originality, authenticity and originality are the great gain for the tourist.

- The direct contact with the nature, with the local traditions, with the community, with the agricultural activities allows the knowledge of the rural environment and the familiarization with the life from the country, and why not the direct learning of some life lessons. [1,3,10]

From all the categories of beneficiaries, the agricultural holding, respectively the farmer/rural entrepreneur is by far the most gained from the development of the agritourism activity, based on this statement coming as justification the following aspects:

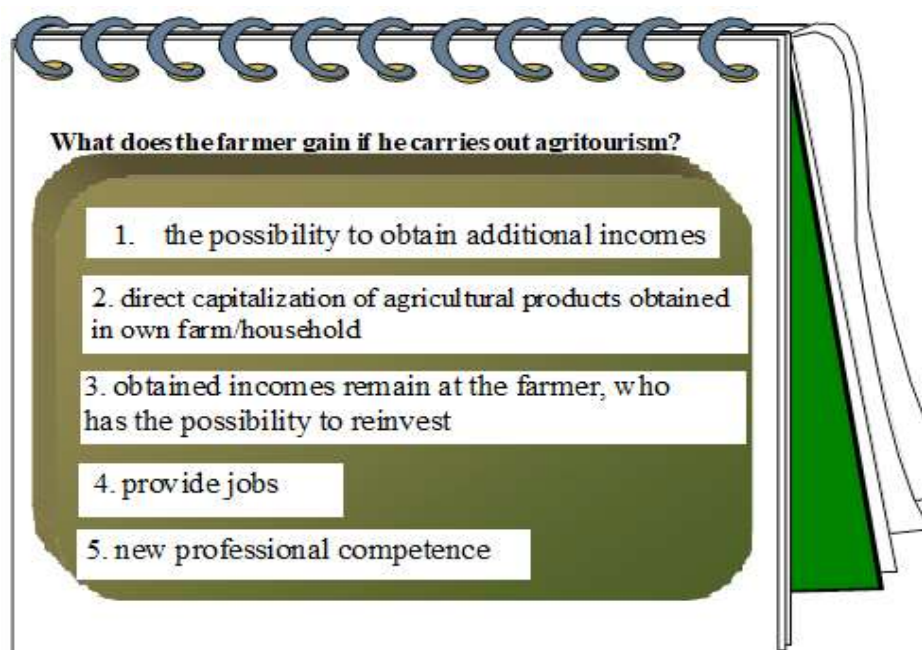


Figure 5. Illustrating the benefits of practicing agritourism for the farmer/entrepreneur

- the farmer/rural entrepreneur has the possibility to obtain those much desired additional incomes also from carrying out other activities besides the agricultural ones;

- there is then the possibility of direct capitalization of agricultural, handicraft products obtained in one's own farm/household;

- the obtained incomes remain at the farmer, who has the possibility to reinvest the financial resources in the modernization and development of his own farm, which can represent a revolution in the rural area, having as a result the reduction of the differences between rural and urban area;

- the moral satisfaction of being able to provide jobs, at least for family members;

- an evolution is also noticeable on a professional level, meaning the farmer acquires a new professional competence in addition to that of a farmer.

The agritourism activity represents one of the few possibilities of almost complete capitalization of the agricultural, forestry, tourist, economic, human resources, why not, thus contributing to the support of the development at local or regional level of the rural community starting from its own resources. The realization of this desideratum can be achieved by capitalizing local resources, either natural, economic or social, with the support and involvement of local communities so that from mixing these resources to make an original agritourism

product, authentic to illustrate the specifics, brand of places. Thus, we consider that agritourism has great implications in the capitalization of all resources and the development of agricultural holdings, and then, in the consolidation and socio-economic development at local and regional level. [2,4,5]

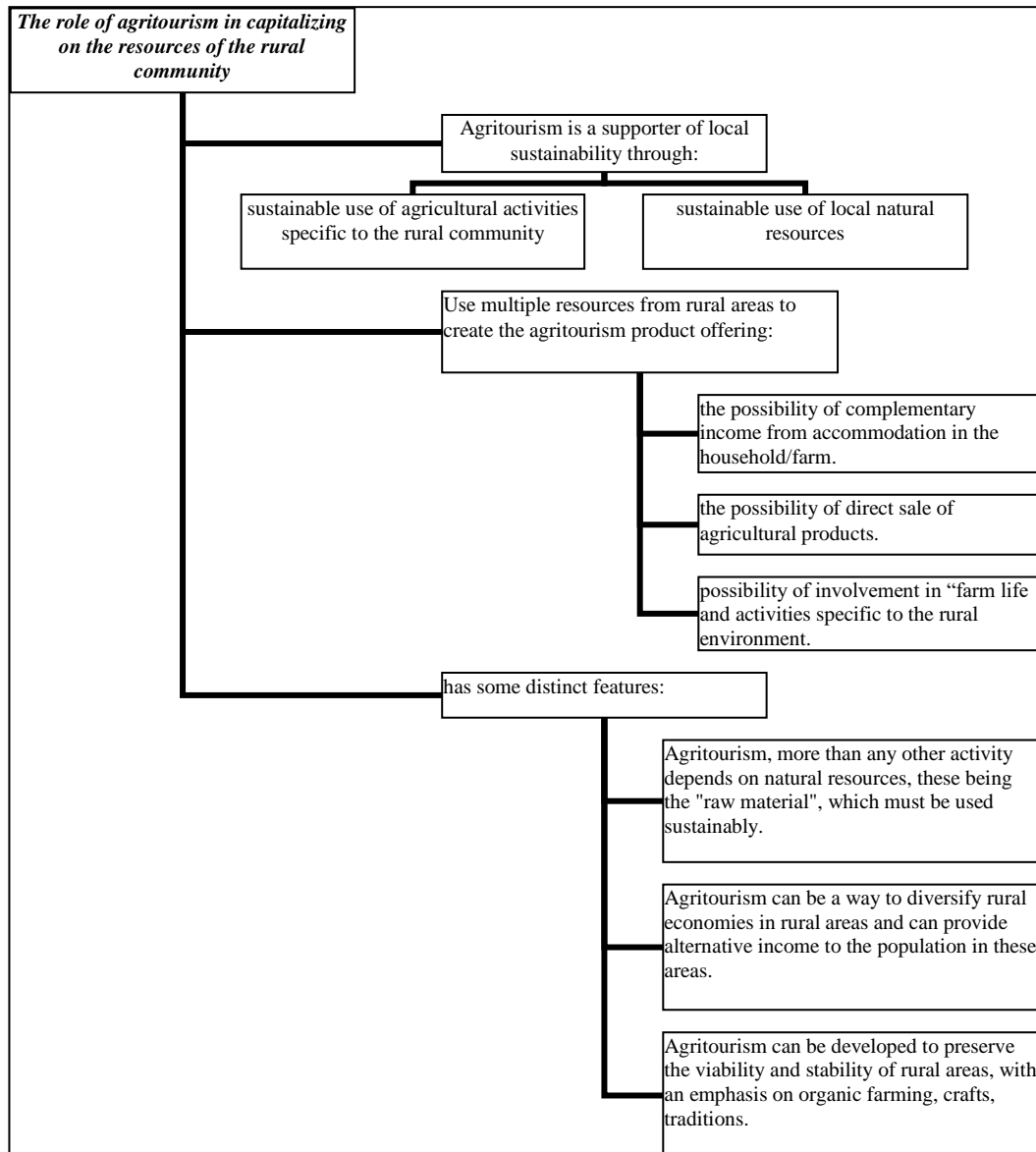


Figure 6. The role of agritourism in capitalizing on the resources of the rural community

CONCLUSIONS

The preservation of a rural world, with everything that is significant from an economic, social, cultural point of view, can also take into account the development of agritourism, it participates in maintaining the viability and stability of rural localities, given that the phenomenon of depopulation is manifested by the departure of young people to urban areas and the abandonment of old households and land.

Agritourism as an activity can be considered an ally of agriculture, from the point of view of conservation and protection of the rural landscape, as well as of the cultural elements, the integration of the tourist business within the localities aiming at establishing adequate correlations.

By developing services for hosting and capitalizing on own and local products, agritourism offers a solution for rural households. He is able to capitalize on the existing accommodation surplus in the peasant household, specially prepared and arranged for the reception of guests and to offer a series of activities that revolve around the peasant household for the consumption of people who, for a certain period, come to the countryside for relaxation, leisure and recreation, therapeutic cures, transactions or business to satisfy a hobby, introduction to the art of traditional crafts, for studies and documentaries, as well as other specific activities.

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