

THE ANALYSIS OF THE AGRITOURIST POTENTIAL OF SIBIU COUNTY

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Abstract: Agritourism is considered an important factor in the development of rural areas, especially of localities where there are favorable conditions for practicing tourism for as long as possible during the year. The social effects of rural tourism on localities are manifested by differentiating the social structure, because many people will move from agricultural work to activities in the field of services, manufacturing and craftsmanship, while allowing a small differentiation in family income.

Key words: agritourism, rural tourism, agritourism potential

INTRODUCTION

Tourism integrated in rural areas and localities represents an alternative to solve, at the same time, problems concerning, on the one hand, the village and, on the other hand, the city. Through rural tourism, it will be possible to solve problems of land use planning policy, of the city-village balance, thus outlining a social change that offers the possibility for the population of the city to find their roots, cultural values, physical relaxation, peace and calm lost or forgotten. [1,3,14]

The rural area through its resources, satisfies a wide advantage of motivations for the tourist: recreation, rest, sports, air cure, offering to the rural tourism a large area of coverage of the possibilities. Through this, rural tourism is a means of full capitalization of rural resources, with its agricultural, forestry, tourism, technical-economic and human potential. [5,9,12]

The full use of natural, economic and human resources of an area with a rich tourist potential can be achieved by involving local communities in the tourism sector, by supporting initiative groups to promote the tourist offer, to protect the environment and local colors. [6,7,13]

The image of the countryside and the Romanian popular spirituality that lasts over the centuries, can be capitalized in rural tourism and agrotourism, only in the context of rural settlement, as a tourist village integrated into an ethnofolkloric area. [1,7,9] Thus, the tourist village participates in the tourist offer of Romania, as a branded tourist product, and agrotourism and rural tourism are activities, ways and means of promoting its image in the world.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper reviews the main resources that constitute the agritourism potential of Sibiu County. In the analysis of the agritourism potential of the studied area we took into account indicators that characterize the offer (number of accommodation units, accommodation capacity and degree of use of accommodation capacity) and agritourism demand (tourist arrivals and overnight stays and average length of stay).

RESEARCH RESULTS

Sibiu County is located in the center of Romania, in the southeastern part of Transylvania, at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains. [8] To the south, the county is bordered by two massifs separated by the Olt river valley: on the one hand Fagaras, with peaks often exceeding 2500 m, and the Lotru and Cindrel massifs with altitudes exceeding

2200 m. Towards the north of the county the relief decreases in altitude, being dominated by smooth hills and wooded hills. Sibiu County is a county located in southern Transylvania in the plateau of the same name, north of the Southern Carpathians, being part of the Central Region. [2,10]

The south of Sibiu County is dominated by the mountain landscape, and the northern half of the county includes a series of urban centers that are independent tourist attractions (for example: Medias, Agnita, Copsa Mica, Dumbraveni). The city of Sibiu represents the truly consecrated tourist destination of the county, being able to be considered a separate entity within the tourist resources and the main nucleus of the historical-architectural and religious type attraction. Other tourist attractions of the county are: spas (Bazna, Ocna Sibiu), Paltinis mountain resort, as well as a series of events with tradition, International or smaller (national, religious, local)

On the territory of Sibiu County can be identified five ethnofolkloric areas, the main characteristic being the intertwining of the Saxon culture with the Romanian one, namely: Marginimea Sibiului, Tarnava Plateau, Hartibaciu Plateau, Secaselor Plateau, Olt Country. [4,11]

Marginimea Sibiu is the cradle of preserving the ancient Romanian customs and the place of festivals and fairs of popular tradition, as well as the participation of ancestral crafts and occupations. The gastronomy of the area is recognized, both due to the traditional agricultural products and through the Saxon influences in the Romanian cuisine. Therefore, the anthropic tourist heritage also has an important intangible component, whose potential is beginning to be explored. The border of Sibiu is a unique ethnographic area in Romania located in west part of Sibiu. The localities have developed a mixed economy, based on agriculture, animal husbandry and traditional crafts, with a special share of shepherding. Most of the villages from the area have strongly preserved spiritual and ethno-folk traditions. Rare, embroidered popular costumes, in black and white, are proudly worn for the holidays, and the crafts inherited from ancestral ancestors are still practiced successfully today. Since ancient times, these populations of shepherds have been and are masters in wool and leather processing.

On these lands we find old churches, museums (Sibiul Museum, where there is the largest collection of glass icons in Europe; Rasinari Village Museum, which includes usual ceramic pieces, painted furniture, household and handicraft objects; an impressive collection of folk costumes and the Museum of the Orthodox Parish of Saliste, which includes objects and old cult books), memorial houses and traditional peasant constructions.

Over time, Mărginimea Sibiului has become an important point in Romanian rural tourism, developing numerous guesthouses that can offer the necessary conditions to spend an unforgettable leisure stay. The typical peasant atmosphere, the preservation of the traditions and customs, the hospitality of the villagers, increase the attractiveness for these places.

The Tarnavelor Plateau is an area of exploitation of important tourist objectives in the category of fortified churches, resources due to the pages of history written by the Saxon population in the area. The Târnavelor Plateau is also a famous wine-growing area, but the exploitation of this resource remains limited in Sibiu County.

The Hartibaciu Plateau is an area with potential in the tourist exploration of multiculturalism. The Secaselor plateau is a viticultural area with tradition, but whose potential remains largely unexplored.

Olt Country represents, similarly to Marginimea Sibiului, a space of Romanian culture, but with a stronger Saxon influence (if Marginimea is recognized for raising sheep, in Olt Country cattle are successfully raised).

Sibiu County has a special tourist potential, whose value is recognized both nationally and internationally. [8,11] Located in the central area of the Carpathian arc, the studied area has an important role in consolidating domestic tourism through the tourist resources it has. Sibiu, as a tourist destination, occupies the central place in the preferences of tourists for Romanian tourist destinations, the appropriate capitalization of this potential having a major positive impact on the development of Romanian tourism.

In the analysis of the agritourism offer, indicators were used regarding the tourist accommodation units, the analysis of the existing and in-service accommodation capacity and the analysis of the indicator regarding the degree of use of the offer. [11]

Table 1

Tourist reception structures with accommodation function, Sibiu County							
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2018	2019	2020
TOTAL							
Total	3121	4226	5222	6821	8453	8402	8610
Center Region	742	993	1188	2107	2369	2249	2333
Sibiu	115	111	167	315	303	273	318
AGRISTOURIST GUESTHOUSES							
Total	400	956	1354	1918	2821	2800	3022
Center Region	242	418	487	813	979	892	967
Sibiu	47	41	73	118	113	96	126

Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/> [15]

Table 1 presents the situation of the existing accommodation units in the Center Region, in the period 2000-2020. Sibiu County is a tourist area with a rich agritourism potential, as evidenced by the large number of agritourism guesthouses registered in this area 123 agritourism guesthouses in 2020, representing 13.03% of the total Center region.

During the analyzed period, their number increased almost three times (2.68 times), from 47 in 2000 to 126 in 2020.

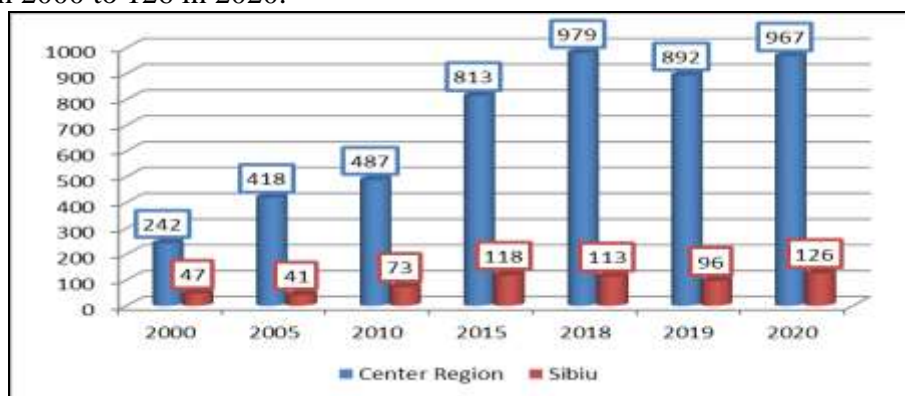


Figure 1. Evolution of the number of agritourism guesthouses, Sibiu County, 2000-2020, [15]

The existing accommodation capacity in the Sibiu for agritourism guesthouses represents 13.77% of the accommodation capacity of these tourist reception structures, existing at the level of the Central Region. During the analyzed period, the number of accommodation places increased constantly, in 2020, being registered a number of 2275 places.

The accommodation capacity in operation for the agritourism guesthouses from the Center Region indicates the fact that, on the first place, is the County of Brasov with a share of 45.60%, followed by Harghita County with 18.46% and Sibiu with 12.33%.

The efficiency of the use of the accommodation capacity in operation is highlighted with the help of the indicator, the degree of use of the capacity in operation. For 2019, the value of this indicator was 18.4%, in Sibiu County, being lower than the regional average. [1]

In 2019, the agritourism guesthouses from Sibiu County, registered a value of the capacity utilization index in operation is 20.79%, a value higher than the one registered at regional level - 19.38%.

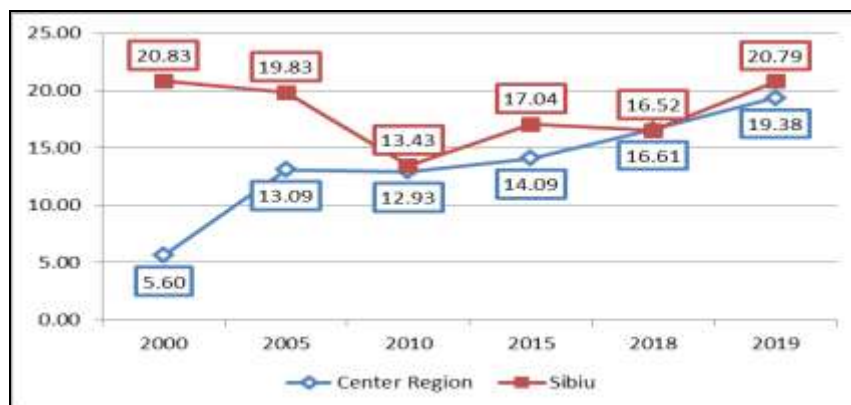


Figure 2. Net utilization index of the accommodation capacity in operation, agritourism guesthouses, Sibiu County, 2000-2019, [15]

The agritourism demand is determined by the totality of the people who choose to visit the rural area of the studied area. The number of tourists accommodated, in 2019, in the agritourism guesthouses of Sibiu County, represented 14.07% from the total number of tourists arriving in the agritourism guesthouses from the Center Region. [8,11]

Table 2

The evolution of tourist arrivals and overnight stays, by categories, in agritourism guesthouses, Sibiu County, 2000-2019

		2000	2005	2010	2015	2018	2019
ARRIVALS							
Total	Total	28152	170164	289923	672756	1173455	1272878
	Center Region	9845	56765	85726	244677	396172	432253
	Sibiu	1329	12660	9885	36506	61007	60819
Romanians	Total	24962	152521	270246	622187	1083662	1171790
	Center Region	7579	46601	74783	217769	349097	379473
	Sibiu	910	10441	8620	33291	50509	47701
Foreigners	Total	3190	17643	19677	50569	89793	101088
	Center Region	2266	10164	10943	26908	47075	52780
	Sibiu	419	2219	1265	3215	10498	13118
OVERNIGHT STAYS							
Total	Total	64588	365967	604606	1368992	2255286	2518605
	Center Region	26824	137845	203529	541249	793237	892162
	Sibiu	2720	20464	25409	69335	110163	117990
Romanians	Total	53804	315870	548014	1256092	2068888	2318252
	Center Region	17851	104741	167450	477992	693010	778038
	Sibiu	1577	16310	22065	62690	93200	94045
Foreigners	Total	10784	50097	56592	112900	186398	200353
	Center Region	8973	33104	36079	63257	100227	114124
	Sibiu	1143	4151	3344	6645	16963	23945

Source: <https://statistici.insse.ro/shop/> [15]

The structure by categories of tourists shows that 78.43% of the tourists accommodated in the agritourism guesthouses in Sibiu County are Romanian tourists, the remaining 21.57% being foreign tourists. [8,11]

Overnight stays of tourists in agritourism guesthouses from Sibiu County, represented in 2019, 13.23% from the total number of overnight stays registered this year, at regional level. The overnight stays of Romanian tourists from Sibiu agritourism guesthouses represent 79.71% and in the case of foreign tourists 20.29%. The high share of overnight stays of foreign tourists registered in agritourism guesthouses, in Sibiu County, out of the total overnight stays of foreign tourists, supports the statement that Sibiu County is a destination with many important agritourism values, both nationally and internationally.

The average length of stay is a relevant indicator in the analysis of agritourism. Figure 3 presents this indicator for the period 2010-2019, in the agritourism guesthouses of Sibiu County.

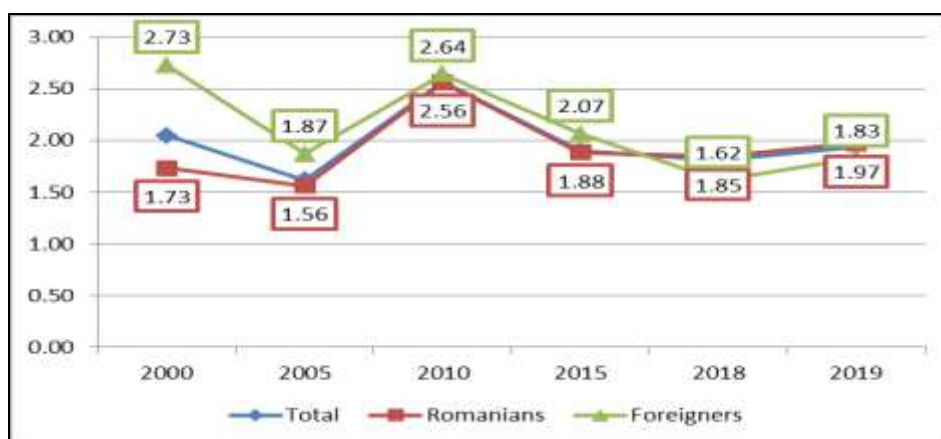


Figure 3. Average length of leisure stay, in agritourism guesthouses, Sibiu County, 2010-2019

The average length of leisure stay in the agritourism guesthouses from Sibiu County, registered in the period 2010-2019, a fluctuating trend, registering a maximum value, in 2010, 2.57 days/tourist. For the entire agritourism activity, the average duration of the stay, in 2019, is 1.94 days/tourist, lower value than the average made for Romanian tourists - 1.97 days/tourist, but higher than that recorded for foreign tourists - 1, 83 days/tourist.

CONCLUSIONS

Rural tourism and agritourism can contribute to the capitalization of resources and sustainable development at local or regional level through the sustainable use of tourist resources, maintaining the natural, cultural and social diversity of rural areas, integrating service activities in planning and development strategy local support, supporting local economies in the socio-economic development of the community, but also protecting nature and cultural values.

The village of Sibiu is a unique tourist product for the national market, but especially for the international one. On the other hand, it can contribute to the discovery of our country as a possible tourist destination, generating an interest for Romania, as a place that offers a wide range of products, quality holidays, business opportunities, experiences, etc.

Due to the customs, traditions, port, relief, but especially of the five ethnofolkloric areas of Sibiu, it is an important tourist resource, exploited by both Romanian and foreign tourists.

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