

## MANAGEMENT OF RURAL TOURISM IN MOUNTAIN AREA OF ARGEȘ COUNTY

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**Abstract:** *Management of rural tourism in the mountain area of Arges County is the leading anticipation, organization, coordination, control process of all tourism resources to achieve maximum efficiency, without prejudice to the environment and to ensure at the same time the relaxation of the tourist.*

*In rural tourism, in Argeș County as in other tourist activities, systems (management through objectives, projects, on product, participative management, through exceptions or total qualities), methods (of diagnostic analysis, foundation-optimization of decisions etc.) and different management techniques can be applied, depending on the characteristics aimed.*

*The conditions which must be met by the effective rural tourism management are: observation and appreciation of nature as well as knowledge of cultural traditions, inventory of protected natural areas and of the cultural ones in a protected area, establishment of potential market of tourists, setting of support threshold based on the compliance with the consumption norms per tourist.*

**Key words:** *mountain relief, management, morphological aspects, cognitive motivation, tourist facilities.*

### INTRODUCTION

The diversity of the geographic landscape in Argeș County primarily reflects the complexity of the relief forms, which are distributed proportionally and harmoniously across its territory. Approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the area is the mountain stage, starting with the lowest and medium altitudes between 800 and 1800 m, covered with beech and coniferous forests, and climaxing with mountains over 2000 m high, covered with alpine meadows. This range of the relief on a difference of level of over 2300 m, between Moldoveanu Peak (2544 m) and Argeșului alluvial plain downstream of Glâmbocata (approx. 200 m), reflects its pronounced diversity.

The variety of mountain relief forms in Argeș County and different degree of fragmentation is due especially to the extremely complex geological composition both in terms of structure, and in terms of the nature and age of component rocks.

Deployed on a large area in northern county, Arges Mountains distinguish themselves by an impressive alpine appearance due to heights of over 2500 m, accentuated massiveness and lofty relief forms. After morphological aspects and the grouping of peaks, mountain relief differs in several distinct massifs that are partially or entirely within the county, with a predominantly linear development<sup>1</sup>.

The main mountain peaks spread on two directions corresponding to the major folding axes of the geological formations: a west-east direction specific to the mountains west of Dâmbovița, and a perpendicular direction, north-south, specific to eastern massifs of this valley.

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<sup>1</sup> Victor Tufescu, Ion Mierla, Claudiu Giurcăneanu, 1997 – „Geografia României”, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, p.98

The main peak of **Făgăraș Mountains** spreads west-east in the northern extremity of Argeș County, on its longest length, between Puha (2177 m) and Comișu (1884 m) Peaks.

An uninterrupted suite of pyramidal peaks and sharp crests distinguish themselves on the crest line, of which over 140 peaks exceed 2000 m, 29 exceed 2400 m, and 6 of them exceed 2500 m. The latter are located in the central part of the crest, starting with Negoiu (2537 m) and Călțun-Lespezi (2522 m) and continuing with Vânătoarea lui Buteanu (2505 m), Moldoveanu (2544 m) – the maximum elevation of Romanian Carpathians, situated entirely in Argeș County - just south to Viștea Mare Peak (2527 m) situated near the crest line, and east of Dara Peak (2501 m). Between the long peaks of Făgăraș massif, completed to the south by a deeper fall, and Cozia-Ghițu crest, a lower stage detaches (1400-1200 m), having a smooth relief, with the aspect of a plateau inclined towards south and cut by deep valleys in parallel crests.

An attractive aspect of tourism is presented by the main peak of **Iezer Massif** spreading on the south - west - north - east direction, starting with the heavy Păpăului crest (2093 m) and continuing to Groapelor saddle with the dominant peaks of Iezer (2462 m) and Roșu (2473 m).

East of Făgăraș and Iezer Mountains, the relief substantially loses height and massiveness, acquiring totally different aspects, due to the tectonic fragmentation of the region and Mesozoic conglomerates. The line of great heights is interrupted here by a large lowland transversal area, with a relief of low and medium mountains (1000-1600 m), arranged as a branched corridor between the eastern extremity of Făgărașului Crest and Leaota Massif. The presence of this corridor of tectonic origin reduced the mountain space at the calcareous crest of **Piatra Craiului**, located mostly in the county.

Arranged perpendicular to the Tâmașului crest, Piatra Craiului crest with a toothed, characteristic profile dominates the adjoining lowland areas by strong steep rocky valleys. The southern half of Piatra Craiului crest, "southern crest" respectively are within the county, starting from Grindului lap (south of Baciului Peak or Om, 2239 m, the height of the massif located on the border line)<sup>2</sup>.

East of Fundata, the main crest of the Carpathians, oriented towards east, it is interrupted by the small depression from Fundățica, to whose south **Leaota Massif** goes up.

To the southeast, **Rucăr-Bran corridor** is supported by impressive massif of Leaota. The western branches of the main peak of Leaota are in the county, and the limit with Dâmbovița County is located along it. The highest and most massive portion of Leaota is largely withdrawn in the south of the Carpathian Divide (formed here by Dudelor Crest to Bucegi) and climaxes with Leaota peak (2133 m), which is an important orographic knot. Therefore, the extended crests of Leaota from the Sub-Carpathians by far exceed the southern limit of Făgăraș and Iezer Mountains, thus dominating Câmpulung Depression to the east.

Among these, **Rucăr-Bran Corridor** distinguishes clearly, of which only its southern part enters the county's territory, where it is wide open between Piatra Craiului and Leaota and oriented in the same direction (north-east south-west). Its relief is fragmented into a series of hummocks and calcareous bridges, bordered by steep walls falling in steps from north to south, from the burrs of Bran and Giuvalei on the main

<sup>2</sup> Ielenicz M. și colab., 2003, *România. Enciclopedie turistică*, Editura Corint, București, pag.72

watershed, and from the south of Piatra Craiului. Another depressing corridor spreads along the upper course of the Dâmbovița upstream of Rucăr, between Piatra Craiului and the heights of Iezer Massif. The low crests, drawn from the 2 massifs are cut by the altitude of 1000-1200 m, which is a major valley of Dâmbovița in this broad framework that also includes Râusor Basin. To the north, the corridor continues over the deep saddle of Tâmaș (1370 m), from the crest with the same name, in Basin Barsa. This is how the name **Tâmașului Corridor** originated, the name under which it is known in the literature.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Management of rural tourism** represents the leading, anticipation, organization, coordination and control process of all tourist resources to achieve maximum efficiency, without prejudicing the environment and to provide tourist's relaxation at the same time. In rural tourism, as in other tourist activities, systems (management through objectives, projects, on product, participative management, through exceptions or total qualities), methods (of diagnostic analysis, foundation-optimization of decisions etc.) and different management techniques can be applied, depending on the characteristics aimed.

Management of rural tourism in mountain area must fulfill the following requirements:

**1) The motivation of rural mountain tourism** is the observation and appreciation of nature as well as the knowledge of cultural traditions dominant in these natural areas. Tourist motivation comprises essentially needs, impulses, specific meanings and specific tendencies having a personal characteristic, influenced by a multitude of factors, among which the geographical environment, the attitudes towards it and to themselves, the conscious purpose as a pragmatic response to necessities.

Human motivational pyramid is generally structured as follows<sup>3</sup> :

- ▶ The social motivation (of adherence, identification with others, affiliation to a group, cultural community) is identified in man's need of searching the group, of going in this group.
- ▶ The cognitive motivation (of knowing, understanding, discovering) is identified in the need of knowing traditions, customs, handicrafts, history, civilization.
- ▶ The motivation for correspondence between knowledge, feeling and action, which contributes to the integration of personality and is found in co-participative tourist actions, in the need of retreating in quiet places in the middle of nature.
- ▶ Rest and refreshing motivation, which reached the first place in the motivational hierarchy, satisfied through a complex of conditions and means, outside the permanent residence.
- ▶ The esthetic motivation expresses the trend toward beauty, art, culture and civilization, toward novel landscapes.

The main tourist motivation still remains rest, entertainment. The following observations stand out with regard to the relation between tourist motivation and the age of the interviewed persons<sup>4</sup> :

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<sup>3</sup> Bran Florina, Marin Dinu, Simon Tamara, 2004 „ *Economia turismului și mediului înconjurător*”, Editura Economică, București, pag.105

<sup>4</sup> Minciu Rodica, Țigu Gabriela „ *Economia Turismului*”, ASE, București, 2005, pag.30

- The need for rest, as a reason for going on a tourist stay is higher to the persons in full professional activity.

- Younger age groups have other motivations for traveling (entertainment, pleasure).

- Groups aged over 60 are less attracted by tourism, as a result of income diminution, morbidity condition, negative moods, lack of tourist facilities.

2) **The representative factors with decisive influence** in general evolution of mountain tourism are :

► **Incomes of the population.** According to most experts it is the main condition for the manifestation of tourist demand and hence the material and objective support of tourism development. The income of the population expresses synthetically the economic and social development level of a country and, indirectly, the opportunities for tourism.

It also should be noted that the incomes of the population are intended primarily to satisfy vital needs, which are the so-called "compulsory consumption", this consumption has a relatively constant size, determined by the quasi-limited character of physiological needs; secondly, liquid assets, after completing compulsory consumption are focused on meeting the requirements ensuring a certain degree of comfort and, ultimately, are used to subsidize activities related to leisure.

► **Prices and tariffs.**<sup>5</sup> They are another incentive for tourism development. Prices influence takes place on several levels, as a result of the complexity of tourist services, i.e. their action aims at the tourist product as a whole or only one (or more) of its components: transport accommodation, food, entertainment, and so on; also this influence is manifested differently in relation to domestic or international market, destination, area, seasonality, etc.

In general, the practice of high tariffs limits the access to tourist services and mainly reflects on the reduction in the number of tourists and / or the average length of stay, while low tariffs stimulate demand manifestation.

► **Tourist offer.** Represented by tourist sources (anthropic and natural) and equipment – it positively acts on the tourist phenomenon. The richness of natural values (relief, climate, hydrography, flora, fauna, etc.), historical, civilization and cultural values available in a country or region, and their degree of planning and facilities created for visitors, has a significant force of attraction on tourist flows, determining their magnitude and orientation.

► Another phenomenon with implications in the development of mountain rural tourism is the **development in the field of transports**. It has direct consequences on increasing the mobility of the population, favoring tourist movement; also it acts on other phenomena such as urbanization, industrialization, environmental degradation, which on their turn are reflected in the tourist activity.

► Most of the analyzed factors have a bearing on **tourist demand**, being the most dynamic side of tourist market. As a result, mountain tourism development strategy within national territory or a particular area depends on the size and variety of resources, and also on their degree of development.

3) **Promotion of tourist flows** Lack of tourist endowments, their uneven dispersion in mountain area, as well as the absence of specific general and tourist infrastructure elements do not allow the optimum valorization of mountain tourist potential, with a great landscape complexity, diversity and international value.

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<sup>5</sup> **Prețul** – este o categorie economică proprie producției de mărfuri și reprezintă expresia bănească a valorii unei mărfi, iar **tariful** este forma de plată a serviciilor prestate.

1. **the optimization** of quality rural mountain tourism
2. **organization** of flows is effectuated on small groups (up to maximum 25-30 persons) and insures the specialization of locals' own companies;
3. **minimization of negative impacts** both of natural and social-cultural environment;
4. **rural tourism** supports the protection of natural habitats by generating incomes for host communities, provision of trade opportunities, jobs and increases the concern for environment and the need to preserve natural and cultural habitats.
5. **provision** of professional improvement in mountain rural tourism (personnel from accommodation structures, guides, local communities involved);
6. **stimulation** of material recycling activities, use of alternative energy resources, of low impact substances (biodegradable detergents, unleaded petrol etc.).

Typically, rural tourism management strategies must take into account national and regional strategies and ensure the balance between economic, social and environmental priorities.

A condition for success in rural mountain tourism is the involvement of local communities in projects through partnerships to increase their responsibility and ensure that some benefits are theirs. These partnerships are based on the creation of a transparent collaboration network, updated with the information system necessary to certify intra-generation and intergeneration equity.

At the base of rural mountain tourism development there are several components, among which<sup>6</sup>:

- Geographical position and location are essential elements, characterized by accessibility, distance, communication links, the presence of a particular type of natural, mountain landscape;
- The natural environment consisting of priceless resources such as water, fauna, flora or landscape as a whole.
- The tofts of the villages that form a specific structure of rural settlements by their size in: hamlet, dwelling, village, commune, suburban commune.
- Agricultural lands are the spaces that have a great share and depend on the quality and economic efficiency of the soils. The greatest aesthetic valences are held by the lands in mountain areas.
- The forestry constitutes the component with most valences: economic, ecological, recreational, aesthetic and environmental.
- Hydrographic network which strongly influences the degree of tourist attractiveness of any rural area by some main elements: lakes, rivers and groundwater.
- Cultural elements, traditions and folklore show the national character and have a profoundly social characteristic. In countries with long tradition in tourism, folk arts and handicrafts contribute to the development of rural tourism.
- Public utilities of urban nature (water supply, sewage, disposal, waste collection, electricity supply, telecommunications, access roads providing greater comfort of home, increase of health and safety degree of households), contribute particularly to the improvement of the quality of tourism services sited at tourists' discretion.

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<sup>6</sup> Glăvan V., 2003, *Turism Rural. Agroturism. Turism Durabil. Ecoturism*, Editura Economică, București, p. 42.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The directions of action by which the management of rural tourism in mountain area are qualitative, are:

- Detailed knowledge of customer preferences and motivations;
- Quality management is based on the quality of tourism resources, raw materials, tourist facilities and training,
- Quality refers to the services offered by a company,
- The human factor that has culture and information on environmental issues carries out total quality in rural tourism;

Quality management of rural tourism in mountain area is a concept that is based on leveraging local economy, enhancing tourist satisfaction, environmental protection and improvement of life in rural communities. Also, quality management in tourism should be a continuous process and not an initiative for a limited time.

In recent years, the European Union has developed a document which sets out a series of recommendations. There are several essential principles of this document, focused on "providing quality"<sup>7</sup> namely :

- **Integration** - all management techniques focused on quality must be integrated in the assembly of tourism functions;
- **Authenticity** - visitors are looking for original experiences;
- **Distinction** - tourists travel trying to benefit by novel experiences, otherwise they obviously choose to stay home. Quality distribution should be identified with the emphasis of particularities, distinction of tourist destination;
- **Market potential assessed realistically** – usually the management is directed toward quality when it is substantiated on realistic assessments of the potential of that area, identifying the strengths in comparison with the competition and makes sure that they are not eroded;
- **Durability** – it can be said that any tourist destination in rural environment that aims to provide quality must be concerned with the impact of tourism on the area;
- **Consumer orientation** – quality management refers to being very close to the tourist, to understanding his/her needs and to assessing how they were met;
- **Continuance** – rural tourism entrepreneurs should not be content with the provision of quality service only for a small group of people. All visitors should benefit from such services, especially those with special needs;
- **Partnership** – Quality management refers to the involvement of all people and teamwork is a positive element and of course, a success factor;
- **Interdependence** - quality rural tourism depends on and helps many other activities in a particular area, such as agriculture, handicrafts, transport and other local services.
- **Time** - enhancing the quality of a destination requires time and success depends on the planning of a stable growth, obtained each year;
- **Population involvement** – it is a fundamental requirement for the inhabitants of the community where rural tourism is practiced;
- **Efficient communication** - with all the people involved represents a basic element in acquiring success;

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<sup>7</sup> Noica C., 2003, *Turismul Internațional. Practici de elaborare și distribuție a produsului turistic*, Editura All Beck, București, pag. 98.

- **Monitoring** - quality management involves periodic monitoring and evaluation of the impact on visitors, companies, environment and local community.

## CONCLUSIONS

Argeș County has a rich and varied tourist potential in terms of attraction typology. The existence of this potential has stimulated interest and concern for its exploitation and valorization, for the development of domestic and international tourism. Preserving cultural traditions, which are tourism attractions and better use of the natural and anthropic potential, are essential for tourism development in Argeș County. Continuous development of the tourist sector in Argeș County requires the development of transportation facilities and services, employment training and increase of public health and safety level.

Rural mountain tourism is based on many tourist resources and can be subdivided into several subtypes, such as:

- Tourism for recreation and rest represents the utmost importance, since many tourists prefer rural areas on holidays and vacations. It is practiced increasingly by young families with children, young couples who love rustic environment and nature, and also by elderly people;
- Ethnographic tourism relies on the presence of bound and valuable folk traditions and on a wide popular creation. In this context, old folk crafts, celebrations related to the development of agrarian cycle moments, events of religious faith;
- Spa tourism highlights the curative quality of mineral water, spa water, salt water, therapeutic mud or a climate of high tourist attraction (calm air, lack of pollution);
- Religious cultural tourism can be developed based on old traditions which have the statute of architecture monuments with public, private or religious functionality. This subtype is practiced by young tourists (pupils, students), or those willing to know other forms of culture and civilization;
- Sports and recreational tourism is practiced depending on the geographical area and geographical landscape. Therefore, one can practice: climbing, cycling, water sports, extreme sports (Adventure), hunting, fishing, sports on landscaped grounds (riding, horseback riding, volleyball etc.);
- Ecological and scientific tourism is practiced by tourists near protected areas (natural, geological, speleological, botanical, forest, fauna reserves).

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