

ASPECTS REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM IN BISTRITA-NASAUD COUNTY

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Abstract: *The main purpose of this paper is to analyze tourist activities developed in Bistrita-Nasaud County's rural area. Known as an area with numerous natural and human resources, which can value the authenticity of Bistrita village, Bistrita Nasaud County has a high rural tourism potential. The intensification of tourism activities in rural areas had a favorable effect on the development of rural areas and the increase in the quality of life of the inhabitants of these areas.*

Key words: *rural tourism, rural development, tourist resources*

INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism can contribute to the valorization of resources and to sustainable development at the local or regional level through sustainable use of tourist resources, maintaining the natural, cultural and social diversity of the rural area, the integration of service provision activities in local development strategy, supporting local economies to ensure socio-economic development of the community but also in protecting nature and cultural values. [1,10,11,13]

The full use of the natural, economic and human resources of an area with a rich tourist potential can be achieved by involving local communities in tourism sector, by supporting initiative groups for development and promotion of local tourist offer, for the protection of the environment and cultural assets.

From what has been presented, we can affirm with certainty that rural tourism has the greatest implications in the valorization of local tourist resources and in raising the living standard of the inhabitants, in the socio-economic development of the rural locality and the community in general, and not least in protecting and preserving the natural and built environment, in the context of an economic activity based on ecological principles. [4,6,9,15]

Bistrita-Nasaud County is located in the northern part of Romania, part of the historical Transylvania region. The county is part of the Northwest Development Region along with five other counties: Maramures, Cluj, Salaj, Satu Mare and Bihor. [3,5,8,12,14]

With a rich tourist potential, Bistrita Nasaud County offers the possibility of practicing various forms of tourism such as: mountain tourism (Rodnei and Calimani National Parks, Bargaului, Suhardului and Tibleaului Mountains), spa tourism (Sangeorz-Bai and Figa resorts), climatic tourism (Colibita, Wine Valley), sports tourism (Piatra Fantanele, Blazna Valley, Rebra Valley, Bistrita Valley), cultural-historical and religious tourism (numerous cultural and historical resources) and ethno-cultural tourism, rural tourism, agrotourism and ecotourism (the valleys of Somesul Mare, Ilvea, Les, Cormaia, Rebra, Salauta, Ideciu, Bargau, Sie, Lut, Ilisua).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The achievement of this study is based on the analysis of statistical data regarding the tourist activity carried out in rural areas of the county. In the interpretation of the statistical data, a series of indicators specific to the tourist activity were used, through which it was possible to highlight the continuous development of this type of tourism.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Having numerous picturesque natural resources, as well as many customs and traditions whose rituals have been preserved with sanctity by the inhabitants of these lands, in the last period, in Bistrita-Nasaud County, rural tourism began to develop more and more, especially agritourism.

The North-West region is a region recognized for the practice of agritourism, Bistrita-Nasaud County (13.65%), being the fourth in terms of share of agritourism guesthouses registered on the territory of the county. As for agriourism guesthouses, in the period 2010-2022, their number increased by 88.18%, a fact due to the expansion of the tourism forms specific to rural areas. [2,15]

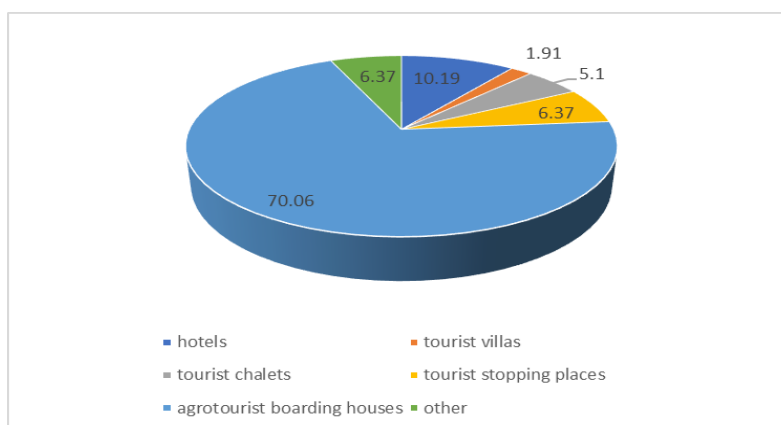


Figure 1. The structure of tourist accommodation, Bistrita-Nasaud County, 2022 [15]

At the level of Bistrița-Nasaud County, the main tourist reception structures with accommodation functions are hotels, tourist guesthouses and agritourism guesthouses, representing in 2022, 70.06% from the total accommodation units.

At the county level, agritourism guesthouses are not evenly distributed. Thus, the locality of Bistrita Bargaului concentrates 23.64% from the total number of agritourism guesthouses existing at the county level. This locality with Tiha Bargaului (11 agritourist guesthouses) and Rodna (8 agritourist guesthouses) own 40.9% from the county's total.

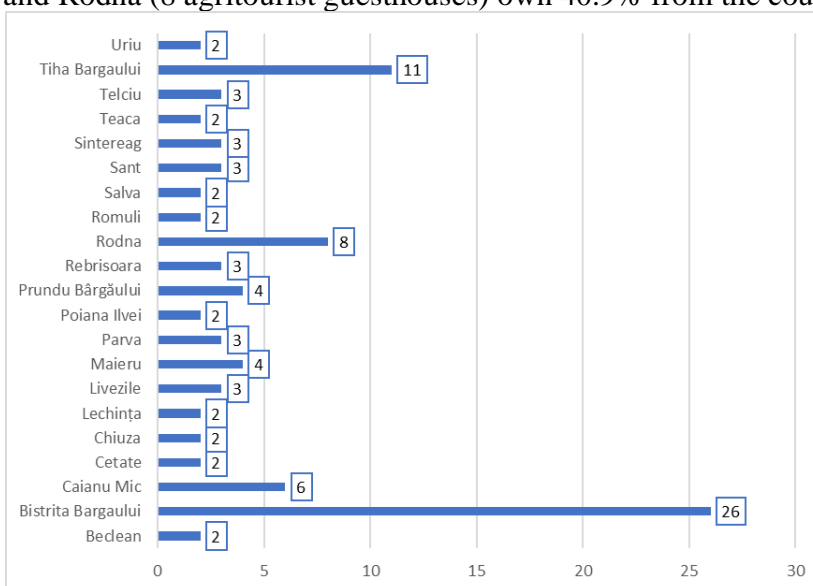


Figure 2. Distribution of agritourism guesthouses by localities, Bistrita-Nasaud County, 2022 [15]

The existing accommodation capacity indicates an upward trend, in the analyzed period, it increased 21.4 times, a fact due to the significant increase of the agritourist guesthouses number.

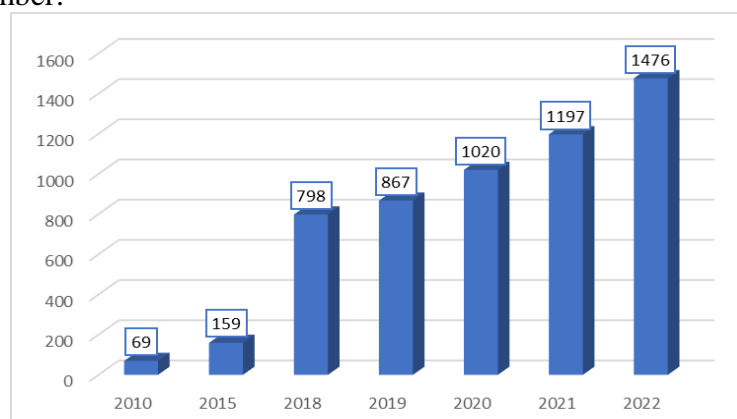


Figure 3. The evolution of the existing accommodation capacity in agritourist guesthouses from Bistrita-Nasaud County, 2022 (places) [15]

The accommodation capacity in operation shows a constant increase, until 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic limited the development of tourist activities, and functioning period of accommodation units was reduced. Compared to 2019, the accommodation capacity in operation decreased by 22.44. Starting with 2021, the trend is upward, in 2022, registering a number of 301,998 place-days.

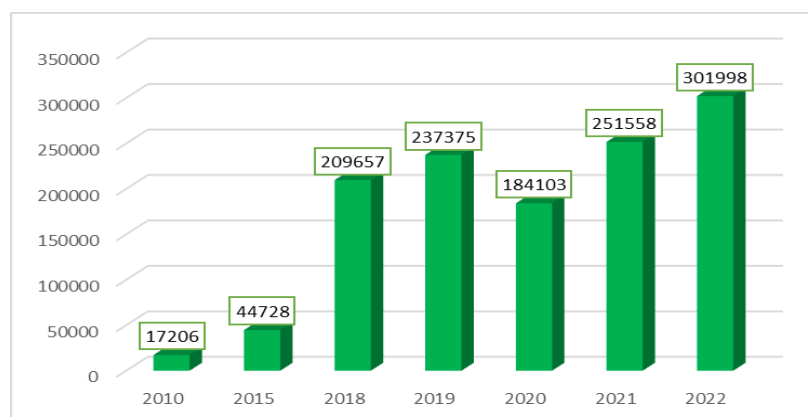


Figure 4. The evolution of the accommodation capacity in operation of agritourist guesthouses from Bistrita-Nasaud County, 2022 (place-days)

An important indicator in the analysis of the tourist offer is the net utilization index of the accommodation capacity. [2,7,15] Figure 5. shows the evolution of this indicator, for agritourist guesthouses from Bistrita-Nasaud County, per month, in 2018-2022 period. As it can be seen from the data presented above, the net utilization index of the accommodation capacity indicates the existence of a higher degree of reception structures, in the period from May to August, during this period an influx of tourists is registered.

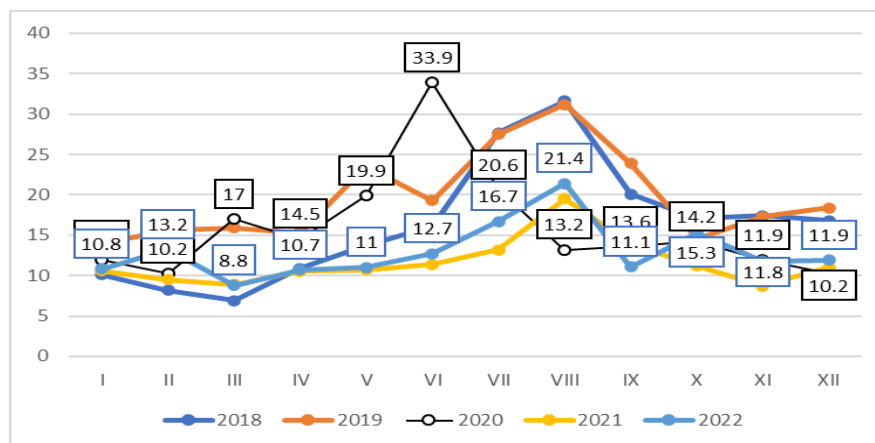


Figure 5. The evolution of the net utilization index of the accommodation capacity, by months, in agritourism guesthouses from Bistrita-Nasaud County [15]

In the analysis of agritourism demand, at the level of Bistrita-Nasaud County, we will take into account the arrivals and overnight stays of tourists in agritourism guesthouses, as well as the average length of stay.

At the regional level, tourist arrivals in agritourism guesthouses show an upward trend, except for 2020, when decreases are recorded. Thus, in 2020, tourist arrivals were reduced by 43.17%, compared to 2019. In the case of Romanian tourists, the decrease was lower than the average 41.63%, while for foreign tourists the value was much higher than this, 92.31%.

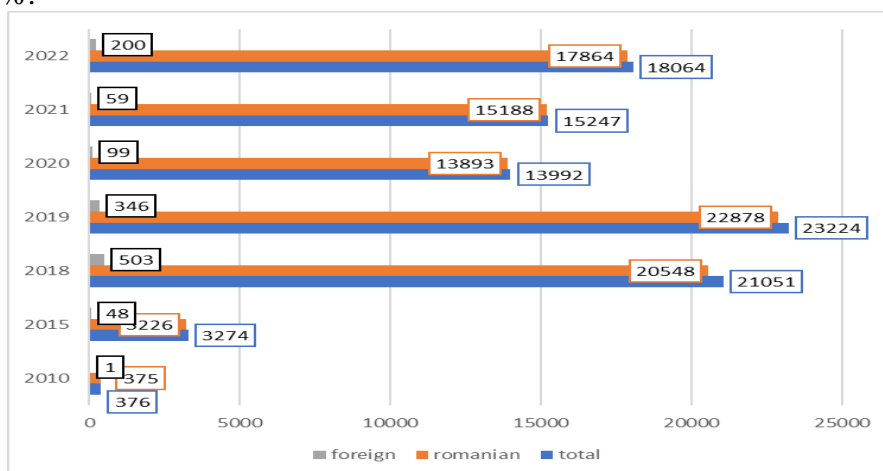


Figure 6. Tourist arrivals in agritourist guesthouses from Bistrita-Nasaud County, 2010-2022 [15]

The arrivals of tourists in agritourism guesthouses, from Bistrita-Nasaud County, show an evolution similar to the one registered at regional level, with an upward trend in the period 2010-2020, a decrease in 2020 and then an upward trend again. In 2020, the decrease was 9.23%, for the entire influx of tourists, 37.60%, in the case of Romanian tourists and 71.39%, in the case of foreign tourists. In 2022, Romanian tourists accounted 98.89% from total number of tourists staying in agritourism guesthouses, with foreign tourists representing only 1.11%. [2,10,15]

Table 1.
Tourist arrivals in localities that own agritourism guesthouses, Bistrita-Nasaud County, 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Bistrita Bargaului	3699	4229	3346	4275	4651
Caianu Mic	178	147	170	581	836
Cetate	786	674	229	178	59
Chiuza	265	316	256	147	81
Lechinta	1423	1461	854	1006	453
Livezile	576	126	368	350	311
Maieru	32	24	55	35	438
Parva	379	545	614	360	647
Poiana Ilvei	542	521	370	281	524
Prundu Bargaului	1381	927	728	482	452
Rodna	851	753	364	815	539
Romuli	1304	1844	572	515	500
Sant	621	2378	1958	1873	1488
Sintereag	230	148	:	176	213
Telciu	599	1617	258	951	651
Tiha Bargaului	3148	2758	1912	1842	3100
Uriu	1298	1325	262	643	980
Total	21051	23224	13992	15247	18064

Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online>

The arrivals of tourists in agritourism guesthouses from Bistrita-Nasaud County are unevenly distributed, by localities, table 2. In the localities of Bistrita Bargaului, Tiha Bargaului Sant, Uriu and Caianu Mic, more than half of the tourist arrivals were recorded, meaning 61.20%.

The analysis of the evolution of overnight stays in agritourism guesthouses from Bistrita-Nasaud County shows a positive situation, marked by constant increases, except for 2020, the year marked by the SARS CoV2 pandemic. In agritourism guesthouses, the recorded increases are due to the expansion of rural tourism activity and the increase in the number of agritourism guesthouses. [2,10,15]

The 2020 indicates significant decreases in the values recorded for the indicator. As a whole, overnight stays in agritourism guesthouses from Bistrita-Nasaud County decreased by 31.99%. In the case of overnight stays by Romanian tourists, it is lower, 30.96%, and for foreign tourists by 80%. In 2021, in the case of overnight stays by foreign tourists, there is still a decrease, but in a lower proportion, of only 64.25%.

Figure 7 shows the average length of stay in agritourism guesthouses in Bistrita-Nasaud County, in the period 2015-2022.

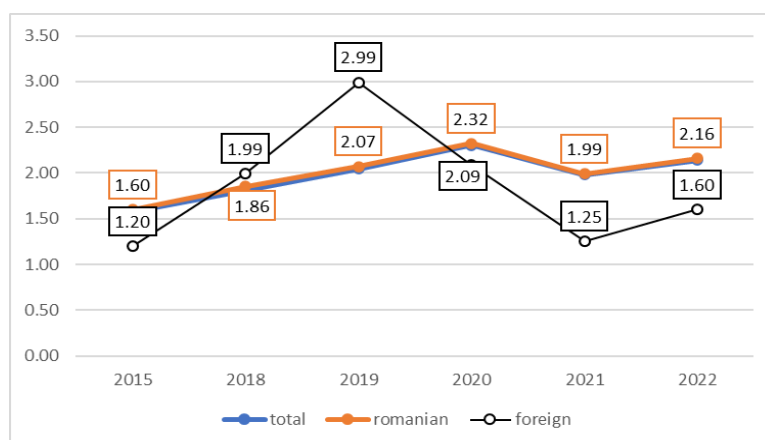


Figure 7. The average length of stay in agritourist guesthouses from Bistrita-Nasaud County [15]

The average length of stay recorded in the case of Romanian tourists follows exactly the trajectory of the average length recorded for the entire agritourism activity. The highest value was recorded in 2020, 2.32 days/tourist, and the lowest in 2015, only 1.6 days/tourist. In the case of foreign tourists, the average length of stay was 1.85 days/tourist, the highest value being recorded in 2019, 2.99 days/tourist and the lowest, in 2015, 1.20 days/tourist. [2,10,15]

In the year 2022, the average length of stay registers a higher value for Romanian tourists, 2.16 days/tourist, compared to the one of foreign tourists, 1.60 days/tourist.

CONCLUSIONS

Bistrita Nasaud County is a county with great tourist potential, a statement supported by the existing potential, materialized in nature reserves and monuments, balneoclimatic resorts, mountain tourism and in the authenticity of rural areas. The most famous natural resources are: Calimani Mountains National Park and Rodnei Mountains National Park, Arcalia Dendrological Park, the historical gardens of Dobric, Beclean and Silvasu de Campie, the caves of Cobasel Valley and Tausoare-Zalion, etc.

The beauty of rural areas and their authenticity, the preservation of traditions and customs have allowed the development of tourist activities in these areas in recent years.

Thus, in recent years there have been significant increases in the number of agritourism guesthouses, this is due, on the one hand, to the intensification of the demand for products and services specific to rural tourism, and on the other hand to financial support from European funds regarding the development of tourist activities in the rural environment, with the aim of increasing the income of agricultural producers and supporting the sustainable development of these territories.

The development of agritourism in Bistrita-Nasaud County must start from the establishment of a well-structured strategy adapted to tourists needs, constantly changing and correlated with the offers of agritourism service providers, local residents and rural community authorities.

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