

EXPLOITING THE TOURISM POTENTIAL OF PERIURBAN TIMIȘOARA. A CASE STUDY ON COMMUNE OF PARȚA

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Abstract: *The inhabitants of great cities who live an intense life, particularly youngsters, need, after a week of work, to spend their free time relaxing. Holiday periods are extremely short and holiday funds are limited in most employed people – which requires relaxation places to be as close as possible to the place of residence. Thus, based on tourist attraction, on accommodation, food, and transport services, we can develop free time activities such as group or family trips, cycling or simply spending time in the middle of nature. In this context, the authors of this paper have studied the opportunities of developing rural tourism and agritourism in periurban Timișoara, at Parța, a locality that can become an attraction for the investors wishing to develop tourism attractions in the area, thus contributing to the economic rise of the area and, to the increase of the natives' life quality.*

Keywords: *tourism, feasibility study, economic growth*

INTRODUCTION

The Commune of Parța was established through Law no. 54/2004, being detached from the Commune of Șag. Geographically, it is located in the plain in periurban southern Timișoara. The village is located at 17 km from Timisoara. It has 1884 inhabitants of different ethnicity: Romanians – 75%, Hungarians – 10.5%, Germans – 5.5%, Serbs – 4.6% and others – 4.4%. [2]

The area of the locality is 61.4 km², with a population density of 28.5 inhabitants/km², a very low one compared to the mean of rural localities in Romania (46 inhabitants/km²).

The stable population of the commune of 1884 inhabitants is distributed relatively evenly per gender (938 males and 946 females) and it lives in 722 dwellings. The commune is crossed by a communal road network 8.6 km long – DC 195 and DC 200 1.6 km long. [1]

At present, the Commune of Parța is to benefit from the following investments: road tarring, rehabilitation of the house of culture, management of the sports grounds and of a pedestrian alley. All this will have a positive impact on tourism in the area. The commune also has a medical dispensary, a dental practice, a human pharmacy and a veterinary practice.[7]

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research methodology used for this study was qualitative, and consisted in the use of all updated statistics and known literature resources, data collection, observation, analysis and evaluation about the subject and it has the structure of a feasibility study for a business proposition to improve the economy activity in the area of the commune of Parța, An agroturistic bed and breakfast of 4 stars ground floor and 1st floor and land management, upon the regulations of CAEN codes, from the Strucural Funds Guide for business propotions.

The study has 2 main parts: firstly, it defines the opportunities of the commune and establishes the scope, secondly, it describes the project, and makes an analysis for understanding the current method of implementation, and the investment in recreational activities, as recommended solutions to satisfy the requirements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Investment opportunities in the commune of Parța

From the point of view of investment opportunities, the commune can draw investors in the food industry through collecting, processing and valorising units in milk, skin and wool, slaughterhouses, vegetables, and fish. They could also invest in the light industry in ready made clothes, textiles, shoes, handicraft, and wood processing (small furniture items, wood buildings).

Investors wishing to invest in the Commune of Parța have the following opportunities: access to facilities, low taxes, skilled labour force (light industry, woodwork, tourism, etc.). To continue economic and social development, the local administration is interested in partnerships aimed at modernising the local infrastructure. The strategy of the local administration aims at improving living conditions for the inhabitants and raise the quality of the services. [5]

Crop culture and animal raising share much of the traditional economic activities of the inhabitants of the commune. To increase economic efficiency in agriculture, they need to ensure the conditions for the processing and valorisation of agricultural products. There are opportunities in beekeeping if they establish a beehoney collecting and valorising unit in the area. They could invest in animal raising (pigs, dairy cows, and poultry) because there is a long tradition in this regard and the products could be valorised on the markets of Timișoara and also through rural tourism and agritourism activities. There is also, in the commune, a tradition of raising horse breeds and this could be exploited by tourism investors by establishing horse farms and by building a hippodrome.

As far as tourism is concerned, we need to mention that the local administration of the commune is interested in the establishment, development and modernisation of the infrastructure specific to tourism activities by supporting investments in bed & breakfast units, holiday houses, motels, local tradition restaurants, sports grounds or other agreement facilities. [5]

Among tourism attractions, we could mention the Archaeological Site, the Turk's Bridge, some historical monuments, folk traditions, local events, and Banat gastronomy. Our study shows that Parța is interesting from both historical and natural points of view. The Timis Flooding Meadow is home to human settlements that reached a peak at the end of the 5th Millennium and at the beginning of the 4th Millennium BC. Based on research, specialists reached the conclusion that the human settlement of Parța is one of the largest neolithic settlements in the Banat area. [3] The first written documentary mention of Parța dates from 1334. Papal tax records for the years 1332-1337 mention Povaz or Movaz on the present territory of Parța, a locality that gained the statute of town in 1447. Because of the battles between the Hungarians and the Turks, the town was destroyed by the latter in 1513. During the Revolution of 1848, one of the measures taken by the Imperial military authorities was to disarm Swabian villages in the neighbourhood of Timișoara, who supported Hungarian revolutionaries around October 17, 1848. Among the communes that were disarmed on October 18, 1848, was also Parța [4]

The neolithic sanctuary of Parța is about 6000 years old; it is the only neolithic sanctuary in Romania and one of the few in Europe; it has been completely restored and it can be seen at the Banat's Museum from Timișoara. The sanctuary was discovered back in the 1970s. The temple was used also as a solar calendar: on the days of the winter solstice, the sun light would penetrate the temple through an orifice and light the altar.

Historical milestones of the Commune of Parța:

- 1334: it was mentioned in a document as Parkas (Paraoz);

- 1417: the borough of Maraz is attested near Parța;
- 8th century: Francesco Grisellini's map mentions the locality of Paraz with 84 dwellings;
- 19th century: Parța was a locality inhabited by both Romanians and Serbs;
- October 1831: archaeologists found, on the banks of the Timis River, a skeleton and different items of clay and bone;
- 1878: Timis River regularisation works uncovered primitive ceramics and bone items;
- 1912: several floodings by the River Timis caused considerable damage in Parța;
- 1936: Parța already had a horse farm with reproduction stallions;
- after 1989: there is a primary school, a Serbian confessional school, a kindegarten, and a male choir;
- 2004: the Commune of Parța was re-established (it was detached from the Commune of Șag) and the "Jurnal de Parța" edited by Ioan Dunca started to be printed;
- There is a monument to the heroes of World War I (1914-1918) and of World War II (Cotul Donului, Russia, 1942).[8]

There are, in Parța, several churches built by the natives in time: the Romanian Orthodox Church (1854), the Greek-Catholic Church (19th century), the Roman-Catholic Church, the Serbian Orthodox Church (historic monument, 1847, painted by Ciolacovici), the Pentecostal Church, the Baptist Church. Events and other cultural and/or religious festivals in the commune are the Saint Patron's Day (Ruga or Nedeia) on September 8, St. Mary's Day, and the Commune's Day (April 20). [1]

Project Proposition For Parța: 4* Tourism Bed & Breakfast Ground Floor + 1st Floor And Land Management

Encouraging tourism activities contributes to the improvement of life quality in rural areas and to the diversification of rural economy. The development of tourism activities in rural areas contributes to the increase of the number of jobs and of alternative income sources as well as to the increase of attractiveness of the rural area. The main activity of the newly-established company will have a CAEN CODE – 5520 *accommodation facilities for holidays and short periods* plus several other types of activities related to tourism and not only. [6] Encouraging tourism activities contributes to the improvement of life quality in rural areas and to the diversification of rural economy. Developing tourism activities in rural areas will contribute to the increase of the number of jobs and of alternative income sources as well as to the increase of attractiveness in the rural area.

The company will also display several types of secondary activities such as:

- CAEN CODE 5610 – Restaurants;
- CAEN CODE 7911 – Travel agency activities;
- CAEN CODE 7912 – Tour operator activities;
- CAEN CODE 7990 – Other tourism reservation and assistance services;
- CAEN CODE 9311 – Sports activities;
- CAEN CODE 9312 – Sport clubs activities;
- CAEN CODE 9313 – Fitness center activities;
- CAEN CODE 9319 – Other sports activities;
- CAEN CODE 9321 – Fairs and theme parks;
- CAEN CODE 9329 – Other recreation and agreement activities.[6]

We wish to implement a 4* bed & breakfast Ground level + 1st Floor uptown Parța, an area that is to be designed as an area of agreement.

The construction will serve both the agreement and sports areas to be developed near the bed & breakfast.

B. Project proposition for the commune of Parța

1. Description of the Project

Location of the Project

The project will be implemented in the Timiș County, Western Romania. The Timiș County is located at the borders with Hungary and Serbia, countries with which Romania has had good relationships. As part of the Serbian Banat, the component localities have a high share of Serbian and Hungarian population. The Commune of Parța was established through Law no. 54/2004, being detached from the Commune of Șag. [5]

Description of the Investment Land

The land is located in the south of the commune; it has a regular shape and it measures 5,200 m². The land is free of buildings so far. The neighbouring plots also are free of buildings since the entire area is to become an area for agreement. The eastern side will be bordered by an access route.

The plot on which will be built the bed & breakfast observes legal stipulations concerning building location depending on risk areas (flooding, land glides) and protected natural areas. The plot measures 5,200 m² and the minimum opening to the street (access route) will observe local urban regulations or, if there is no such regulation, local tradition. This exigency applies only to new buildings. The distance to the street, to the property lines (left/right, face/back) will observe local urban regulations or, if any, local traditions in the field. It is important to ensure parking places to fit the number of rooms for the tourists; they could be protected but only by a wooden pergola.

Description of the Investment

The idea is to build a bed & breakfast (Groundfloor + 1 Floor) classifiable as 4 daisies. This height regime observes the specific of the area: the project takes into account a coroboration of architectural styles, of the materials and textures specific to the area.

The plot on which the bed & breakfast is to be built is rectangular: 65 m long and x 80 m wide. The building will be as follows:

- 10.85 m from the eastern limit (the street);
- 32.75 m from the southern limit;
- 46.65 m from the western limit;
- 0 m from the northern limit (the property limit).

Circulation and Access

Both pedestrian and auto access will be from the eastern limit (from the road that links the area to the locality).

The new building will be a compact one, with the following functional organisation:

Ground Level

- Shared areas: lobby, hall, reception (with wardrobe and technical area), staircase, restaurant, vestiaries per gender for the clients wishing to play lawn tennis;
- Service areas: laundry with laundry deposit, areas serving the restaurant (kitchen and dish washer, vestiaries and toilets for the personnel, separated food storage areas, waste room);
- 2 twin bed rooms with separate toilet for people with disabilities.

From a functional point of view, the ground floor can be divided into five areas serving for different activities.

Thus, access to the building will be possible through the reception and circulation area. It functions as a filter and it covers:

- The reception area proper including the wardrobe and benefiting from a technical area to be used by the reception personnel;
- A waiting room connected visually to the reception desk and to the staircase: this area allows communication with the restaurant and the vestiaries leading to the outer area to the tennis courts and to the two rooms at ground level.

Restaurant and Kitchen Areas

The restaurant will consist of two parts: the breakfast room and the restaurant room, separated by a stained glass window. The two rooms communicate and can be used together or separately.

The area where the food will be prepared is wider and has the organisation specific to the flows of a kitchen observing hygiene standards. The flow of raw materials will not intersect the flow of prepared foods. Kitchen personnel will cross a cleaning filter before getting into touch with the foods to be served in the restaurant.

There will be a secondary access route for supplies. Foods will be stored per categories in four rooms (fruits and vegetables, meat and dairy products, eggs, packaged products). They are linked with the kitchen through a hall equipped with sinks, ovens, separate desks to allow food preparation per categories. Kitchen personnel will access the working area from an outer terrace (secondary access) through a vestiarey equipped with a shower and toilet where they change clothes and then can get into contact with the foods.

The Accommodation Area

At the ground level, there will be two double rooms equipped with bathrooms adapted to disabled people.

The Vestiaries Area

From the waiting area a hall allows access to toilets for the tourists, to a toilet for the personnel and to two vestiaries (for each gender) that link the building to the tennis courts. The vestiaries have toilets and a sauna each.

The Service Area

At the end of the corridor, there will be a laundry area, drying area and laundry deposit area for the entire bed & breakfast. It will function exclusively for the clients and personnel of the bed & breakfast. The main access to the building has a slope for disabled people. Besides the main access, there is also a secondary access to the laundry, an access for the kitchen personnel, an access to the technical area and to the storage area which will also have a charging/discharging ramp.

1st Floor

- Shared areas (level hall, circulation and staircase);
- 10 double rooms with bathrooms, plus a suite (sitting room, bedroom and bathroom);
- Level storage room.

The tourism complex will also have a waste management system implemented. We should also mention that the investment will be placed in a pollution-free area.

2. Investment in Recreational Activities

Private investments in the tourism infrastructure linked to the tourism unit – ***lawn tennis courts***.

As a basic activity of tourism activities, playing lawn tennis will influence directly the level of tourism flows and, implicitly, the effectiveness of tourism activities.

Lawn tennis courts will be an attraction for both amateur tennis players and professional tennis players wishing to train. Playing lawn tennis aims at relaxing and recomforting physically the people practicing it.

The increase of the role of rural tourism in the framework of a new quality of life supposes active rest for the tourists.

From an economic and social perspective, agreement activities meet the exigencies of increasing attractiveness of the bed & breakfast. Agreement becomes an important source of incomes and of increase of economic efficiency of the bed & breakfast.

The increase of the role of sports activities in the bed & breakfast (playing lawn tennis by both amateurs and professionals) ensures its competitiveness and meets tourists' needs thus developing new types of holidays.

CONCLUSIONS

The Commune of Parța lies in a high tourism level area that has not been properly exploited so far from this point of view.

Our project aims at developing the tourism and agri-tourism potential of the area ensuring new jobs, increasing incomes for the natives and, implicitly, increasing life quality.

The project meets legal conditions and can be submitted to obtain the necessary funds from the European Union.

Implementing this project in Parța would introduce the locality in the local and national tourism circuits.

Accommodation structures, the restaurant and the agreement area correspond to the classification standards stipulated by our national legislation for the category 4 daisies.

The bed & breakfast will have 12 double rooms and 1 suite, with 28 places and a total of 13 accommodation areas, as well as an area for the serving of food and drinks, an area for the preparation of the foods (kitchen), an area for the reception of the tourists, a technical area, toilets and vestiaries for the tourists and personnel, a laundry, etc.

The project will create 8 new jobs: a manager, a receptionist, a cook, a maid, a cleaning staff, a guard and an accountant.

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