

## DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND CAPITALIZATION OF ROMANIAN RURAL AREA THROUGH TOURISM

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**Abstract:** *Romanian rural area still retains unaltered traditional values, spiritual cultural, of Romanian people, socio-economic life and the picturesque landscape of these lands. These values provide to rural area favorable conditions for development of tourism activities, especially agrotourism. Romanian villages have a tourist potential of a wide variety: ethnographical traditions and values, cultural, historic and art values but also an unpolluted natural environment that constitute itself in a rich agrotourist offer.*

**Key words:** *rural area, agrotourism, traditions, tourist villages*

### INTRODUCTION

Practicing agrotourist activities represents a benefic element for both the rural community but also for the local population, with lower incomes, who wants practicing of tourism in other areas than daily ones. Lower prices practiced in agrotourism are more affordable than in classic tourism, favoring the development of a mass tourism. [1,3]

Rural area represents a real area of tourist attraction, in which intersects all the specific elements of an important local development. Thus, between the agrotourist activity and general economic development of rural area creates a real bond of reciprocity: the economic development of the area leads to increasing of the tourism activity in the area but, also the development of agrotourism has as effect economic increasing of the area. [4]

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

To highlight the role in of agrotourism in rural communities' development we conducted a diagnostic analysis of the current situation, based on statistical data. Research carried out is concentrated on the role of knowledge the role that agrotourism has in economic growth of Romanian villages. In this regard, we have taken in analyze some economic indicators that characterize tourism activity and accommodation capacity, arrivals of tourists, number of overnight stays, utilization degree of the accommodation capacity and average length of stay.

### RESEARCH RESULTS

Ethno-cultural and ethnographic specific, originality and richness of resources make from Romanian village a unique tourism product, that comes to satisfy a wide variety of motivations for Romanian tourists as for the foreign ones. At national level we find sufficient villages, recognized as tourist villages, which constitute themselves as important destination for weekend tourism, religious tourism, knowledge tourism, health tourism etc.

Tourism development in rural area should cover both economic development and social development. Rural tourism and especially agrotourism have an important role in the economic growth of the village through: [2,5]

- Developing a policy of long-term development, of tourism, closely related to policies developed in related sectors: agriculture, infrastructure, environment protection;
- The possibility to become a support for new businesses and jobs and to determine a new development in local and regional level;

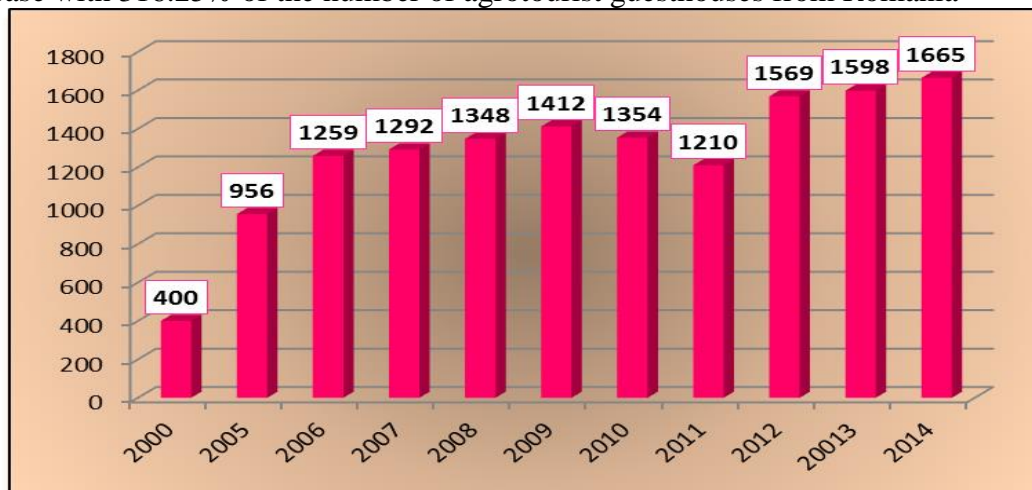
- Supporting and developing local traditional activities (crafts and handicrafts) and of the other activities which lead to the development of trade activities and creating new jobs;

- Increasing the incomes of rural residents, generated by capitalization of local resources, traditional products for tourists consumption or sailing through them and of the existing tourist potential (for recreation, trips, etc.);

- Important factor in increasing the quality of life in rural areas. [7,2]

Tourist accommodation offer in rural area is represented by the households of the population and agrotourist households. *The number of agrotourist households* registered at national level, during 2000-2014 period, indicate an upward trend, exception making the 2010-2011 period, when was registered a decrease.

Increasing of the demand for tourist activities from rural area has positively influenced the concerns of tourism managers and investors, in the meaning of their reorientation towards this form of tourism. This reason sits, also, at the basis of the increase with 316.25% of the number of agrotourist guesthouses from Romania



**Figure 1 The evolution of the number of agrotourist guesthouses from Romania, during 2000-2014 period**

Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/>

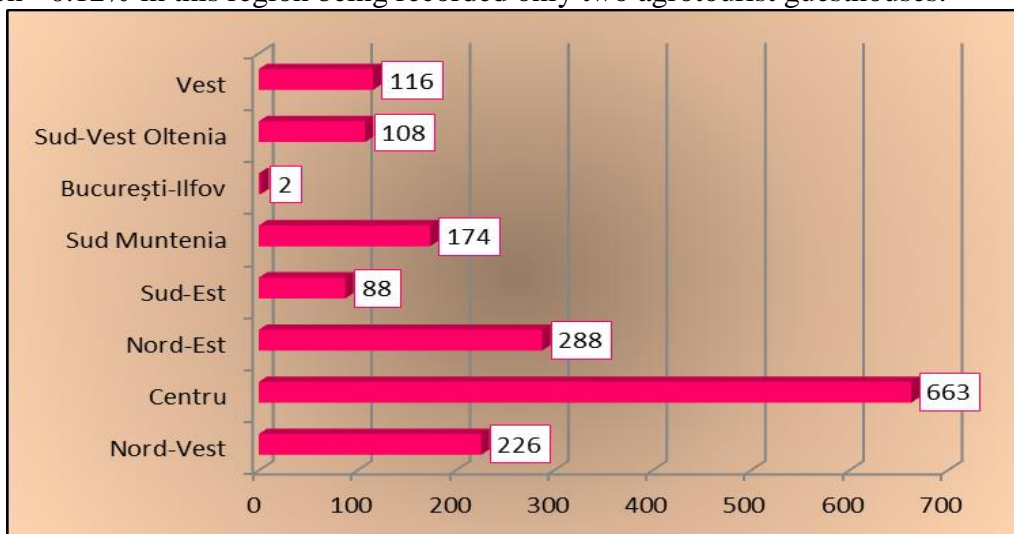
At the regional level, development of rural tourism depends heavily on the availability and quality of tourist guesthouses and by the presence of various types of activities, by folklore, by ethnographic regions and by practicing of agriculture and viticulture (agrotourism).

The specific tourism for Bucovina (North - East) is the religious tourism, in Maramures (North - West), architectural and ethnographic tourism, in Transylvania (Centre) - recreational and cultural tourism, food and wine art, at the Carpathian foothills is practiced fishing. Mountain and forest areas from Romania provide many opportunities for practicing tourism and especially ecotourism. [1,6]

Another important tourist area is the Danube Delta (East), which also shows high natural value due to biodiversity and allows practicing various types of tourism (leisure, fishing, food art).

Regarding regional distribution of agrotourist guesthouses, Figure 2, it can observe that, those 1665 agrotourist guesthouses registered at national level, in 2014 are not uniform distributed, at the level of development regions. 39.82% (663 guesthouses) are concentrated in the Central Region, region with tradition of practicing agrotourism. It follows North East Region with 17.30% (288 guesthouses). North-West Region has a value close, to the North-East Region, 13.57% (226 guesthouses). These three development

regions concentrated 70.69% from the total number of agrotourist guesthouses, being actually the most important agrotourist areas of the country. South-Muntenia Region holds 10.45% (1747 guesthouses), West Region - 6.97% (1162 guesthouses), South-West Oltenia - 6.49% (108 guesthouses), South East - 5.29% (88 guesthouses) and Bucharest-Ilfov Region - 0.12% in this region being recorded only two agrotourist guesthouses.



**Figure 2 The situation of agrotourist guesthouses in territorial profile**

Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/>

As we noted earlier, the Central, Northeast and Northwest Regions are areas with a rich agrotourist potential, highlighted by the local population and being tourist areas of increased tourist interest for Romanian and foreign tourists.

A particular importance in analyzing the tourist offer has the economic indicator that express the accommodation capacity. This takes two forms, existing accommodation capacity expressed in number of beds available to tourists and accommodation capacity in operation witch express the number of places - days available, depending on the period of operation of accommodation establishments, knowing the fact that, due to tourist seasonality phenomenon are accommodation units that are not operating throughout the year.

Increasing the own accommodation capacity of agrotourist guesthouses, both in terms of number of seats and the number of places-days is the resultant of the continuous growing efforts made by the people involved in rural tourism activity in order to provide for tourists as many places, in the 365 days of the year.

**Table 1**

**Distribution of accommodation capacity, by comfort categories, 2014**

	Total	5 stele	4 stele	3 stele	2 stele	1 stea
<b>Ccapacity and respectively</b>	<b>27453</b>	348	2886	13138	10270	811
<b>%</b>	<b>100,00</b>	1,27	10,51	47,86	37,41	2,95
<b>capacity in operation</b>	<b>6865</b>	117	886	3456	2249	157
<b>%</b>	<b>100,00</b>	12,91	50,34	32,76	2,29	1,70

Source: Anuarul Statistic al României, 2013

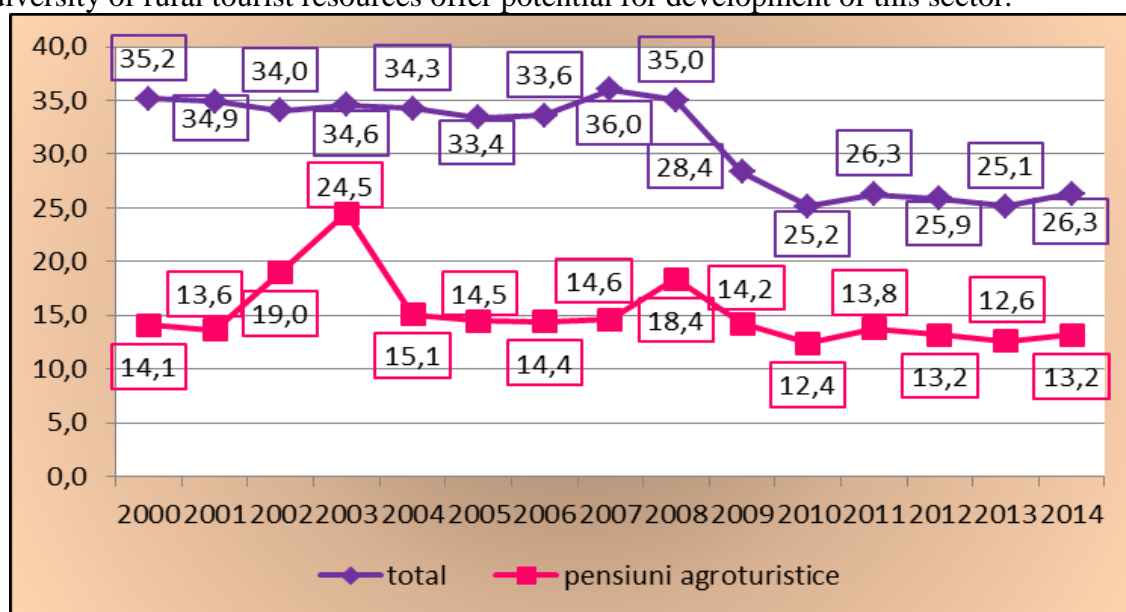
Distribution by type of comfort categories of the existing and in operation tourist capacity indicates the predominance of 3 stars comfort category, followed by the one of 2 and 4 stars. The allocation of accommodation capacity on comfort categories indicates, for both categories a high percent of comfort category - 3 stars (47.86% for the existing capacity and 50.34% for tourist capacity in operation) followed by category - 2 stars

(37.41% for existing capacity and respectively 32.76% for tourist capacity in operation) and 4 stars (10.51% - existing tourist capacity and 12.91% - tourist capacity in operation).

In present, at national level we do not find many centers to promote tourism information witch to provide information to Romanian and foreign tourists, regarding the tourist attractions, cultural events, archaeological sites, information regarding the accommodation places, public catering units, the entertainment possibilities existing in the area, etc.

Development of rural tourism and agrotourism determines obtaining alternative incomes, having as effect economic development of rural area, using the existing resources (unique landscape, extensive semi-natural areas, traditions and customs, gastronomy specific to each ethnographic area, the hospitality of the inhabitants from rural area). [2]

Preservation of traditions, culture, culinary specialties and beverages and the diversity of rural tourist resources offer potential for development of this sector.

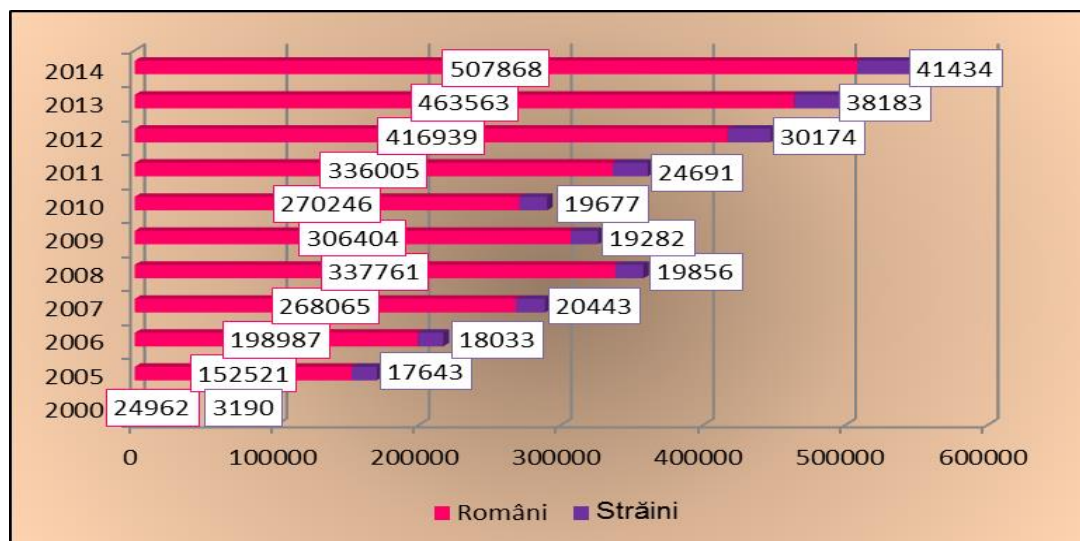


**Figure 3 Indices of net use of accommodation capacity**

Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/>

In Figure 3 is presented the evolution of net use index of accommodation capacity both at national level and for agrotourist guesthouses. In both cases, during the analyzed period are found both increases and decreases of this indicator.

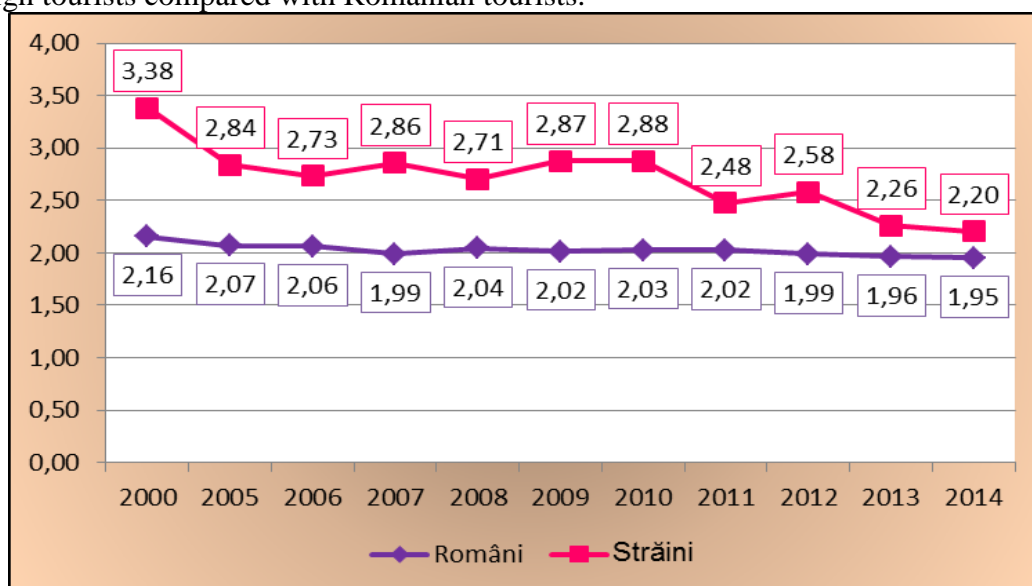
Tourism practiced in rural area is one of the forms of tourism that are rising in our country. Proof of this is the increases in tourist arrivals among the agrotourist guesthouses. During the analyzed period, the number of tourists accommodated in agrotourist guesthouses has rise a lot, from 28.152 in the year 2000 to 549.302, in 2014, the growth being of 18.51 times.



**Figure 4 The evolution of the tourists number accommodated in agrotourist guesthouses, by categories of tourists, 2000-2014**

Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/>

A particular importance should be given, in economic analysis of tourist activity, to average length of stay. Overall there can be seen a greater duration of the length of stay for foreign tourists compared with Romanian tourists.



**Figure 5 Average length of stay in agrotourist guesthouses, day / tourist**

Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/>

In the 2000-2014 period, at the level of agrotourist guesthouses, there is a reduction of the the average length of stay among both Romanian and foreign tourists. Regarding Romanian tourists it can be seen a reduction from 2.16 days in 2000 to 1.95 days in 2014. The average length of stay of foreign tourists decreased from 3.38 days in 2000, to 2.2 days in 2014.

The development and intensification of tourist activities in rural area requires the development of material and technical base and of the recreational one, of accommodation structures and improving of the quality of services provided to customers, having as effect increasing of the number of tourists and of the average length of stay.

## CONCLUSIONS

The development of Romanian rural areas through rural tourism and agrotourism require the existence of a unique landscape, with comfortable houses and farms, with hosts that have cultural, ecumenical and artistic own tradition, with talented craftsmen and artisans.

Agrotourism is considered as a symbol of preserving national traditions and customs, a way to value the report between the use of agricultural production achieved and the provision of tourist services in rural area, representing thus a real opportunity for economic and social development of Romanian villages.

The natural unique landscape, favorable for agrotourism practicing offers to Romania the opportunity to work towards promoting rural tourist offer and the possibility of becoming the component part of the international tourism market.

Cultural heritage met in Romanian villages represents a real source of economic development of the areas, both at regional and local level, the symbolic potential being essential for the cultural component represented by customs, ethnographic and folklore values, occupations, beliefs and symbols existing and kept in rural communities.

Rural tourism and agrotourism represents true alternatives sources of income for inhabitants of rural areas offering the possibility of combining agricultural activities with tourist services. So, it will get a better exploitation of products obtained, a preservation of cultural and spiritual heritage of the Romanian villages, but also the natural, unpolluted environment, which attracts residents of urban areas.

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