

TOURISM – IN SUPPORT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT. A CASE STUDY ON TRAINING NEED ANALYSIS IN RURAL AREA (BUTEA, IAȘI)

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Abstract

The present paper is a result of a research conducted in a rural area from North-Eastern part of Romania, analyzing the training need in tourism and the level of education of the working population. The goal of the study is to obtain conclusive information as to establish concrete solutions and priorities regarding the diversification and employment reviving in rural areas in the following years (with an orientation in the field of tourism and services). The key aspect is to improve the quality of human resources in rural areas in order to facilitate the access to employment in non-agricultural activities, as an alternative. Along with other measures supported and promoted by the local government, this initiative will help to prevent depopulation of rural areas in the short to medium term. Moreover, the ingredients for a sustainable rural development are the tourism potential proper exploitation and the human resources skills development.

Key words: *rural tourism, employment, training need analysis, vocational training in tourism, rural development*

JEL Classification: *L83, M54*

I. INTRODUCTION

On the regional development agenda, tourism has been always mentioned as a strategy for economic growth. Rural and areas and other peripheral areas have frequently looked to it as a tool for promoting local jobs and raising the level of economic welfare. While tourism is seen as job-generating, it is also blamed for promoting low wages and only seasonal employment.

The employment situation in rural areas is much more difficult than in urban areas. The majority of the occupied population in rural areas performs agricultural activities, mostly being informal activities, whether it is occupied in the public sector (education, public administration, social work), the latter having a fairly modest share in the structure of employment in rural areas. Both farming which cannot ensure a rapid growth of labor productivity and employment in the public sector, where wages of employees depend on the limited possibilities of the local budget, may not provide a level of income necessary for a decent living. Neither promoted reforms in the agricultural sector, in terms of implementation of market items, as well as the land privatization, leasehold estates, farmers with land, abolishing agricultural collective farms and foundation of farmers' households, etc. have not improved the situation regarding the living conditions or increasing employment in rural areas. On the contrary, there are cases when the situation has further aggravated.

Basically, the economically active population in rural areas is put in the position to choose between the two possibilities. On the one hand, to accept a job that pays a modest income, under adverse conditions and increased risk. On the other hand, the population has to choose the path of emigration in the urban area in order to find a more attractive job and better paid or to depart abroad looking for a job that would provide the necessary income to support itself and the family.

For these reasons, the rural areas are becoming less populated, and the remaining inhabitants are, in large part, people under the age of 14-16 years, i.e., those that are still studying and older people, i.e. pensioners. Depopulation of rural settlements is determined by the fact that most young people that leave for education in urban areas refuse to return after successful completion of their studies in the native communities to continue their work. The unattractiveness of rural settlements is determined by several factors. One of the factors is

represented by the narrow spectrum of occupations and trades required in rural areas. Therefore, a large proportion of young people that study in institutions of secondary education and higher education from cities cannot and do not want to return to their hometown because they cannot find a suitable job on their specialization. Otherwise, their studies would turn into an unreasonable investment in human capital. Another cause is the degraded and underdeveloped social infrastructure in rural areas, which inevitably leads to a rural population quality of life significantly inferior to that offered in urban areas.

In the conditions created in order to improve the situation regarding employment in the rural areas there is a need for urgent measures to be taken by both local governments and the central public authorities and better guidance and development that could lead to the growth of the area.

II. TOURISM POTENTIAL OF BUTEA AREA

Through its age, Butea commune has several historical monuments and religious buildings: the Roman Catholic Church "Sfânta Treime", "Passion of Jesus" Missionary Sisters, Sturza Medieval Castle, Monastery of nuns from Miclăușeni that could be considered tourism attractions for the region.



Roman Catholic Church "Holy Trinity"

Source: www.biserici.org

Roman Catholic Church "Holy Trinity" of Butea

It was rebuilt between 1977-1980, with a length of 60 m, width 23 m and a tower height of 37. The architecture is neo-Gothic. The church has a miraculous statue brought from Lourdes (France) in 1886.



Sturza Medieval castle

Source: www.primaria-butea.ro

Sturza Medieval Castle

Gothic art monuments built between 1880-1904 by George Sturza and his wife Maria, on the site of an old manor house in 1755. Castle has extensive library and several collections of arms and full medieval costumes, jewelries, rare tracks, Carrara marble busts and old oil paintings. Library was remarkable, containing approx. 60,000 volumes.



Miclăușeni Monastery

Source: www.primaria-butea.ro/

Miclăușeni Monastery

It was founded by Catherine Serban Cantacuzino, the last descendant of Sturzești boyars. Because she had no direct successors, Catherine donated Miclăușeni monastery to Roman Diocese for the establishment of a convent of nuns. Due to the pressure the communist government, on 1 May 1953 Miclăușeni monastery was dissolved. In 1990, at the initiative I.P.S. Metropolitan Daniel the convent of nuns from Miclăușeni is restored.

But, unfortunately the successful development of the rural area depends not just on its attractiveness and landscape, but also on quality and competitive services.

Hospitality sector requires understanding, professionalism, commitment, organization and an effective strategy of human resource development. The hospitality sector equally involves facilities and services.

III. ESTABLISHING THE PROBLEM TO BE INVESTIGATED

The present study presents a quantitative analysis on the training and information needs of the working population in rural areas in order to obtain conclusive information as to establish concrete solutions, to establish priorities regarding the diversification and employment promotion in rural areas in the following years (with an orientation in the field of tourism and services).

The organization of the training process is on the analysis of training demand expressed in the labor market. The analysis of those needs, as well as analysis of the demand for training in the field of tourism are the subject of this study and have been identified through various methods and tools.

I. Identification of the training needs is a complex process that attempts to reveal these differences and to propose those for which training is the solution. The proposed methodology to achieve this research was chosen so that the research should be carried out as planned, to be conducted within the parameters of quality proposed and thus, at the end, to obtain the expected results.

II. Defining the scope of the investigation must be done in such a manner so that it will not permit ambiguous interpretations. This analysis aims to investigate, among the population of the Butea commune, Iași County, some issues related to vocational training and its level. Many sectors, including tourism, are characterized by poor quality, inadequate services that really are not up to the standards. This issue has been identified in a number of market researches and strategic documents.

III. The need for the process of identification of training needs is given by the following reasons:

- ❖ to determine professional development needs relevant to each person;
- ❖ to determine means to improve individual performance;
- ❖ to find out if there are other solutions apart from training;
- ❖ to make differences between training needs and organizational issues;
- ❖ to make the natural connection between the performance at regional level and the region's development prospects.

IV. In direct connection with the responsibilities of a person or of an employee there is identified a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes which should exist in order to achieve the proposed performance standards. What exists-the number of employees, qualification, competence, should tend towards an ideal situation. For the differences identified the training can be established as a solution. Prioritization of areas addressed by training programs should be carried out in relation to the personal objective.

The main objective of the study was the analysis of training need among the population of Butea. In order to get a more detailed perspective on this theme, there have been traced a number of specific aspects. In a general form, these are related to: human resource development and adaptation to the changes specific to the process of economic restructuring in Romania; major factors influencing the participation in training programmes; training opportunities for employees; characteristics of vocational training programmes that respond to the identified needs.

IV. DEFINING THE POPULATION TO BE INVESTIGATED

In the case of this research, the survey basis corresponds to employable people to attend vocational training programmes (minimum 14 years old) of Butea commune. Once this has been defined, we move to identifying the documents that can serve as a source of information/data base of the investigated population, representing as well the sampling frame of the initial research.

The survey database started from certain data from the last census of the population of Butea – from 2012, which systematized presents the population units and which allows choosing which units will go into the sample. To carry out a survey database that corresponds to the proposed objectives as effectively as possible in the case of this research, we have conducted working visits in the commune of Butea, in 2012, interviewing the representatives of the area, in order to collect data. The discussions focused on achieving the following basic data: identifying the situation of the last Census, identifying the demographic structure of this commune, identifying socio-economic studies developed in the region, identifying occupational trends. The database thus constructed has constituted a starting point in selecting subjects to be part of the investigated population in the research. For this analysis, we intended to involve into the research both employees as well as persons who do not have a job, young and older people, who have a key role in the further development of the area.

V. THE INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT AND POPULATION

The questionnaire designed to identify the training needs in Butea commune pursued the following aspects:

- ❖ interest regarding the training courses;
- ❖ perception of the need to participate in training courses;
- ❖ participation in training programmes;
- ❖ level of satisfaction regarding the previous attended training programmes;
- ❖ the categories of knowledge and skills that employees consider they should improve in the future.

Regarding the population, an analysis of the data highlights the following:

- Rural areas face severe demographic problems, we deal with an aging population and a migration of the population (especially women) to other countries for a better paid job

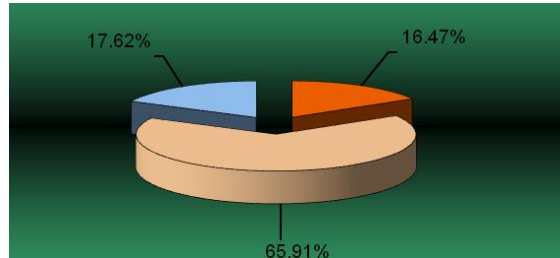


Figure 2. Age structure

According to the last Census from 2012, at the level of Butea commune, the group of young people, aged 0-14 years is representing 16.47% of the total, far below the level of 30% , which marks the beginning of a demographic structure degradation due to aging territory. The adult population increased as from the total population in this period (65,91%), as well as the elderly (17,62%).

- Territorial mobility of labor from rural areas is in a permanent increase.

The sample size required to achieve such a research given the ensuring that the probability of outcomes is 95% (t = 1.96), the unit proportion in the sample which possess the investigated characteristic it is not precisely known, and the acceptable error limit is ± 8.5%, will be around 137 units.

The size (volume) of the sample is calculated as:

$$n = \frac{t^2 \cdot p(1 - p)}{\Delta_{\omega}^2}$$

where:

n - the size (volume) of the sample,

t - the coefficient which corresponds to the probability which the results are guaranteed,

p - the proportion of the components in the sample which have the investigated feature,

1-p - the proportion of the components in the sample which do not possess the investigated feature,

Δ_ω - the acceptable error limit.

The frame of the error limit is so large (8.5%) because a significant segment of the Butea population has an oscillating character, meaning that more than 1,000 of active population in the area of this administrative territorial unit was left for at least a month of working abroad (Italy, Spain, Germany, Belgium, France, Greece, etc.). For this reason it is difficult to establish the volume of the general collectivity.

Also, when it is not known the unit proportion of the sample that possess the researched feature (presenting interest in tourism training), there are automatically assign two complementary elements -p and 1-p similar values equal to 0,5.

$$n = \frac{t^2 \cdot p(1-p)}{\Delta_{\omega}^2} = \frac{3,84 \cdot 0,5 \cdot 0,5}{0,007} = \frac{0,96}{0,007} = 137,14$$

When applying the questionnaires, we took into account this information.

V.CONDUCTING THE SURVEY, DATA ANALYSING AND INTERPRETATION

The pilot survey scheme in the study of Butea commune consisted in applying 10 surveys in order to determine the followings:

- ❖ *the corresponding character of the sampling frame*
- ❖ *the anticipated proportion of non-response*
- ❖ *the appropriateness of the questionnaire:* the simplicity of the questionnaire administration in the field, the effectiveness of the implementation, the clarity of the text, the appropriateness of the questions, the accessibility of the language, the terminology used.

Pre-testing has provided information regarding the image that the investigated person forms in regard to the research tool, the issues addressed, and in general, to the designed survey. Some questions were redrafted and even there were added other possible answers as a result of the discussions with decision makers of Butea commune. Based on information obtained from the pilot survey, there could be completed the research tool, both in terms of content and in terms of the form (for example: the layout).

The investigation was influenced by a number of factors, such as: the availability and interest of the selected persons to respond to the questions in the questionnaire and by the access to different areas.

So, in conclusion, all completed questionnaires within the framework of this research were the result of the survey in the field.

In order to analyze the data collected we used SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) - one of the most used programs for statistical analysis of data. We chose this method of information analysis since this programme includes various facilities for interpretation. Electronic processing of information gathered was made using the SPSS software package. During this phase, a key role was held by the quantification of the responses to the open questions, as well as entering information from questionnaires in computer for final processing.

VI.RESEARCH RESULTS

As we mentioned earlier, in this research we have used one type of questionnaire, the questions being adapted to the specific of the occupational categories which we have addressed. In the research on the training need analysis in tourism there have been applied up to 150 questionnaires, 2 of them being eliminated in the screening phase, due to some data errors/inconsistencies in relation to the purpose of the present research. Thus, the total number of valid questionnaires was of 148.

We will systematically present the key questions and answers obtained:

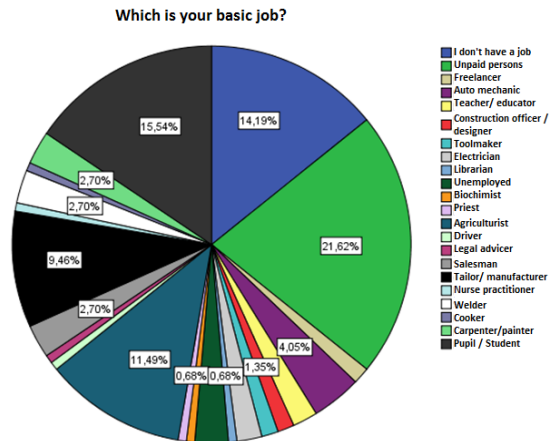


Figure 2 – The structure of the basic job profile of the respondents

At this question concerning the basic job of the interviewees, 53% have responded either they don't have a job (21%), whether they are unpaid persons (32%). Also 23% said that they are still pupils/students, 17% are farmers, 14% are tailors/ manufacturers, 6% for auto mechanics, and smaller percentages are recorded by the following trades: teacher/educator, designer, construction officer, electrician, librarian, nurse practitioner, driver, salesman, salesperson, legal adviser, nurse, welder/designer, cooker, carpenter/painter or freelancer.

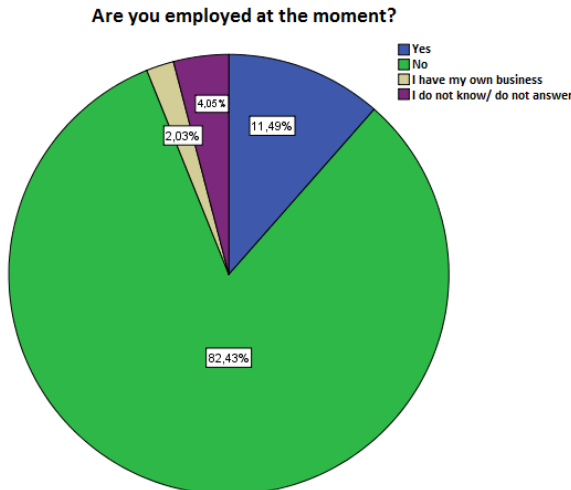


Figure 3 – The employment situation of the respondents

To question number 2, if they are employed at the moment, the majority have reply with NO (82, 43%), only 11, 49% being employed, 2.03% having their own business. 4.05% did not mention their status at the time of the interview.

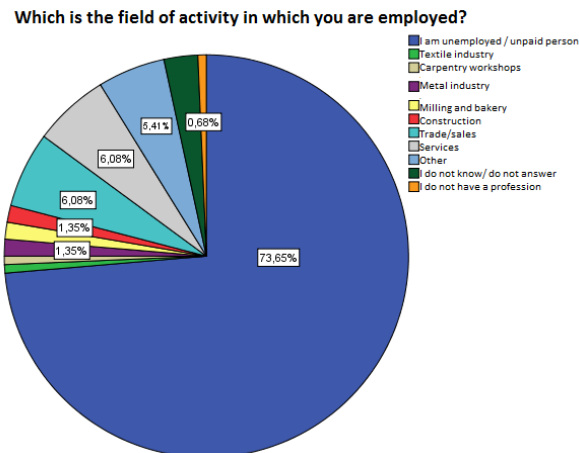


Figure 4 – Employment structure according to the field of activity

To question number 3, we must take into account the fact that more than 70% said that they are not employees, but according to the table above we can see that, of those who answered that are employed, the following areas were mentioned, in descending order: trade/sales- 23,07%, services- 23,07%, textile industry, tailoring workshops 5,13%, apparel shops 5,13%, milling and bakery 5,13%, construction 5,13%, etc. There have been mentioned and other fields in a very small percentage: agriculturist, church singer, construction worker, teaching and education.

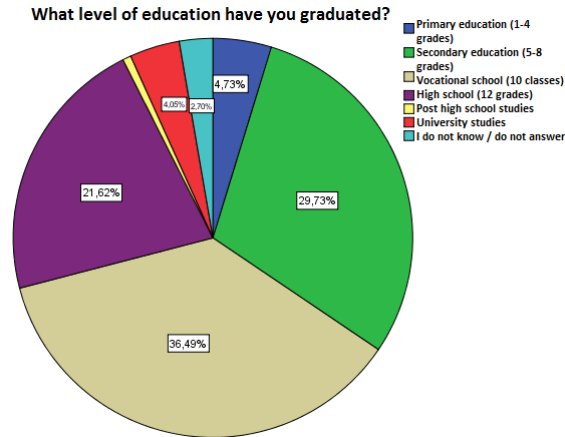


Figure 5 – The structure based on the level of education of the respondents

With respect to completed studies, we will point out in descending order their level: vocational school (10 classes) -36.5%, secondary education (5-8 grades) -29.7%, high school (12 grades) -21.6%, primary education (1-4 grades) -4.7%, university studies - 4.1%, post high school studies - 0.7%, and 2.7% of the interviewees did not mention the level of studies.

Another question had concerned the training courses accessed in addition to the graduated studies. Thus 85,81% mentioned that they were not enrolled in other courses, 12,84% participated in other training courses, and 1.4% did not answer.

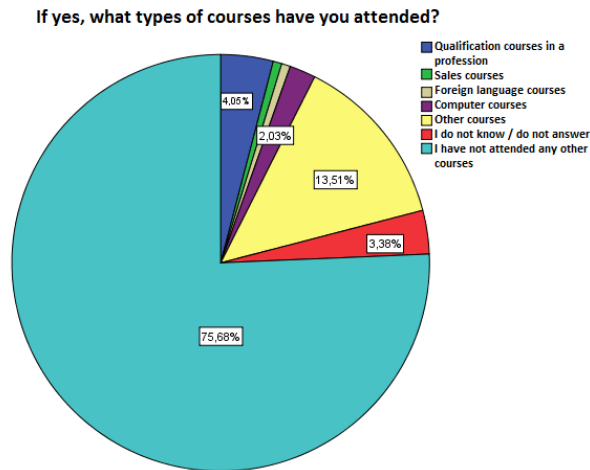


Figure 6 – The respondent’s attendance to different courses

The attended courses in completing the studies were qualification courses in a trade - 4,1%, sales - 0, 7%, foreign language courses - 0, 7%, computer courses- 2,0%, the rest of the population, over 75% have not participated in other courses or have preferred to not respond. In addition they mentioned other categories of courses: job order, librarian, economics, communication, cooker, attending faculty, educational management, improvement in public administration, steno-typing skills, all totaling 13, and 51%. Among those who attended other courses, 79, 16% were satisfied with their quality, 8, 34% were not satisfied and 12.5% have not formulated a response to this question.

Do you consider that the tourism development of the region may lead to the economic development of your area?

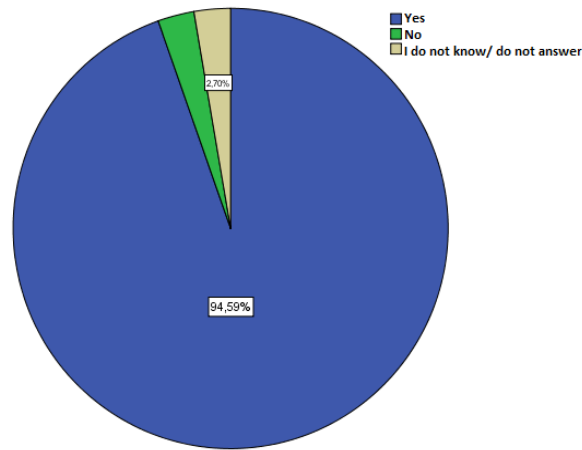


Figure 7 – The respondent’s opinion regarding the relation between tourism development and economic development

Regarding the potential development of the region by promoting the development of tourism, 94,59% of those interviewed believed that tourism can lead to the development of the area of reference, 2,7% were not too optimistic in this regard, the same percentage of 2,7% preferring to not respond.

If you were to continue your professional training, would you be interested to attend courses in tourism?

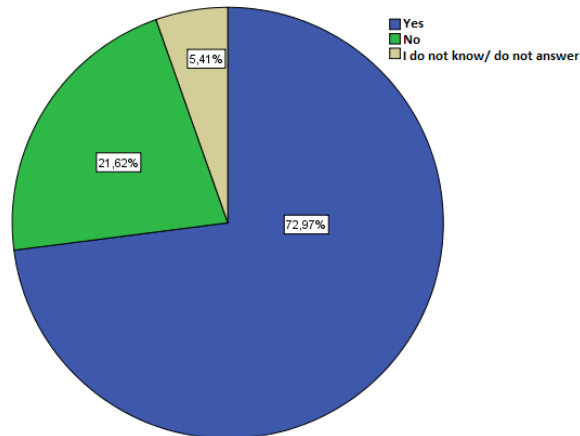


Figure 8 – The need for training in tourism

With regard to continuing of vocational training through participation in other courses in tourism, 72,97% responded affirmatively, being interested in continuing education in the field of tourism, 21.6% do not want this, and 5,41% and did not want to formulate a response.

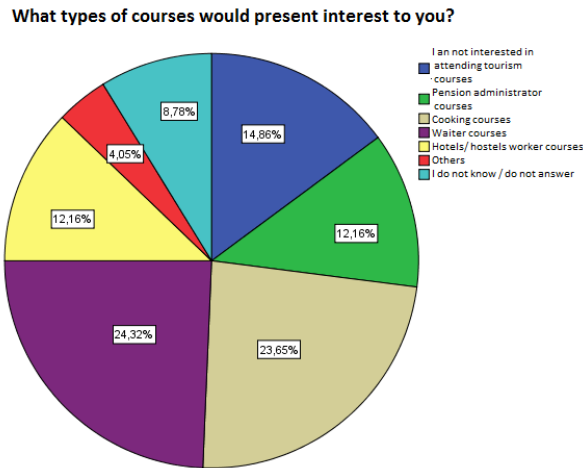


Figure 9 – The respondents need for different types of training courses in tourism

Among the categories courses desired by respondents, we mention, in the next order: waiter courses - 24.32%, cooking courses - 23.65%, tourist pension administrator courses- 12.16%, hotels/ hostels worker courses - 12.16%. 8.78% were not decided on a certain type of course in tourism, and 14.86% said that this area is not for personal interests.

In the other courses category marked by 4,05% of those interviewed, there have been mentioned: accounting courses, computer courses, boiler work masonry, carpentry, construction or even mentioned that they are not yet decided upon a particular course.

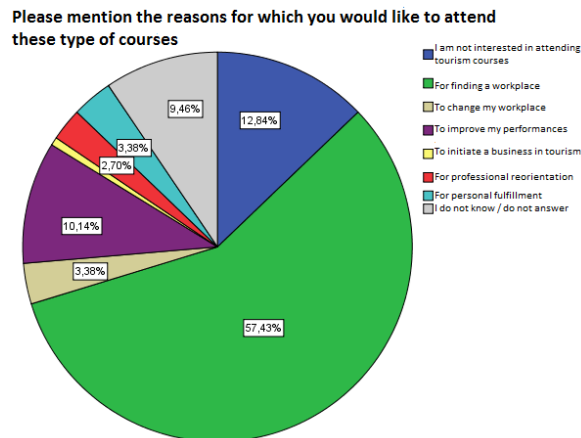


Figure 10 – The main reasons to attend training courses in tourism

The main reason cited to justify the interest of participation in training courses in the field of tourism is finding a workplace (57,4%). Other reasons cited were: to improve performance – 10,1%, to change the workplace – 3,4%, for personal fulfillment – 3,4%, for professional reorientation – 2,7%, and even to initiate a business in tourism – 0, 7%. 9,5% have not mentioned other reasons.

VII.CONCLUSIONS

The effectiveness of this type of growth strategy in generating local jobs and incomes has received limited attention. Butler and Clark mentioned that tourism in rural areas is not necessarily the magic solution to rural development.

Balanced development of the countryside can be seen as a long-term improvement of living conditions of the country but according to the imperatives of economic, environmental, social and cultural self-respect due to population.

Tourism development in rural areas will solve key business objective outside motivation and satisfaction of tourism and economic issues related to the depopulation of areas caused by migration of rural population to urban centers. By ensuring the practice of profitable in villages seeks to stop labor and return migration from urban to areas of origin, increasing the stability of the active population, improving living conditions, protecting the environment as a factor of recreation and rehabilitation.

The rural tourism will be able to solve problems considering: policy regarding planning, village-town balance, fostering social change that allows the population of the city to find roots, cultural values, relaxation, and tranquility lost or forgotten.

Even though the suitability of rural tourism as a tool for economic development has not been fully demonstrated, local government continue to support it as a growth strategy.

Rural tourism is a good opportunity for agricultural based communities but the setting of objectives and the final tourism development plan needs caution. Slow and stable steps are needed for this kind of planning, for conflicts and mistakes to be avoided.

Increasingly, people are becoming involved in tourism to help meet their own goals of independence and survival, yet tourism development carries special risks for them. There are also special problems related to obtaining financing, training, attitudes towards work and service, and making decisions. One of the few main challenges for further tourism development is the low skill workforce, which makes it increasingly difficult for rural areas to compete on regional tourism markets

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