

## TOURISM WAS BORN IN THE VILLAGE

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### Abstract

Statistical data certifies that tourism is one of the most profitable and dynamic sectors of the economy, occupying the second position in international trade, after oil. By extrapolation results that rural tourism also has major implications for the economic, social and cultural development of the villages.

This study presents an analysis of the factors contributing to the practice of rural tourism in Romania during 2000-2015. Using data provided by the National Statistics Institute was possible to analyze the number of employees and number of units specific to rural tourism. In the structure of this study, the methods of improving and developing rural tourism are defined by the concept of volunteer tourism by developing national portals presenting the vacant jobs in tourism and developing human capital by attracting European Funds 2014-2010. The importance of these methods have as a starting point the alignment with the current requirements of tourists and human resources due to the fact that workers in tourism are the main connection point between services and tourist.

**Key words:** agrotourism guesthouse, Human Capital Operational Programme, rural tourism, The National Statistics Institute, volunteering tourism.

**JEL Classification:** D60, I30, O10, L83, Z32.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The beauty of habits, of traditions, is intertwined with the daily activities of villages, creating those things blessed by God. Pottery, spinning, weaving, sheep breeding, animal husbandry, fruit picking, cooking art, mowing, traditional dancing, traditional singing: romanian traditional song, romanian traditional round dance etc., are elements that identify with the romanian village. Their presence in everyday life contribute to the architectural construction of the concept of rural tourism. Equipping it with formulas worthy of royal titles, puts it very close to the food chain of the modern society, if not even on the top of it.

By developing this theme we find that the strength of the tourism is found in the power of mountains, plains, hills, rivers, seas, flight, seasons, fauna and flora, as well as the joy and consciences of men. All these factors are intertwined with the human will to master nature. Lucian Blaga says : " eternity was born in the village", and we fill it by saying that not only eternity was born there, but time itself, freedom, humanity. The village is therefore the meeting place of beauty and love, is the place where life takes birth and the days turn into celebrations.

This is how the tourists are welcome in the beautiful romanian village. Kindness and politeness are the main teaching of faith. Hospitality is connected with friendship and both of them invite the tourists to visit their ancestral lands.

This foray into the life of romanian villages allows Travel Agencies, the Ministry of Tourism, the World Tourism Organisation and other relevant institutions empowered with promoting and selling "dream trips" to add to the Romanian logo/brand - " Explore the Carpathian garden" - " Romanian village - the joy of the human soul".

The introduction so far has as starting point the following questions: What is the potential of the rural tourism?, How can we motivate tourists to visit and spend their holidays in the romanian villages?, Which are the offers of spending time in the village?, What are the methods of developing rural tourism?.

All these questions and many others can be found in the structure of this article. The answer is multiple, some of it already known, and its realization is related to good faith of the politicians and to the decision making factors of the state institutions.

### II. ROMANIAN VILLAGE PERSPECTIVES

The streets of the villages with benches at gates, pushes us to pick "Forget me not" flowers in a day of may, to listen to the singing of the ducks, to give greetings to the peasants, and at lunchtime to halt into the peasants' house and feast with dishes prepared on the stove and baked in the oven.

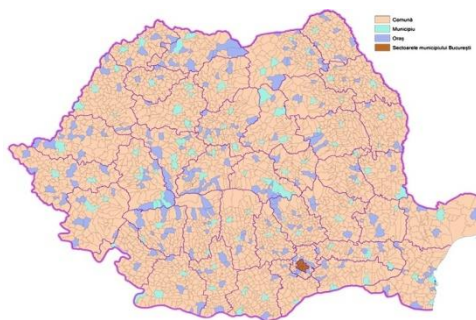
The joy of these moments intertwines with the charm of hiking on mountain paths/ grove/ stubble/ forest, with wagon rides/ horse-drawn carriage, with picking berries, with talking with the elders from the village etc. The picture can be filled with moments in which we participate at the romanian traditional round dance of the

village, with "group work" evening activities, with participating in the taking out of the wine from the barell, and sleeping under the moonlight.

The presence of tourists and/ or their motivations to choose a tourist destination in rural locations take into consideration the following issues: the attraction of the landscape, the quality of the food, the general atmosphere (inhabitants, the reputation of the region, cleanliness), curiosities of the region, the quality of the environment in relation to health, rest and relaxation, itinerary (two ways), accomodation, great price, language problems, symphaty contacts with the local community, cultural attractions, the state of the roads, day and night entertainment, arrival and reception, local folklore, possibilities to practice some sports, travel planning and formalities, opportunities to make various shopping, other hobbies and amusements.

All these motivations intertwine with the advantages arising from the activities of rural tourism, as following: valorizing spaces for agriculture, natural resources, cultural heritage, rural traditions, agricultural products, exchanges between the income of urban and rural areas, creates direct and indirect jobs, improves infrastructure. There are a number of economic, social and cultural reasons which recommend developing touristic initiatives in rural areas as well as stimulating the rural economy. They are seen as main motivational trends of knowledging the activities or rural tourism, given the existence in Romania of some outstanding options of performing this type of tourism, motivated by the presence of natural and anthropic resources in a romanian rural area with multiple ethnic-folkloric traditions, cultural and historic monuments, museums etc.

Romanian peasants' artistic spirit gives color and form to the local landscape and transform the romanian village specific activities into a daily "party" of the time spent in the village. The large number of villages that our country holds (2861 communes with 9707 thousand inhabitants on 1st of january 2015) (<http://www.recensamantromania.ro/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/TS2.pdf>) is a major factor of activities developed in these regions ( figure no.1). For a better understanding we present the definition of rural tourism offered by H. Grolleau : " Rural tourism is a concept that includes tourist activity organized and led by the local population, based on a close connection with the natural and human environment" (Grolleau H., 1987).



ROMANIA	COMMUNES		CITIES		MUNICIPALITIES		TOTAL
		%		%		%	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Number a.t.u.	2861	89,94	217	6,82	102	3,21	3181
Surface – km <sup>2</sup>	207705,74	87,21	20797,30	8,73	9653,01	4,05	238156
No. of residents	9262851,00	50,80	2073465	11,37	6897812	37,83	18233128

Figure no.1 Romanian Map – representing communes, municipalities, cities and districts of Bucharest

Source: <http://www.acor.ro/acor/membrii-acor>

Representativeness of the romanian village (rural area occupies approximately 87,21% of the total area of the country) determines the decision makers (institutions, organizations, associations, international organizations etc.) to contribute to the sustainable development of rural tourism. The sustainability of tourism combines different aspects - economic, social, environmental etc. whose results demonstrate the impact on sustainable development and tourism.

Sustainable development of rural tourism is defined as a guarantee of the needs of the present without compromising the capabilities of the next generations of satisfying their needs (Comisia Brundtland, 1987). Romanian countryside benefits will occur when we, the ones living today, will leave as legacy more then we have received. Our responsibility was well designed over time by a number of personalities who led or loved our country. The statement made by Ștefan the Great that says "Moldova is not mine, but our descendants", continued with the words of King Mihai I of the Romanians " We borrowed this country from our children" and completed by Prince Charles, heir to the throne of Great Britain "What don't you understand? I love Romania" can be reformulated in : "Romania is the continuation of the human dream".

This is the ultimate trump of the pursuit of sustainable development of romanian tourism. Quantification of sustainable development is one of the primary concerns of organizations and researchers in the field. The complexity of this phenomenon is due to the large number of indicators that comprise aspects of life: economic indicators, social, ecological and human capital liaison, environmental or economic indicators.

Enhancement of natural resources and resources created in a region, site of tourism interest, mostly depends on the dynamism of the development of the national economy of a country, on the overall policy promoted by a country or another from the countries welcoming tourists in the development of tourism, on the facilities to attract visitors. Regarding this, we mention that the tourism potential held by the rural regions offers tourists the opportunity to spend some time in thematic villages depending on the resources available in the area. Thus, tourists can spend their holidays in fishing (hunting) villages, creative arts and handicraft villages, ethnographic folklore villages, pastoral villages, climatic and landscape villages etc., villages where traditions and culture are combined with leisure and pleasure, resulting the product of the romanian village.

### **III. MOTIVATION OF RURAL TOURISM**

The multitude of needs faced daily by human beings in developing their personal and professional development oblige the state institutions and public and private economic entities to offer them the possibility of travel, relax, educate, health, literacy, knowledge of traditions, practice different sports ( swimming, horseback riding, climbing etc.), to help maintain a clean natural environment etc. People's desires and needs are a priority and the government institutions of our country must seek solutions for an optimal and sustainable use of rural tourist resources available to our country in order to attract foreign tourists flows, as well as the internal ones.

We are currently witnessing an evolution of social phenomena in our country, which in the market economy will generate the formation of new categories of potential tourists with new reasons of spending their leisure time. We mention that the appearance and development of new tourism demand are of real interest and play a first fiddle on the rural tourism market and beyond.

The economic importance is completed by social and cultural effects of tourism. To these sides of the tourism phenomena are dedicated more and more studies, which refers to the social role of tourism and its cultural and educational side. In this context there will be analyzes on new relations between productive work and leisure, between the use of land for tourism purposes, especially between the social and cultural-educational chains of tourism and new service requests.

So, we talk about the presence of various factors which are benefic to tourism and their contribution to economic growth without neglecting the negative impact of tourism on the environment. Furthermore, the tourism consumer tends to become his own holiday space master ( by renting the space or by buying it); it tends to take short holidays ( for a day, for shopping etc); it tends to combine several types of tourism in the area and types of a holiday ( adventure + relaxation + action + participation in special events) etc. Considering these elements and assessing the experience over time of the tourism consumer (Nedelea A.M., 2014) (shown in hundred/thousand of studies) we notice a conceptual leap from the exalted tourist (stendhalian type - french writer Stendhal, after visiting the famous church of Santa Croce from Florence, was so confused that he said : " I was already in a kind of ecstasy (...). Absorbed in the contemplation of sublime beauty, I reached this point of emotion in which the celestial sensations given by the fine arts and full of passion feelings", text found in "Memories of a tourist") to the new type of tourist, the one that is analytical, critical, demanding, who always asks himself key questions even on "what the tourist is", also emphasized in the work of J.M.Hoerner (Geopolitical professor, tourism specialist, president of AMFORTH – World Association for Training in Hotel and Tourism Industry, author of several literature).

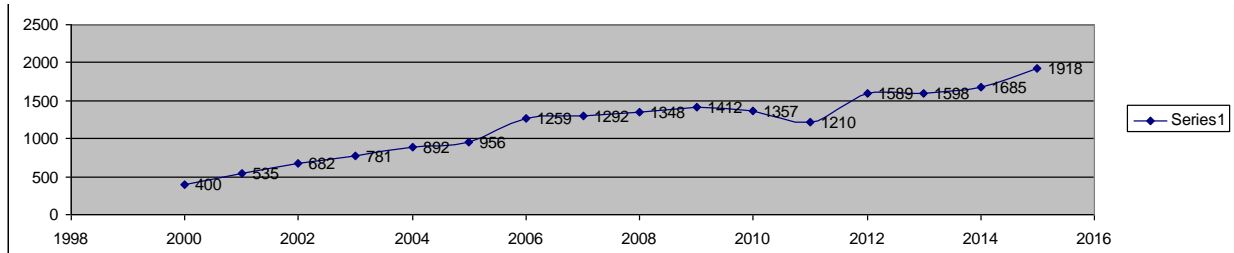
Tourist education, evolution and changes noticed by this over time are fundamental to the economic development of the romanian village.

### **IV. RURAL TOURISM IMPACT ON THE ROMANIAN ECONOMY**

Increased touristic demand for visiting rural areas which have a rich heritage in resources and traditions contributes in maintaining the trades, local services and creates new employment opportunities.

However, an accurate assessment of tourist traffic in this industry is quite difficult (Niță and Niță, 2008). Therefore we will analyze a number of indicators that allow "objective assessment" of the impact on the economy of rural tourism. We consider the number of units and human resources that are involved in strengthening the romanian rural tourism and have a decisive role in the formation of a tourist behaviour which leans towards this niche, being indispensable with natural resources (Avram and Bălan, 2015).

So, using statistics provided by the National Institute of Statistics (data series TEMPO) we note that over the past 15 years the number of registered national agropensions has evolved (figure no. 2).



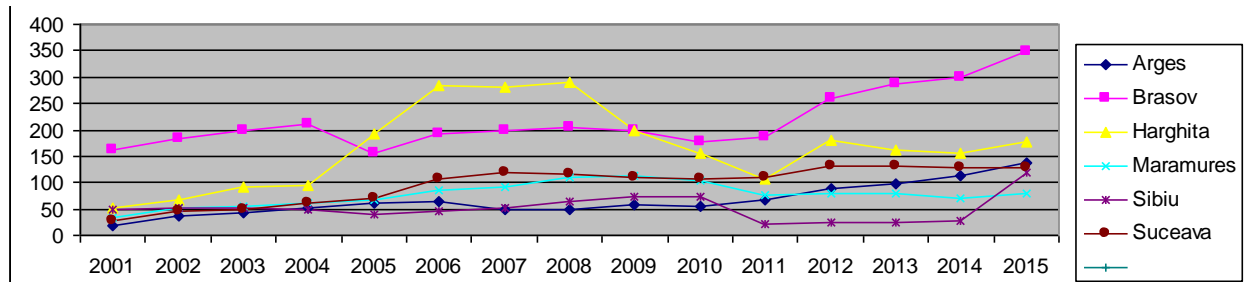
**Figure no.2 Dynamics of agropensions during 2000-2015**

Source: Created by author based on <https://statistici.insse.ro/shop/?lang=ro>

Romania's integration into the European Union has brought numerous development opportunities for rural tourism, and from 2006-2007 the number of agropensions recorded a significant increase due to free movement within the European Union, tourists being able to travel without a visa now. Therefore, the number of agropensions between 2007-2009 has recorded an increase from 1292 units in 2007 to 1348 units in 2008 and 1412 units in 2009.

We also notice that 2011 recorded the lowest number of agropensions nationwide. If in 2007 their number was 1292, in 2011 there were only 1210 agropensions. The unstable economic situation from 2011 halted both new investments and also has closed some of the existing pensions. Starting in 2012, the increases are visible and constant. The number of agropensions in Romania reaches a number of 1918 in 2015, an increase at a rate of 48,45% during 2007-2015.

Still using data series TEMPO, we find that representative regions for rural tourism in our country are Braşov, Harghita, Argeş, Suceava, Sibiu, Maramureş etc. (figure no.3)



**Figure no.3 Evolution of the number of rural locations in the counties with the greatest potential for rural tourism**

Source: Created by author based on <https://statistici.insse.ro/shop/?lang=ro>

The graphic shows that Braşov county is ranked first in the ranking of the counties with the highest potential in rural tourism. It records a constant evolution throughout the period 2001-2015. Increases in this period are due to culture, tradition and interest for customs in this county. In 2010 there was a slight decrease in the number of pensions, the same trend also being reflected in the national situation. The downward trend is also due to the measures taken by the government which led to the closure of businesses and halting new investments. Among the key factors that contributed to the situation presented are remembered the severe degradation of national transport infrastructure and the lack of motivation of human resources.

The data analyzed for the years 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 show an upward trend compared to the years 2009, 2010 and 2011. There are noticed large increases in the time series, as a result of numerous projects developed and also the intense media support for this segment of activity.

Rural tourism is one of the strengths of Romania, unmodernized areas attracting domestic and international tourists with different motivations.

Regarding the agrotourism personnel, we observe that in the time series analyzed, its level records a fluctuating trend from year to year (figure no.4)

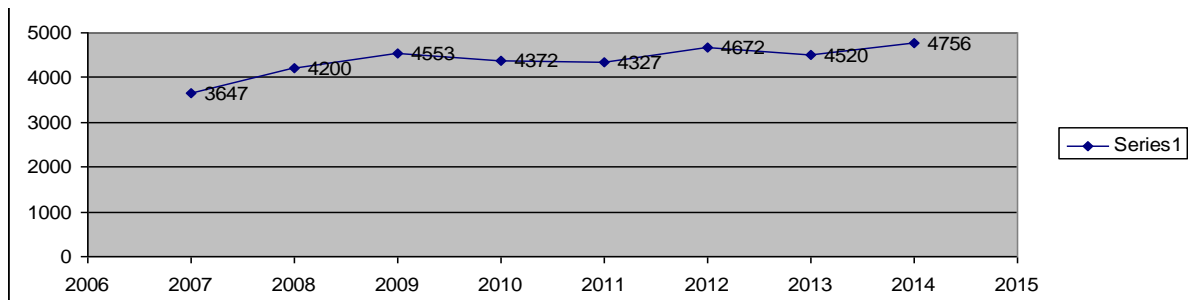


Figure no.4 Number of employees in agrotourism - national level

Source: Created by author based on: <https://statistici.insse.ro/shop/>

The years 2007, 2008 and 2009 are characterized by an increase in the number of employees in the agrotouristic pensions, while in 2010 and 2011 they suffer a slight decrease, due to the closures of business from the field or restructuring of businesses.

The period 2007-2014 has an increase in the number of employees in the agrotouristic pensions at about 30%. This increase in employment is largely due to the implementation of these national and regional projects which promote investment by creating new jobs (HRD; REGIO, RDP, etc.).

The situation presented shows that at national level during 2007 - 2014 the number of agrotouristic units and human resources in the rural tourism sector did not benefit from investments every year. This was manifested as a result of the low level of absorption of European funds, economic problems and fiscal policies that our country has faced.

V. METHODS USED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM IN ROMANIA

Natural and anthropogenic resources defined by spectacular landscapes, favorable climate conditions, special configuration of the relief and the flora and fauna potential, offer Romania the possibility of practicing several forms of rural tourism.

Development of rural tourism is necessary due tot the effect it has on the population in those areas. Please note that in rural areas in Romania living standards of the population is very low. Improving the lives of the rural population (rural population represents about 50% of the population of the country according to NSI - figure no.5) is closely related to the activities carried out in those regions as well as to the existing legislation.

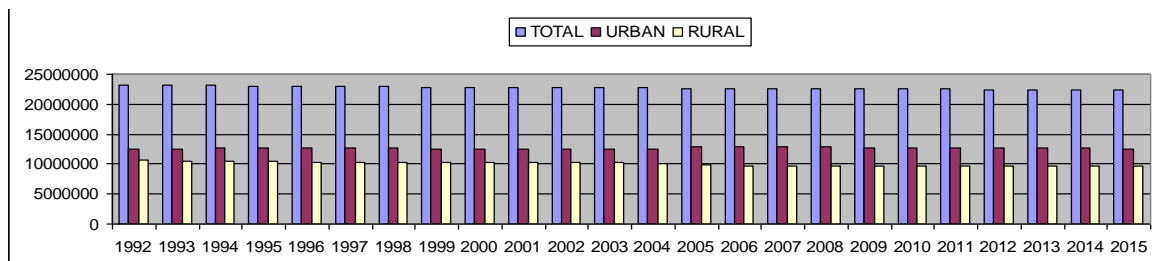


Figure no.5. Population by home on January 1st

Source: Created by author based on: <https://statistici.insse.ro/shop/>

In this context we consider the development and implementation of measures to increase competitiveness. A successfull way practiced in the countries of Western Europe and implemented in a shy way in our country is volunteer tourism (sites necessary for those interested [www.helpx.net](http://www.helpx.net), [www.wwoof.net](http://www.wwoof.net) or [www.workaway.info](http://www.workaway.info)). This is therefore a way to attract human resources for a short time and with benefits for rural tourism. The benefits of this type of activity can be found in the increasing experience for entrepreneurs in the field and the opportunity to promote tourism internationally. Specifically this activity is also the multiplier effect of promoting achieved following the descriptions about the places and customs unique in Romania (the existence of social networks enables the transmission of information for those interested).

Making and offering to use a national site of vacancy jobs in seasonal tourism is another way to improve and promote rural tourism in Romania. This site contains information on active legislation, European Directives, rights/obligations of employees and available positions for shifts depending on seasonality.

The beneficial effects of this site for human resources are found in the elimination of breaks during the year (which sometimes takes several months) with the offer of new jobs which suit the requirements.

EU Funds Absorbtion is another possibility of keeping and attracting human resources in rural tourism. Eliminating the negative aspects recorded in the previous program (excessive bureaucracy, non-compliance with deadlines to repay the funds, the complexity of the forms, tightening resolving disputes) from 2007-2013, we have the possibility that by accessing axes of Human Capital Operational Programme (HCOP) to improve

tourism services due to human resources development. Accessing axes 1,2 and 3 of the Human Capital Operational Programme provides the possibility of developing professional training programs, assessments and certification of competences, as well as counseling; targeting financial aspects for employers; mutual aid in vulnerable groups : romi, unemployed or disabled people.

Removing the negative elements of these programs and attracting european money should be a priority also at microeconomic and macroeconomic levels.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion I believe that the production of tourism services provided in rural areas (agrotourism, ecotourism in rural areas, adventure tourism, etc.) lead to an increase in living standards in rural areas by providing a constant remuneration for employed labor. Also we are witnessing the combating of aging in rural areas (mainly due to the emigration of young people in urban areas) by providing opportunities to achieve incomes in their area of origin. Young people will make the most of their knowledge, instead of being attracted by opportunities in urban areas. Also, by initiating retraining courses (by creating professional skills for the local population) and economic diversification activities in rural areas, the touristic industry is developing and unemployment among the local population is stopped. We envisage that development of tourism infrastructure (accommodations, restaurants etc) and valorisation of the extremely rich natural potential and not yet fully exploited is an attraction to foreign investors in these regions.

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