

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGROTOURISM IN THE MOUNTAIN AREA - A TENDENCY OF THE FUTURE IN PROMOTION OF THE ROUMANIAN MOUNTAIN ZONES

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Indeed, today we can no longer speak of a rural economy based solely on agriculture. The general process of integrating all economic branches determined essential changes in the structure of rural economies, in the life of villages and of the inhabitants thereof. Therefore, modifications of conceptions, of directing efforts towards excessive technologization of a human way of being characterized by intensive power consumption and other material values usually scathed away, are necessary," in view of reaching more balanced life forms, rhythms and tendencies, a wiser management and the use of resources which are less prone to exhaustion, of recyclable energies which can long and successfully be used." Among the numerous activities which are developed at present in the rural areas, especially in the mountain areas, tourism represents an important position with a tendency of extension and depth. It is generated by numerous specific resources beginning with the exceptional natural landscape from various areas which in their turn present a large variety of mineral waters and thermal springs, historical sites, traditional architectonic monuments, customs and crafts, local traditional dress, especially attractive flora and fauna rich folklore etc. Rural tourism represents moreover, a way of maintaining the populations in the least favored areas, it stimulates artisan rural economy, ensures the preservation and the protection of the rural environment etc. The work refers to mountain touring zone Almașu Mare - Alba, li presents on organized case a "Agrotouristic pension", where the tourists benefit by board and lodging. The work emphasezes the possibilities of fitting out, the expenses and the revenues, from which result a substantial profit.

Keywords: agro-tourism pension, tourism services, rural tourism, agro-tourism, pension classification.

„The rural communities represent, according to present standards, the environment of a maximum visibility of a world which still tries to exceed its own condition – imposed by the dependency thereof on agriculture – to construct its activity beyond any type of social marginalization” as it is stated in the Introduction to the book named „Local Rural Economies” (1).

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Among the numerous activities which are developed at present in the rural areas, especially in the mountain areas, tourism represents an important position with a tendency of extension and depth. It is generated by numerous specific resources beginning with the exceptional natural landscape from various areas which in their turn present a large variety of mineral waters and thermal springs, historical sites, traditional architectonic monuments, customs and crafts, local traditional dress, especially attractive flora and fauna rich folklore etc.

Presenting a large diversity of manifestation and development forms in a territorial profile, „tourism is a phenomenon of our century which acts both in the social field and in the economic one.” (3).

To the same extent, tourism creates and maintains a balance between the different geographical areas (mountain, hills and fields), between agriculture and the other branches of the economy, between different professions etc.

Therefore we mention that in Romania five large tourism areas can be found: the Oriental Carpathians area, the Meridian Carpathians area, Banat Mountains area, Western Carpathians area and the Black Sea area and the Danube Delta. Each area is distinguished through the specificity thereof and through the local resources, through the development level of tourism, through the preoccupation of the population and of the administrative management bodies for the development of these particularly important activities.

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MATERIAL AND METHOD

For illustrating the possibility and the necessity of practicing rural tourism in Romania, a case study was performed in the locality of Almașu Mare, Alba County – Andreea Pension.

A technical and economic analysis of a peasant household from this locality, which had been practicing agro-tourism for several years, was performed and the identification of a long term development strategy was researched for this economic system.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analyzed household is part of the tourism area located on the banks of Aries River. The respective family had been practicing tourism for several years and ever since 2005 it has been a member of the National Agency for Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism in Romania (ANTREC). In this context a contract (no. 1 from August 1, 2005) was concluded between the two parties (ANTREC, Alba Branch and the owner) for the functioning of the tourism pension, in view of ensuring tourists „vacationing throughout the year” (art. 1) under the obligation that „... the tourism services are in compliance with the international standards, at accessible prices, thus rendering rural tourism attractive, both for the Romanian tourists as well as for the foreign ones” (art. 3).

Pursuant to the concluded contract, the pension received a certificate of classification which grants it the category of „two daisies” by the National Authority for Tourism, category which expresses comfort, technical, public endowment and the quality of services.

In the following lines, we shall present several aspects of the pension’s activity during the period from foundation, namely August 1, 2005 – July 31, 2006.

The pension belonged to a family consisting of 4 persons (2 parents and 2 children). In the high season period, apart from the members of the family, other persons providing various services (procurement, maintenance, cooking and serving means etc.) are hired.

The total accommodation space comprises 14 rooms, belonging to two buildings (figure 1 and 2) constructed and equipped as per the standards imposed by the National Authority for Tourism, having a pronounced rural character, fact which represents a particularly attractive element for tourists especially from other areas of the country and from abroad. In the building consisting of 10 rooms (fig. 1) a dining room with a capacity of 20 seats is arranged for the tourists who have meals there.



Figure 1. Main building

The space arranged for tourism is based on the house of the owner (4 rooms, 2 at the ground floor and two at the first floor) and an appendix conceived and executed especially for this purpose (3 rooms at the ground floor and 3 at the first floor) as well as a building (fig. 2) representing an old house (bought), reconditioned and arranged for tourism (4 rooms). The appendix is provided at the first floor with a hall in which tourists can watch TV, can listen to the radio, can read the press, can play fun games, and with a dining room at the ground floor.

All construction, arrangement, equipment works for the spaces were performed with the amount of ROL 2.95 bn at the level of the prices of 2005. Broken down on components, the respective amount represents ROL 2.10 bn in constructions (the two buildings) whereas ROL 850 bn represents sanitary, electrical and heating installations and interior endowment with furniture, equipment for beds, carpets etc.

Having consulting the norms pertaining to the duration of the objectives created through investments (50 years for constructions, 20 years for installations and equipment), the result is an annual depreciation level amounting ROL 42 m for constructions and ROL 42.5 m for installations and equipment, totaling ROL 84 m, value which is to be added to the other annual expenditures.



Figure 2. The old renovated building

Total expenditures for a year (1.VIII. 2005 - 31.VIII. 2006) amounted to ROL 1,098,200, 000 (table 1).

Table 1

The value and the structure of expenditures

No.	Type of expenditures	Total	
		ROL thousand	%
1.	Total expenditures	1098200.0	100.0
2.	Out of which: - electrical power	84000.0	8.2
3.	- thermal power	7200.0	0.7
4.	- telephone	24000.0	2.3
5.	- consumables	1000.0	0.1
6.	- duties, taxes, interests	75000.0	0.3
7.	- staff salaries	780000.0	76.1
8.	- food purchases	126000.0	12.3

Out of the data presented in table no. 1, it follows that the largest portion of expenditures (approximately $\frac{3}{4}$) is represented by staff salaries, including the salaries of the family members of the entrepreneurs. In decreasing order, food purchase expenditures (over 12.0%), power expenditures (over 8%), telephone (over 2%) are next. The other expenditure elements hold reduced percentages (under 1.0%).

If at the total of the current expenditures we also add the investment depreciation level of ROL 84500 thousand, the result is ROL 1182700 thousand as total annual expenditures.

The revenues of the pension are achieved from two sources: accommodation and board.

Having extracting information from the accommodation bookings, it follows that, during the period which the study refers to, a number of 2400 days/room have been rented, at an average price of ROL 750 thousand per day/room. It follows a total amount of ROL 1800 million (V_1).

Based on the same bookings, it follows that a number of 1570 persons/day have been served three meals and 3140 person/day have been served two meals. Using the prices charged for a meal (ROL 500 thousand for three meals and ROL 400 thousand for two meals) it follows a total amount (V_2) of ROL 2040.16 million ($1570 \times \text{ROL } 500,000 / \text{day} = \text{ROL } 785,000.000 + 3140 \text{ persons/day} \times \sim \text{ROL } 400,000 \text{ lei/day} = \text{ROL } 1,256,000,000$) has been obtained from this source.

The profit was computed through the difference between the revenues obtained from the two sources (accommodation and board) and the total expenditures, including the depreciation for the objectives created through investments, namely:

a) $V_T = V_1 + V_2 = \text{ROL } 1800.0 \text{ mil} \pm \text{ROL } 2040.1 \text{ mil.} = \text{ROL } 3840.1 \text{ mil.}$
Total revenues

b) $P_v = V_T - C_h = \text{ROL } 3840.1 \text{ mil.} - \text{ROL } 1180.27 \text{ mil.} = \text{ROL } 2653 \text{ mil.}$

The computed amount represents both the gross profit as well as the net one, since in the first years from foundation the rural tourism pensions are exempt from taxation.

Splitting the profit by 12 (the number of months in a year), it follows that the monthly profit is above ROL 221 million, amount which allows for the covering of the expenditures of the pension owner's family as well as an important amount for investments (development fund), in view of the extension and modernization of the pension, being an attraction base for a large number of tourists, for further increasing revenues.

We hereinafter present some data pertaining to the structure of tourists according to certain criteria:

- a. The structure of tourists according to nationality (countries):
 - from Romania – approx. 80 %;
 - from other countries (Moldova, Greece, France, UK) – approx. 20 %.

b. The structure of tourists per areas:

- from Alba and related counties - 75 %;
- from other counties - 25 %.

c. The structure of tourists per profession:

- persons from the management of economic units - approx 40 %;
- persons with important positions in economy – approx. 30 %;
- other categories - approx 30 %.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Although the studied period extends only over a year of functioning of the tourism pension, the obtained results are more than convincing for practicing rural tourism in the Almașu Mare area.

2. The performed study shows the necessity of organizing rural tourism only in the conditions in which the business starts from a basis which can rival the one offered by the traditional units.

3. The possibility of practicing agro-tourism is demonstrated by the studied case, starting from one's own house and by extending the space based on the capital accumulation and the credits offered by the banks in our country.

PROPOSALS

1. The use of new investments for increasing comfort in view of granting a superior category (three daisies) (sanitary installations, radio, TV in every room, public telephone, etc.).

2. Developing the agricultural household (increasing cattle, sheep, pig, and poultry numbers) for ensuring the animal products necessary for serving meals from one's own farm.

3. Arranging the hall from the first floor of the appendix for developing a mini-club, necessary during the days which are unfavorable for hiking.

4. Developing a store of craft products and food products specific to the area.

5. Developing a covered parking lot for the car owning tourists.

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