

AGRITOURISM POTENTIAL OF THE RURAL LOCALITIES FROM DORNA' S BASIN

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The rural communities show a disturbing image, by their contradicting images and the structures of great mobility. They describe a system in which the private property is prevailing and most of the times the rural communities are the scene of „parallel economies”. The research underlines the agritourism potential with emphasise on the possibilities to integrally develop the rural localities at the level of Dorna's Basin, Suceava county, a region with a remarkable potential that is not fully exploited. Agri-tourism in this area comes as an alternative for development of inhabitants' daily lives. Although Dorna's Basin has a rich potential, the tourism flow is mostly domestic, the foreign tourists having only a very small share (about 2%). In order to increase the number of tourists, especially the foreign ones, an improvement of the material base and an intense promotion, by various means (leaflets, illustrated tourism guides, web pages, television and so on) are needed.

Key words: rural development, complementary activities, rural space, tourism, rural communities, Dorna's Basin

Rural tourism and agri-tourism have evolved differently in each country. Great qualitative differences can be noticed especially when it comes to services and endowments. Each country has its strong points and its own potential which allow development of the rural spaces. In Central and Western Europe, the most attractive and developed area, representative for rural tourism and agri-tourism, is represented by the Alps. Austria is considered to be the mother country of agri-tourism. The international experiences must be carefully chosen and adapted to the conditions existing in Romania. Specialised providers for various categories and segments of Western consumers of agri-tourism must have an influence on this process and now, in the enlarged and united Union, Romania is becoming more and more attractive and sought after as tourism and agri-tourism destination.

Turning the resources of the Romanian villages into account can be done by organizing various fairs, festivals, contents that will complete the favorable image

of the villages. Still, the rural tourism/agri-tourism remains the main and the most important way for turning these resources into account. They make a contribution to introducing some diversified natural conditions into the domestic and foreign tourism circuit and to turning the entire thesaurus of traditional and contemporary culture into account.

This vast activity is based on three inter-dependent elements:

- Attraction to the natural beauties, to ethnography, novelty, charma ND events specific to the rural life;
- Accommodation and meals, even though they are not at the hotels standards, must be of high quality and offered with hospitality;
- Transportation, access ways to the rural area are vital for ensuring a continuous flow of tourists.

At the level of Dorna depression, rightfully called “The pearl of Bucovina”, well-known for its beauties provided during centuries, for its high-quality products delivered to the marketplace (“La Dorna” milk and cheese, “Dorna” mineral water), for its rich pastures that determined the secular traditions of animal breeding, for its rich resources of mineral water, a better turning into account of the tourism and agri-tourism potential is in order, by a better involvement of the villages in the area.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In this context, the aim of this research is to underline the agritourism potential with emphasise on the possibilities to integrally develop the localities at the level of Dorna's Basin, Suceava county, a region with a remarkable potential that is not fully exploited.

Dorna's Basin has a surface of 222.194 km², representing 0.63% of the surface of the Eastern Carpathians and 0.093% of the country's surface. Within this area there are 10 communes with 49 villages and two urban centers, represented by Brosteni town and Vatra Dornei city, localities that form the administrative point of view are part of Suceava county [4].

Dorna's Basin has a wide range of attractions that facilitate the development of tourism: the surrounding mountains, where one can go hiking on many routes, the rivers that form wild quays (Cheile Zugrenilor on Bistrița river), the resinous forests that give the air full with ozone, the rich hunting fund and many architectural monuments and historical objectives. Such a potential, as well as the technical-material base, allowed the people to perform several types of tourism in the area, such as: mountain tourism, hunting tourism, sports tourism (skiing, parapantă, river-rafting), spa tourism and rural tourism.

Tourism activities, which comprise a wide range of services: accommodation, meals, treatments, entertainment and so on, have an important contribution to the social-economical development of Dorna's depression.

Thus, tourism, besides the recreational and cultural effect has on the visitors, also generates new job opportunities, at the same time limiting migration towards other areas or commuting. The most important and visible impact is in the economical field. In Dorna's Basin, one can notice a growth of the living standards of the population practicing rural tourism. Having to meet the demands from the World Tourism Organization, the inhabitants has been „forced” to improve the infrastructure and the

accommodation equipment, even more, to increase the number of rooms, in order to practice agri-tourism on long term. Besides the incomes and the growth of living standards, tourism encourages the development of traditional activities (crafts, handicrafts). An important role in promoting the rural tourism, which has developed very good in the last years in Dorna's depression, has been played by various associations and organizations, such as: ANTREC, CEFIDEC, Mountain Farmers' Federation – „Dorna”, Țara Dornelor Foundation and so on. These associations want to promote, organize and develop agri-tourism, by training the owners of tourism and agri-tourism units.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Although Dorna's Basin has a rich potential, the tourism flow is mostly domestic, the foreign tourists having only a very small share (about 2%). In order to increase the number of tourists, especially the foreign ones, an improvement of the material base and an intense promotion, by various means (leaflets, illustrated tourism guides, web pages, television and so on) are needed.

Vatra Dornei spa is an area with many investment opportunities that would lead to a faster economical development of the area. Thus, the following are recommended:

- works for consolidating the Spa's Casino and putting the casino into the tourism circuit;
- building the agri-food market place and improving the land where the market will be built;
- building parking lots;
- rehabilitation of city's thermal system;
- improvement and homologation of the ski and sledge slopes;
- turning Lunca Dornelor and Runc recreation areas into account;
- improving Dorna river, in order to have recreational activities, by building a modernized dam and endowing the lake with boats and hydrobicycles;
- building a factory for processing berries;
- building a furniture factory.

If these investments are done in the future, Dorna's depression will attract more tourists and maybe it will be recognised at the world's level as a tourism area [5]. For now, Dorna's Basin is slowly but constantly evolving. Dorna's Basin does not have favorable conditions for the „big crops” (cereals, technical and food plants, etc.), but there are conditions favorable to development of the zootechnics sector, being the most favorable area for cattle (especially the milk one) and sheep breeding. Among the agricultural crops, potato is characteristic to this area.

The secondary mountain pastures comprise hayfields and natural grasslands, representing a quality fodder base. From ancient times, their existence has stimulated the pastoral economy, which represented an important factor for humanizing the depression, for keeping the liaisons with the population from Transilvania and Moldova.

The population living in the area (50.730 inhabitants) is distributed as follows – 34.8% in the urban environment and 65.2% in the rural area – compared to the country's average – 54.7% in the urban environment and 45.3% in the rural area and it shows that the level of economical development in general is lower in this part of the country. Nowadays, the active population from Dorna's Basin is of 22,453 persons, which represents 44.26% of the total population, out of which 10,594 persons are employed, meaning 47.18% of the active population. The number of persons working in agriculture is 11,859 and represents 52.18% of the active population [6].

An overview on the density of animal species from Dorna's Basin that participate to forming this indicator (which is of 50.90 UVM/100 ha of agricultural land) shows that the number of animals per hectare is below optimal (in average, the optimal number is 1UVM/ha). In the rural environment we can not talk about a model of regional development, but only about local models, in which the territorial image of the area investigated is marked by the specificity of the agararian structures generating own ways of using the space, the natural and social capital. Multiplying the economical structure and especially the appearance and the encouragement of the structures specific to the rural tourism induce not only a development of occupations but also reinserts the rural environment into the economical paradigm. Effects at the cultural and communication level appear, tourism being a dynamic element that can bring traditions closer to modernity.

The study shows that within the rural space from Dorna's Basin, the factors favorable to development are: **a wide range of natural resources** (mainly underground's mineral resources, forest vegetation, agricultural surfaces with productive qualities that allow development of animal breeding, valuable elements of the natural environment); **human potential** (numerous and cheap labor force, youth that ensures regeneration of this labor force, partially trained in agricultural and non-agricultural operations); **forest potential; nature parks and monuments; special landscape and patrimonial values** (historical, cultural, architectural and ethnographic); **local experience in animal breeding, handicrafts, crafts and agri-tourism**.

The factors against the development of the rural space in the area studied are: continuation of depopulation; reduced diversification of economical activities; non-performant agriculture; low incomes for the population; bad roads – most of the communal roads are not modernized and more than 61% of the rural population does not have direct access to the main roads and the network of railways; water supplying systems are insufficient and not proper; the educational system is not so diversified, the schools are poorly endowed with specialised equipment; degradation of forests, mainly by an uncontrolled aforestation.

Based on the fluctuation of the determinants of development of rural development in Dorna's Basin, the following objectives have been conceived, to which 8 development strategies correspond:

1. Increasing incomes and improving the quality of life, by promoting the diversification of economical activities:

- stimulation and promotion of investments in the rural area
- development of capital marketplaces (deduction in the price of credits).

The financial and fiscal incentives created for the economy of the rural space will have multiplication effects at the economical and social level, on all the members of the community, both as individuals and economical activities (the complexity degree of the rural economy is increasing, small and medium enterprises are born).

2 Turning agriculture into a performant and diversified activity:

- Stimulation of activities in this field

Considering that mostly of the activities of rural economies take place in farms, the chance to have a sustainable development is represented by stimulation and support of investments in agricultural farms, which will lead to: rational turning into account of the rural resources; increase of the farmers' incomes and improvement of living and working conditions; increase of viability of agricultural farms; diversification of agricultural production and rural services; increase of quality of products, in order for them to become competitive, on local, regional or international marketplaces; decrease of production costs; improvement of hygiene and animal breeding conditions; increase of life quality; preservation of environment.

By offering a wide range of rural services, the farmers will focus on the productive side and will request specialised services that are necessary for them to perform their activities.

3. Attracting and maintaining the young people in the rural area, in order to decrease the average age of the rural population and to ensure the human resources in the rural space, by age structures and social categories

- direct or indirect financial assistance for agricultural entrepreneurs, who are less than 40 years old.

Measures have to start from ensuring the vital space and facilities that will provide the young people with the necessary conditions to start a productive investment. These measures will have a positive impact on the rural development, by maintaining active a population that has the capacity to work and possibilities to act on long term.

4. Development of human potential

- by supporting the continuous vocational training and by getting the local population involved in the process of economical development.

The subjects are ready to direct themselves towards the production of quality products, to use ecological production technologies, to produce economically efficient and so on.

5. Supporting the development of social and technical infrastructure

- investments and "compensations for handicaps".

The quality of infrastructures acts as a capital magnet.

6. Increasing the economical, ecological and social role of forests

- development of programs regarding the establishment of protective clearings, protection of forestry's resources and their improvement and development of forests fund.

Expansion of the surfaces covered by forests, by using the non-productive lands will make a contribution to both increasing the ecologization degree of the area and to increasing the local incomes.

7. Ensuring alternative incomes

- efficient use of local resources and stimulation of tourism and crafts activities.

8. Rehabilitation, protection and preservation of areas with a natural value and attractive landscapes

- stimulation of activities that do not generate negative ecological effects.

Panaci commune is situated in Dorna's Depression, belonging to the mountain area of Suceava county. It comprises 6 villages situated on all the valleys, which converge in Neagra Sarului river on one side and in Neagra Brostenilor on the other. The commune's surface is of 140 km, most of them, respectively 61%, is represented by mountain heights and 39% by low depressionary places [6].

As settlement, it is situated in the surrounding places of the important spa Vatra Dornei, which represents a favorable element from the tourism point of view.

Relief

Panaci commune is situated at an altitude that varies from 900 and 1600 m, but most of it (more than 45%) is at the altitude of 1200 m.

Natural environment

Of the commune's total surface, the mountain area represent 57%, being of an exceptional beauty, due to the great variety of landscapes, flora and fauna.

The whole area is covered by rich forests on which many sheepfolds or cowfolds that ensure animal ecological products with a great nutritive and economical value are setup.

A specific element for the area analyzed is represented by the volcanic relief. This occupies the left side of Calimanel river, having smooth slopes towards the depression and portions of deep valleys.

The mountain, by its position, by the direction of the main peaks, by altitude and massivity, by structure and landscapes, is a special geographical entity.

Climatic conditions

The climate is a mild continental one, due to the fact that the locality is situated in a depression. The average annula tempreature is of 5.2 °C, with variations between – 6 °C in the winter and 15 °C in the summer. The average temperature in July is of 22.5 °C and in January of –10.2 °C [4].

The depression is closed by a mountainous frame that ensures a climate favorable to the amusement activities.

Fauna

Due to environment's conditions and the ones provided by forests – shelter and food and then due to the diversified relief, vegetation, micro-climate, the fauna is very well developed. It is represented by mammals, such as bears, wolves, Carpathian stags, deers, lynxes, martens, wild boars, rabbits, squirrels. Also, one could find birds such as the capercaillie, the raven, the jay, the nutpecker, the tomtit, the blackbird, the hoopoe, the hawk. Very valuable and attractive from the tourism point of view is the piscicultural fauna: the trout, the umber, the barbel, the huck.

Population

Panaci commune has a density of 17 inhabitants/km², which is similar to the population of the entire Romanian mountain area.

The total population is of 2324 inhabitants, out of which 72% represent the active population.

The high potential of Panaci commune, as far as the human resources (especially the 18-60 age segment, which represent more than 60% of the total population) are concerned, generates good conditions for this potential to remain as high as today.

Popular traditions

The popular traditions have been kept unaltered. From ancient times, the men here have liked to carve wood, to decorate their hats, the peasant coats and waist leather belts, to play the shepherd's flute and the bagpipes. The women have liked to decorate their houses first, by painting the ledges and then to dress up with long floss silk headkerchiefs, with vividly colored shirts and peasant skirts.

The carpets, Romanian peasant homespun skirts, peasant towels and all the other homemade fabrics are very attractive for tourists, being made using local floral motives specific to the area. Also, the wooden objects are well-known for their beauty and are represented by the furniture, chairs, tables, chests and supports for the deerhorns and wild boars fangs.

Nature's monuments

One of the most important strong points for development of agri-tourism is represented by the nature's monuments, very numerous in the area: the mysterious „Jumalțu“ mineral water spring that springs twice a day, like an artesian well; „Pietrele roșii“, representing relics of Dacian culture; „Tinovu Mare“ peat reservation; „Mlaștina Drăgoioasa“ micro-reservation; the reservation of juniper trees and Pinus Cembra from Calimani mountains; „12 Apostoli“ rezervation; „Cheile Zugrenilor“ rezervation; „Cheile Barnarului“ rezervation; „Toance“ rezervation [5].

The special natural environment specific to the mountain area, together with the presence on the commune's territory of some valuable ethnographic elements and interesting tourism objectives, represent landmarks in the development of agri-tourism and agri-tourism related services.

There are several types of farms within Panaci commune:

- farms where the head of the family is farmer and the owner of the farm.

- farms where the head of the family is employee and who is taking care of the farm's agricultural activities after work.
- farms where the head of the family is retired and takes care of the farm with the help of the family members.
- farms where the head of the family is intellectual and he's only taking care of a small garden and breeds small animals and poultry.
- farms with agri-tourism profile.
- Mixed farms (occasionally with agri-tourism services).

All five villages within Panaci commune have a picturesque natural environment that is not polluted and a micro-climate that is very good for one's health, all of them ensuring very good conditions for tourists' physical and mental relaxation.

The fact that after 1990 the commune has been visited by many tourists that occasionally sought accommodation at farms determined actions for establishment of farms with an agri-tourism profile. Thus, the following agri-tourism farms have been established and certified:

- * Panaci villages – 5 farms;
- * Coverca village – 2 farms;
- * Păltiniș villages – 2 farms;
- * Drăgoioasa village – 2 farms;
- * Glodu village – 1 farm.

In Panaci village, there is also a mini-hotel totally dedicated to tourism. Panaci commune has a strong agricultural potential, mainly represented by grasslands and hayfields. At the commune's level there is a total surface of 4345 ha of agricultural lands, out of which 57.2% is represented by hayfields and 38.7% by grasslands. This structure requires the human activities to be guided towards animal breeding. At the level of farms, the agricultural lands show a certain degree of crumbling, which determines a decrease of their economical potential. The fact that only 8.3 % of the farms own more than 10 hectares of land and a quarter of them have surfaces between 5 and 10 ha and if we consider the fact that these surfaces mostly represent natural grasslands, then it will be safe to say that these farms have a subsistence character.

This aspect is also confirmed by the way the number of sheep is distributed per farms. Thus, of the total number of farms, 14.4% do not have even a single cow, 72.1% have 1-3 cows and only 13.5% have more than 4 cows, being the only ones that we can say that perform a partially commercial activity.

The work also comprises a case study regarding the efficiency of an agri-tourism guesthouse (Poiana). Poiana guesthouse has been established in 2002, using the owner's own funds. After the expertise, it has been catalogued as a 3 daisy guesthouse. The entire activity is performed by the 5 members of the family (2 parents, 2 grandparents and a child). The farm has 20 ha of agricultural land, 90% being represented by natural grasslands. The owners breed 10 animals, out of which 8 are cows and 2 are horses. They also breed 5 pigs and 50 chickens. The

farm has two buildings, one for the tourism activity and the other for the family members. The family's incomes are as follows:

- incomes from agricultural activities;
- budgetary incomes (grandparents' pensions and child's allowance);
- incomes from agri-tourism activities.

The total amount of the annual incomes from the first two sources (without the agri-tourism activity) is of 38,740 RON. Deducting the expenses with the farm, they have a gross profit of 3,805 RON. From the agri-tourism activities, deducting the expenses, they have a gross annual of 33,469 RON, which represents almost ten times the profit obtained from agricultural activities and budgetary sources, which demonstrates the efficiency of the area's agri-tourism activities [6].

CONCLUSIONS

Agri-tourism in this area comes as an alternative for development of inhabitants' daily lives. Used to the thought that they are forgotten by the world, still, this activity managed to change the mentality of people and the village's monotony. In a few years, Panaci commune will be able to compete with the Eastern villages, at the same time keeping its values and its own elements of originality.

As a result of the studies made, we can come to the following conclusions:

- Panaci commune, situated in the south-eastern area of Suceava county, has a strong agri-tourism potential not sufficiently turned into account.
- More than 90% of the peasant farms, by norms and the economical potential, have a subsistence character.
- The case study made on an average sized peasant farm with agri-tourism activities shows the high efficiency of agri-tourism activity, obtaining a ten times higher profit, compared to the profit obtained from agricultural activities.

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