

## STUDY AND RESEARCH ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF RURAL TOURISM AND AGROTOURISM IN BRAȘOV

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*In the contemporary world, tourism is undoubtedly one of the dominant phenomena, one of the most profitable segments in the world's economy through its remarkable dynamics, multiple motivations, and high diversity.*

*In Romania, rural tourism has always been practised, although spontaneously, sporadically, casually and especially in unorganized forms. Its actual manifestation was recorded in the 1920s-30s, as accommodation provided to the occasional visitors of some rural settlements.*

*Starting with the year 1990, the interest in rural tourism is revived. Numerous associations and bodies are established whose objectives are to promote and develop rural tourism. Among them, the Romanian Federation for Mountain Development (1990) aims at promoting, under any form, the inhabitants of the mountains. Including by promoting, organizing, and developing agrotourism. The Federation was followed by the Romanian Agency for Agrotourism (1995), aimed at introducing Romanian agrotourism into the international system, and the National Association for Ecological and Cultural Rural Tourism (ANTREC) – 1994, member of the European Federation of Rural (EUROGITES), etc.*

**Key words:** rural tourism, agrotourism, touristic house, tourist, natural and anthropic resources

The city of Brașov, the tourist centre of the county, is itself a settlement of high tourist interest endowed with monuments from various historical periods; justly called "a museum-city", it is also one of the most visited tourist centres in the country.

The city is a starting point for the entire network of resorts and chalets that has developed in the extremely attractive landscape of the neighbouring mountain area. Brașov is also a spa, owing to its remarkable curative qualities resulting from the specific weather condition of the contact area between the Bârsa Low Land and the Mounts Postăvaru and Piatra Mare.

The settlement recorded an extraordinary evolution: in the Middle Ages, it was a highly developed village concentrating the entire economic life of the entire Bârsa Region.

Today, Râșnov encounters its fully economic regeneration according to the new market demands. Its geographic position, landscape, and a little interest from the local authorities may turn Râșnov into a tourist attraction that could thus become a famous tourist area like Bran.

Tourist services are a variety of activities aimed at meeting the tourists' needs during and related to their travel, such as some common demands (rest, food) on the one hand, and specific characteristics of tourism itself, on the other.

## **MATERIAL AND METHOD**

The paper is based upon an inventory of the natural and man-made resources of the area, studies on the tourist development and promotion in the area, as well as case studies in already existing PENSIONS.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Emphasizing the main characteristics of tourist services is important to identify and delimit them from the other components of the economic and social activity. Tourist services have a series of specific features that are determined by the particular nature of the tourist supply and demand, their correlations, and the conditions provided by the purchase-selling activities.

By its nature, tourist services should provide conditions for the recovery of the workforce, as well as pleasant and instructive pastime; they must also be conceived of in such manner as, following tourist consumption, the individual should acquire additional information, knowledge, and even skills. Under the present-day conditions provided by Romania as a country committed to new development, such an orientation of the services provided render tourism an important instrument in increasing the quality of life.

Another demand of tourist consumption, that should be effectively met by tourist services, is the provision of the tourist's active rest – a modern procedure of relaxation and treatment that eliminates the negative consequences of overwork and nervous stress. Starting from these premises, tourist organizers should be interested in planning holidays and tourist arrangements that offer multiple possibilities for recreational activities: cultural, artistic, sports, handicraft, hobby-stimulating, etc., aimed at diversifying traditional entertainment and increase attractiveness according to the active rest criteria.

Although there is close similarity between the tourist demand and consumption, the two concepts cannot be juxtaposed. Thus, the official definitions reveal the different content of the two categories:

- “tourist demand consists in the total number of persons who manifest their wish to travel periodically and temporarily outside their own residence, for other purposes than carrying out paid activities at destination”;
- “tourist consumption is made up of the expenses incurred by tourist demand to purchase new services and goods related to the tourist motivation”.

Therefore, tourist demand is the total demands, either expressed or not yet expressed, regarding the appropriation of tourist products whereas tourist consumption is the material form of demand.

The town of Râșnov is also favoured by its location near Brașov which is famous for its old architectural monuments and top tourist buildings and endowment.

The town is recommended for active rest (sports and leisure), as well as for its therapeutical action upon the central nervous systems with positive influence upon all the vital functions.

#### *Case study: The “Valea Cetății” PENSION*

The “**Valea Cetății**” PENSION is a new three-star accommodation place, recently included in the tourist circuit, located at the foot of the Râșnov Fortress (*Photo 1*).

A few minutes’ walk provides access to the centre where there are several important buildings of the town: the Town Hall, Culture Club, Evangelical Church, etc. The pension is located on the road that connects Râșnov to Poiana Brașov, an extremely visited resort.

The building style is a mixture of rustic and modern, as the pension is built only in fir wood on concrete pillars, which creates an atmosphere of privacy; nevertheless, it provides all the necessary modern facilities (*Photo 1*).



Photo1 **Valea Cetății PENSION**

The “Valea Cetății” PENSION is privately owned by the “ȘTEFĂNESCU IMPEX” trading company, a limited liability company with its main office in Râșnov, 3 Cetății St. The company was founded in 2002, certified by the Romanian Trading Register J08/1309/2002, and has the unique registration R7475465. At present, its social capital is 24,830 RON (Source: Company balance, December 2005).

The activity of the medium-sized PENSION is carried out by 14 full-time employees, and additional staff during summer or holiday time.

Staff structure:

- two receptionists;
- one accountant;
- two chefs;
- two sous chefs;
- two bartenders;
- one waiter;
- two housekeepers;
- two maids.

### **History**

The idea of building a pension in that location belonged to the Ștefănescu couple who spent a holiday in Bran and wanted to visit the surroundings. One of the places they visited was Râșnov, both town and fortress. On their way to the fortress, they noticed a land strip and a disused tennis playground. The couple was so impressed with that isolated location, surrounded by marvelous beech and fir wood, that they decided to make an investment; at that time, their best idea was to modernize the tennis playground.

Thus, in 2002 they started constructing the four tennis playgrounds which are used as such during summer; in winter, the courts are covered with water and turned into natural skating pools (*Photo 2*).



**Photo 2 Tennis playground**

After the playgrounds became functional, the owners thought about building a pension nearby since tourism in Râșnov was at the beginning and they had noticed an acute lack in meeting the tourists' accommodation demands. Therefore, a year later, the "Valea Cetății" pension was inaugurated, its name being inspired by the homonymous area.

### **Pension structure**

The "Valea Cetății" PENSION consists in the groundfloor, first floor, and attic.

On the *groundfloor* there are two entrances: the main one and one from the bar. The main entrance leads to a small hall which connects with the inner staircase (leading to the landing of the first floor) and the reception.

The reception makes the connection with the restaurant or the dining hall and bar. Also on the groundfloor there are: the kitchen, lavatories, the sports equipment storeroom, and a wardrobe room.

The restaurant has an area of 100 sq meters and a capacity of 70 tourists. During the summer there is also an outdoor terrace hosting 20 persons. The furniture is massive wood combining the rural and modern styles.

Food is top quality, the wide range including both traditional and international specialties from well-known dishes to refined delicacies. The cooks create true works of art, as the savoury food is completed by an impressive presentation.

The *first floor* provides accommodation for 28 tourists in the 12 rooms, as follows: six rooms in the West wing of the PENSION, with a view to the tennis playgrounds, while the other six rooms are located in the East wing, with a view to the Râșnov Fortress and the road that leads to the town. All the rooms are decorated in a rural-modern style, and 11 rooms have the same facilities:

- their own bathroom (toilet, shower, hair drier, towels);
- massive wood furniture (night tables, double beds with orthopedic mattresses, wardrobe, small table and two stools, luggage support);
- TV set;
- minibar;
- Internet connection;
- four rooms have their own balcony (two on the East and the other two on the West wing);
- there is one special room providing two single beds.

In the *attic* there is a conference room.

### **Prices of “Valea Cetății” PENSION:**

*Accommodation:* 30 EUR / double room, no terrace / night

32 EUR / double room and terrace / night

41 EUR / two single beds room / night

The price also includes breakfast. Lunch, dinner and other snacks are paid either when ordered or when checking out. The price of lunch and dinner is not standard as it depends upon the type of food ordered.

*Tennis:* ticket - 7 EUR / hour;

equipment – 5 EUR / hour.

*Skating pool:* ticket – 4 EUR / hour;

equipment – 5 EUR / hour;

- for groups larger than 10 students, prices are 50% lower

## CONCLUSIONS

Râșnov is an increasingly attractive town, both to the Romanian and foreign tourists. The town has extremely valuable natural and man-made resources. Owing to its particular charm, Râșnov provides great leisure possibilities: fresh air, quiet life, amazing landscape all over the year.

Basically, Râșnov is a tourist receiving area. Romanian tourists can come from the large urban centres of the country, as they practice a season-based tourism (especially in summer and winter), sports tourism, weekend tourism, and business tourism.

Generally, the tourists who spend their spare time at the “Valea Cetății” PENSION are not organized in groups as the time length of their stay is very short (normally on weekends).

The organized groups come for a longer period of time, usually up to a week, in order to spend their Christmas, Easter or summer holidays.

Since the pension is located in a mountain area, it does not depend very much upon the season, compared with the Black Sea Coast. The afflux of tourists is constant all over the year, mainly motivated by entertainment, followed by sports and, last but not least, rest.

As seen from the calculations and conclusions of the present papers, both Râșnov as a tourist town and the pension under analysis, “Valea Cetății”, need several improvement measures in order to attract more tourists.

### *The town itself needs:*

- an updated infrastructure, as the existing one is very old or even absent in certain places;
- a tourist information centre to offer information on: locations, museums, cultural events, or to organize cultural and artistic events in order to attract tourists, etc.;
- renovated buildings, in order to recapture the medieval atmosphere of the town;
- well-developed and modern accommodation places for the tourists who wish to spend their spare time in this town;
- a well-developed and modern public feeding service;
- participation in tourist fairs and exhibitions both in Romania and abroad, for the better promotion of the town.

As results from the above, measures can be taken to improve all the factors related to a better development of tourism and, subsequently, the increase in the number of tourists in Râșnov, as well as at the “Valea Cetății” PENSION.

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