

SOME ASPECTS OF TOURIST TRAFFIC IN THE ARIEȘENI AREA (CASE STUDY – MAGIC MOUNTAIN PENSION)

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In this stage, agriculture can't limit only to providing food to a population becoming more and urbanized, but must also contribute to the maintenance of the countryside, which represents the indispensable support of rural tourism. Rural tourism includes both tourism activity as such, and economic activity, usually agriculture, practiced by hosts (production activities of farm product processing and marketing them to tourists or through business networks), and the way of spending free time. Agro-tourism is a liminary concept, considered a form of rural tourism which uses for accommodation and meal only touristic pensions and Agro touristic farms, benefiting in its cadre of an unpolluted and picturesque environment, natural tourist attractions and cultural and historical values, traditions and customs of the rural areas. Therefore, agro tourism refers to various forms of tourism related to agricultural activities and / or agricultural arrangements. This particular form of rural tourism is organized by farmers, usually as a secondary activity, agriculture remaining the main occupation and source of income. Of the main problems of agrotourism in our country at present we enumerate: insufficient promotion of the touristic objectives, low quality of tourism services (the quality – price ratio is inadequate), obsolete road infrastructure, the limited number of projects for obtaining grants offered by European institutions, the degree of seasonality (seasonal concentration of tourism activity overlaps with the agricultural seasons), environmental degradation, etc. This paper contains an analysis of touristic traffic in a pension from Arieșeni area in order to highlight the changes produced within two years and the reasons for these changes (variations).

Key words: agrotourism, commercial networks, agricultural arrangements, the quality-price ratio, touristic traffic

Agrotourism represents a complex economic and social process, carried out by the agricultural producer from the mountain area, within his/her household, in order to gain additional income necessary for his/her family.

This activity, which can include accommodation, food service, entertainment, etc., represents an integral part of the tourist product. Therefore, a proper correlation between the quality of the facilities, of the equipment and the general aspect of the accommodation spaces with the food and entertainment areas is compulsory.

It is for this reason that agrotourism has to fulfil some essential conditions, derived from the very functions it has to carry out; these conditions are:

- achieving additional income by the local population, thus allowing it to face the crisis of the agricultural system and of the rural society;
- diversifying economic activities by raising the service and local product offer, which can represent factors of strong tourist attraction;
- maintaining an optimal balance between the ecological, socio-economic and cultural systems of the area, as well as promoting development and hence change;
- promoting cultural exchanges, as a factor of solidarity and social cohesion, favouring coordinated politics regarding territorial planning, which allow improving competition between different economic activities of the less favoured areas and providing necessary infrastructures and equipment to improve living and holiday conditions for the local population and respectively for the visitors.

Due to its complexity, agrotourism contributes to the development of the rural areas and, consequently, this development leads to an increase of tourist flow.

Besides being amazingly beautiful, Arieșeni tourist resort has a very rare advantage: due to its weather conditions, snow can be found here a great part of the year. More precisely, there are good conditions for skiing six months a year.

This advantage and the inclination of the slopes represent great pluses for developing the two slopes in Vârtop, which currently attract thousands of winter sports lovers every weekend and not only.

Small investors have quickly speculated the potential of the area and have built boarding houses, motels and restaurants in order to satisfy the increasing demand. Even so, we are far from the resort we would want to have in Arieșeni.

A complex tourist development project would be needed in the area, a project that implies huge costs but which would bring considerable profit.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Like any other economic activity, tourism has as objective the rational use of resources and production efficiency in order to obtain positive results, as well as satisfying clients' needs. This can create the premises of a long-lasting development.

Efficiency implies comparing the efforts (quantified by the value of the resources used) to the obtained results (the value of the achieved production).

Tourist demand represents the ensemble of persons who manifest their desire to travel periodically and temporarily outside their own residence, for other reasons than performing remunerated activities at the place of destination.

Tourist consumerism represents the expenses made by the tourist demand when acquiring certain services and goods connected to tourist motivation.

Tourist flow represents the effective manifestation of the tourist demand. The main indicators of tourist flow are: the number of tourists (N_t), the number of days per

tourist (N_{zt}) and the degree of occupancy or the use coefficient of the accommodation capacity (C_{uc}).

The degree of occupancy or the use coefficient of the accommodation capacity (C_{uc}), as a measure of estimating the performance of accommodation, is calculated by reporting the occupied capacity of a certain period, expressed by the number of overnight stays or the number of days per tourist (N_{zt}), and the possible theoretical/maximum capacity (the product of the nominal capacity C_n and the number of functioning days n_z).

$$C_{uc} = \frac{N_{zt}}{C_n \times n_z}$$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Tourism implies a growing demand for goods and services, fact which has positive consequences in the relative production fields.

The increasing offer has as a direct result the development of the accommodation facilities and as an indirect result the stimulation of the production fields that contribute to the development and modernization of the accommodation and food service spaces, of transport services, of entertainment facilities, and to the construction and modernization of new roads, etc.

A representative situation for the development level of agrotourism in Vârtop-Arieșeni area is „Magia Muntelui” pension.

„Magia Muntelui” pension is located at 1020 m altitude, half way between Vârtop slope and Arieșeni, at 2.5 km from the ski slope, on the DN75 national road that connects the cities of Câmpeni and Ștei. This geographic position allows to be reached easily from a few important towns: Oradea, Cluj Napoca or Alba Iulia.

„Magia Muntelui” pension is rated at four daisies, has 14 rooms, corresponding to 28 accommodation places.

The structure of the pension is as follows:

- ground floor: restaurant with bar and a capacity of 36 seats
- first floor: 3 double rooms, 3 rooms with matrimonial bed
- second floor: 2 double rooms, 3 rooms with matrimonial bed
- loft: 3 rooms with matrimonial bed.

Each room has a bathroom and has been equipped with TV, fridge, telephone, hairdryer.

In 2009 prices vary from 170 lei/room/day (the price includes breakfast at the price of 30 lei/room) from Monday to Friday, to 200 lei/room/day (the price includes breakfast at the price of 30 lei/room) from Monday to Sunday.

After the analysis of the tourist traffic at the Magia Muntelui pension in Arieșeni, we have reached the following results:

Table 1

**Tourist traffic at the Magia Muntelui pension in Arieșeni
from 1st June 2007 to 30th May 2009**

MONTH	Number of tourists		Number of days per tourist		Occupancy degree	
	June 2007- May 2008	June 2008- May 2009	June 2007- May 2008	June 2008- May 2009	June 2007- May 2008	June 2008- May 2009
June	158	145	2,10	2,04	39,6%	35,2%
July	164	154	2,34	2,51	44,2%	44,5%
August	168	179	2,51	2,50	48,6%	51,5%
September	155	154	2,22	2,20	41,1%	40,5%
October	156	160	2,02	2,03	36,5%	37,6%
November	151	152	1,99	1,96	35,8%	35,5%
December	148	139	2,42	2,43	41,2%	39,8%
January	132	126	2,50	2,31	38,2%	33,7%
February	143	124	2,33	2,13	41,1%	33,7%
March	133	118	2,10	1,95	32,3%	26,5%
April	131	119	2,16	1,99	33,7%	28,3%
May	154	146	2,01	1,86	35,8%	31,4%
Annual average	149	143	2,22	2,16	39%	36%

• If in the period between June 2007 and May 2008 the average number of tourists was 149, in the same period of the following year the average number of tourists was 143, registering a slight decrease.

• The highest number of tourists was registered in August 2008 and the lowest in March and April 2009.

• The number of days per tourist or the number of overnight stays registers an average of 2.22 days in the period from June 2007 to May 2008 and in the period between June 2008 and May 2009 the average of this indicator is a little lower, 2.16 days.

• The occupancy degree of the studied pension is of 39% in the first studied period and of 36% in the second one.

• The highest occupancy degree was registered in August of 2008 and 2009.

• It is noticeable that the number of tourists had decreased in the last year, a fact that is related to the socio-economic situation induced by the crisis.

CONCLUSIONS

As a consequence of tourist traffic increase in the last years in the Vârtope Arieșeni area, local economic activities have been developed in order to satisfy the growing demand of agricultural and non-agricultural products.

Indirectly, an increase of working places has been registered, not only in tourism but also in the production and service fields.

Although, currently, the quality of the services is nothing near to what it should be, their development will determine the increase of the prosperity level in the area.

A special field of agrotourism development is that of workmanship and handicraft; besides their economic importance, these activities have an artistic and cultural connotation.

The essential condition for the development of the tourist product in the Vârtop Arieșeni area implies improving the general local infrastructure, which influences the whole local economy.

The development of the accommodation offer leads to the creation of a high-quality architectonic setting that has as a result the improvement of the aspect and functionality of the resort.

Offering accommodation to satisfy the request will lead to the entrepreneur's increase of income. If we consider the cases where the accommodation offer already exists, without requiring great investments, the gained income will grow accordingly.

Taking into consideration the fact that we are facing economic crisis, the owners of the studied boarding house as well as other local owners have reduced accommodation prices in order to keep their clients. Magia Muntelui pension has reduced the price of an overnight stay by 20 lei.

For a higher tourist traffic in the Vârtop Arieșeni area, we suggest the following: promoting the area and tourist objectives with the help of a tourist guide, specialization of accommodation and food service staff etc., improving quality/price ratio; developing road infrastructure (the means of transport that reach the area are very few), implementing household utilities, information and support regarding the access to structural funds.

Another very important aspect that would be able to increase the tourist traffic in the area is publicity, because the area is well known to the people leaving in the nearby towns, but not discovered by the rest of the country, neither by the foreigners.

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