

RESEARCH ON THE CURRENT SITUATION OF AGRITOURISM IN BUCOVINA

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Abstract

Agritourism is an innovative agricultural activity linking tourism to agriculture and has a great capacity to create opportunities for additional source of income and employment for farmers. Agritourism has the power to change the perception of traditional agricultural activities and the benefits from its development are varied. Bucovina is one of the most important parts of the country with agritourism potential but this form of tourism is not sufficiently developed. Although in recent years efforts were made by local authorities and nongovernmental organizations to promote tourism in Bucovina, the actual development of rural tourism is still at low level. Proof of this is the number of farmhouses, very small compared with the total number of pensions in rural areas. This paper analyzes the current situation of agritourism in Bucovina taking as reference the approved agro pensions and the main activities undertaken as well as the owners' perception in practicing this form of tourism. Although the absence of related infrastructure facilities is a negative factor in the development of agritourism, a major problem identified is that many owners of hostels not differentiate between rural tourism and agritourism, leading to poor coordination and promotion of its own agritouristic product for attracting tourists. Moreover, rural tourism activities offered are limited and without the direct involvement of the host. Currently, the tourism potential of Bucovina is not fully exploited, and for this reason need it is requested an increased attention to tourism development in particular by creating effective strategies and specific activities involving agro guesthouses in joint projects to develop and promote this form of tourism and attracting tourists to the region.

Key words: agritourism, Bucovina, pensions

MATERIAL AND METHOD

This research of the applied qualitative nature assumed an interview of agritourism pensions from Bucovina in the period of May - July 2011. The collection of the dates was in the area Vama, Sucevita, Vatra Dornei and Gura Humorului, in this areas are approved the most agritourism pensions. The guide of the interview (Brătucu G., Brătucu T.O., 2006) was structured on 5 themes (the rural tourism and agritourism, business, tourism activity, promotion of the agritourism product) for the achievement of a better image upon their results and was applied to a number of 10 agritourism pensions and 5 tourism pensions from the rural environment with the operation certificate valid at the research date. The followed objective through this research and which were found in the approached aspects in the interview guide are the following: the identification of the main problems in agritourism and the identification of the measures which the agritourism owners see as necessary for the improvement of this sector.

An important stage of the research was the collection of the statistic dates on the attendance of the structure of the tourism receipt with the operations of the tourism accommodation from the

county Suceava provided by the National Institute of Statistic, The Direction of Statistic Suceava (Institutul Național de Statistică București, 2011). There were seen the dates bases on the structures of the tourism receipt with the operations of the tourism accommodation of the Ministry of Regional and Tourism Development, the last dates base is updated at the date of 31 July 2011.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Bucovina is a region with a historical determined character, but which circumscribes to a polarized territory of a single major center, which is the municipality Suceava (Bouaru Codruța Petronela, 2006). So, as the historical documents Bucovina show us overlaps on the county Suceava with the exception of the town Falticeni and its surroundings and only over some villages from the county Botosani (Sinautii de Jos, Rogojesti and Candesti). The county Suceava recommended itself as an important tourism area of the country. Besides the great attractiveness of the mountain landscape, the tourism potential of the county is characterized through the variety, density and the value of the praise and architecture monuments, through the nature reserves and special

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ethnographic areas, much of them , unic on the world plan.

At the national level, Suceava is on the III place (207 approved tourism pensions) after the counties Brasov (478 tourism pensions) and Harghita(233 tourism pensions) in the number of the approved tourism pensions. Over 80% from these pensions are in the rural environment.

About the number of approved agritourism pensions, the county Suceava is on the IV-th national level, but with a very small number of agritourism pensions (12) in front of Brasov (28), Cluj (41) and Maramures(45). So, in what represents through definition the agritourism, we can say that in Bucovina this tourism form is still very small in comparison with the existent potential (Slave L., 2006).

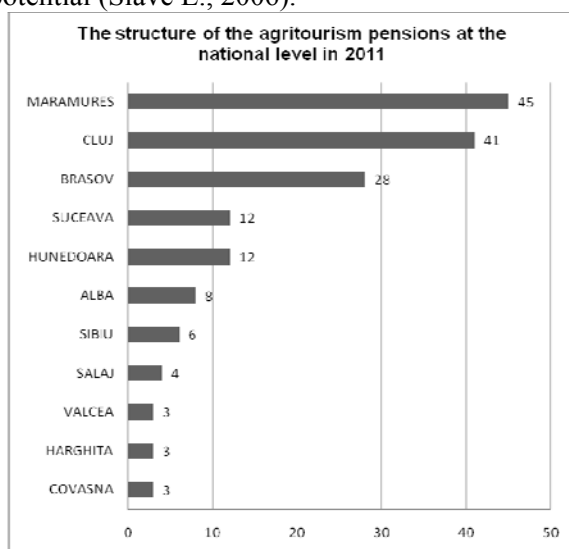


Figure 1 The structure of the agritourism pensions at the national level in 2011

The research of the presented qualitative nature was realized on a number of 10 agritourism pensions from 12 approved and a number of 5 tourism pensions from the rural environment. The discussions with each pension owner was between 45 – 60 minutes, following a preordained interview guide. Regarding the degree of agritourism development the most of the respondents said that this is enough developed on the local plan, but there exists a lot of opportunities of growth of this activity.

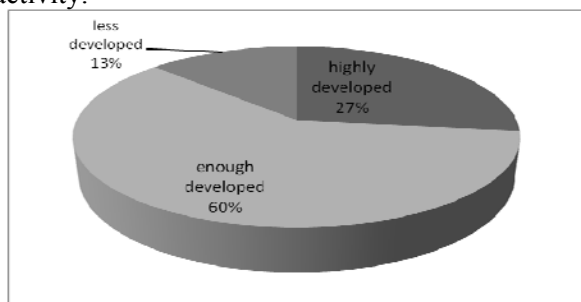


Figure 2 The development degree of the agritourism from the owners vision of the agritourism pensions

The interview participants had to expose their mind about the activities of the local administration for the improvement of the tourism in the zone. Their answer was varied according to the locality where is the pension. The general conclusion is that the local authorities doesn't involve enough to support this sector, especially when it is about to attract the foreign partners and of some or investments.

The main problems sets out by the agritourism owner are according to financing, the behavior of Romanian tourists, the zone infrastructure, unqualified personal, the relationship with the local authorities, the legislation in the field (confused).

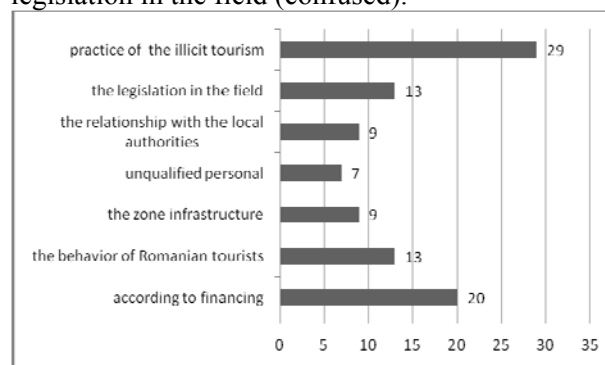


Figure 3 The main difficulties with which were confronted the agritourism owner

The solutions worded by the agritourism owner to improve their offer and the profitableness of the business would be the inclusion of the activity of the pensions in complex activities in the zone, the association with other pensions, better accommodation conditions and agreement activities, the engagement of a qualified personal in tourism, promotion at the national and international markets, were the most frequently answers given by the owners of the agritourism pensions.

About the coordination of the activity in the pension was followed which was the experience of the owners of the agritourism pensions from the beginning of the business. The most answered that they had any experience, but they followed courses in tourism. 93% from the owners have the pension opened the whole year, because they live in the property. The most agritourism pensions (60%) have as personal members of the family of the owner, such as engaged personal, and a large part (27%) is working with the family members of the owner. Only two studied pensions have only engaged personal for the assurance of the tourism services.

About the activities from the pensions, agriculture, fruits, animal growth were the main answers, the craft activity was only in one case. A key question for the research is „What kind of

activities do you offer to the tourists in your agripension?”

Centralizing the answers to this question, we have a simple conclusion, the most pensions (Maria Rusu, Velcea M., Tănăsescu L., 2003) offer activities specifically to the agritourism, from the visits to the sheepfold, sightseeing with the cart, sledge, hikings, wine tasting and campfires. In special periods of the year (Easter, Christmas or other holidays), the tourist can participate to the eggs painting, decoration of the bundles, preparation of dishes, pig cutting, at the some preparations for different local holidays (Hrib Festival – village Vama). Nearby this activities, the majority of the pensions offer in their yard play places for children, ping pong tables, billiard tables, darts, table tables, Chess, Rummy for the recreation of the tourists in the interior of the pension. Tourist activities exist and are practiced, but the most of the pension owners doesn't consider very important this kind of activities, perhaps and from the motive that the tourist doesn't know exactly what to ask, because there isn't a list or a correct promotion of the activities arts which the pension can offer.

Speaking about the tourists who came in the pensions from Bucovina, the most from the tourists are Romanians (about 70%) from the counties Constanta, Bucuresti, Iasi, Galati, Bacau, Neamt. There is an enough number of foreign tourists, who come from the European Union (Germany, France, Belgium, Austria, Poland), and from the Ukraine and Republic Moldavia. But these are not more than 30%.

From the composition point of view, the most tourists are families with children (33%) and groups of 3 ore more persons with or without children (27%, respective 20%). This is a very important thing to know for the owners of the agritourism pensions, to adapt their tourist offer in function of the client categories and their requirements. In the vision of the pensions owners, the main reasons of the torurist to choose their pension are diverse, from silence and recreation, to the beauty of the landscape or to the zone objective. Only a few can say that the tourists come to them for some tourist activities or for the accommodation or meals offer.

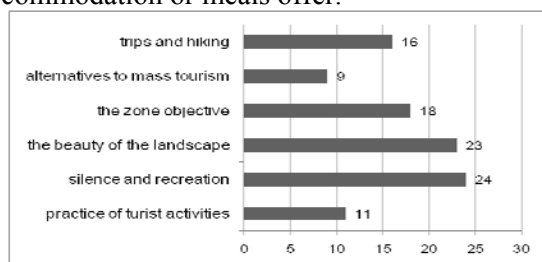


Figure 4 The main reasons which are in the choose of the agritourism pensions by the tourists

From the experience of the pensions owners, the most tourist prefer the walking with the sledge in the cold season, visit to the sheepfold and walkings with the carts, such as the visit of the objectives from the zone. The main activities and events to which the owners of the pensions had a common answer are the developed projects with the help of The County Council Suceava such as „Christmas in Bucovina” and Easten in Bucovina”. Of course for each zone are specific local events, such as Hrib Festival from Vama, Festival from Ciocanesti, patrons of some churches or monasteries, different customs and traditions to the New Year, etc. but these attract the tourists in a small part.

The pensions owners were interviewed about the measures and the channels of the tourist offer promotion. The unification of all the answers in one single shows that all the owners are using promotion means such as leaflets, tourism brochures, internet notices, tourism local, national and international markets. As alternative promotion means, some pensions organize special and traditional events even in the court of the pension (Bucovina Lodge – village Vama, ancient customs in the Christmas meatless). As the most pension owners specified, one of the most efficient and sure promotion method is the recommendation given by the tourists who were there to the other tourists, relatives or friends. All the interviewed consider that the agritourism is a source of income and of the economic development of the locality, but they put the main problem from this domain on a missing of an unit vision and of a strategy in the development of the tourism in Romania and on the mentality of the people, which can sometimes block the best intentions of the development of some viable projects for the local communities.

CONCLUSIONS

Bucovina enjoys of a very reach tourist potential, unic in the country and abroad and therefore, in this area the solutions for the development of the rural communities are coming from the promotion of the agritourism activities. It seems that in the last years the most citizens from diverse zones of Bucovina understand this thing and together with the local authorities make efforts to establish new pensions, to promote agritourism activities and to capitalize the zone potential.

With all this, the qualitative research made in some agritourism pensions reveals some problems of the existent pensions, such as in them in the establishment course. Besides the infrastructure problems (the absence of adecvate good roads, of a tourism promotion network –

indicatives, marks, information centers), appear other problems too, about the financing from the tourism domain, the continuous change of the legislation, the mentality of the people, the absence of the qualified personal in the hospitable industry, the absence of the strategies on long term and the less tourist promotion projects from Bucovina initiated by the authorities. An acute problem put by the majority of the owner of the approved pensions is the practice of the illicit tourism and agritourism, what brings indirectly considerably loss for the local communities and directly for the existent pensions.

In the same time it is true that in the last two years grew a number of tourism structures with functions of tourism accommodation classified by the Ministry of Regiona and Tourism Development and the accommodation capacity, but we can say that the tourism in Bucovina doesn't develop in the real capacity.

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