

ABSTRACT

Mountain has always been the most suggestive evidence of the greatness of nature, and therefore it has become today one of the main holiday destinations, being considered essentially a symbol of spirituality.

Overall development of tourism, in general, the transformation into a mass movement, made the mountain to require more and more the attention of investors and promoters of mountain tourism.

Thus in present, the effects of mountain tourism development in economic, social and cultural plans, although very difficult to quantify, are increasingly popular because of their importance.

Tourism in Romania is a potential source of economic growth. Support and stimulate tourism activity at local and county level aims to create a substantial number of jobs, which may contribute to the economic welfare of residents. Tourism creates jobs, particularly for women, helping to resolve the serious employment problems of workers.

In the last half of the twentieth century, it was imposed in practice and economics theory, marketing and agromarketing. Originally appeared in the business world, in order to identify ways to better serve customers, and, also to improve efficiency and control of firms, marketing has had a spectacular evolution, going quite fast several stages in its extensive and intensive development.

Touristic marketing is a new optic, a philosophy, but also a science and art involving tourism market research as a starting point, followed by orientation, organization and operational of touristic activities, so as to ensure satisfaction in better conditions of the consumption needs and profit maximizing of tourist firms, oriented towards marketing.

In this respect are directed the studies and researches tackled through the doctoral thesis.

Doctoral dissertation entitled "**Study on the Economics and Marketing of tourism and agrotourism in Vârtope – Arieșeni from Apuseni Mountains**" is comprised of two parts: one part focused on the theoretical foundations and the second for proper research. Doctoral dissertation structure includes a summary of the thesis (in Romanian and English), an introduction, seven chapters and a bibliography.

Part I, in whose composition enter **the first chapter of this thesis**, is a synthesis of existing specialized information in bibliographic sources in the country and abroad,

concerning the economy and tourism and agrotourism marketing: a brief history about the emergence and development of tourism, presentation of National Agency for Rural Ecological and Cultural Tourism, tourism contribution to economic growth, pricing, balance of payments equilibrium, fair and equitable distribution of national income and full use of labor.

The contribution of tourism to GDP varies significantly among regions and countries of the world according to its levels and the development and economic structure of those countries.

Thus in *Europe* the main tourist area of the world, tourism's share in GDP is 14.0%, on the *American continent* about 11%, in *Asia and Pacific* 10.0%, in *Africa* almost 9.0%. In contrast, analysis of the contribution of tourism to achieve the GDP on countries, in the case of small ones, tributaries of tourism, the participation quota is very high: about 84% in the Maldives, 50% in Malta, over 34% in Jamaica. In countries with a rich tourist activity, but also with a developed economy, the share of tourism to the achievement of GDP is close to the global media, for example: Spain 11.4%, France 7.5%, Switzerland 7.7%, U.S. 5.5% Canada 4.1%, in England 4.0% etc., in some of these countries, the contribution of tourism to GDP is comparable with that of basic branches, such as agriculture in France, the auto industry in Italy, steel industry in Great Britain.

In Romania, tourism is less developed and therefore its contribution to national GDP is lower, in recent years its share in GDP, being only 2-4%.

Part II of the thesis comprises six chapters and covers the obtained results and their interpretation.

In Chapter 2 are presented the objectives, scope of research and research methodology.

The aim of the doctoral dissertation is to highlight which are the opportunities for improvement of tourism and agrotourism in Vârtop - Arieșeni area, and socio-economic effects of tourism and agrotourism development on local communities.

The main objective of the research contained in this doctoral dissertation was directed toward the knowledge and highlighting the tourism and agrotourism potential of Vârtop –Arieșeni area and characteristics of tourism and agrotourism mountain offer.

For achieving the basic and the complementary objective was conducted a socio-economic survey, which was based on a panel of 30 heads of agrotourist hostels located in the Vârtop-Arieșeni area, to provide general information and some social and economic analysis regarding the possibilities for improvement of tourism and agrotourism in this area.

Chapter 3, entitled "**Monograph of Vârtop-Arieșeni area in the Apuseni Mountains**" presents the natural and organizational framework of the study area.

Vârtop-Arieșeni area comprises Vârtop holiday village, which enter in the Nucet city administration, plus the villages included in the Arieșeni village composition, in number of 18: *Arisen –village center, Avrămești, Bubești, Casa de Piatră, Cobleș, Dealu Bajului, Fața Cristeșei, Fața Lăpușului, Galbena, Hodobana, Islaz, Pântești, Poienița, Pătrăhăitești, Ravicești, Sturu, Ștei-Arieșeni, Vânvucești.*

Climate is typical of mountain, generally wet and cold on the high peaks, with gradual attenuation towards the lower regions.

Air temperature in this area has annual average of 4-5 ° C, the sun shines an average of about 135 annual hours, and annual rainfall is over 1800 mm.

The population of the study area has a declining trend, confronting also here like in most Romanian villages with depopulation of the area, confirmed by the natural increase of population, which records a negative value, whereas the number of registered deaths is greater than the number of births.

In Chapter 4, "Diagnostic analysis of tourism and agrotourism in Vârtop-Arieșeni area of the Apuseni Mountains" is presented an analysis of tourism and agrotourism potential of the area, with the focus on the agricultural potential, forestry, industry and handicraft, but also the potential of tourist and agrotourism units, offer and quality of tourism and agrotourism services.

In this regard, a SWOT analysis was carried out to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of tourism and agrotourism in the area searched, and the opportunities and threats existing in this area.

Also, for knowing the level of economic profitability and development opportunities of tourist and agrotourist guesthouses was conducted a case study concerning the possibilities to improve tourism and agrotourism in the area studied.

The case study conducted in the Vârtop-Arieșeni area in Apuseni Mountains consisted in designing of a questionnaire opinion.

In the wake of the evaluation of questionnaires were the following conclusions:

- *in Vârtop-Arieșeni area there are two 3-star hotels, 4 guesthouses of four daisies, 10 guesthouses of 3 daisies, 16 guesthouses of two daisies and one boarding of a daisy;*
- *most hostels have been built in the last 3-5 years, which indicates that it is the case of a young and growing station;*
- *most hostels have been built from its own funds;*

- of 30 owners who were questioned, none is a member of professional associations;
- 29 of the 30 respondents, said that infrastructure in the area and provision of facilities greatly influence their work;
- over 50% of the owners of hostels have only secondary education (high school);
- at 100% of those surveyed believe that support for investors with funds, increasing the quality of local products and services, increasing professional skills, working with tour operators, are very important issues for the development of the area studied;
- all respondents felt that they need promote training of tourism services and attracting tourists.

In Chapter 5 entitled "**Analysis of housing, habitation manner and technical equipment of localities**" are analyzed a series of socio-economic indicators, such as household income and purchasing power, birth and death rates, teachers and school population.

Didactic process is served by 22 teachers, up from 2002 when there were only 18 teachers.

Number of pupils in primary and secondary education during the years studied has not changed significantly. In contrast, the total school population increases significantly during the past four years, due to the establishment of an industrial school group - Group School of Tourism, until 2006 there was no school in the village.

In Chapter 6, are presented the development strategies of tourism and agrotourism in Vârtop-Arieșeni area in the Apuseni Mountains.

Concern for choosing appropriate strategies and depth of analysis and value judgments made is because effective strategies ensure high capitalization of economic potential of the country, branch or concerned industry and, thus, affirming national economy on worldwide.

A strategy for rural tourism development within a certain territory requires the harmonization of public intervention with the private action in at least three aspects: **infrastructure, conservation and capitalization of patrimony and professional training.**

Elaboration of tourism marketing strategy is a complex and difficult process, involving several steps:

- a) *diagnosis analysis of current situation;*
- b) *formulating strategic objectives of tourism business;*
- c) *choosing fundamental strategic options;*
- d) *building up tourism marketing mix.*

A crucial component of marketing strategy is the mix marketing. In tourism, this concept defines all the activities and means by which tourism businesses can achieve its predetermined goals, intervening, coherent and consistent, in the four variables of marketing - tourism product, price, investment, tourism promotion.

The term "mix" is an abbreviation of the English origin of the word "mixture" and has the sense of blend, interweaving, mix. Mixture regards the way touristic firm resources are trained and improved the information on tourist market forces, the company's global effort to achieve the desired effects.

Neil Borden, the father of mix marketing, considers that marketing responsible is the person who must establish the combination of various elements and processes of a marketing policy for to exploit with profit the business products. He must choose the best program and the best combination of a large number of options available. Criteria of choice is closely related to the objective pursued by the company at the time of analysis (eg profit maximization or increasing market share).

Place and role given by the company management to each of the four variables (PPPP), for to be achieved the overall and specific objectives, arises from efforts provided for each "submix" marketing and financial resources allocated for the realization of these efforts. The point is to ensure a judicial mix of effort and they can be integrated within a single program.

The deployment of mix marketing development process involves the following four steps:

- a. *detailing mix in the four components: tourism product, price, distribution, tourism promotion;*
- b. *description of actions for each area;*
- c. *integration of the four domains in the designed mix marketing;*
- d. *introduction of stipulated actions in the marketing program of tourism company.*

Because endogenous and exogenous factors are constantly changing, the mix marketing of business tourism is, continually, in a poor balance, justifying its periodic revision. The composition of the mix marketing ends the elaboration effort of marketing strategy.

The marketing strategy of tourist business is not an aim in itself. It will be followed by a program of action (tactical level), by its operational and, naturally, control and evaluation of its effectiveness.

Successful marketing strategy of a tourism business is highlighted by sales growth, increase profits, development of market segments gained and by the continuity of effective action.

The last chapter, seventh, contains general conclusions and recommendations.

Recommendations aimed at: attracting new investors in the area with a significant contribution to increasing employment, modernization of tourist reception structures and service diversification, promotion of activities that could attract tourists by creating a diversified tourist offer, stimulating entrepreneurs in opening catering facilities in the area, developing and implementing an integrated marketing and communication strategies, coherent and unified, to actively promote, at national and international level, tourism and agro-tourism potential, attractiveness and identity of the area, attracting tourists in the Vârtop-Arieşeni area.