

## SOME ASPECTS REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISTIC AND AGROTOURISTIC SERVICES IN ARIEȘENI AREA FROM APUSENI MOUNTAINS

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### Abstract

*The aim of this work is to highlight the tourism potential existing in Arieseni area, located in the Bihor Mountains, at an altitude of 800-1000 m, on the Aries Big Valley in Arieseni depression, also the offer of touristic and agrotouristic services existing here. The tourist offer in this area include natural and anthropogenic tourism resources, the "production" equipment of touristic services, mass food supply industrial, intended for tourism, labor specialized in specific activities, infrastructure, marketing conditions (prices, rates, facilities, etc.). Exploitation of touristic and Agro-tourism resources in the area Arieseni, took amplexness after 1990. The process took a longer route and more slowly compared with other similar areas in the country, due to the influence of factors such as lack of infrastructure, weak information on accessing European funds, reluctance of local population, etc. Despite these obstacles, this area has seen increasing in recent years, worthy to be taken into consideration.*

**Key words:** tourism, agro-tourism, rural arrangement, offer

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism, implicitly the agro-tourism is now, undoubtedly, one of the phenomena that dominate contemporary world, one of the most profitable segments of the global economy, remarkable through dynamic, multiple motivations and a large variety of forms of manifestation.

After the data published by the World Tourism Organization in 2000, tourism outmatched the expenses for the development of world agriculture and those for arming, estimated at over one thousand billion U.S. dollars annually.

Apuseni Mountains is one of the most interesting tourist destinations in Romania. Karst topography (about 400 caves), and specific flora and fauna, represents also many reasons why was declared nature reserve. There is no country in such a concentration of monuments of nature, falling within a whole landscape very beautiful and attractive.

Commune Arieseni of the Apuseni Mountains is located in the north-eastern extremity of county of Alba, at the springs of Big Aries, at 120 km from Alba Iulia (county

courthouse) and 40 km from the nearest town - Câmpeni.

Tourism and agro-tourism resources through their variety and complexity, have a high value, what gives to the area a high degree of tourist interest in the summer and cold season (snow persists about 4-5 months per year on north versant having an average thickness of about 60-70 cm).

### MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study was performed in the area "Vartop - Arieseni" in the Apuseni Mountains and was based on sociological investigation. To collect information was used as a tool the written questionnaire. There were prepared two types of questionnaires applied to the tourists who visited and stayed in the area, respectively to the locals - those who have witnessed the metamorphosis of the area under the agro tourism impact. The sample contained a number of 100 tourists and 60 locals of the researched area.

Of the investigated tourists 47% were male, and the difference was represented by women. Applied questionnaire included

questions on: the unit of accommodation, the number of daisies/stars, type of room reserved, the accommodation price, degree of satisfaction, the price-quality report, gastronomic offer, opportunities for entertainment, the possibilities of redemption and prospects of returning to the area.

The questionnaire included a total of 14 questions (some improved with a score from 1 to 5). I note that the questionnaire was applied only to persons over 18 years, each questionnaire was validated in the analysis.

The second questionnaire applied to the locals sought to include as many people who are proprietary of an agrotouristic hostel.

Thus, in total of 60 people questioned, 40 were owners of agrotouristic hostels or were directly involved in the agrotouristic activities in the area. The share of men was 60% (36 men).

The study involved also data collected from local authorities and public institutions.

Information processing was based on classical methods and the presentation of the results was based on the tables, figures or schemes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The agrotourism gives the possibility of knowing better the countryside with all its natural, spiritual and occupational valences, for the urban population. The very existence and the launch of the Romanian village as a tourism product, impose the necessity of knowledge and its differentiation.

Thus, the regional tourist offer is differentiated according to the villages characteristics.

If reference is made to the world market, which is a receiver of the Romanian offer is considered necessary to know the following positive aspects, with reference to:

- a) The existence of tourists flows that are possible to be attracted;
- b) Tourists arrived in Romania appreciate the hosting in other spaces than hotels;
- c) The touristic imagine of the country is getting better

From the negative aspects, there can be mentioned the following:

- a) There is not yet a notable preoccupation for the Romanian's touristic product image in general on the world market and much less for that from the rural area;

- b) There are insufficient the promotion materials that are distributed on the external market;

- c) There is not a devoted logo

By capitalizing the offer of accommodation and services of all structures of rural tourism, by creating various programs for tourism, it is developing the rural tourism movement.

Arieș superior basin may be a point of attraction for tourists, due to heavy snow so favorable for the winter sports, and various beauties (caves, waterfalls, tourist journey) that presents interest especially during the summer.

Because tourists are becoming more pretentious, the offer of tourist services in the area studied can be easily enriched with a number of original elements, refined emphasized in other parts of the earth, namely: karst phenomena ( caves, keys, etc ) formation of rocks, (teaching role ), the collection of forest fruits, tourism industry, (mines, and plants processing minerals ) invite at the parties, the inclusion in the team waits, practicing ski, competitions, initiation schools during the summer, (artificial snow), climbing without a rope (Cheile Turzii), gold digger in the waters of the mountain, wise- men for 1-3 days: tourist receives household (house, garden, poultry and domestic animals, etc.) which he manages a certain time without the intervention of the owners, feeding wild animals (with the supply of winter hay, salt etc.)

Numerical evolution and territorial distribution of touristic and agrotouristic pensions in the Apuseni Mountains followed several steps:

In 1997, in the ANTREC network, there were 82 touristic and agrotouristic authorized pensions in three counties: Cluj county, with 57 pensions ( 69% ) had first place, followed by Alba, 27% and Sălaj, with about 4%.

Table 1.  
 The number of pensions and the accommodation capacity between 2006 – 2008

Year Locality	2006		2007		2008	
	Nr. pensions	Nr. places	Nr. pensions	Nr. places	Nr. pensions	Nr. places
Albac	30	200	31	344	31	396
Arieșeni	30	222	30	414	33	623
Vârtop	19	196	21	380	25	567
Rimetea	32	320	34	356	38	400
Gârda de Sus	15	101	15	116	15	137
Scărișoara	2	8	3	24	5	64
Lupșa	1	10	1	20	1	35
Total	110	861	135	1654	148	2222

Until 2001, the number of touristic and agrotouristic pensions from ANTREC network increased noticeably, especially in the two counties Alba and Cluj, reaching 130, the two counties owning together 95% of the total number of the rural touristic pensions from ANTREC of Apuseni Mountains. They were followed by Bihor county, with 4 pensions and Salaj, with 2 pensions, counties with an early agrotourism, at the time.

Most pension were small, the average being 5 – 8 places/ pension. The most places, 58% were in the county of Alba, followed by Cluj county, with 37%.

In 2003, in the Apuseni Mountains, were officially registered 155 touristic and agrotouristic pensions, with an accommodation capacity of 1165 places, 41% of ANTREC.

The evolution of number of accommodation units, including their capacity between 2006 – 2008, in Alba county (including the area studied) is shown in the following table:

Observe that if in 2006 there were recorded 110 units of accommodation in the following years the value increased, reaching 135 agrotouristic pensions in 2007 and at the end of 2008 there were registered 148.

Increasing the number of accommodation units, respectively upgrading and expansion of existing, determined the increase of

number of places available from 861 in 2006 to 1654 places in 2007 and at the end of 2008 there were 2222 places.

In the area Vartop – Arieseni in 2006 were registered 49 units of accommodation, extending in 2007 to 51 pensions, and in 2008 there were 58.

Price / room varies between 30 – 40 RON for the units of a daisy, 50 – 80 RON for housing in units with 2 daisies, 70 – 100 RON for pensions with 3 daisies and 150 RON for 4 daisies.

Most pensions, particularly those agro, have developed very slowly, without substantial support and therefore have modest endowments. Many have left the formal network for various reasons: the formation of a stable and faithful customers, elusion from taxes and rates and especially of the various checks, dissatisfaction with the modest support given by formal networks etc.

Tourism and agrotourism has as the main actor the man, and for this reason the phenomena that guide the touristic mechanism should be evaluated primarily in light of the impact on the human factor.

Under the dome of this consideration we applied a series of questionnaires to highlight human behavior in relation with the agrotouristic supply and demand of the Vartop Arieseni area.

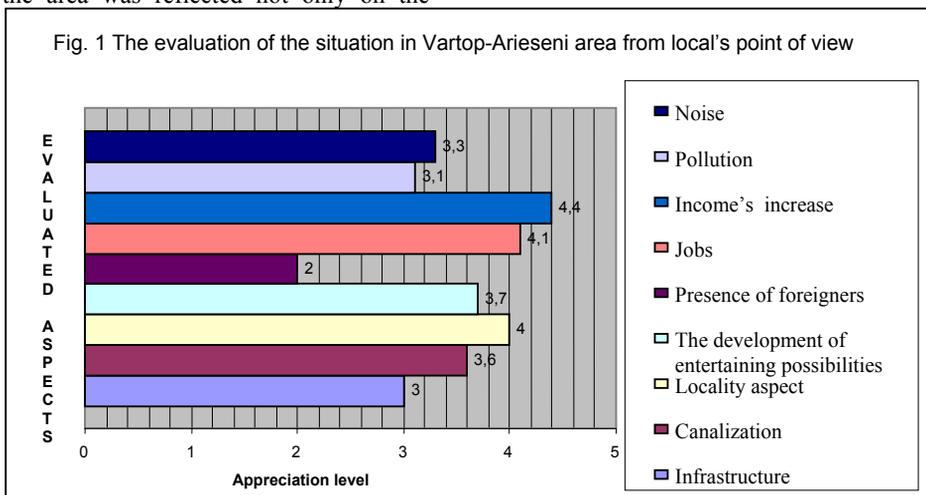
Table 2.  
 Aspects of the offer assessed by tourists

Nr. crt	Nr. Daisies	1 	2 	3 	4 
1	Number tourists	18	42	26	14
2	Accommodation period (days/person)	4	5,5	4,5	3
3	Satisfaction degree (from 1 to 5 points)	2,5	3,9	4,6	4,7
4	Quality – price report (from 1 to 5 points)	3,5	4,4	4,2	4
5	Gastronomical offer (from 1 to 5 points)	-	4,1	4,8	5
6	Entertainment possibilities (from 1 to 5 points)	4	4	4,2	4,9
7	Internet access possibilities (from 1 to 5 points)	-	-	3	5
8	Retainer/settlement possibilities (from 1 to 5 points)	3,8	4,2	3,9	4,5
9	Revert temptation (from 1 to 5 points)	3,2	4,3	4,6	4,7

Following evaluation of questionnaires given to tourists addition, appears that 18% were accommodated in a unit of a daisy, 42% opted for pensions of 2 daisies, 26% chose the comfort of the accommodation units of 3 daisies and other 14% opted for 4 daisies. They were asked to give points from 1 to 5 ( 1 equivalent to total dissatisfaction, with 5 excellent ) vis-à-vis of agrotouristic offer in the area. The responses obtained are shown in the table 2.

The impact of agrotouristic development of the area was reflected not only on the

tourist – the beneficiaries of services, but also on locals, respectively the services offerers. The appreciation towards the increase of their income and the possibility of seeking a job, respectively the dissatisfaction regarding the lack of an infrastructure to allow easier access into the area and the appearance of factors that disturb the peace of another time, is reflected in the following figure (appreciation was performed by means of points from 1 to 5).



Monitoring rural tourism phenomenon is extremely difficult. Is a very dynamic development, rapid changes of ownership, classification, number of places. Many touristic and agrotouristic pensions are being classified, having files laid-down at the office of subsidiaries of ANTREC. Others have only permit from city hall, being in progress of classification and part work without a permit (40%).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Assessment and recording responses from tourists after filling out questionnaires show that tourists are satisfied with the hospitality and accommodation that offers the area, but the stimulate of their return is conditional on infrastructure development, implementing the latest technology to improve routes communication, the arrangement of path, and diversification of methods of entertainment. There must be identified ways to promote the area for to be exploited to maximum the agrotouristic potential.

Knowing at a medium level an international language ( English preferred ), and promoting the offer on the Internet and other media sources would result in a greater number of foreign tourists to spent their leisure in the area Vartop- Arieseni. Among owners of agrotouristic pensions 70% know English language at a level that enables them to communicate with foreign tourists, but locals or employees know English only in proportion of 34%.

The development of the area through tourism and agrotourism is directly proportional to the incomes recorded by locals and owners of units of accommodation.

Also, economic and social status is improved by increasing the offer of jobs, decreasing unemployment.

Dissatisfaction of the locals is related to the attitude of many tourists who pollute (through negligence and indifference) the area.

The evolution of number of units of accommodation (hotel, hostel, villa, tourist complex) is evident over the past three years.

If in 2006, most touristic and agrotouristic pensions had a capacity of accommodation averaging 7,8 places / pension, proving that tourism activity is not in an advanced stage of development and bring additional income to the residents ( the main source of revenue being based on agricultural activities ), in 2007 the capacity of accommodation of pensions amounts to an average of 12,2 places / pension, so that at the end of 2008, capacity is 15 places / pension.

In the studied area, Vartop –Arieseni, the capacity of accommodation in 2006 is averaging 8,5 places /pension, extending in 2007 to 15,6 places/ pension and reached in 2008 to 20,5 places/ pension.

From a legal point of view, those who practice tourism and rural tourism in the area Vartop-Arieseni are authorized as family associations, authorized persons, legal persons.

In order to ensure a favorable course for development of rural tourism, in perspective, the following are required:

- A rigorous definition of the “rural tourism” activity in the spirit of European standards, adapted to the specific of Romanian realities (by elaboration some measurable criteria to identify quantitative and qualitative the integration of the activity in this field);
- Adoption of new facilities applicable to the authorized agents that satisfy the real requirements of the rural tourism;
- Improving the legislative framework of pursuing rural tourism through the elaboration of some sanitary and fiscal norms concerning direct marketing of household products, various forms of insurance, etc.;
- Identify and assess the potential of rural tourism from the perspective of regional and local development programs and elaborate the projects of touristic arrangements (individual or integrated), designed to outline and to diversify the tourism offer;
- Institution of a compulsory of minimum professional bands of providers of

tourist services (peasants, guides, local agents, etc.), through training, seminars and information materials developed or supported by factors empowered in this regard (associations of providers, consulting and managerial firms, bodies of government agencies, educational institutions, etc.);

- Training experts in the agrotouristic field management at local, regional and national level;

- Multiplicity of ways to promote rural tourism offer in the domestic and international market (organization of conferences, exhibitions, symposiums, fairs, elaboration of promotional materials, organization of marketing and promotion in the promotional program of MTCT, collaboration with specialized foreign companies interested in organization of rural circuits in the Central Europe and the introduction of Romanian offer in the promoting catalogs thereof);

- Identifying by the skill forums (MTCT, ANTREC etc.) of the touristic offer of maximum complex and representative for the Romanian rural and support them through grants and facilities to promote, nationally and internationally;

- Facilitating by MTCT of collaboration between agencies and organizations involved in developing rural tourism in Romania and similar bodies and other European countries with traditionally rural tourism;

- Assurance of facilities to support the development of rural tourism: facilitating access of peasant households and small craft to credit from funds allocated from the state budget, the creation of a Mutual Fund for rural tourism for granting loans with subsidized interest rates and guarantee certificates of peasant household etc.;

- Capitalization of natural heritage is parallel with establishment of an organization framework for the protection and

regeneration (specific infrastructure, legislation, regulations, local orders, etc.);

- Elaboration of some studies for sustainable development for the destinations of great attraction;

- Assimilation of the latest and performant means of promotion and commercial advertising: video clips, compact discs, the internet;

- Establishment of specialized departments in elaborating advertising materials at a high professional level, able to penetrate foreign market information

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