

## THE POSITION OF TOURIST AND AGROTOURIST GUESTHOUSES IN ROMANIA'S ACCOMMODATION STRUCTURES

Agatha POPESCU

University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Bucharest, Romania, 59 Marasti, District 1, Bucharest, 011464, Romania, Phone: +40 21 318 25 64, Fax: +40213182888, Email: agatha\_popescu@yahoo.com

*Corresponding author:* agatha\_popescu@yahoo.com

### Abstract

*The paper aimed to analyze the position of the tourist and agrotourist guest houses in Romania's accommodation structures in the period 2007-2015. The tourist offer in terms of the number of tourist and agro-tourist guesthouses and of the number of places/beds in this type of accommodation units has continuously increased because of the demand growth in terms of the number of tourist arrivals and overnight stays. This is a consequence of the visitors need to apply for a new alternative to the classical tourism, and of the rural population to diversify the activities in order to get more incomes per family. Tourist and agritourist pensions offer a pleasant stay to their visitors at lower prices compared to hotels. The holidays planning in the middle of the year and the trend to shorten the length of the stay have led to a decline of the net use of the accommodation indices in touristic and agrotouristic pensions, in tourism in general. The results showed that tourist and agrotourist pensions play a more and more important role in Romania's tourism and their services are more attractive in comparison to other sorts of accommodation units. Important efforts must be done by the local population and communities, local authorities, entrepreneurs, local and national administrations and tourism associations in order to promote and support the growth of touristic activities in tourist and agrotourist guesthouses.*

**Key words:** accommodation structures, agritourist pension, tourist pension, Romania, trends

### INTRODUCTION

Romania has excellent conditions to develop rural tourism because 44 % of the population lives in the rural space and besides the incomes coming from agriculture, income from rural and agri-tourism is welcome for any farmer and any household.

Rural tourism is able to combine the pleasure to live in plain air far away from the civilization of the cities to enjoy learning about traditional occupations of the people, tasting traditional food, meeting folk customs, but also having contact and taking part to agricultural works, milking cows, harvesting hay or potatoes, sleeping in the hay, playing with farm animals etc. [1]

Therefore, tourism services in the rural areas are able to support local population and communities in developing economic diversity.

According to the legislation in force, agrotourist pensions are units whose accommodation capacity is maximum 8

rooms and they act either independently or in people's houses. They accommodate tourists and offer them natural food, produced in the farm or household by local authorized producers and the possibility of taking part to handicrafts activities and other activities in the household [4].

The expansion of rural tourism is justified by the revival and development of the rural area, and by the need to offer an alternative to classical tourism form. The quality of services determines the clients satisfaction and wish to return, the income of the pension owner and the economic efficiency of the tourist pension [8].

In the rural areas of Romania, tourism is growing and the quality of accommodation and services is constantly improving. Romania's image in the international tourism depends on advertising and intensive promotion of the national values and national and local brands. The positive trend in the number of rural pensions is the result of the efforts destined to the development of tourism

in the rural space [9].

The evolution of rural tourism activities reflects both the changes in the tourism offer in terms of the number of tourist and agri-tourist guest houses, and in the tourism demand, in terms of tourist arrivals in rural tourist reception structures [5].

In this context, the present paper had the purpose to analyze the dynamics of the tourist and agritourist pensions in the period 2007-2015 in order to establish the position of this category of accommodation units in Romania's accommodation structures and the development of tourism in the rural space.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to set up this paper, the data were collected from the National Institute of Statistics, more exactly from Tempo Online Data base, for the period 2007-2015.

The main indicators taken into consideration were the following ones: (i) the tourism offer in terms of the number of tourist and agri-tourist pensions, and the share of the tourist and agrotourist pensions in the total number of accommodation establishments existing in Romania, (ii) the tourism offer in terms of the number of beds/places in tourist and agritourist pensions and their share in the total number of places/beds existing in all the categories of touristic accommodation establishments in Romania, (iii) tourism demand in terms of the number of tourist arrivals in tourist and agrotourist pensions,

and their share in the total number of tourist arrivals in accommodation units in the country, (iv) tourism demand in terms of the number of tourist overnight stays in tourist and agrotourist pensions and their share in the total number of overnight stays, (v) the indices of the net use of accommodation capacity in tourist pensions and agritourist pensions.

The data were statistically processed using the fixed basis indices and also the comparison method. The results were tabled and graphically represented and correspondingly commented.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Number of tourist and agritourist pensions.

In the period 2007-2015, the accommodation structure in Romania's tourism have registered a continuous development. In 2015, Romania had 6,821 accommodation units, by 45.3 % more than in 2007. The most important tourist accommodation units are hotels, tourist pensions and agritourist pensions. The number of hotels increased by 41.6 % from 1,075 units in 2007 to 1,522 units in 2015. On the 2nd position came agritourist pensions, whose number increased by 48.5 % from 1,292 units in 2007 to 1,918 units in 2015. On the 3rd position came tourist pensions, whose number has doubled in the analyzed period from 736 units in 2007 to 1,527 units in 2015. (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of tourist and agri-tourist pensions in Romania's accommodation capacity, 2007-2015

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2015/2007 %
TOTAL UNITS	4,694	4,840	5,095	5,222	5,003	5,821	6,009	6,130	6,821	145.3
TOURIST PENSIONS	736	783	878	949	1,050	1,247	1,335	1,323	1,527	207.5
AGRI-TOURIST PENSIONS	1,292	1,348	1,412	1,354	1,210	1,569	1,598	1,665	1,918	148.5

Source: Own calculations based on NIS, Tempo-online Data base, 2016 . [6]

**The share of tourist and agritourist pensions in the total number of tourist accommodation units** is presented in Fig.1. The agritourist pensions registered a slight

increase of their share from 27.5 % in 2007 to 28.1 % in 2015, with the top share 27.7 % in the year 2009 and the lowest share 24.2 % in the year 2011. They occupy the top position in

the accommodation units structure.

The tourist pensions have continuously increased their share from 15.7 % in 2007 to 22.4 % in 2015, occupying the 2nd position after agritourist pensions.(Fig.1.).

On the 3rd position are hotels whose share

varied between 22.9 % in 2007 to 26.1 % in 2011, the highest weight, and 22.3 %, the lowest level in 2015. All these three categories of accommodation units accounted for 72.81 % of the total number of tourist accommodation units in Romania.

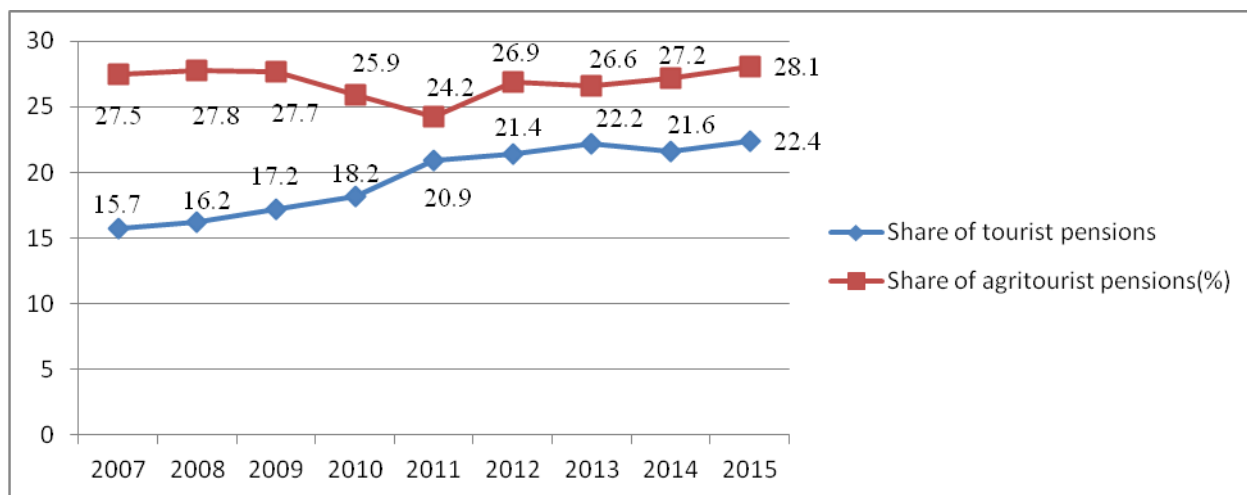


Fig.1.Share of tourist and agritourist pensions in Romania's accommodation capacity, 2007-2015 (%)

Source: Own design based on NSE Tempo online data base, 2016. [6]

**The number of beds/places in tourist and agritourist pensions.** A high attention was paid not only to the number of accommodation units, but also to the number of places or beds. In 2015, Romania had an accommodation capacity in terms of number

beds accounting for 328,313 places, by 15.7 % higher than in the year 2007, when it had 283,701 places. The highest offer of beds is in three accommodation units, the most numerous ones: hotels, tourist pensions and agritourist pensions.

Table 2.Number of beds/places in tourist and agri-tourist pensions in Romania, 2007-2015

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2015/2007 %
TOTAL BEDS/PLACES	283,701	294,210	303,486	311,698	278,503	301,109	305,707	311,288	328,313	115.7
BEDS IN TOURIST PENSIONS	13,429	14,538	16,653	18,422	20,499	25,019	27,325	27,295	32,051	239.7
BEDS IN AGRITOURIST PENSIONS	15,448	16,906	19,783	20,208	20,683	27,453	28,775	30,480	35,188	227.8

Source: Own calculations based on NIS, Tempo-online, 2016 [6]

The number of places in hotels increased by 11.8% from 168,736 beds in 2007 to 188,607 beds in 2015. But the number of places in pensions has increased much more. The number of places in agritourist pensions accounted for 35,188 beds in 2015, being 2.27 times higher than in 2007. In this case, the number of beds offered by agritourist

pensions came on the 2nd position. On the 3rd position was the number of places offered by tourist pensions. It accounted for 32,051 beds in the year 2015, being 2.38 times higher than in 2007.(Table 2)

**The share of the places/beds in tourist and agritourist pensions in the total number of places in tourist accommodation units** is presented in Fig.2. The share of beds offered

by tourist pensions increased from 4.7 % in 2007 to 9.8 % in 2015 in the total number of beds existing in Romania's accommodation units with tourism function. The number of beds offered by agritourist pensions registered a more dynamic trend, increasing from 5.4 % in 2007 to 18.7% in 2015. Looking at the figures presented in Fig.2., one can notice that

in the year 2011, the number of beds existing in tourist pensions and the number of beds existing in agritourist pensions was almost similar. But, since 2012, the agritourist pensions increased more intensively their number of places, because farmers were interested to grow their income by accommodation and also traditional meals.

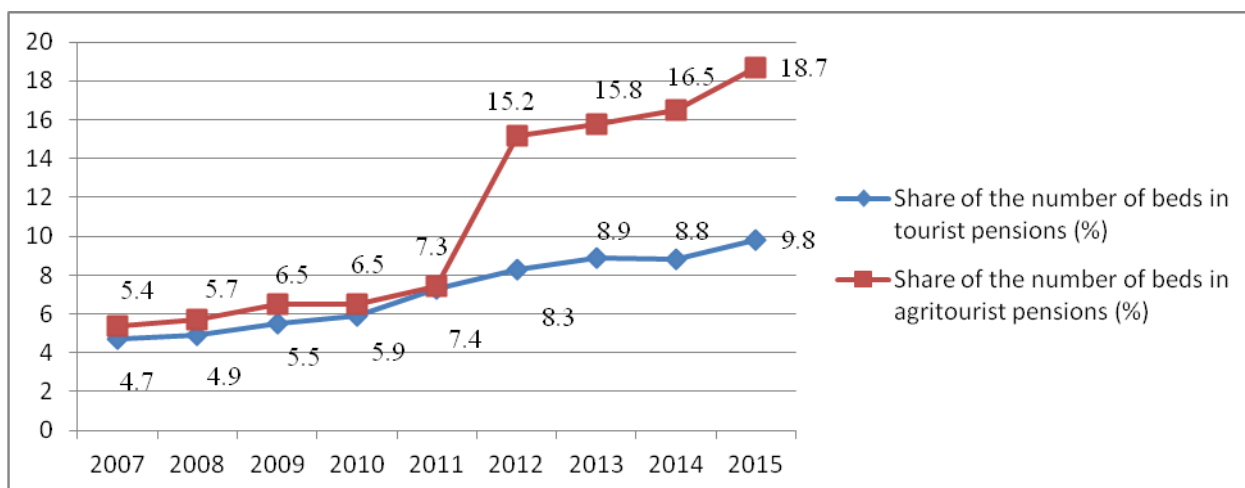


Fig.2.Share of the number of beds in tourist and agritourist pensions in Romania's total number of places, 2007-2015 (%)

Source: Own design based on NSE Tempo online data base, 2016, [6]

**The number of arrivals in tourist pensions and agritourist pensions.** In the analyzed period, Romania registered a continuous increase of the number of arrivals in

accommodation units with tourism function. In 2014, the number of arrivals totalized 8,465,909 (residents and nonresidents), being by 21.4% higher than in the year 2007.

Table 3.Number of tourist arrivals in tourist and agri-tourist pensions in Romania, 2007-2014

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2014/2007 %
TOTAL ARRIVALS	6,971,925	7,125,307	6,141,135	6,072,757	7,031,606	7,686,489	7,943,153	8,465,909	121.4
ARRIVALS IN TOURIST PENSIONS	451,640	478,058	412,162	406,632	479,590	586,119	653,464	704,129	155.9
ARRIVALS IN AGRITOURIST PENSIONS	288,508	357,617	325,686	289,923	360,696	447,113	501,746	549,302	190.4

Source: Own calculations based on NIS, Tempo-online, 2016, [6]

The highest number of arrivals were in hotels: 5,212,170 tourists in 2007 and 6,314,865 tourists in 2014, by 21.2 % more than in the first year of the analysis. On the 2nd and the 3rd place came the number of arrivals in tourist pensions and, respectively in agritourist pensions. In 2014, the tourist pensions received 704,129 tourists, by 55.9%

more than in 2007 (451,640 tourists), while the agritourist pensions accommodated 549,302 tourists, by 90.4 % more than in 2007 (288,508 tourists).(Table 3).

**The share of arrivals in tourist and agritourist pensions in the total number of arrivals in Romania's tourism** is presented in Fig.3. The share of arrivals in tourist pensions increased from 6.5 % in 2007 to 8.3

% in 2014, while the share of the arrivals in agritourist pensions increased from 4.1 % in 2007 to 6.5 % in 2014.

However, the share of arrivals in hotels

remained on the top position, ranging between 74.8 % in 2007 and 74.6 % in 2014, with the maximum weight 76.2 % in the year 2011.

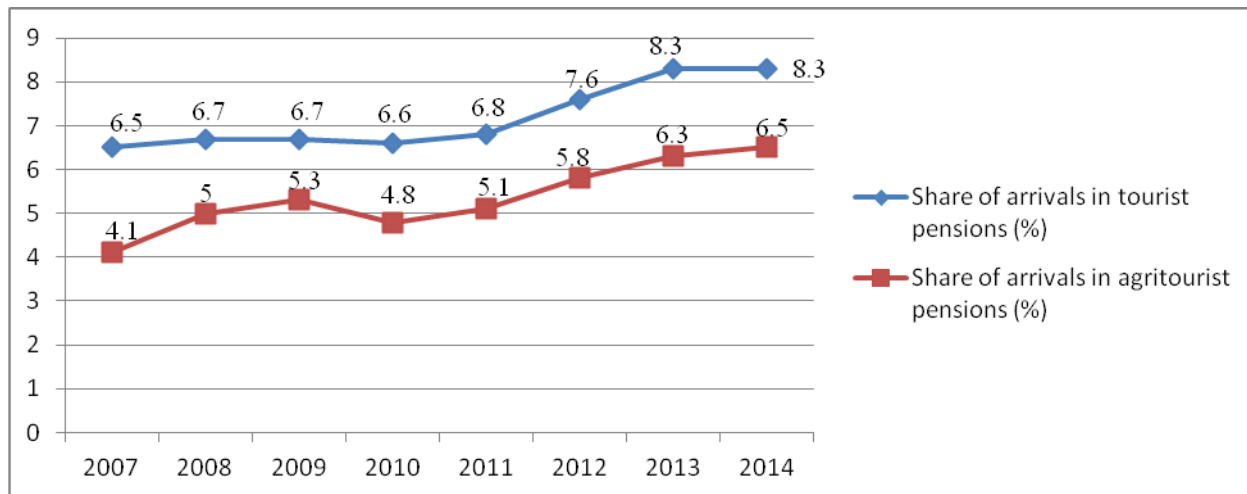


Fig.3.The share of the number of arrivals in tourist and agritourist pensions in Romania's total number of tourism arrivals, 2007-2014 (%)

Source: Own design based on NSE Tempo online data base, 2016, [6]

**The overnight stays in tourist and agritourist pensions.** In the analyzed period, the number of overnight stays registered a

decreasing trend, from 20,593,349 stays in 2007 to 20,280,041 stays in 2014, meaning by 1.5 % less than at the beginning of the period.

Table 4.Number of overnight stays in tourist and agri-tourist pensions in Romania, 2007-2014

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2014/2007 %
TOTAL OVERNIGHT STAYS	20,593,349	20,725,981	17,325,410	16,051,135	17,979,439	19,166,122	19,362,671	20,280,041	985
OVERNIGHT STAYS IN TOURIST PENSIONS	927,604	959,391	813,281	802,222	928,535	1,083,763	1,197,200	1,273,114	1372
OVERNIGHT STAYS IN AGRITOURIST PENSIONS	592,327	743,444	673,188	604,606	741,350	906,504	996,475	1,081,521	1826

Source: Own calculations based on NIS, Tempo-online, 2016, [6]

This was due to the decline of the number of overnight stays in almost all categories of accommodation units, except tourist pensions and agritourist pensions, where the number of stays increased. This is explained by the attractive accommodation in a rustic style and beauty of the scenery and the lower tariffs compared to the one in hotels.

In case of the hotels, the number of overnight stays declined by 4.1 % from 16,603,404 stays in 2007 to 15,928,051 stays in 2014.

In case of the tourist pensions, the number of

stays increased by 37.2 % from 927,604 stays in 2007 to 1,273,114 stays in 2014, while in case of the agritourist pensions the number of overnight stays increased by 82.6 % from 592,327 stays in 2007 to 1,081,521 stays in 2014 (Table 4).

**The share of overnight stays in tourist and agritourist pensions in the total number of overnight stays in Romania's tourism** is presented in Fig.4. The number of overnight stays in tourist pensions increased from 4.5 % in 2007 to 6.3 % in 2014, while the share of

overnight stays in agritourist pensions increased from 2.9 % in 2007 to 5.3 % in 2014. The overnight stays in hotels have the highest share in the total number of overnight stays. However, their share declined from

80.6 % in 2007 to 78.5 %, because of the tourists would like to shorten their stays or travels and to be accommodated in cheaper accommodation structures like pensions.

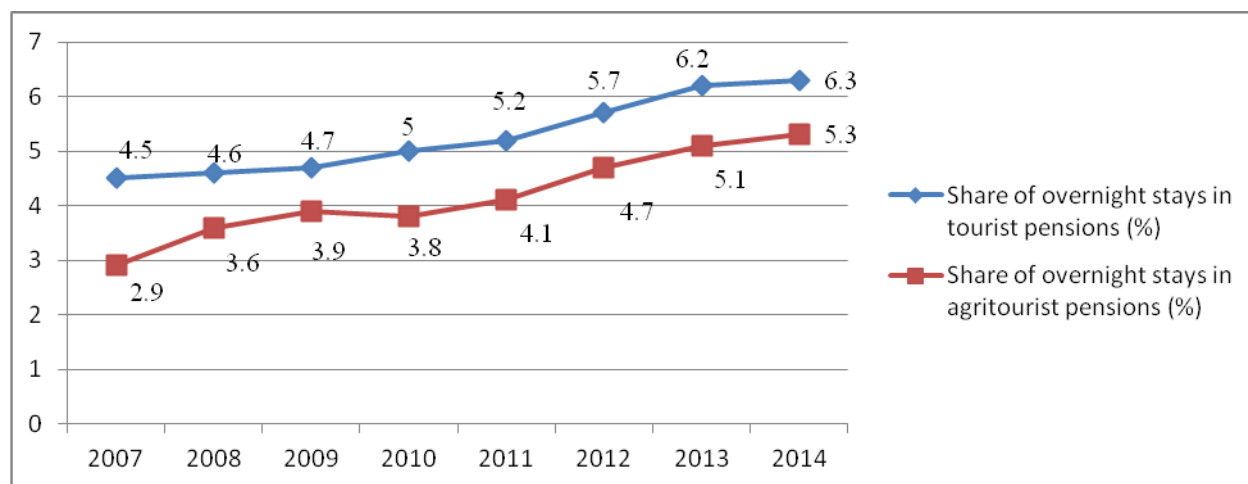


Fig.4. The share of the overnight stays in tourist and agritourist pensions in Romania's total number of overnight stays, 2007-2014 (%)

Source: Own design based on NSE Tempo online data base, 2016, [6]

**The indices of the net use of accommodation capacity in tourist pensions and agritourist pensions.** At country level, the indices of net use of the

accommodation capacity for all the types of touristic units varied between 36 % in the year 2007 and 26.1 % in the year 2014.

Table 5. Indices of the net use of the accommodation capacity in tourist and agri-tourist pensions in Romania, 2007-2014

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2014/2007 %
AVERAGE INDICES AT COUNTRY LEVEL	36	35	28.4	25.2	26.3	25.9	25.1	26.1	72.5
INDICES FOR TOURIST PENSIONS	22.3	21.9	16.6	14.6	15.5	14.8	14.6	15.4	69.1
INDICES FOR AGRI-TOURIST PENSIONS	16.3	18.4	14.2	12.4	13.8	13.2	12.6	13.2	81.0

Source: Own calculations based on NIS, Tempo-online, 2016, [6]

Therefore, it was registered a deep decline accounting for 27.5 % in 2014 compared to 2007. This is because of the vacations planning mainly in the months of July and August, the wish of the tourists to shorten the duration of stay and the limited money allotted for vacation in close relation to the family budget. In this way, the managers of tourist units can not cover the whole accommodation capacity.

Among the macro economic factors affecting the number of arrivals and the net use index of accommodation in rural guesthouses, in

tourism in general, are: family income, inflation, and unemployment. [2]

The highest indices of net use of the accommodation capacity is recorded in hotels. But even in this case, the indices varied between 43.2 % in the year 2007 and 32.9 % in the year 2014, with an obvious decreasing trend. The lowest level was 29.9 % recorded in the year 2010, but then, it started a slight recovery.

A similar decreasing trend was noticed for all the other sorts of accommodation units, except the tourist chalets and tourist houses

which recorded an increase.

In case of the tourist pensions, the indices of the net use of the accommodation capacity declined by 30.9 % from 22.3 % in the year 2007 and 15.4 % in the year 2014. In case of the agritourist pensions, the indices of the net use of the accommodation capacity declined by 19 %, from 16.3 % in 2007 to 13.2 % in 2014 (Table 5).

The flows of tourists have a deep influence on the indices of the net use of the accommodation capacity and tourism receipts. The flows of tourists are characterized by seasonality along the year, because of the holidays planning mainly in the middle of the year. For example, in August the flows of tourists is 4.5 times higher than in February in agri-tourists guest houses [3].

But there are differences from a region to another regarding the tourist flows and the indices of the net use of the accommodation capacity in touristic and agri-touristic pensions. For instance in the Rucar-Bran area and Marginimea Sibiului area, the tourists flows are higher and also the indices of the net use of the accommodation capacity are higher [7].

## CONCLUSIONS

The tourist offer in Romania has continuously increased, but it is obvious a development in the rural space regarding the number of tourist and agro-tourist guesthouses and of the number of places/beds in this type of accommodation structures.

This is because of the need to diversify the activities in the rural space and to increase the income of the rural population, of the farmers and households, to preserve the rural style of buildings and internal decorations, to preserve folk traditions and offer to the visitors a pleasant and high quality services at acceptable prices.

The results of this empirical research have also confirmed that the demand for tourism services in tourist and agrotourist pensions has increased in terms of the number of tourist arrivals and overnight stays.

However, the indices of the net use of the accommodation in touristic and agrotouristic

pensions declined, mainly after 2008, when the economic crisis started. A large range of factors such as family income and budget allotted for trips and holidays, as well as the vacations planning mainly in the middle of the year, and the trend to reduce the length of the stay have led to a smaller and smaller net use of the accommodation use in general, but also in touristic and agrotouristic pensions.

Therefore, tourist and agrotourist pensions play a more and more important role in Romania's tourism and their services look to be more attractive in comparison to other sorts of accommodation units due to a good correlation between the service offer and price.

The development of this category of accommodation establishments on the map of Romania depends on the efforts which local population and communities, local authorities, entrepreneurs, local and national administrations and tourism associations promote and support the growth of touristic activities in the rural space.

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