

STUDY ON THE CURRENT STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING AND PROMOTION OF RURAL TOURISM AND AGRITOURISM IN THE ETHNOGRAPHIC AREA MARAMUREȘ

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Abstract

The paper presents general elements regarding rural tourism, agrotourism and the tourist potential of the rural area, the unique natural and anthropic tourist heritage of the Maramureș ethnographic area. The current stage of capitalizing the tourist potential is presented, by analyzing the main forms of rural tourism practiced in the area, by determining the indicators that characterize the number of rural tourist pensions, accommodation capacity and are proposed some strategies for tourism development and tourism promotion and advertising this area, at national and international level. In the first part, a realistic and pertinent analysis was made of the specific tourist potential of the Maramureș ethnographic area, through which it is clearly different from other ethnographic areas in our country and which capitalized at its true value can be a real magnet of attraction for domestic tourists, but especially for foreign ones. The second part highlighted the evolution and development of the number of pensions and accommodation capacity in this beautiful region, in the period 2016-2020, which was significantly affected especially by the pandemic situation in our country and other neighbouring countries and the European Union. Finally, based on the real situation of the development stage and use of the tourist potential in the studied ethnographic area, a series of new strategies for the development and promotion of the rural tourism and agrotourism activity were presented.

Key words: agritourism, management, rural tourism, tourist resources

INTRODUCTION

As it is well known in time, the tourist activities carried out in the “green” rural area generate positive effects, but also undesirable effects, especially when the ecological loading capacity and the ecological peculiarities of the rural environment are not respected [13, 14]. Starting from this hypothesis, we considered that it is very good to carry out this study, to find out what is the current stage of development and arrangement of tourism in general and how it should evolve so that its uncontrolled development does not seriously and irremediably affect this fascinating and unique ethnographic area of Maramureș. The advantages of practicing rural tourism and agrotourism are:

(a) Related to the tourist activity itself: Rest in the country is an increasingly attractive alternative for townspeople [2, 4]. In it, tourists are invited to participate in local traditional holidays, folk costume parades, craft fairs, visit of traditional houses,

churches, monasteries and medieval castles, etc. [3, 6];

(b) Economically: Tourism in general stimulates the development of other branches of the national economy such as: industry, agriculture, construction, transport, trade [10, 16, 19, 31]. Agrotourism is a real chance for the local economy by developing traditional activities that have long been neglected, crafts, local artistic creations to satisfy tourists. As can be seen, agrotourism contributes to the capitalization of local tourist resources, raising the standard of living of the inhabitants, the socio-economic development of the rural locality and the community and the protection and conservation of the natural and built environment [8, 22, 29].

(c) Culturally, they are in close interaction, thus creating a series of social advantages, advantages that benefit both the agritourism entity and the environment of which it is part. This activates the socio-cultural, craft, folkloric traditions [9, 21, 27];

(d) At the political-demographic level, it helps to increase the phenomenon of stability, but also to restrict the process of emigration of the rural population, especially the young, preserves the existing socio-cultural models, popular traditions and local architecture. It contributes to the creation of a favorable external image of Romania on an international level, through the contact of foreign tourists with the ethnoculture and the natural and hospitable ambiance of the Romanian village [7, 17, 20].

The branded rural tourism product that has not been exploited at all until now in our country and especially in the studied area is the "tourist village". Tourist villages are those hearths of rural communities that by their specificity and particular note can be a rural tourism product, being prepared at the same time to satisfy a wide range of motivations of domestic and international tourism [1, 11, 22]. The application of the principle of specialization in the field of organization and functioning of the tourist village is necessary because each rural locality is an entity with its own particularities and specific activities, which only need to be identified and capitalized as efficiently as possible, from a tourist point of view [12, 18, 33]. In the studied area we meet: (a) Landscape and climatic villages such as Botiza, Breb, Vișeu de Sus and others; (b) Spa villages: Stoiceni, Ocna Șugatag, Coștiui, Borșa and others; (c) Pastoral tourist villages: Baia Sprie, Căvnic; (d) Sports tourist villages: Căvnic, Budești, Mara, Cosău, Mogoș; (e) Tourist villages of artistic and artisanal creation: Săcel, Sighet, Rogoz village, Șugatag village, Botiza, Margina, Cordon, Săpânța; (f) Ethnofolkloric tourist villages: Bogdan-Voda, Bârsana, Preluca Noua; (g) Villages with objectives of scientific interest, which have different types of nature reserves that, through their uniqueness and beauty, attract to visit many foreign tourists and natives: Slătioara, Glod, Chiuzbaia, etc; (h) Villages with historical, art and architectural monuments of exceptional value: Rozavlea, Budești, Săcele, Josani, Desești, Breb, Sârbi Village.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the first phase, the specific tourism potential of the Maramureș area was determined, very varied, diversified and concentrated, due to the existence of combined landforms throughout the territory, a favorable climate for tourism throughout most of the year, a rich faunal and floristic potential with unique species and ecosystems in Europe. The existence of some natural spa treatment factors, and of a cultural heritage - historical and architectural heritage of world reference, based on which the area can be included among the attractive tourist destinations in Romania and even in Europe [5, 32, 26].

Subsequently, the aim was to highlight this tourist potential by clearly highlighting the unparalleled natural and anthropic tourist heritage, with a special specificity of the Maramureș ethnographic area. The current stage of capitalizing the tourist potential was determined, by analyzing the main forms of rural tourism practiced in the area, by determining the indicators that characterize the number of rural tourist pensions, accommodation capacity, tourist circulation and proposed some strategies for tourism development and publicity of this area, at national and even international level [24, 28, 23].

Based on the documentation and studies carried out, it was found that the natural and anthropogenic potential are not sufficient in the development of a tourist area such as the Maramureș ethnographic area and that it must be supported by adequate management, economic power and a well-implemented strategy, in order to arrange and rearrange the existing tourist framework. Also, new projects must be started that will lead primarily to the preservation of the unique historical-cultural and craft heritage, to the obtaining of complementary incomes, but also to the raising of the standard of living, culture and civilization [24, 32, 23].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Maramures is a geographical region, made up of the Maramures Depression in Romania and the eastern Transcarpathian region of Ukraine

by human activities with agrotourism function. Maramureş is a wood civilization, undoubtedly encouraged by the splendid wooden churches and the many buildings founded according to a secular architecture. The specific ceramics of the area are of different shapes and sizes, depending on their use. The vessels are colored in bright green, red, or blue, on a whitish background [24, 32, 23, 26].

A special place of unparalleled uniqueness and originality is the *Merry Cemetery from Săpânța*. The name of the cemetery comes from the multitude of multicolour crosses and from the satirical poems and epitaphs that are inscribed on the crosses. Legend has it that the cheerful attitude towards death is a habit of the Dacians who believed in eternal life and death for them was just the transition to another world.

The Maramureş Village Museum is a tourist attraction located in the town of Sighetu Marmăției, Maramureş County, opened in 1981, which mainly groups a collection of houses specific to the Maramureş area. The museum comprises over 30 households, some fully furnished with original pieces. The preserved houses and households are grouped on the main subzones of the historical Maramureş [24, 32, 23, 26].

The monasteries are points of attraction for religious tourism such as: *Bârsana Monastery* located in the commune of the same name, built in the middle of the 16th century. *Săpânța-Peri Monastery* founded in 1391, by Dragoş Vodă's grandchildren, in which the headquarters of the Romanian Episcopate of Maramureş functioned for more than 300 years. With a maximum height of 78 m, the church of the Săpânța-Peri monastery is currently ranked 3rd among the places of worship in Romania.

The wooden church from Poienile Izei. The church was built of fir beams. The square altar is narrower than the rectangular plan of the main body of the church, as is typical of older churches. The building is one of eight churches included in the UNESCO International Heritage List. Gheorghe from Dragomireşti painted the church in a post-Byzantine style in 1794. The paintings are

very well preserved and include large scenes in simple frames [24, 32, 23, 26].

Botiza Monastery. A nunnery, the Botiza monastery (Baş Botiza hermitage) dedicated to the "Change in the Face" is a holy foundation in the commune of Botiza, which hosts an icon that works wonders. The construction of the monastery began in 1991, the works being coordinated by the craftsman from Botiza, Vasile Petrehuş, at the request of the faithful and the father. The monastery is built of solid fir wood, with a porch adorned with Maramures arches, sculpted in Maramures style.

Along with religious tourism, it is also possible to practice with great success the curative tourism or health care in the beautiful resorts such as: The spa resort of local interest Ocna Şugatag which is located in Maramureş County, 20 km from Sighetu Marmăției, at 490 m altitude at the foot of the Țibleş-Gutâi mountains. Borşa spa and recreation resort located at the foot of the Rodna Mountains at 850 m altitude. The Borşa tourist complex located near the city benefits from a climate conducive to both the treatment and the practice of winter sports. The air is clean, free of allergens and strongly ozonated. There are also springs of bicarbonate, calcium, magnesium, ferruginous mineral waters used in the treatment of kidney and urinary tract diseases [24, 32, 23, 26].

Vaserului Valley - Mocănița from Vişeu de Sus. Often referred to as the "Vaserului Valley Railway", the Forest Railway in Vişeu de Sus is located right in the north of Romania, on the border with Ukraine and represents a richness both technically and culturally and runs on a route of almost 60 kilometers, being known worldwide as the last true forest railway, which runs on steam [24, 32, 23, 26].

Analysis of the evolution of tourist reception structures in the period 2016-2020

Until December 31, 2020, Maramureş County had 38 rural localities in which only one touristic boarding house was identified in the commune of Vişeu de Jos and 156 agritouristic boarding houses in the 38 rural localities (Table 1).

Figure 2 shows an increasing trend in the number of agritouristic boarding houses in Maramureş County in the period 2016-2020, from a number of 96 in 2016 to a number of 156 in 2020, growth is sustained even in 2020, despite the pandemic conditions. This is

the result of the development of rural tourism in general, the preferences of potential tourists being oriented towards diverse, recreational activities, carried out in a less polluted space, also due to the fact that most were developed on existing housing of entrepreneurs.

Table 1. Tourist reception structures with accommodation functions by types and localities, from the Maramureş area, in the period 2016-2020

Tourist reception structures	Localities	Years / number of pensions					Tourist reception structures	Localities	Years / number of pensions				
		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020			2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Touristic boarding houses	Dumbrăviţa	1	1	-	-	-	Agritouristic boarding houses	Mireşu Mare	-	1	1	1	1
-	Ocna Şugataş	2	2	-	-	-	-	Moisei	7	9	10	10	15
-	Recea	1	1	-	-	-	-	Ocna Şugataş	13	26	20	21	24
-	Strâmtura	1	1	-	-	-	-	Onceşti	2	3	4	4	7
-	Vişeu de Jos	2	2	1	1	1	-	Petrova	-	1	1	1	1
Total touristic boarding houses		7	7	1	1	1	-	Poienile Izei	10	10	9	10	10
Agritouristic boarding houses	Băiuţ	1	1	1	1	1	-	Recea	1	1	3	3	3
-	Bârsana	7	7	5	5	6	-	Rona de Jos	-	1	1	-	1
-	Bogdan Vodă	1	1	1	1	1	-	Rona de Sus	1	1	1	1	1
-	Botiza	8	11	9	9	10	-	Ruscova	-	-	1	1	2
-	Budeşti	3	3	3	3	4	-	Săcălăşeni	1	1	1	1	1
-	Călineşti	-	1	2	2	2	-	Săcel	3	3	4	2	4
-	Cerneşti	-	-	1	-	-	-	Săpânta	3	4	4	4	6
-	Cicărlău	1	1	1	1	1	-	Sarasău	1	2	2	1	1
-	Coaş	-	-	1	-	-	-	Satulung	1	1	1	1	1
-	Colţău	4	5	5	5	5	-	Şieu	2	4	3	3	4
-	Copalnic-Mănăştur	1	1	1	1	3	-	Şiseşti	2	2	2	2	2
-	Deseşti	4	6	5	4	7	-	Strâmtura	2	2	3	3	3
-	Dumbrăviţa	1	1	2	2	1	-	Suciu de Sus	1	1	1	1	1
-	Giuleşti	3	4	3	3	5	-	Vadu Izei	8	13	12	12	14
-	Groşii Tibleşului	-	-	-	-	1	-	Valea Chioarului	2	2	2	2	3
-	Ieud	1	1	1	1	3	-	Vişeu de Jos	1	1	2	2	1
Total agritouristic boarding houses		96	132	129	124	156							

Source: processing according to the data of the National Institute of Statistics [25].

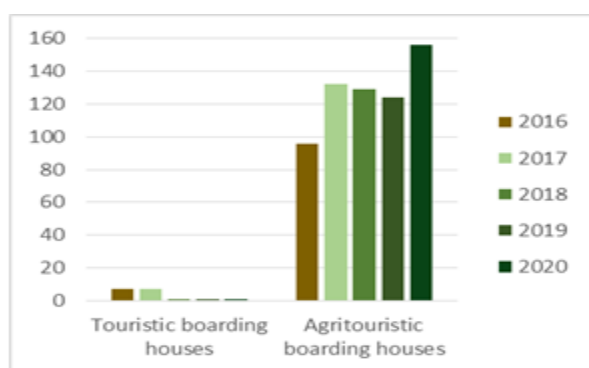


Fig. 2. The evolution of rural tourist boarding houses with accommodation functions in the Maramureş area, during 2016-2020

Source: processing according to the data of the National Institute of Statistics [25].

This development was made with very little investment, because the constructions existed, and in order to be made available to tourists, they were briefly arranged and built spaces for

bathrooms and serving the hygienic meal, which meet the minimum classification criteria, at least 2 daisies.

The number of touristic boarding houses remains extremely small, from a number of 7 boarding houses in 2016 and 2017, to a single boarding house in 2018, 2019 and 2020. This was mainly due to the specific conditions existing in households in Maramureş, which could it easily provides tourists with a range of quality traditional products, with the help of which to attract and retain the tourist clientele.

Analysis of accommodation capacity in touristic and agritouristic boarding houses

The existing (installed) tourist accommodation capacity represents the number of tourist accommodation places registered in the last act of reception,

homologation, classification of the tourist accommodation unit, excluding the extra beds that can be installed in case of need. The places related to the tourist reception structures with complementary tourist accommodation functions (cottages, campsites, etc.) to a basic tourist accommodation structure (hotel, motel, campsite, etc.) and the use of these places are included in the basic structure.

In the period 2016-2020, there was a continuous increase in the existing accommodation capacity as a result of the increase in the number of agritouristic boarding houses in the county. This is explained by the desire of the locals to start their own business in order to obtain additional income to the basic ones, due to the

increase of the requirements for the practice of rural tourism (Table 2).

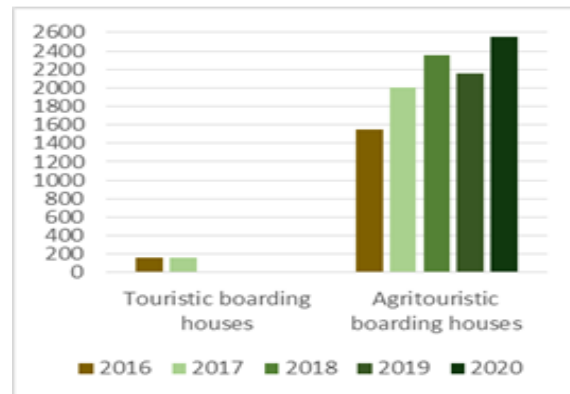


Fig. 3. Accommodation capacity in rural touristic boarding houses, in the Maramureș area, during 2016-2020

Source: processing according to the data of the National Institute of Statistics [25].

Table 2. Existing tourist accommodation capacity by types of reception structures and localities, from the Maramureș area, in the period 2016-2020

Type of tourist reception structures	Localities	Years / number of places					Type of tourist reception structures	Localities	Years / number of places				
		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020			2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Touristic boarding houses	Dumbrăvița	16	16	-	-	-	Agritouristic boarding houses	Mireșu Mare	-	9	9	9	9
-	Oena Șugatag	50	50	-	-	-	-	Moisei	117	164	186	186	214
-	Recea	43	43	-	-	-	-	Oena Șugatag	231	371	391	405	446
-	Strâmtura	36	36	-	-	-	-	Oncești	48	53	85	85	117
-	Vișeu de Jos	20	20	7	7	7	-	Petrova	:	20	30	30	30
Total touristic boarding houses		165	165	7	7	7	-	Poienile Izei	10	109	104	99	114
Agritouristic boarding houses	Băiuț	14	14	14	14	14	-	Recea	21	21	74	74	73
-	Bărsana	138	140	115	115	139	-	Rona de Jos	-	8	8	-	8
-	Bogdan Vodă	19	19	19	19	19	-	Rona de Sus	36	36	36	36	36
-	Botiza	107	135	115	113	123	-	Ruscova	-	-	30	30	43
-	Budești	44	44	54	54	70	-	Săcălășeni	12	12	12	12	12
-	Călinești	-	16	32	32	50	-	Săcel	77	77	136	54	88
-	Cernești	-	-	14	-	-	-	Săpânța	34	45	51	51	66
-	Cicârlău	16	16	16	16	16	-	Sarasău	26	49	82	60	60
-	Coaș	-	-	63	-	-	-	Satulung	10	10	10	10	10
-	Colțâu	64	75	75	75	75	-	Șieu	23	49	55	55	67
-	Copalnic-Mănăstur	11	11	11	11	37	-	Șisești	36	36	36	36	36
-	Desești	45	105	87	49	85	-	Strâmtura	26	26	62	62	62
-	Dumbrăvița	13	10	20	20	10	-	Suciu de Sus	14	16	16	16	14
-	Giulești	48	58	48	48	73	-	Vadu Izei	131	183	173	173	205
-	Groșii Țibleşului	-	-	-	-	16	-	Valea Chioarului	52	33	33	33	31
-	Ieud	19	27	27	27	47	-	Vișeu de Jos	14	14	27	27	13
Total agritouristic boarding houses		1,555	2,006	2,351	2,151	2,556							

Source: processing according to the data of the National Institute of Statistics [25].

Figure 3 shows the evolution of the number of accommodation places in agritouristic boarding houses in Maramureș County in the period 2016-2020, which shows that their number increased from 1,555 places in 2016 to 2,556 in 2020, an increase also being sustained in the year 2020, contrary to the

restrictions imposed by the pandemic conditions existing at that time. From what was presented, it was found that the very high demand for recreational places in open spaces, during the pandemic period 2019-2020, led to an increase in the number of accommodation places, especially in agritouristic boarding

houses, which have a growth rate of over 60%. The high demand during this period was also due to the restrictions imposed on the movement of tourists by neighboring countries and the European Union. Tourists preferred to spend their holidays in the country, where they did not need a green passport or a covid test, Maramureș area fully benefiting from these restrictive conditions. As can be seen from the presentation of the specific tourist potential, it has sufficient tourist and agrotourism resources to satisfy a wide range of requirements and needs of the tourist clientele in our country and beyond.

The number of accommodation places in the touristic boarding houses in Maramureș County in the period 2016-2020 is very small, from a number of 165 places in 2016 and 2017, it reached only 7 accommodation places, in the years 2018, 2019 and 2020, in Vișeu de Jos commune. This phenomenon was mainly due to the general trend in the studied area, of transforming rural touristic boarding houses into agritouristic boarding houses, as all households had certain traditional local natural products, which they could use and increase their added value by providing tourists (Table 2).

Figure 4 shows that the number of accommodation places, expressed in places-days for agritouristic boarding houses in Maramureș County in the period 2016-2020, had a period of growth from 2016 (563,140 places) to 2018 (734,497 places), and then in the last 2 years, 2018-2020, a decrease to 546,325 places in 2020. Although from the data presented above it was found that the number of accommodation places especially in agritouristic boarding houses has increased considerably, from Table 3 and Figure 4 it is found that the number of places expressed in days decreased in the first year of the pandemic to 688,325, and in the second year to 546,325, this was mainly due to the reduction of the number of accommodation places that could be made available to tourists, to 50% or up to only 30%, in situations where the evolution of the infection rate increased above certain percentages.

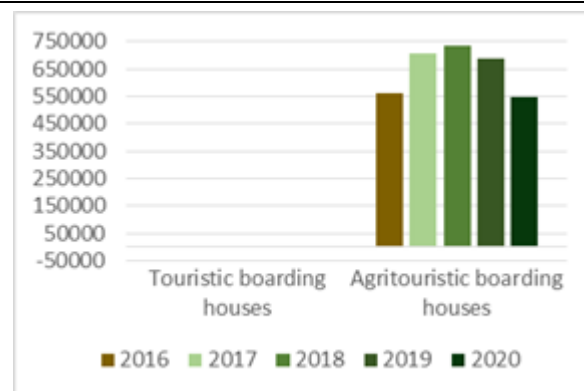


Fig. 4. Accommodation capacity in rural touristic boarding houses (places-days), in the Maramureș area, in the period 2016-2020; Source: processing according to the data of the National Institute of Statistics [25]

The number of accommodations expressed in places-days for rural touristic boarding houses in Maramureș County in the period 2016-2020 increased from 2,190 places in 2016, to a number of 3,650 in 2020. This increase is explained by the fact that these touristic boarding houses located in the environment rural areas could provide spaces for relaxation and leisure, in conditions of isolation and safety, in accordance with the requirements imposed by the restrictions during the difficult period of the pandemic (Table 3).

Tourism development proposals

The future of rural tourism in Maramureș is promising provided that there is a greater awareness of public authorities and the private sector, but especially of consumers, on the ability of rural tourism to contribute to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage in rural areas, and to improve living standards in this region of the country. A superior capitalization of the potential is held by the rural tourism with its forms, leisure tourism, ethnographic tourism (cultural-folkloric manifestations), cultural tourism, balneoclimateric tourism, ecological tourism, sports tourism (hunting schools), agrotourism (specialized farms).

Proposals for the development and diversification of the tourist offer

Analyzing the above and the current state of development of tourism in the region, we can say with conviction that it has not reached a maximum level of development, despite its rich and varied potential, and its development prospects are promising. A first step in

supplementing the income is to diversify the tourist offer within the accommodation units and at the local, regional or interregional

level, by giving up kitsch and promoting the traditional.

Table 3. The capacity of tourist accommodation in operation by types of tourist reception structures and localities (places-days), from the Maramureş area, during 2016-2020

Type of tourist reception structures	County	Localities	Years / number of places-days				
			2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Touristic boarding houses	Maramureş	Vadu Izei	2,190	3,650	3,650	2,555	3,650
Agritouristic boarding houses	Maramureş	Băiuţ	4,690	5,110	5,110	5,110	2,338
-	-	Bârsana	14,331	13,420	19,025	14,830	6,385
-	-	Bogdan Vodă	5,909	6,935	6,935	6,935	5,491
-	-	Botiza	38,955	43,370	38,282	38,650	29,250
-	-	Budeşti	16,088	16,060	17,590	19,834	18,670
-	-	Călineşti	-	4,368	5,840	9,248	7,598
-	-	Cerneşti	-	5,110	4,256	-	-
-	-	Cicârlău	5,856	5,840	5,840	5,824	944
-	-	Coaş	13,482	22,995	15,309	-	-
-	-	Colţău	24,840	27,740	26,755	27,567	21,959
-	-	Copalnic-Mănăştur	4,015	4,495	4,015	4,004	4,089
-	-	Deseşti	14,982	35,559	30,167	18,601	23,777
-	-	Dumbrăviţa	6,986	8,952	7,938	8,542	4,986
-	-	Giuleşti	11,027	8,522	11,210	12,394	8,306
-	-	Groşii Țibleşului	-	-	-	-	480
-	-	Ieud	5,610	8,407	9,855	9,855	14,881
-	-	Mireşu Mare	3,285	3,285	3,285	3,285	900
-	-	Moisei	34,294	45,139	44,809	44,736	32,517
-	-	Ocna Şugatag	97,003	133,389	132,132	132,846	100,091
-	-	Onceşti	18,064	21,535	33,890	31,319	27,099
-	-	Petrova	1,220	8,344	10,950	10,950	8,220
-	-	Poienile Izei	35,045	34,868	35,669	35,472	41,682
-	-	Recea	23,305	22,295	26,400	25,126	15,195
-	-	Rona de Jos	-	3,650	3,650	3,650	5,475
-	-	Rona de Sus	12,084	13,140	13,140	13,140	10,404
-	-	Ruscova	-	-	10,588	10,950	9,463
-	-	Săcălăşeni	4,392	4,380	4,380	4,368	3,468
-	-	Săcel	49,063	49,640	48,639	26,634	9,546
-	-	Săpânţa	6,570	12,422	18,722	16,239	13,842
-	-	Sarasău	9,087	17,632	22,434	21,840	17,433
-	-	Satulung	3,660	3,102	920	2,140	1,590
-	-	Şieu	1,054	9,458	11,443	18,593	11,631
-	-	Şiseşti	12,680	12,900	13,140	13,140	10,404
-	-	Strâmtura	11,802	11,722	9,490	9,490	7,514
-	-	Suciu de Sus	3,430	5,110	5,110	5,110	3,850
-	-	Vadu Izei	48,905	58,266	59,694	57,658	55,013
-	-	Valea Chioarului	12,794	12,775	12,775	12,756	10,077
-	-	Vişeu de Jos	6,679	5,500	5,110	7,489	1,757
Total			563,140	705,435	734,497	688,325	546,325

Source: processing according to the data of the National Institute of Statistics [25].

The trade of handicrafts provides another framework for inter-relationship at the level of "countries". Through the exchanges made by the rural localities of the four Maramures countries, an inter-functional relationship is developed, conducive to the development of rural tourism and local communities. Creating

a site for the promotion of traditional and artisanal products, with the possibility of purchase, would be another way to influence the growth of income in the region and to help motivate the perpetuation of crafts. The Internet can also be an opportunity for artisanal trade, thus becoming an e-commerce,

as a new method of presenting and capitalizing on products [24, 32, 23, 26]. Diversifying the forms of tourism and creating thematic routes would mean important sources of income and especially to promote the region. Construction of new marked trails on the surrounding hills, and even mountains and maintenance of the old ones, arrangement of special places for picnics, where the fire is controlled, also construction of tourist cabins, with medium capacity, for the development of weekend tourism in the area of higher hills, there are only a few possibilities to increase tourist traffic and income.

Examples of thematic routes [24, 32, 23, 26].

1. The route of the wooden churches: Desești - Ieud - Bogdan Vodă - Bârsana - Giulești - Budești - Ferești - Vadu Izei - Rozavlea - Rogoz or on the route Sighetu Marmăției - Vadu Izei - Ferești - Cornești - Călinești - Sârbi - Sat Șugatag Monastery.

2. The route of folk crafts (making dowry boxes, tools and household objects, carved and painted crosses, folk pottery, processing wool and animal skins, etc.): Desești - Plopiș - Băița de sub Codru - Săpânța - Vișeu de Jos - Șugatag Village - Botiza - Ferești - Călinești.

3. Tour of the spas: Ocna Șugatag - Băile Cărbunari - Băile Dănești - Băile Botiza - Băile Borșa.

Ways to develop and promote rural tourism in Maramureș County

As dominant intangible products, rural services are not easy to promote. Intangibility is at least difficult to describe in advertising, whether it is print, TV or radio. There is a need to develop a marketing program that widely promotes the entire sector, a cooperative marketing company, under the same umbrella, in which all operators will compete, with equal opportunities. All these elements of the promotional activity must be channelled to promotional events, fairs, exhibitions and conferences both nationally and internationally. The rural tourism product is supposed to be perceived especially by those with a certain degree of culture, the promotion in this case will be directed in attracting long and short-term tourists during treatment stays in rural areas, thematic or cultural circuits.

On the foreign market we have the categories of foreign tourists that are considered to be open to the promotion of rural tourism. A trip to Maramureș is a delight for the tourist eager to know the moral and spiritual values of the places, specific to the Romanian people but forgotten in other areas. Maramureș is par excellence the best-preserved source of ancestral traditions. It is the place where simplicity blends harmoniously with humanity, giving them that nobility full of grace [24, 32, 23, 26].

In the ethnographic and folkloric tourist villages in the Maramureș area (eg. Bogdan-Vodă) can be offered to tourists accommodation and dining services in authentic conditions (furniture, decor, bedding in popular style, traditional menus served in ceramic bowls, tablespoons wood, etc.). Permanent handicraft exhibitions (for sale) can be organized in these villages, and for tourists who do not stay in the locality, but only visit, one or more households can be arranged, with an open-air ethnographic museum.

The preservation and perpetuation of folklore and especially of ethnography (dress, work techniques, architecture, furniture and interior decoration, etc.) in their original traditional forms, is in decline, becoming increasingly isolated on the ethno-folk map of the country. The forms and content of urban life have penetrated and continue to penetrate impetuously and irreversibly into the rural environment as well.

Approaching the future of a rural locality from the tourist perspective and adapting them to this purpose, we consider that their ethnographic specificity can and must be preserved and perpetuated. Otherwise, the current interest of tourists for the Romanian village, for the rustic environment, in general, will gradually decrease. This desideratum must be pursued all the more, as many villagers from some localities in the area clearly show interest in maintaining their lifestyle, these localities having chances to become permanent tourist bases, of international popularity, particularly profitable [24, 32, 23, 26].

Agrotourism and rural tourism in addition to those presented above must also contribute to recreation, restoration and comfort, enriching knowledge and flourishing human personality. These activities cannot be carried out at a high level of quality without the pensions and agritourism farms having modern hygienic-sanitary facilities. For this, peasant households must be supported by a number of facilities.

In order for the support to be realized faster and directed towards the rural tourism activity, at the level of each county the territorial tourist centers must be built to deal with: attracting new members and creating in the area a current of specific marketing opinions; ensuring the inclusion in the national catalogue of all classified rural tourist structures, organizing with the support of the body of experts from the National Association and the relevant Ministry of Romania, professional training courses for the owners of rural tourist structures; providing technical assistance in the preparation of documentation for the classification and granting of non-reimbursable financial aid, participation in the activity of the technical commissions for the classification of tourist structures in the area.

CONCLUSIONS

Regarding the analysis of the main forms of rural tourism practiced in the ethnographic area Maramureș, we can conclude that the area is dominated by the number of agritouristic boarding houses, much higher than that of touristic boarding houses. This increase is due to the orientation of tourists' preferences towards such diverse, recreational activities, carried out in a picturesque space and as little as possible polluted. The increase in their number is also due to the fact that most of them have been developed on the already existing homes of entrepreneurs, with a minimum of investments for their transformation into tourist reception structures.

From the analysis of the indicators that characterize the dynamics of rural touristic boarding houses, the accommodation capacity, in the analyzed interval 2016 - 2020,

increased in agritouristic boarding houses, but decreased considerably in touristic boarding houses, in 2020, the accommodation capacity expressed in places-days, decreasing below the last reference year analyzed, namely 2016. Regarding the number of agritouristic boarding houses in Maramureș County, there was a tendency to increase them in the analyzed period, by approximately 62%, sustained growth even in 2020, despite the pandemic conditions, instead, the number of touristic boarding houses remained very small, limited to only one, in Vișeu de Jos.

During the same period, there was a continuous increase in accommodation capacity expressed in the number of places, existing in agritouristic boarding houses of about 64%. This is explained by the desire of the locals to start their own business, in order to obtain additional income to the basic ones and as a result of the increase of the preferences for the practice of rural tourism. The number of accommodation places expressed in places-days for touristic boarding houses in Maramureș in the period 2016-2020, increased by 66%, especially in the pandemic period 2019-2020, when they were used almost at full capacity.

Rural tourism must ensure the preservation of the countryside and in no way support its urbanization, it must reflect the rural and traditional note specific to Maramureș, both from an architectural and dimensional point of view. We must warn because improper and abusive practice can negatively influence the development of rural areas, loss of identity through industrialization, change of mentality, attitude towards architecture and folk dress, adoption of modern models in everyday life and activities.

The main measures that should be applied to carry out a tourism activity developed in the Maramureș area are: creation of programs and funds for co-financing regional development projects, correlation of national programs with those of local and regional interest, extension of communications in areas of tourist interest, efficient and modern transport, promoting the zonal tourist potential by participating in tourism fairs, by conducting advertising campaigns, preparing brochures with

information about the tourist potential of the area and with suggestive images in this regard, media coverage of agritourism pensions and farms.

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