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TOURISM AND AGROTOURISM POTENTIAL OF VRANCEA COUNTY - ROMANIA

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Abstract: *The Vrancea County region is one of the important areas of the South-East Development Region through tourism potential, through the natural cadre it possesses, the historical monuments and architecture, folk art, because here live householder people who keep the ancestral traditions, adding the quality of the offered tourism services.*

The tourism potential represents, truly, the primary tourism offer (potential) which, together with the existing tourism structures (accommodation structure and specific infrastructure) form the real tourism offer or the patrimonial tourism.

In this essay we analyze the tourism accommodation structures and the accommodation capacity, the tourist circulation, the net usage of the operative capacity coefficient in Vrancea County.

Key words: *tourism, agrotourism, tourist circulation*

JEL Classification: *Q 11*

INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism is and isn't a new form of expressing in the EU countries where tourist lodging in villages in a more or less organized manner has been done for a long time, this phenomenon appearing with the desire to expand and to spend leisure time another way than the classical way, by avoiding urban jostle and by looking for quiet areas and recreation in nature, in the form of countryside holidays, being also an alternative to classic tourism, industrial, that has had and still has, regarding fondness and constancy, as place of unfolding, tourism centers that are mostly urban. In its ensemble, rural tourism includes that large range of lodging possibilities, of activities, events, festivities, sports and entertainments, all of them unfolded in a typical rural environment³.

Vrancea, ancient hearth of Romanian ethnography and folklore and of remarkable cultural values, has a picturesque landscape, in which there are protected nature monuments that have a special beauty.

The tourism potential of Vrancea County really makes up the primary tourism offer (potential) which together with the existing tourism structures (accommodation structure and specific infrastructure) form the real tourism offer or the patrimonial tourism, to which it adds, not lastly, the general factors of human existence: hospitality, traditions, the variety and the quality of the offered services, for a good unfolding of the tourist activities.

The sojourn tourism in the mountain, vineyard or plain areas is favoured by the existence of multiple natural factors that can determine many ways to spend the holidays in spas with picturesque landscape, unpolluted and with distinct microclimatic particularities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Tourism is analyzed and followed in dynamic through a system of specific indicators, based on a calculation methodology that is standardized worldwide. The indicators of the tourist phenomena reflect its particularities and dimensions, the rates of operation generally or by certain sectors from it.

The analysis aims to identify the tourist and agrotourist potential in Vrancea County based on statistical indicators regarding the tourist accommodation structures and the lodging capacity by types of structures and tourist circulation.

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³ Glăvan V.,2002, Agroturism.Ecoturism.,Editura Alma Mater,Sibiu, p.11

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the comparative analysis one can notice the fact that in 2016 the number of accommodation units has increased from 45 in 2010 to 57. In this period the number of hotels, motels and tourist boarding houses has increased, but the number of agrotourism boarding houses has decreased from 24 in 2010 to 18 in 2013, staying that way until 2016.

On a County level, the number of accommodations has registered a decrease in 2013 compared to 2010, of approx. 25% (280 accommodations), only to increase in the following period until 2016 with a of 28% percent compared to 2013

A considerable increase is noticed in the lodging capacity of motels which doubles in 2013 but has a small decrease in 2016 with a 6,3% percent compared to 2013.

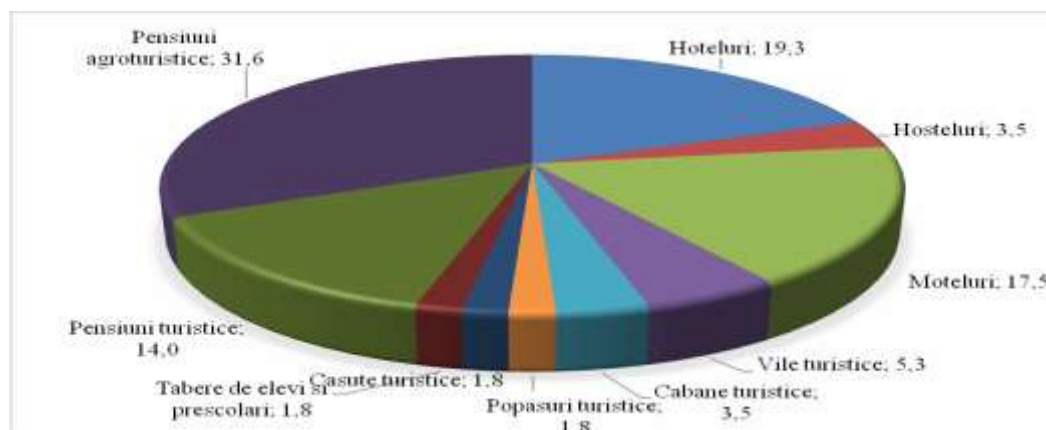
Table nr.2 Comparative analysis of the tourist accommodation structures and lodging capacity by types of structures in Vrancea County

Unit Type	2010		2013		2016		2013/2010(%)		2016/2013(%)	
	nr. of units	nr. of accom.	nr. of units	nr. of accom.	nr. of units	nr. of accom.	units	accom	units	accom.
Total	45	1836	49	1556	57	1993	108,9	84,7	116,3	128,1
Hotels	6	504	8	425	11	723	133,3	84,3	137,5	170,1
Hostels	*	*	2	60	2	60	*	*	100,0	100
Motels	4	166	10	397	10	372	250,0	239,2	100,0	93,7
Tourist Villas	2	127	1	12	3	48	50,0	9,4	300,0	400
Tourist Huts	1	7	1	10	2	108	100,0	142,9	200,0	1080
Tourist Rest areas	*	*	*	*	1	6	*	*	*	*
Bungalows	1	58	*	*	*		*	*	*	*
Tourist Cottages	*	*	*	*	1	10	*	*	*	*
Pupil and pre-school camps	2	520	1	200	1	240	50,0	38,5	100,0	120
Tourist Boards	5	84	8	137	8	141	160,0	163,1	100,0	102,9
Agrotourist Boards	24	370	18	315	18	285	75,0	85,1	100,0	90,5

Source: INSSE tempo data series online 2010-2016

In the chart below we can see the share of the tourist accommodation structures out of total. The largest share is held by agrotourism boarding houses with a percentage of 31,6%, followed by hotels with 19,3% and motels with 17,5%.

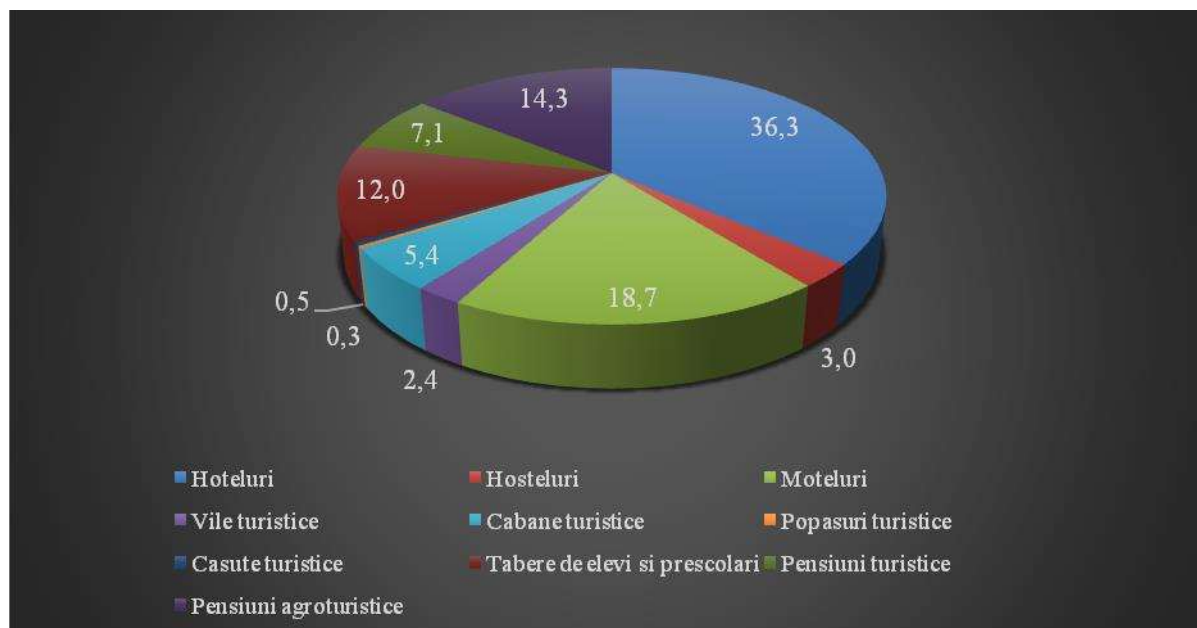
Chart nr.1. Tourist accommodation structures in 2016 in Vrancea County



Source: INSSE

Regarding the accommodation capacity in 2016, the largest share is held by hotels with 36,3%, motels with 18,7% and agrotourist board houses with 14,3%. A very small share is held by tourist rest areas with 0,3% and tourist cottages with 0,5%.

Chart nr.2. Lodging capacity in 2016 by types of structures in Vrancea County



Source: INSSE

Analyzing the evolution of the number of tourists foreigners as well as Romanians we can see both decreases and increases in the analyzed period so that in 2010 the number of arrivals increases until 2012, only to decrease 16% in 2013 compared to past year. Until 2015 the number of arrivals increases by 41% compared to the first year from the analyzed period, only to decrease a little in the following year.

Table nr.3. Analysis of the tourist circulation between 2010-2016 in Vrancea County

Years	ARRIVALS (nr. of people)			OVERNIGHTERS (nr.)			Average sojourn duration (nr.)		
	T	RT	FT	T	RT	FT	T	RT	FT
2010	30606	29276	1330	51464	49097	2367	1,68	1,68	1,78
2011	41625	39901	1724	71697	68766	2931	1,72	1,72	1,70
2012	40657	38034	2623	57330	52972	4358	1,41	1,39	1,66
2013	34196	31455	2741	55898	51020	4878	1,63	1,62	1,78
2014	38901	36584	2317	63206	58225	4981	1,62	1,59	2,15
2015	43290	41355	1935	75061	71495	3566	1,73	1,73	1,84
2016	41350	39013	2337	74517	69177	5340	1,80	1,77	2,28

Source: INSSE tempo data series online 2010-2016

We can see that the number of tourists has a very small share of total arrivals in the County, of 4,34% in 2010, increasing until 2016 to 5,7%.

In 2016, the number of arrivals in hotels holds the largest share with 41%, followed by motels with 21,4%.

Romanian and foreign tourists go for hotels, but Romanian tourists also go for motels and boarding houses.

In overnigheters' case the minimum value is with tourist cottages (61) and the maximum one with hotels (34417).

The average sojourn duration ranges from 1,3 for boarding houses, up to 4,1 for pupil and pre-school camps.

Table nr. 4 Tourist circulation structure in Vrancea County by types of tourist accommodation structures and tourists in 2016

Types of structures	Types of tourists	Arrivals	Overnigheters	Average sojourn duration
		Nr. of people	Nr.	Nr.
Total	T	41350	74517	1,8
	RT	39013	69177	1,8
	FT	2337	5340	2,3
Hotels	T	16981	34417	2,0
	RT	15655	30993	2,0
	FT	1326	3424	2,6
Hostels	T	1005	2596	2,6
	RT	1005	2596	2,6
Motels	T	8867	12490	1,4
	RT	8847	12448	1,4
	FT	20	42	2,1
Tourist Villa	T	254	520	2,0
	RT	187	361	1,9
	FT	67	159	2,4
Tourist Cottages	T	36	61	1,7
	RT	36	61	1,7
Pupil and pre-school camps	T	2179	8863	4,1
	RT	2179	8863	4,1
Tourist Boarding Houses	T	7337	9555	1,3
	RT	6679	8315	1,2
	FT	658	1240	1,9
Agrotourist Boarding Houses	T	4691	6015	1,3
	RT	4425	5540	1,3

Source: INSSE tempo data online 2016

The net usage of the functioning capacity index in Vrancea County is 17,9%, which shows a small usage of the lodging capacity, one of the influencing factors being the weak tourism advertisement.

Table nr. 5. The capacity and the tourist lodging activity

Types of structures	Lodging capacity		Arrivals	Overnigheters	Net usage of the functioning capacity index %
	Existent	Number of accommodations -days			
Total	1993	415802	41350	74517	17,9
Hotels	723	137775	16981	34417	25,0
Hostels	60	21952	1005	2596	11,8
Motels	372	89833	8867	12490	13,9
Tourist Villas	48	4380	254	520	11,9
Tourist Cottages	10	1530	36	61	4,0
Pupil and pre-school camps	240	80560	2179	8863	11,0
Tourist Boarding Houses	141	40822	7337	9555	23,4
Agrotourist Boarding Houses	285	38950	4691	6015	15,4

Source: INSSE tempo data online 2016

The net usage of the functioning capacity index registers minimum values for tourist cottages of 4% and maximum values for hotels of 25% and tourist boarding houses with 23,4%.

CONCLUSIONS

Vrancea County is a part of the South-East Development Region, an area that registers a large number of unemployed people, tourism representing an alternative. In order to capitalize the tourist potential, some tourism development directions are imperative, aiming to integrate the Vrancea tourist product in the future national and international tourist programs.

Here we find a very diverse relief with areas that have powerful historical, ethnographic or winegrowing resonances, making possible to promote:

- mountain tourism in the Soveja, Tulnici-Lepșa and Jitia-Vintileasca massifs
- balneary tourism through the improvement of the lodging conditions, of the degree of comfort in general in Soveja resort
- founding the local interest resort Vizantea through capitalizing the bioclimate and the mineral waters
- founding the Tulnici-Lepșa recreation resort

For those who prefer week-end tourism, Vrancea County offers many possibilities for backpacking and relaxation: the Soveja resort, known for the highest quantity of ozone in the air in the country, Putnei– Lepșa Valley, vineyards and the “domnești cellars” from Panciu and Odobești.

A specialized form of tourism that would capitalize this characteristic of being the largest wine-bearing County in the country is the wine tourism, for wine tasting in renowned vineyards, where there are wineries equipped for this purpose: Panciu, Odobești, Cotești.

The rising interest of tourists, Romanian as well as foreigners, for the customs, traditions and folk art, pottery and traditional costumes, brings a considerable development of this type of tourism, the rural tourism.

In Vrancea County there are many natural reservations that could attract tourists. In order to do that, the possibilities of the natural reservations of the County should be capitalized scientifically and they should be given a special attention.

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