

THE SUPPLY TENDENCY OF ROMANIAN AGRITOURISM

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we will examine the Romanian agritourism from the perspectives of supply for agritourism in comparison with those of Romanian tourism markets in general. In Romania, a rural tourist infrastructure with small dimension accommodation functions (agritourist and tourist guesthouses) was developed with priority. If we compare the evolution of the number of agritourist guesthouses to that of the total number of tourist structures in Romania, the significant rhythm of growth (+2472.13 %) is noticeable in the case of agritourist guesthouses compared to the growth (+96.32%) registered by the total number of tourist accommodation structures existent in Romania. Following only the agritourist guesthouses by comparison of their number to the accommodation capacity, in the analyzed dynamics it is apparent that rhythms of growth decreased in the number of units, but increased in accommodation capacities. Thus, the number of units increases by +2472.13 % and the accommodation capacity existent increases by +8168.96% respectively +9302.73% .

INTRODUCTION

Comprehensive examination of the literature reveals numerous labels and definitions for agritourism based on a variety of characteristics (Phillip et al. 2010). Each country, subregion and sector has its own particular characteristics, aspirations and priorities (Hall 2004).

Agritourism has become a central concept in recent debates on rural development policies, practices and initiatives (van der Ploeg et al. 2000; Marsden et al. 2001; van der Ploeg&Renting 2004; Kizos&Iosifides 2007). In theory agrotourism contributes to economic development in rural areas with out putting much pressure on natural resources or social and community values, thus allowing locals and visitors to interact positively and share common created experiences (Anthopoulou et al. 2000).

Agrotourism refers to specific places, and its activities are linked with certain local traditions and landscapes; apart from a local orientation to production, consumption is also kept local (Marsden 1999).

In Romania, agritourism appeared after the fall of communism, has adapted to the economic reality and is limited to the rural households converted in agritourist guesthouses. Agritourism is practiced by small owners in the countryside, usually as a secondary activity, the main activity being that carried out in their own household, which serves as the main occupation and source of income (Calina 2008, 2015b; Glavan 2000).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In Romania it was developed, with priority, a rural tourist infrastructure with small dimension accommodation functions. As the reception structures in the rural environment have a certain characteristic, for authorization it is necessary to be compliant with the regulation documents in force. The specificity of agritourist guesthouses also implies a certain term in ranking these units, namely daisies (flowers). This means the complementarity of rural/agritourist households, very much preferred by the inhabitants from the urban area (Calina 2011).

Agritourist guesthouses are tourist reception structures, having an accommodation capacity of up to 8 rooms, functioning in the households of the citizens or in independent buildings, which ensure, in specially arranged spaces, the accommodation of tourists and the conditions to prepare and serve meals, as well as the possibility to participate in domestic or handicraft activities. Food for tourists comes from natural products, preponderantly from their own household or from local authorized producers. Within agritourist guesthouses agricultural activities (cultivation of plants, livestock farming, vegetable growing, fruit growing wine growing) or handicraft activities (workshops where different handicraft products are manufactured) are carried out. Ranking categories of agritourist guesthouses are determined by the compliance with all compulsory criteria referred to in the Official Gazette no. 312, Part I /2010 (Order no. 1296/2010).

Only by the set up of the evolution and dynamics of a system of indicators a perspective over the entire tourist activity carried out in rural area may be obtained. (Badita, 2004). Concerning offer in agritourism, references to accommodation capacity have been made, which mean statistical measurement and are based on notions regarding the total number of places and their structure in the form of: existent accommodation capacity (Cext), expressed in number of places; accommodation capacity in use (Cf), expressed in number-places-days.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tourism comes under the category of open systems, characterized by the phenomena of growth, amplification of functions, accumulations of large properties, adaptability to environment conditions, restructurings, etc. In the organizational structure of agritourism a series of integrated components are included, where an important place is held by the space structure. This structure is represented through the heterogeneous mode of space repartition of elements of tourist potentials, referring especially to accommodation structures and capacity (Calina 2012, 2015a).

Quantitative and qualitative representation of the technical-material basis in agritourism is related to reception structures. Their economic functions impose analytical knowledge of the current situation of reception structures. Only this way can concrete and effective solutions be presented in order to capitalize on the agritourist potential.

With regard to the total number of agritourist guesthouses, significant increases are determined; thus, if in the year 1996, at national level, there were only 61 such units, in the year 2012, 1569 are registered (Tab.1). If we compare the evolution of the number of agritourist guesthouses to that of the total number of tourist structures in Romania, the significant rhythm of growth (+2472.13 %) is noticeable in the case of agritourist guesthouses compared to the growth (+96.32%) registered by the total number of tourist accommodation structures existent in Romania. Out of this overall knowledge of these reception structures at national level it results an appreciable existent potential.

Table 1.

The supply side of Romanian agritourism

Specification	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012
	Number of establishments								
Total (All types of accommodation),	2965	3127	3121	3339	3900	4710	4840	5222	5821
of which									
Agritourist guesthouses	61	213	400	682	892	1259	1348	1354	1569
	Existing accommodation capacity (number of places)								
Total (All types of accommodation),	288206	287268	280005	272596	275941	287158	294210	311698	301109
of which									

Agritourist guesthouses	332	1003	3544	6219	9405	14551	16906	20208	27453
Accommodation capacity in use (thousand places – days)									
Total (All types of accommodation), of which Agritourist guesthouses	53639	53164	50197	50752	53989	56500	59187	63808	74135
	73	248	805	1270	2132	3188	4038	4891	6864

Source: National Institute of Statistics

The accommodation capacity gathers the total of different equipments necessary for tourists in transit or during stay, a period of variable length, in a territory other than the place of residence. Having special regard towards agritourist guesthouses, the increase of the existent accommodation capacities are of +8168.96% (from 332 in the year 1996 to 27453 places in the year 2012). The total at national level registers at this indicator decreases from 288206 (1996) to 272596 number of places (2002).

The accommodation capacity in use reflects similar tendencies, but with different rhythms. The total at national level registers increases from 53639 to 74135 thousand places-days, the growth being of +38.21%, the decreases are maintained for the same period 1998-2002, due to the diminution of accommodation units. For agritourist guest houses the growth is very significant (from 73 thousand places-days in the year 1996 to 6864 thousand places-days in the year 2012, which represents a growth rhythm of 94.02 times).

Following only the *agritourist guesthouses* by comparison of their number to the accommodation capacity, in the analyzed dynamics, rhythms of growth evidently decreased in the number of units, yet increased in accommodation capacities. Thus, the number of units increases by +2472.13% and the accommodation capacity existent increases by +8168.96% respectively +9302.73% .

CONCLUSIONS

For Romania, a preponderantly agricultural country, but with a diverse natural and cultural patrimony in good condition of preservation, agritourism represents a viable alternative, still insufficiently exploited. Even if during the period 1996-2012 a significant increased rhythm (+2472.13 %) of the number of agritourist guesthouses in Romania was registered, the rural tourist infrastructure with small size accommodation function (agritourist guesthouses) has not reached a satisfactory development level, especially from a qualitative point of view, for the market requirements both at national and international level. This development has not been carried out in a durable manner and most frequently has not been correlated to the improvement of the quality of tourist services (promotion, information, marketing), to the development of transport infrastructure, of recreational services and units. Probably the clearest indicator of the increase of interest for agritourism in Romania is represented by the expansion of agritourist guesthouses, stimulated to a certain extent by the availability of European funds for rural development pre and post-adhesion.

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