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Some Particularities of Rural Tourism Management in Romania through Indirect Quantification

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Abstract *Rural tourism represents a major factor in the Romania's economic transformation conditioned by the affirmation force to the requirements of the market's economy. It began to assert in the Romanian society as a form of exploitation of the local beauties areas and local opportunities, as forms of entrepreneurial courage, as a way of developing proprietary business niche. The mass tourism is declining as share; it began to impose a shorter holiday tour and more often ones. But the visitor behaviors' focus niche is moving from relatively acceptable quality at lower price mirage, to relatively, the best quality at acceptable price. In this equation, it's all about a tourist that starts to fall in love with authenticity, sustainability, reputation and escape into traditional, and for business people open up business opportunities that require innovation and differentiation. The analysis below is based upon the observation of some correlative aspects between statistical data and qualitative level of travel services supply, which suggests business management of tourism field on the way to pick up the performance. Of course, the statistical data studied, beyond their scientific relevance and suggest matters of quality in the design of packaging, planning and providing services that are specific to rural tourism, for which it's assert a new type of management, called rural tourism management.*

Key words Rural tourism, density, accommodation, quality, services, visit

JEL Codes: A1, M0, M1, R0, Z3

1. Introduction

For the tourism service's beneficiary to return with a new demand, it is necessary the services' quality and value received analysis which constitutes a theme of a great interest in this field. The quality of the craftsmanship of those who expressed it offers to meet customer requirements, by default sizes declared and subjected to direct verification (Lim and Su, 2003). The offer of tourist services, those who were dedicated to rural tourism are already confronted with fierce competition, constantly concerned about improving the quality of their services in order to respond better to the needs and

expectations of their current and potential clients, but also to earn the reputation as alluring in relation to competition (Haiwood, 1983). In a broad sense, were given several meanings for the perceived value of client, as follows: low price, everything that anybody from a service or product quality for the price paid, or what receives the buyer of what he wants (Ye *et al.*, 2014), while the level of hospitality tourism describes the value that reputation for quality, value for money and, especially, the prestige (Slater and Narver, 2000).

The success of travel companies, including in rural tourism, is based on a consideration of the demand's change (Weiermair, 2006; Novelli *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, innovation which has the effect of making the objects supports the idea of competitiveness (Bieger and Laesser, 2002). The results presented in statistical mode can also, through comparative interpretation to indicate aspects of the quality of services, especially for rural tourism.

The authors consider that, by analyzing the comparative capacity, the number of arrivals and overnight stays, the average duration of stay and the density of tourist movement may have come off some interesting conclusions in relation to the existing situation and prospect of quality tourist offer. In fact, the tourism offer represents the concentrated expression of any tourism business management.

2. Tourism activity in a few Romanian counties

Increased demand in some counties from Romania was the sequel to promote rural tourism through the media under consideration. This fact has led employers to increase the physical basis for accommodation in Covasna, Argeş, Suceava, Sălaj and Bistriţa-Năsăud counties, administrative entities over which will focus on the proposed analysis. In the timeframe studied, it may be noted that rural tourist accommodation and tourist villas have recorded a significant increase in relation to the previous timeframe. From the analysis carried out, the accommodation corresponding to the counties mentioned above had a positive trend during the period 2005-2015, this aspect can be observed from the data contained in Table 1.

From the below analysis it can be seen that Sălaj county holds the smallest capacity, both existing and in use, and the occupancy of the accommodation units is higher by 11% in Bistriţa-Năsăud County than in Sălaj County.

Because of the fact that counties are areas with a studied importance from the historical point of view, level of accommodation capacity, particularly in the counties such as: Covasna, Suceava and Arges, has increased. This is explained by the interest of establishments that provide rural tourism services to invest in this field of activity and create business opportunities.

Table 1. Accommodation capacity in Covasna, Suceava, Argeş, Sălaj and Bistriţa-Năsăud counties, within the timeframe 2005-2015

| Year | Existing Accommodation Capacity (places number) | | | | | Functioning accommodation capacity(thousand day-places) | | | | |
|------|---|---------|-------|-------|-----------------|---|---------|--------|-------|-----------------|
| | Covasna | Suceava | Argeş | Sălaj | Bistriţa-Năsăud | Covasna | Suceava | Argeş | Sălaj | Bistriţa-Năsăud |
| 2005 | 3664 | 6526 | 4710 | 1058 | 2660 | 976,9 | 1932,6 | 1274,7 | 267,6 | 839,1 |
| 2006 | 3735 | 7012 | 4837 | 924 | 2705 | 803,5 | 2056,7 | 1319,8 | 240,4 | 835,0 |
| 2007 | 2592 | 6831 | 4803 | 829 | 2730 | 766,6 | 2087,4 | 1255,7 | 225,5 | 766,9 |
| 2008 | 2832 | 7029 | 4899 | 754 | 2728 | 869,2 | 2101,8 | 1135,0 | 208,3 | 818,0 |
| 2009 | 3293 | 7554 | 5189 | 1263 | 2689 | 939,1 | 2176,4 | 1097,4 | 386,7 | 704,2 |
| 2010 | 3638 | 8033 | 5419 | 1381 | 2626 | 962,6 | 2263,6 | 1164,6 | 409,6 | 718,7 |
| 2011 | 4050 | 8835 | 5942 | 1509 | 2752 | 1236,4 | 2439,6 | 1396,8 | 446,5 | 757,1 |
| 2012 | 4863 | 9447 | 7076 | 1686 | 3101 | 1313,4 | 2594,0 | 1598,0 | 524,1 | 831,0 |
| 2013 | 4254 | 9585 | 7461 | 1723 | 3105 | 1225,4 | 2642,6 | 1539,9 | 515,7 | 801,6 |
| 2014 | 5552 | 9650 | 7829 | 1593 | 2769 | 1369,8 | 2686,4 | 1632,1 | 530,9 | 791,5 |
| 2015 | 5582 | 10143 | 8714 | 1710 | 2609 | 1369,6 | 2780,2 | 1728,6 | 581,6 | 745,4 |

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Tempo Online, completed and updated A. Gheorghe, *Methods and techniques to improve the ecotourism service's quality. Case study: Salaj County*, ASE Publishing House, Bucharest, 2016, pp. 49-52.

Table 2. Arrivals number and overnights number in Covasna, Suceava, Argeş, Sălaj and Bistriţa-Năsăud counties, within the timeframe 2005- 2015

| Year | Arrivals (thousand) | | | | | Overnight stays(thousand) | | | | |
|------|---------------------|---------|-------|-------|-----------------|---------------------------|---------|--------|-------|-----------------|
| | Covasna | Suceava | Argeş | Sălaj | Bistriţa-Năsăud | Covasna | Suceava | Argeş | Sălaj | Bistriţa-Năsăud |
| 2005 | 54,0 | 192,1 | 95,8 | 15,0 | 65,8 | 490,9 | 435,2 | 248,1 | 61,6 | 274,8 |
| 2006 | 51,4 | 211,0 | 105,3 | 18,4 | 71,0 | 457,7 | 500,3 | 260,0 | 63,7 | 261,0 |
| 2007 | 52,5 | 226,3 | 139,0 | 16,3 | 72,6 | 429,0 | 535,1 | 348,6 | 54,2 | 253,3 |
| 2008 | 62,6 | 229,1 | 144,1 | 17,4 | 67,6 | 486,8 | 530,1 | 315,8 | 64,2 | 239,1 |
| 2009 | 62,4 | 209,7 | 110,1 | 21,4 | 52,0 | 452,0 | 479,4 | 189,9 | 61,7 | 178,9 |
| 2010 | 60,9 | 194,4 | 111,3 | 24,3 | 52,9 | 409,2 | 460,6 | 206,2 | 70,2 | 137,9 |
| 2011 | 91,4 | 229,5 | 123,0 | 29,0 | 57,8 | 532,4 | 556,2 | 218,5 | 86,0 | 143,9 |
| 2012 | 79,1 | 238,6 | 160,8 | 34,1 | 66,2 | 472,8 | 586,2 | 249,5 | 90,3 | 164,6 |
| 2013 | 83,4 | 241,6 | 149,5 | 33,4 | 66,3 | 438,2 | 577,2 | 236,8 | 85,5 | 140,4 |
| 2014 | 89,24 | 260,68 | 160,0 | 32,26 | 70,93 | 483,6 | 583,6 | 277,7 | 78,5 | 142,6 |
| 2015 | 97,42 | 310,55 | 195,2 | 37,96 | 80,3 | 481,6 | 699,5 | 328,03 | 87,53 | 195,56 |

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Tempo Online, completed and updated A. Gheorghe, *Methods and techniques to improve the ecotourism service's quality. Case study: Salaj County*, ASE Publishing House, Bucharest, 2016, pp.49-53.

Covasna and Ieş Suceava counties are highlighted by the celebrations of traditional festivals, conducted annually, making it a magnet for local tourists, and foreigners ones. These kind of traditional activities are turning into as many business opportunities, as well as increasing the number of arrivals and overnight stays in rural tourism, as shown in Table 2.

In the present Romanian counties, such as: Sălaj and Bistriţa-Năsăud is observed the lowest values of arrivals and overnight stays indicators, and it can be appreciate the fact that, the number of overnight stays is higher in Bistriţa-Năsăud, unlike Sălaj county, because Bistriţa-Năsăud is located in close proximity to the famous tourist areas such as Ţara Oaşului (Satu Mare) and Ţara Lapusului (Maramures). According to the indicators studied, Suceava and Covasna enjoy a growing tourist demand, making it necessary to enhance the base materials of rural tourism.

Annual cultural events organized and carried out during the summer explain the evolution of overnight stays tourist arrivals in the studied counties, mentioned above. This occurs as a result of increasingly intense publicity made, year after year, through media channels. Actual situation of working states in tourist accommodation resource results from the analysis of the average duration of stays, as it appears from the data presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Average length of stay in Covasna, Suceava, Argeş, Sălaj and Bistriţa-Năsăud counties, within the timeframe 2005-2015

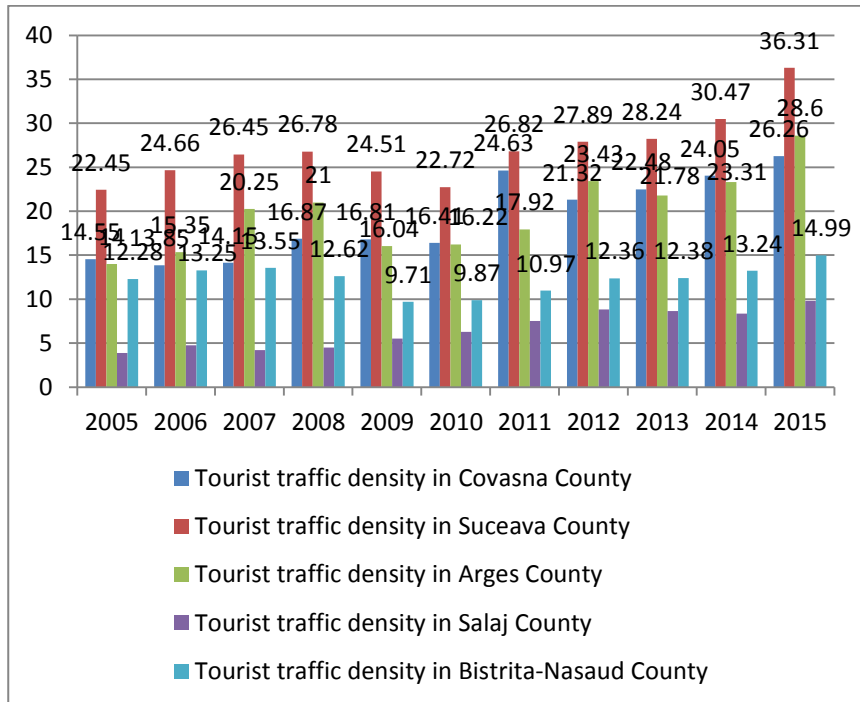
| Average length of stay (days) | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Year | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Covasna | 9,09 | 8,90 | 8,17 | 7,77 | 7,24 | 6,71 | 5,82 | 5,97 | 5,25 | 5,42 | 4,94 |
| Suceava | 2,26 | 2,37 | 2,36 | 2,31 | 2,28 | 2,37 | 2,42 | 2,45 | 2,39 | 2,24 | 2,25 |
| Argeş | 2,59 | 2,47 | 2,50 | 2,19 | 1,72 | 1,85 | 1,77 | 1,55 | 1,58 | 1,73 | 1,68 |
| Sălaj | 4,10 | 3,46 | 3,32 | 3,69 | 2,88 | 2,89 | 2,96 | 2,65 | 2,56 | 2,43 | 2,3 |
| Bistriţa-Năsăud | 4,16 | 3,67 | 3,49 | 3,53 | 3,44 | 2,60 | 2,49 | 2,48 | 2,12 | 2,01 | 2,43 |

Source: completed and updated A. Gheorghe, *Methods and techniques to improve the ecotourism service's quality. Case study: Sălaj County*, ASE Publishing House, Bucharest, 2016, pp. 48

According to the data presented above, the average length of stay recorded variations, observing a continuous and slow decrease in average duration of stays, beginning in 2008. This decrease is due mainly, to the unfavorable economic context, both at national and European level. The economic crisis has affected the activity of the tourism sector and local authorities have made substantial financial efforts in order to maintain a balance between tourist demand and offer tourist area.

3. Tourist traffic density

One of the most important tourism traffic indicators is the tourist traffic density. The tourism traffic density is an indicator that quantifies indirectly the quality level of rural tourism services from an area or city. This indicator analyzed for Romanian counties mentioned above can be seen in Figure 1, presenting its content:

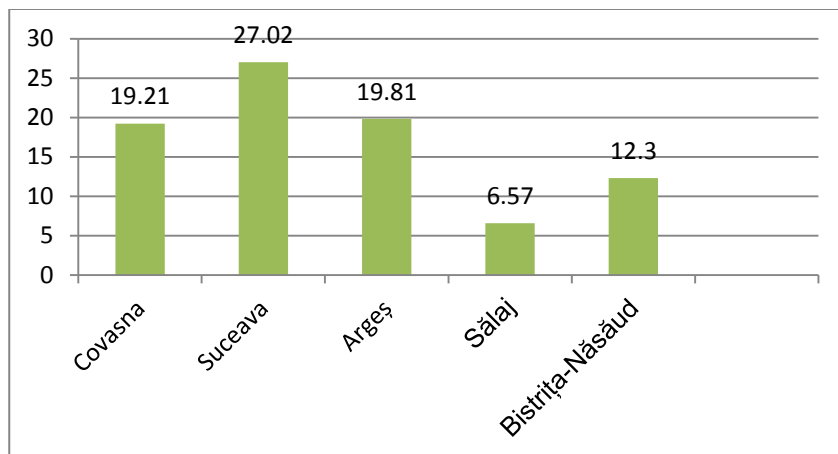


Source: completed and updated A. Gheorghe, *Methods and techniques to improve the ecotourism service's quality. Case study: Salaj County*, ASE Publishing House, Bucharest, 2016 pp. 50-54.

Figure 1. Tourist traffic density in Covasna, Suceava, Argeş, Sălaj and Bistriţa-Năsăud counties, within the timeframe 2005-2015

In Figure 1, it can be seen that the density of tourist movements recorded fluctuations from one county to another. The highest value (27 tourists/sqkm) of the annual average

density of tourist movements identified in Romania is in Suceava's county, where the main tourist attraction of rural area being the local traditional culture. Covasna and Arges Counties, with an average annual density of tourist movements is almost 20 tourists/sqkm each, as shown in Figure 2.



Source: Made by authors

Figure 2. The average density of tourist movements at county level

The study was conducted over a period of ten years and highlighted the fact that, on the last position is located in Sălaj County, with an average annual tourist density of 6 tourists/sqkm, while the Bistrița-Năsăud County has an average annual tourist density twice as large. Also, the counties of Suceava, Covasna and Arges register increases of traffic density, the main causes are: geographical position, the beauty of mountain landscapes and foothills, the diversity of leisure and tourist services transportation provided by local hosts.

It is confirmed that the average density of the tourist movement is proportional to the quality of tourism services, with the reputation of what it is built in this direction. Is already renowned the quality of tourist services particularly in counties, such as Suceava and Covasna, because of their culture and tradition grounded along its history, plus an original local architecture, showing great interest for both Romanian and foreign tourists who visit the two counties.

Traditional character events are attracting increasingly more tourists and promoting them contributes to the tourist movement indicators which quantify the counties' rural

tourist activity. Also, rural tourism, as well as the Bistrița-Năsăud and Sălaj counties is in the developing world, because there is a local massive natural potential in Romanian's areas, as well as the traditional one. Proper implementation of a smart travel, both at county and national level, is the "key" of the profitability of rural tourist business developers, of which they have won both local communities, investors, as well as tourists. Smart tourist services are having a direct connection with the rural tourism services, as well as ecotourism ones.

4. Conclusions

The conditions under which each district exists as a tourist entity differs, and in this direction, it can be said that indirect indicators for the evaluation of quality of rural tourism are different and have a differentiated trend. The statistics reveal the complete fulfillment with these issues. But the study of statistical data, beyond their scientific relevance and suggest matters of quality cases in the design, planning and providing services that are specific to rural tourism.

Thus, through the establishment of a database of accommodation and food materials, very diverse, particularly in the counties, such as Covasna and Suceava, even three times higher compared with counties like Sălaj and Bistrița-Năsăud, creates attractive premises for leisure in the original way, both by national tourists and those from other lands. Here, they can enjoy the hospitality of some well-known hosts in offering rural tourism services value added, which know to include in the offered packages, as well as, the specificity of traditional celebrations, where it makes skillful gourmet exhibition, traditional folk festivities, scent of popular dances, the traditional Romanian beauty, so on. Perhaps for these reasons, the tourist function of Covasna, county with great diversity of traditional folk, in which Romanian folk art blends with the Hungarians one, is twice higher than the tourist function of Salaj County, expressing such a great interest of the tourists for the biodiversity. All this may explain the fact that touristic attraction in counties, such as: Arges, Covasna and Suceava have a level of tourist traffic density higher than counties, such as: Sălaj and Bistrița-Năsăud, due to their geographical position, the beauty of the landscapes and the quality of the services provided by the hosts. At the top lies Covasna County. The maximum number of overnight stays during the analysis period is 490 thousand. This fact is explained by the high number of accommodation units in the county studied, numerous tourist attractions and related increased interest of hostels managers and rural villas' one to promote tourist business.

Attractive areas from the point of view of rural tourism service quality, quality expressed through the tourism indicators studied in the article, are located in counties, such as Suceava and Covana.

Based on that, both zonal decision-making persons, as well as managers engaged in lucrative activities can hold specific activities of resource allocation decisions taken at their disposal for the provision of services generating profit, but also rewarding for individuals or groups of individuals eager for special services.

In service quality management field, the company's management should manage sources that generate insatisfactions, which can occur in one of the following situations, such as the difference between the desired service, the service charged and the one expressed by the company's head of tourism business; as the difference between perceived services by the head of business tourism and rendering of services of own staff directly in offering them; as the difference between the promotions made and staff mastery; the difference between request, communicational complementary and helpful presence; as the difference between the desired service, the asked one and the received service (Extensively M. Udrescu, D. Nastase, Consumer behaviour, Artifex Publishing House, Bucharest, 2015, pp. 34-35)

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