

The Rural Tourist Entrepreneurship – New Opportunities of Capitalizing the Rural Tourist Potential in the Context of Durable Development

By Ionica Soare¹, Nicoleta Cristache¹, Razvan Catalin Dobrea², Marian Nastase²

Abstract

The present paper aims to analyze the economic impact of developing an integrated pattern of entrepreneurship in rural tourism, on the basis of a complex process of monitoring the factors that have helped the rural communities to develop successfully, as well as through capitalizing the opportunities provided by the ensemble evolution of the national economic system. In the context of the theoretical researches regarding the standardization of terminology of rural tourism we have highlighted the effects of the economical social implications of rural tourism on the economical flows at national level. The increase of the offsets between the countries of the European Union regarding the tourist activity at rural level, is an issue of special interest which needs a process of constant analysis and intervention. The premises of European politics regarding rural development, through the support granted to foodstuff production, have allowed the concentration of the study on the identification and analysis of an entrepreneurship network with registered traditional agro-foodstuff products from rural area. The results obtained have highlighted the possible chances of revitalizing certain communities from mountainous and adjacent areas they have at their disposal, by capitalizing the potential provided ensured by the regional foodstuff patterns. The evaluation of the development potential of the mountainous tourism, based on the zone food system was performed based on the rural touristic entrepreneurship ratio – RTER. The paper also provides an overview on the setting up method of a ratio which highlights the potential of rural touristic entrepreneurship – RPRTE.

Keywords: rural tourism, entrepreneurship, registered traditional products, underprivileged areas, and tourist potential

1. Introduction

Romania, like other countries from the east of Europe, has oriented the policies and strategies towards the rural development of the agricultural and agristuffs sector in accordance with the principles of stable development. This orientation imposes itself more as a necessity for the national economy, being sustained not only by „The National Strategic Framework for stable development of the agristuffs sector and the rural area in the period 2014-2120 -2030” [1] but also by „The national strategic orientations for the stable development of the underprivileged mountainous area (2014 - 2020)” [2]. The approach from an environmental point of view, as a major objective of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), is justified because the areas and rural communities are affected by multiple and complex processes which affect their durability, such as: the population aging process, the disappearance or limitation of the traditional lifestyle, the opposition to urbanization and intensive tourist exploitation,

¹ Dunarea de Jos University of Galati; Faculty of Economics and Business Administration; Str. Nicolae Bălcescu; nr. 59-61; Galați, 800001; Romania

² Bucharest University of Economic Studies; Faculty of Management; 6, Piata Romana Square; 010374; Bucharest, Romania

significant deterioration of the environment, the appearance and extension of the deprecated places from the industrial environment [3].

Tourism must become an integrator rover of the strategies of rural development, playing a role in the diversification of local and regional economy, with real contribution to creating jobs directly into the tourist industry and indirectly in related activities provided by other organizations, as well as to increasing the level of public income or offering a basis for small businesses collaterally involved such as: farms, gas stations, foodstuffs shops and so on. [4]

Through the researches performed within this paper we have highlighted the relationship between the entrepreneurship oriented towards the confirmed traditional products on the one hand and the tourist potential with specific possibilities of valorification on the other hand. Among the arguments that can contribute to the substantiation of opportunities to revive villages we can mention:

- Romania is known in The European Union as a country with rural population numerically increased sustained by a migratory flow from urban to rural areas [5] from 10,9 % in 1970 to 29,8% in 2014; with the decrease of the number of deceases at 1000 inhabitants [5] –from 12,5%in the year 1996 to 11,4 % in the year 2014; with the increase of life span at birth[6]- from 67,33 years between 1968-1970 to 75,47 between 2012-2014 and 78,93 years at women, more emphasized between 1998-200, respectively with wide agricultural areas.

- Many rural communities keep their social structure and traditional lifestyle, in particular the ones that are located in „underprivileged mountainous areas’, also called „ traditional areas”. This situation justifies the fact that values such as tradition and uniformity, analyzed in different studies, place Romania on favorable positions in the cultural profile of countries. [7]

- The existence of a potential provided by the segment of old population, gradually increasing, especially the female one, which sustains the rural tourism and tradition, similar to other European and even Latin countries [8]. An example in that direction can be Spain which through the autonomous communities from the North (Navarra, Cantabria, Asturias and Catalonia, Galicia and Basque Country) have registered the greatest success. Women can be „the main actors” in tourism development and promoters of some „nourishment patterns”. [9] Their transmission has been made on female side, especially by old categories (the most conservative social element), which implied reediting at the level of each generation of practices, beliefs and customs. Since the inter-war period the cultural, economic and tourist coordinates, with strong support in the potential of the natural framework and the people history, which defined and promoted the rural and urban-industrial civilization, they have reflected in the success Romania had on participating at the first exhibition with special impact, namely The Universal and International Exhibition from Paris, in the year 1937 - through the restaurant pavilion with list of menus printed daily, and through the tourism section. [9]

- It is noticed that the population orientation is stronger and stronger on the development of a mentality based on a healthier nourishment, inclusively coming more from the awareness of urban population, more educated but also of the population returned to the rural environment.

- The increase of the level of accessing and using the Internet from 30 -50% in 2011 to 60-70% in 2015 [10] to inform and attract funds, respectively for orienting the investments towards „underprivileged areas”.

Under the fact that rural tourism is considered as a potential way of economic development and regeneration of rural areas, especially of those affected by the decline of traditional agricultural activities [11], this can be considered a vector of promoting their identity and image.

Romania supports through specific policies of rural development for the period 2014-2020, the encouragement and promotion of local food products not only on short supply chains, similar to European peasants' tendency to sell at the consumers' dwelling (or intermediary spots), but also selling on the farm, as beneficial ways of saving, maintaining and development of entrepreneurship, in particular in family farms [12].

The rural tourism is cooperating more and more and better and better with the existent rural organizations such as the farms, either as part of a business, be it a seasonal activity, just for maintaining or developing the primary, agricultural production [13], [14]. The need to diversify the activities within a farm is emphasized in the Romania space, similar to other European countries, as well as the development of agro tourism as an entrepreneurship activity and stimulating the concept of entrepreneur in the sphere of farm owners and employees. [15]

2. State of the Art

The economic transformations and restructurations determined by post-crisis evolutions, have opened new opportunities for rural communities. Practically, these have engendered new options of economic development, namely strategies of development and operational plans which enforce all the area resources, having as main objective the creation of new job and the sustenance of the economic growth of the areas.

According to Cloke [16], specific rural functions such as agriculture and tourism can be associated to rural communities and the concept of rurality is associated with the marginal character, the distance and dependence on the rural economic activity. There are new approaches in the social theory according to which the rural areas are indissolubly connected with national and international political economy. According to the same author[16], changes are organised in society and the rural communities are organised and work under the influence of the following elements;

- the growth of people's, goods and information mobility has worn away the autonomy of local communities;
- the delocalization of economic activity which makes the separation of homogenous economic regions impossible;
- the appearance of new occupations and specializations in the rural area which has engendered new networks specialized in the corresponding domains;
- the population from a certain rural area is completed with a diversity of temporary visitors as well as the ones having resident status;
- the rural spaces are ensuring more and more functions for non-rural users, who need proactive integration with the rural population specific ones

For many states and region, tourism represents another entrepreneurship options which

can be associated with certain social valences. The benefits entrepreneurship generates in tourism, in particular in the rural area, are connected with the resource access, the short and long term availability, the degree of novelty and their relevance [17]. Joseph Schumpeter has significantly contributed to the theory of entrepreneurship through the Theory of economic development, considering entrepreneurship as the main engine of economic development with innovation as the central element. According to him, the innovator entrepreneur is the one who achieves new combinations, such as [18]:

- introducing a new product;
- implementing a new production method in untested industries;
- opening a new market;
- using new supply sources;
- carrying out new forms of organizing the industry.

Consequently, the entrepreneur is seen as a person who creates either new combinations of production or as a person who is inclined to undertake not only the organization, production, but also the risks that derive from these, is preoccupied with reorganising the social mechanisms, or as a person which, through the exploitation of the market opportunities, eliminates the imbalances between demand and offer, or as one who holds and operates a business. [19]

The relationship between the entrepreneurship and stable development is a symmetrical bidirectional one and reflects the assembly of connections between the business medium and the environment. Thus, on one hand, the market opportunities and the existence of the policies sustaining durable development can result in creating new companies and economic activities. On the other hand, new organisations can also encourage new environmental risks, whereas the pressures on the environment (example: safety, ethics, social and so on, regulations) can deter the creation of business. Innovation, as central element of entrepreneurship, can be an a solution to environmental issues, if this fact regards the development of a new environmental product. The integration of the environmental objectives in creating new organizations must be a goal of the entrepreneurship policy. [20]

We can therefore state that stable entrepreneurship, in its essence, is not different from other types of entrepreneurs, but takes into consideration the social and environmental aspects, together with the economic ones; context in which durable entrepreneurs are considered more responsible. According to the document Agenda 21, the responsible entrepreneur can play a major role in improving the efficiency of resource usage, risk and danger reduction and protecting the ecological and cultural features [21]. Within the framework of tourism, the entrepreneurship has become an active and important form of development and especially of enforcing the existent potential, in the context of respecting the principles of durable development.

What is more, the role of the entrepreneurs in tourism is a vital one for the development of rural areas, for the growth of the quality of life, namely the diversification of the alternatives of people's active existence. From an ecological point of view, the responsible trade activity based on the resources and experiences offered by nature [22], which have as support the nonmaterial values and renewable natural resources. The organizations that operate in the entrepreneurship domain in rural tourism, are usually of

small sizes, but can be a potential catalyst, essential force generator in local communities, with direct effects on the process of transforming / turning the local resources into products and services. [23]

3. The Present Framework of the Romanian Rural Tourism

The adoption of strategic decisions has as foundation a complex process of analysis and evaluation of the action environment of the organisation, of its competitiveness and capacity to react appropriately, facing the challenges and the changes produced in the exterior and interior environment. For the SWOT analysis of the national rural tourism we have started from the premise that Romania is a country with a relevant experience in the industry of tourism and travels, but which requires a fast and flexible adaptation to the new requirements of the consumer of specific products and services. Whether they are urban or rural, in the mountains and at the seaside, all the tourist destinations face the same tendencies: a more and more competitive, more and more pretentious and exigent, difficult access to resources, everything in the context of a balanced development. The evolution of Romanian tourism requires a new strategic approach, based on the principles of stable development and territorial intelligence, which internationally ensure the increase of the level of attractivity.

Defining a packet of coherent actions of intervention in the perspective of new approaches at national level, imposes, at first stage, the analysis of present situation and the identification of the main positive and negative features of internal tourist market. The results of the documentary researches achieved in the present paper, have enabled the identification of the following elements with a significant impact.

Strengths:

- the existence of numerous rural areas with favourable real potential for the development of entrepreneurship in stable tourism;
- easy acces of start-ups to a great diversity of natural and cultural resources;
- the significant increase of the demand for traditional tourist products, out of financial, social, cultural and medical reasons;
- an increased level of safety and security at the level of the whole country, characterised by a low crime rate;
- the existence of some programmes at governmental and European level which offer the framework and the resources necessary for promoting certain regions with agritourist potential;

Weaknesses:

- the lack of a entrepreneur culture at the level of the active population from the regions with significant rural tourist potential;
- the existence of a specific adverse infrastructure to promote the rural entrepreneurship;
- significant difficulties in the financing process for new organizations or the ones being at the beginning of their life cycle;
- the increased level of duty and the existence of administrative obstacles in the development of tourism businesses;
- the lack of incentive mechanisms for investment processes from tourism not only from

the public sector but also from the private one;

- low level of investments in the development of human resources, involved in the tourist activities from the rural environment;
- limited level of coordination and collaboration between the interested sides from the industry of tourism and with other industries from interconnected domains;
- frequent modifications of the duration of the specific seasons for tourist activities;
- the extremely low weight of the investments from tourism in all investments from the economy under 2% at the level, compared to other european countries.

Opportunities:

- the existence of a period of economic growth, favourable to the development of tourism;
- the increase of the number of investments interested in the industry of rural tourism;
- the appearance and development of some clusters with role in the sustenance and promotion of tourism corroborated with other industries from a certain region;
- creating and developing some forms of promoting the local and regional identity;
- creating some alternatives of capitalization of opportunities for the niche tourism;
- the appearance of some programmes meant for the development of female entrepreneurship in the rural area;
- the growth of the degree of awareness of the value of patrimony and the need to protect it;
- the reduction of the degree of usage of the renewable resources, the regulation of the waste issue, the protection of the environment and the preservation of biodiversity;
- implementing the principles of stable management of lands / grounds;
- the increase of the degree of flexibility and adaptability of offer in the rural tourism domain to the always changing customers' requirements through the development of organizations of a handicraft type;
- the capitalization of the limited level of impact on the environment due to the handicraft feature of the entrepreneurs in the rural tourism.

Threats:

- the emphasis of the phenomenon of migration of population from the rural area towards the adjacent urban areas;
- the decline of traditional agricultural industry to the prejudice of the one of intensive industrial type;
- the lack of some patterns of promotion integrated at a national level which will include the rural areas with the associated features and the facilities provided;
- the jumpy evolution of the level of quality of life and of the financial disponibilities of the population for spending the free time;
- the increased frequency of economic, political crisis not only at national level but also at an international one;
- the inconsistency of the public institutional framework with role in the elaboration of the policy and strategy in tourism;
- the emphasized degradation of the natural environment, through different types of

people's interventions;

The conclusions of the analysis regarding the national rural tourism consider the fact that this activity disposes of a valuable and diversified natural potential, insufficiently developed out of reasons connected with the access, the quality of services, pollution and administrative barriers. Likewise, the existence of a rich cultural patrimony is affected by the state of degradation of numerous buildings and historical buildings. The insufficient involvement of the authorities in the development and the promotion of cultural objectives, the lack of an integrated sustenance towards the local traditions constitute turnoff factors.

In addition to the above mentioned, we can add deficiencies connected with the weak quality of roads, the lack of motorways, of fast tracks, the limited access for the disabled people to areas of interest and tourist attraction from the rural environment.

From the perspective of human resources, although Romania is considered a country with welcoming, communicative people with an increased traditional hospitality, the analysis has highlighted a limited awareness of the importance of tourism for the economy, an insufficient development of the forms of professional training in the rural area, an instability of the workforce from the tourism industry, also influenced by the seasonality specific to tourism.

The legal framework and its transposition in the tourist activity, presents certain deficiencies regarding the manner of licensing, monitoring as well as the networking of organizations that support the rural tourism, both from the public medium and the private medium, in the absence of a strategy of integrated tourist development.

From the perspective of the size of internationalization of the tourist offer, the problems registered are based on the incoherence of the achieved marketing actions, the insufficient research of the international consumer's behaviour and the limited use of the computer tools and the Internet for information and marketing.

The research intercession is completed with the statistic analysis of the tourist potential regarding the entrepreneurship with confirmed traditional products. The information structured at a county and town / locality with the confirmed products, reflects a differentiated situation, determined on the one hand by the geographical location, the access to the infrastructure, the proximity towards the urban crowding and the level of population's income from the different analysed areas.

The entrepreneurs, but also the public authorities can use an assembly of models and examples from the countries advanced in agrotourism in Europe. From a historical point of view, in the Czech Republic [14] in 1993 there were only 15 farms developing their activity in this domain and in the next year 51 farms which were also visited by 800 tourists. Another relevant example is Slovenia [24] which benefited of a significant increase of agrotourism at the end of the year 1970, being caused by the intervention of authorities to ensure an additional income to mountainous farmers, by initiating some varied forms of practice, some of them still existing at present and which can, as far as we think, be applied and developed including in the Romanian space. [25]

The entrepreneurs of rural tourism, based on confirmed traditional products must not be limited from the perspective of some potential actions of affecting the environment, they must be considered as leaders of forces for the social and economic development in the rural areas in which they work.

The maintenance of environment balance in the underprivileged areas, established between the agricultural practices and natural conditions, can ensure a pattern of cohesion between the continuances of agricultural activity along with the preservation of the traditional landscapes as determiner factors of the process of economic growth through rural tourism.

4. Methodological Background

In the research of the phenomenon specific to the development of the agrotourism market we have taken into consideration two major objectives as follows:

O1. The identification of the tendencies of the increase of attractiveness of an underprivileged area, and of the determiner factors of the entrepreneurship performance (the size of the business, management practices, the product characteristics..), which better define the business potential of attracting and satisfying the tourists;

O2. Defining a pattern of ex-ante analysis for the entrepreneurs from the rural tourism for consolidating the stability of the tourism in the rural space.

The research has achieved monitoring a number of 81 rural sites, with activities specific to entrepreneurship, based on confirmed traditional products, selected from the National Register of Traditional Products (NRTP) [26], on the basis of localizing their work place, through the stated address, for the years 2014 and 2015 (with a downright of 485 on the day of interrogating for data – December 3rd 2015). The data gathered have been introduced into a matrix of evaluating the tourist potential and infrastructure for the administrative-territorial units to which the villages from underprivileged areas belong to, with initiatives in the entrepreneurship with traditional products. The criteria have aimed at the following aspects: natural and antropic tourist resources, technical and tourist infrastructure. The cumulative processing of those 4 evaluation elements has provided the entire score of the potential of tourist development. (table A1.)

We mention the fact that the research regarding the entrepreneurship in the rural tourism develops in order to support the Romanian village, in the context of sustainability, after a long period of about half a century, in which the processes of collectivization, urbanization and massive industrialization have influenced the economic activity, the community lifesyles and customs with a direct effect of limiting the traditional organization forms of social life.

The actual results aim at the identification of alternatives and opportunities of revitalizing some villages, especially the ones in underprivileged area, in connection with the following elements: geographical setting, the feeding pattern specific to the area, the traditional occupation, the tourist potential and infrastructure elements.

The values obtained highlight the fact that the analysed villages, especially the ones in the mountainous and adjacent space but also from underprivileged area hold a real potential of increasing the tourist vocation and of really representing „ an unprecedented tourist product”. The impact of the valorification of this potential is connected with the image of Romania as a tourist detination, which can determine an increased interest in a wide range of experiences, quality holidays and even business opportunities.

5. Results and Discussion

In order to evaluate the entrepreneur potential of those 81 selected rural settlements, we have used the entire network of sites, out of the total of which the urban ones held 27,05 % in 2014 and 26,66% in 2015, as well as the data base related to confirmed traditional products, which comprised 111 products in 2013, 362 products in 2014 and 485 products on December 3rd, immediately after implementing The Order no 724 from July 29th 2013 regarding the confirmation of traditional products.

The system for confirming the traditional products is used in 2005, by that year the legislation being unclear and permissive in the process of registering the traditional products (ex. 1050 products, reported in 2011, some of them obtained through industrial methods).

The geographic distribution correlated with the entrepreneurship phenomenon with confirmed traditional products at the level of rural settlement, with the seven categories of products from the National Register of Traditional Products (RNTP) is presented in figure no.1.

The information used have been corroborated with the one related to scientific papers, historical, ethnological, geographical, economic policies regarding the durable economic development of tourism. On their basis, we have identified relevant aspects that justify the orientation of actions towards the insertion of this form of rural tourism on the national and international tourist market.

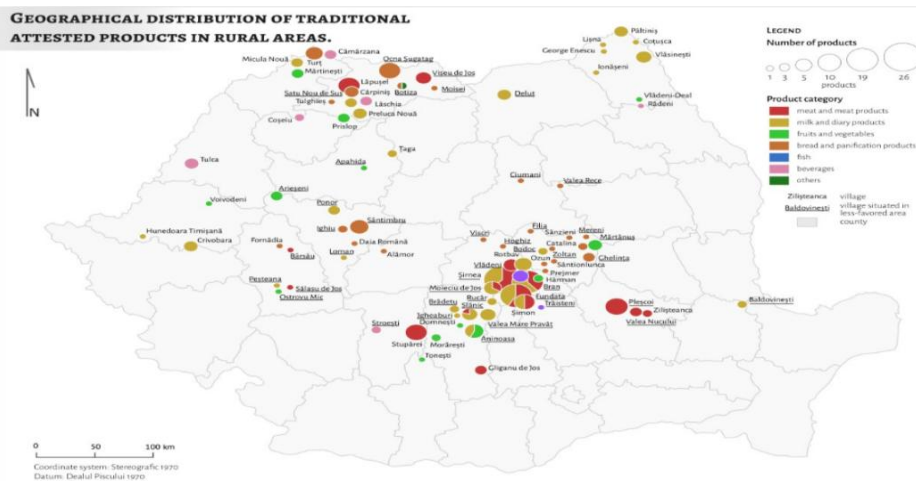


Figure 1. The geographical distribution of rural localities with confirmed traditional products - GIS map server achieved by processing database RNPT

The analysis of the graphic processing of information firstly reflects a concentration of entrepreneurship in the villages from the units and relief forms with altitudes, which ensured the basis in the humanization of Romanian space along the history, highlighting the role played by the Carpathian Mountains in the national economic- social development.

These areas are specific to some existence regions, characterized through a feeding

manner preserved in time, with minor temporary or final changes, but reported to different time periods and generations with a higher predilection towards the traditional elements or the innovative one.

An important aspect detached after the study highlights the fact that a good knowledge of the social-economic, cultural and natural medium, which influences the lifestyle and nutrition, ensures the possibility of establishing some patterns of nutrition specific to a certain area, with an important role in stimulating the entrepreneurship and traditional products.

Some localities identified in the study, as being work places for entrepreneurship, from the space long known for traditional occupations connected to animal breeding, especially shepherding, are known as historic centres of shepherding, being placed mainly in the spring area of transhumance and on the ancient roads, big roads of the country.

The rural settlements included in the study are also geographically located mainly in traditional tourist areas, such as The South of Transylvania, Maramuresh and Oash, The Apuseni Mountains.

In order to justify the entrepreneurs' option regarding the start-up of the investment process in the analyzed areas, it was considered appropriate to set up a ratio that would emphasize the importance of evaluating the impact of the projects' results. In a first perspective, we aimed at highlighting the economic impact, respectively the number of companies founded in the area, the degree of exploiting the resources and the complementarity with other components of the development.

In the disadvantaged areas, it can be established an indirect connection between the accessibility, respectively the availability of the resources for the touristic entrepreneurship and the low standard of living in the area. The social dimension is limited, due to the fact that most of the entrepreneurship projects are mainly focused on economic aspects. In the methodological proposal of setting up a ratio, the social aspect of the entrepreneurship process in rural tourism is explored. Table no. 2 presents general aspects, in favour of the role of rural touristic entrepreneurship, highlighting its contribution to the social dimension.

Table no.2:

Area	The functions tourism entrepreneurship	Theories and Approaches
Politic	Rural tourism entrepreneurship - the link between entrepreneurs and community from a political perspective	Corporate approach Integrating social nature
Instrumental	Rural tourism entrepreneurship contribution to creating value for Shareholders	Maximizing Shareholder Value Strategies for obtaining competitive advantages
Integrative	The integration of the rural entrepreneurship tourism in the management policy of the companies, the responsibility taken by the entrepreneurs, concerning their role in the development of the respective community.	Management principles Principles of Responsibility Economic performance Social performance
Ethical	The process of rural touristic entrepreneurship must comply with the ethical requirements characterizing the relation between the business environment and the society	Sustainable development

Source: processing authors

In the field of rural tourism, the entrepreneurial initiatives must be analyzed from the perspective of their contribution to the development of the social dimension of the economic processes that they are generating. According to the theoretical framework of rural touristic entrepreneurship, it is expected that this process brings its contribution to social development as well. Within this context, the RPRTE ratio must be oriented towards the perception of the interested parties, concerning the approach method of the entrepreneurs, as far as the key aspects in the field of tourism are concerned. The expert reports related to the mode of measuring the social dimension of the rural touristic entrepreneurship are relatively limited. Although it is considered that the problem of the social dimension associated to the economic processes is multidimensional, each dimension or problem is approached separately and it is not treated with the same degree of objectivity.

Four major aspects related to the social results in the field of rural tourism are identified: the access and the responsible use of the natural and anthropic resources, the human rights, the impact on the community and the labour related problems. Even if the socio-economic aspects, such as the number of jobs or the access to the resources of the area are frequently approached in the scientific literature, the issues of social essence, such as the human rights, the impact of touristic entrepreneurship on the community are treated in a limited way.

The entrepreneurship potential of an area must be analysed from a complex perspective, which includes various indicators in the methodology of calculation. A specific formula, cumulating these indicators, would ensure an objective evaluation method of an area's potential. By monitoring the 44 localities, which represent the segment of this research, it was aimed at measuring the entrepreneurial potential of each of them.

The main objectives associated to the calculation methodology of this ratio are the following:

- the analysis of the sustainability of tourism in the rural areas concerned;
- the analysis of the sustainability of resource entrepreneurship projects;
- evaluating the social impact of various projects of rural touristic entrepreneurship.

The points resulted from each area subject to analysis, for each type of resource, were taken into account, in establishing the entrepreneurial potential ratio within rural tourism – RPRTE, as follows:

$$RPRTE = \frac{\sum (P_m + P_{ra} + P_{it} + P_{ith})}{\sum (R_m + R_{ra} + R_{it} + R_{ith})}$$

where:

P_m – the score for natural resources;

P_{ra} – the score for anthropic resources;

P_{it} – the score for touristic infrastructure;

P_{ith} – the score for technical infrastructure.

The relevance of the approach lies in the calculation of the hypothetical ratio of the entrepreneurial potential within the field of rural tourism, where the main reference is given by the maximum value obtained by one of the analyzed locations (out of the 44 locations – table no. 1).

$$RPRTE^* = \max \frac{\sum (P_m + P_{ra} + P_{it} + P_{ith})}{\max \sum (P_m + P_{ra} + P_{it} + P_{ith})}$$

RPRTE was set up based on the data given by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, respectively the Urban Management Plan of the National Territory – section VI – touristic areas. Establishment studies, the evaluation of the touristic potential in the territorial administrative units per counties.

As it can be observed from table no. 1, the 44 rural locations, with activities specific to entrepreneurship, selected from the National Registry of Traditional Products (NRTP), were evaluated from the perspective of the touristic potential and the infrastructure of the administrative-territorial areas including the villages from disadvantages areas, having initiatives in the field of traditional products entrepreneurship. The criteria were focused on the following aspects: natural and anthropic touristic resources, technical and touristic infrastructure.

Table no. 3. Distribution zones attractiveness localities analyzed, from the perspective of the values resulted for RPRTE

The attractiveness whichever RPRTE	Percentage of localities
(0-0,3] - small	1 locality – 2,27%
(0,3-0,6] - medium	21 localities – 47,72%
(0,6-1] - high	22 localities - 50%

Source: processing authors

It can be noticed, from the resulted data, that most of the monitored area (97,72%) is in the region of medium and high attractiveness, generated by the high scores, mainly obtained for the accessibility to the touristic resources. By the mixed analysis of the data, it was attempted to determine the variation of the attractiveness degree, based on the RPRTE value. Thus, the localities with a high value ratio have the capacity of attracting more entrepreneurs. The Solver Function of the Excel programme has allowed calculating the variation of these values, as it can be observed in Table no. 4.

Table no. 4. Mixed data analysis

Nr.crt	Locality	RPRTE value	Variation %	Cumulated %
1.	<i>Loman</i>	1	2,7	2,7
2.	<i>Viscri</i>	0,98	2,6	5,3
3.	<i>Bran</i>	0,89	2,53	7,83
4.	<i>Şimon</i>	0,89	2,53	10,53
5.	<i>Satu Nou de Sus</i>	0,88	2,52	12,88
6.	<i>Mărtănuş</i>	0,86	2,5	15,38
7.	<i>Hoghîz</i>	0,85	2,49	17,87
8.	<i>Ocna Şugatag</i>	0,83	2,37	20,24
9.	<i>Ighiu</i>	0,77	2,37	22,61
10.	<i>Pleşcoi</i>	0,77	2,37	24,98
11.	<i>Valea Nucului</i>	0,77	2,268	27,248
12.	<i>Moieciu de Jos</i>	0,76	2,265	29,513
13.	<i>Rucăr</i>	0,73	2,255	32,068
14.	<i>Sântimbru</i>	0,7	2,25	34,313
15.	<i>Moisei</i>	0,7	2,25	36,563
16.	<i>Deluţ</i>	0,69	2,249	38,812

Nr.crt	Locality	RPRTE value	Variation %	Cumulated %
17.	<i>Vladeni</i>	0,68	2,242	41,054
18.	<i>Apahida</i>	0,68	2,242	43,296
19.	<i>Sălașu de Jos</i>	0,66	2,248	45,544
20.	<i>Peșteana</i>	0,65	2,238	47,782
21.	<i>Arieșeni</i>	0,64	2,236	50,018
22.	<i>Ostrovu Mic</i>	0,62	2,236	52,254
23.	<i>Brădetu</i>	0,59	2,235	54,489
24.	<i>Bodoc</i>	0,58	2,233	56,722
25.	<i>Valea Mare Pravăț</i>	0,56	2,232	58,954
26.	<i>Fundata</i>	0,56	2,232	61,186
27.	<i>Șirnea</i>	0,56	2,232	63,418
28.	<i>Botîța</i>	0,56	2,232	65,65
29.	<i>Valea Rece</i>	0,52	2,228	67,878
30.	<i>Vișeu de Jos</i>	0,51	2,228	70,106
31.	<i>Jgheaburi</i>	0,48	2,224	72,33
32.	<i>Baldovinești</i>	0,48	2,224	74,554
33.	<i>Aninoasa</i>	0,46	2,22	76,774
34.	<i>Slănic</i>	0,46	2,22	78,994
35.	<i>Filia</i>	0,45	2,22	81,214
36.	<i>Zoltan</i>	0,44	2,221	83,435
37.	<i>Zoltan</i>	0,44	2,216	85,651
38.	<i>Gbelința</i>	0,43	2,215	87,866
39.	<i>Ponor</i>	0,42	2,212	90,078
40.	<i>Trăisteni</i>	0,41	2,214	92,292
41.	<i>Bărsău</i>	0,4	2,213	94,505
42.	<i>Ciumani</i>	0,37	2,21	96,715
43.	<i>Stroești</i>	0,37	2,21	98,725
44.	<i>Mereni</i>	0,19	1,37	100

In May – September 2016, a survey-based quantitative research was performed on a segment of 150 entrepreneurs, in view of identifying their perception regarding the investment potential of the areas under analysis. In order to establish the defining aspects related to the decision of investing in these areas, a series of correlations made under the form of the following hypotheses, tested by the SPSS program, were considered.

H1 – There is a correlation between the affiliation of the entrepreneurs and the measured attractiveness of the area (based on the RPRTE value)

	Are you willing to invest in rural tourism areas	
The affiliation of the entrepreneurs	da	nu
High attractiveness: 0,6-1	70	2
Medium attractiveness: 0,3-0,6	51	4
Small attractiveness: 0-0,3	16	7

The affiliation of the entrepreneurs * Are you willing to invest in rural tourism areas?

Crosstabulation

Count

	Are you willing to invest in rural tourism areas ?		Total
	Willing to invest in rural tourism areas	I am not willing to invest in rural tourism areas	
The affiliation of the entrepreneurs			
High attractiveness: 0,6-1	70	2	72
Medium attractiveness: 0,3-0,6	51	4	55
Small attractiveness: 0-0,3	16	7	23
Total	137	13	150

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17,058 ^a	2	,000
Likelihood Ratio	13,212	2	,001
Linear-by-Linear Association	13,583	1	,000
N of Valid Cases	150		

The value of the asymptotic signification is $<0,05$ and the Pearson Chi-Square value (17,058) $>$ tabular value (5,99 considering 2 freedom indexes - <http://sites.stat.psu.edu/~mga/401/tables/Chi-square-table.pdf>): As a consequence, the hypothesis is validated. In conclusion, there is a significant association between the attractiveness of the area where the entrepreneurs are coming from and their predisposition to invest in the indicated areas, based on the calculated value of the attractiveness ratio ($\chi^2 = 17,058$. $df = 2$, $p = 0,000$).

H2 – There is a correlation between the affiliation of the entrepreneurs and the willingness of including the social aspect in the structure of an investment project.

The affiliation of the entrepreneurs	In structuring an investment project in rural tourism should be given to the social component				
	totally agree	agree	indifferent	disagree	totally disagree
High attractiveness: 0,6-1	36	12	20	4	0
Medium attractiveness: 0,3-0,6	25	17	8	4	1
Small attractiveness: 0-0,3	18	2	1	1	1
The affiliation of the entrepreneurs * In structuring an investment project in rural tourism should be given to the social component					

Crosstabulation

Count

	In structuring an investment project in rural tourism should be given to the social component					Total
	totally agree	agree	indifferent	disagree	totally disagree	
The affiliation of the entrepreneurs						
High attractiveness: 0,6-1	36	12	20	4	0	72
Medium attractiveness: 0,3-0,6	25	17	8	4	1	55
Small attractiveness: 0-0,3	18	2	1	1	1	23
Total	79	31	29	9	2	150

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17,326 ^a	8	,027
Likelihood Ratio	18,437	8	,018
Linear-by-Linear Association	1,869	1	,172
N of Valid Cases	150		

The value of the asymptotic signification 0,027 is $< 0,05$ and the Pearson Chi-Square value (17,326) $>$ tabular value (15,507) considering 8 freedom indexes - <http://sites.stat.psu.edu/~mga/401/tables/Chi-square-table.pdf>): as a consequence, the hypothesis is validated. Considering the results, it can be noticed that there is a significant association between the affiliation of the entrepreneurs and the concern for the social aspect of the investment projects. ($\chi^2 = 17,326$. $df = 8$, $p = 0,027$).

H3 – There is a link between the area's attractiveness and the resource's degree of appreciation in the area concerned.

	Entrepreneurs appreciate what extent existing resources in rural areas aiming to invest				
Measured the attractiveness of rural tourism area	Very much	Much	Medium	small	Very small
High attractiveness: 0,6-1	40	15	10	5	2
Medium attractiveness: 0,3-0,6	28	18	6	3	1
Small attractiveness: 0-0,3	15	5	1	1	0
The affiliation of the entrepreneurs * Appreciate what extent existing resources in rural entrepreneurs who intend to invest					

Crosstabulation

Count

		Entrepreneurs appreciate what extent existing resources in rural areas aiming to invest					Total
		Very much	Much	Medium	small	Very small	
The affiliation of the entrepreneurs	High attractiveness: 0,6-1	40	15	10	5	2	72
	Medium attractiveness: 0,3-0,6	28	18	6	2	1	55
	Small attractiveness: 0-0,3	14	5	1	2	1	23
	Total	82	38	17	9	4	150

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4,901 ^a	8	,768
Likelihood Ratio	5,145	8	,742
Linear-by-Linear Association	,137	1	,712
N of Valid Cases	150		

a. 7 cells (46,7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,61.

The value of the asymptotic signification 0,768 is $> 0,05$ and the Pearson Chi-Square value (4,901) $<$ the tabular value (15,507) considering 8 freedom indexes - <http://sites.stat.psu.edu/~mga/401/tables/Chi-square-table.pdf>): as a consequence, the

hypothesis is invalidated.

Considering the results, it can be observed that there is not a significant association between the affiliation of the entrepreneurs and existing resources in rural areas aiming to invest. ($\chi^2 = 4,901$. $df = 8$, $p = 0,768$).

To be mentioned that the research on rural tourism entrepreneurship was performed in order to identify the entrepreneurs' behaviour, the factors influencing it and the development perspectives of these areas.

The actual results were based on identifying the alternatives and opportunities in these areas, by associating the following elements: *the geographic position and the attractiveness of the area, from the perspective of resources and infrastructure, the willingness to start up an investment project in tourism, the social aspect.*

Under the correlations achieved between the placement of rural localities from the research with the rates of growth of regions in which the rural tourism has developed, we can expand the following preliminary conclusions:

- over 1/3 of the villages are in the region of development Centre (counties Alba, Brasov, Covasna, Harghita, Mures, Sibiu) fact that justifies the tourist flows significantly greater than in the other development regions.
- in approximately 20 villages from the North West Development Region (counties: Bihor, Bistrita – Nasaud, Cluj, Maramuresh, Satu Mare and Salaj), the major tourist flows are ensured by the contribution of foreign tourists, through the view of proximity to the western border.

The entrepreneurs' opportunities, identified according to the study achieved, can take account of agritourism and rural cuisine for the revitalization of the villages through initiating the entrepreneur tourist activities based on the valorification of natural tourist and antropoc resources and of the existent specific infrastructure.

The entrepreneurship orientation with over 50% towards the villages from underprivileged areas by granting financial support must be considered a priority in the policies of maintaining the desired medium balance, between the agricultural practices and national conditions from the underprivileged areas. Statistically, already a significant percentage from the analysed villages within the studies , according to RNTP for the years 2014 and 2015, respectively 54,32 % from all the villages are found on the list of underprivileged areas, most of them being framed in the mountainous area.

A concrete form of support for the entrepreneurs in the stable rural tourism can be granting pays for the disadvantages faced in performing agricultural activities, caused by the capacity of decreased production of agrarian fields and additional costs involved by maintaining the agricultural activities in these areas. Thus the risk of abandoning agricultural and tourist activities can be considerably limited and would increase the entrepreneurs'level of trust, respectively the sustainability of projects.

The phenomenon of abandon of agricultural activities from the underprivileged areas affect the economic viability of the rural areas and the sustainability of the local medium factors, respectively the ecological balance. From this perspective, the continuation of agricultural activity in underprivileged areas must ensure the preservation of traditional landscapes, and at the same time the basis for the economic development of stable rural tourism.

The definition of a form of financial support, for the entrepreneurs from the

corresponding areas can ensure, on the one hand, the farms sustainability and on the other hand, the development of rural tourism, based on the confirmed traditional cuisine, but also on products untested yet, but with relevant potential.

A number of studies connected with the farm tourism consider this activity as being an economic alternative for the farmers who face reduced dividends and difficulties generated by the agricultural crisis or seasonality. [11]

The opportunity of employment in different activities, but correlated with the specific agricultural ones and the perspective of a greater income at the level of farm possibly represents the biggest advantage of embedding tourism in the businesses of this type.

Other supplementary elements, detached after the researches achieved are synthetized in what follows:

- the necessity of development at the level of the country of an entrepreneur network with confirmed traditional products of almost 70 % of rural areas in order to generate impact on the level of knowledge from these places, on the social-economic, cultural and natural medium and with direct effects on the entire lifestyle , including of nourishment.
- from those 81 rural settlements analyzed the entrepreneurship has focused more on the villages from traditional tourist areas (the South of Transylvania, Maramures and Oas, The Apuseni Mountains) or in the newest ones in practicing rural tourism at country level, but with significant anthropic potential (example: the Corridor Bran – Rucar). On the other hand, the underprivileged areas have also attracted entrepreneurs (54,5 % of the whole) being also encouraged by the granted financial support and the increased number and diversity of the traditional products, even at the village level.(example: Fundata – 26 products).
- starting with 2013, Romania entered a stage of contouring and zoning of confirmed traditional cuisine (with a contribution of Romanian ethnic element) including the rural one, fact that has significantly contributed to the development of tourism and local economy;
- brand, promoting the confirmed traditional product as a coherent and convincing tourist this being a form of stimulating and developing the cookery tourism (including of cookery festivals), capable to sustain locally the tourism at the farm / agritourism or eco-agritourism. Through the development of the system of direct selling by the entrepreneurs, the efficiency of the tourist activity is ensured and especially the convergence with the European peasants' tendencies;
- the certification in a short time, just in almost 2 years, of an increased level of traditional products at country level (111 in 2013, 362 in 2014, 485 in December 3rd 2015) and the proliferation of the villages with entrepreneurship (62 villages in 2014, 77 villages on August 30th 2015 and 81 villages on December 3rd 2015) ensures the existence and valorification of a potential assured by the patterns of regional nourishment. [32]
- the villages that compose the network of three areas contoured from the mountainous and adjacent space, through their density are more evolved than the other villages from Romania regarding the possibilities of diversification and development of stable rural tourism, and on the basis of confirmed traditional products from the traditional cuisine.
- the areal on the Brasov depression continued to the south in the Sub Carpathians

through the Bran - Rucar Corridor benefits from the localization at distances of about 200 km from the most crowded areas in the country, easily taking over tourist flows;

- the entrepreneurship orientation towards the underprivileged areas with diversified tourist potential, even of the ones „in waiting” / „preservation” with „0” level of infrastructure (the Loman case from Alba county), because they can constitute the incentive factor of increasing the businesses in tourist sector;
- the necessity of developing a pattern of rural tourism integrated on the account of the resources (economic, cultural , social and ecological ones) and of the interested parts, through promoting the tourism as part and parcel of a strategy of development of the rural space. Such a pattern can contain an itinerant structure of villages and farms, which ensures the corresponding diversity regarding the customers’ demands;
- developing a system of facilities specific to rural tourism to ensure the increase of the length of the stay spent in the villages and the corresponding farms, the association with different providers of local services and joint organization of certain programmers.

The results obtained after the researches achieved, reported at the actual stage of the rural tourism development at a national plan, have enabled the identification of a potential pattern of analysis precursory to the decision of investments at the level of entrepreneurs from this domain. The importance of such a pattern of analysis has a double signification, respectively one related to the correct evaluation of the opportunity of future projects and the other connected to the avoidance of some projects that may not lead to a positive impact, at least at the customers’ , entrepreneurs’ and community level.

From this perspective, we consider that the proposed system of analysis can be schematised according to figure 2.

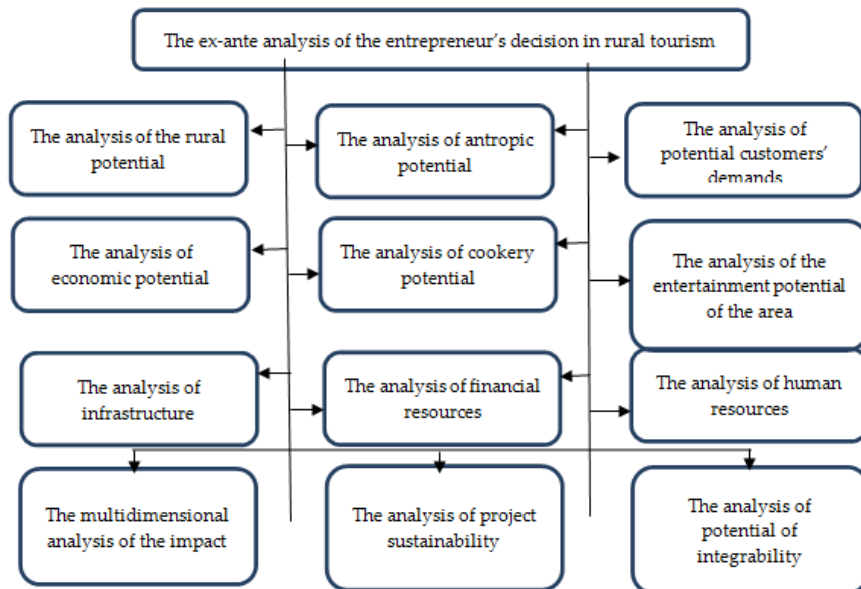


Figure 2. Pattern of ex-ante analysis for the entrepreneur in rural tourism

The proposed pattern of analysis is structured on four successive levels, defined regarding the level of knowing the entrepreneur, the availability of information and the connection with the stakeholders involved. The first stage directly refers to the manner of knowing the characteristics of potential customers, in correlation with the offer of natural and antropic capital of the endorsed rural area. If the answers are favourable to this first stage, the second must be reported to the accordance between demand and local offer in terms of economic, cookery and entertainment plan. The results of this stage highlight the fact that the price policy, the way of nourishment and the entertainment potential of the area, can constitute incentive factors for the entrepreneurship or limit the initiatives of this kind.

The third proposed stage for the pattern of analysis refers to the availability of general and specific infrastructure, of human and financial resources that will be involved in the entrepreneur intecession. For the existent conditionalities on the three domains we must identify solutions in the precursory stage of decision, motivated by this, by the external contribution of some institutions over which the entrepreneur has no significant influence (public authorities, financial institutions or from the domain of education).

The last stage of analysis, considered the most difficult takes account of the identification and quantification of the impact of the future project on the entrepreneurs, customers and comunity, without being limited by the one afferent to other organizations involved.

The sustainability, namely the project capacity to selfdevelop through positive results generated on medium and long term, requires a preliminary evaluation, at least from financial, social and ecological point of view. The inconsequence of information, the dynamics of the changes from the environment, affect dirrectly the project performance, and from this point of view the entrepreneurship is subject to a major pressure of instability and insolvency.

The analysis must also be completed on the dimension of integrability of future business, in connection with the local and regional actors, which can constitute the differentiation factor at competitiveness and performance level.

Complementary to this pattern, we consider that at the basis of the tourism in the analysed rural settlements, there are also other factors such as: a good community management, the support and involvement of local authorities, the availability of public funds for tourism development, a strategic approach of different domains, a coordination and cooperation between entrepreneurs and local authorities, the information transparency and the technical assistance provided for the development and promotion of tourism.

6. Conclusions

The rural tourism must remain, on medium and long term, a complex domain of activity, firstly motivated by the placement at the confluence of some activities such as: agriculture, culture, nourishment, transportation on which it depends on directly or indirectly. The extension of the processes of integration and globalization in European context obviously implies the necessity of approaching stable and sustainable development, through which new valencies and medium or long term perspectives are offered.

The stable development of rural tourism must take account of: the ecologic stability through which their tourist development and the proper exploitation should contribute to the ecological reconstruction and to the limitation of the aggression on the medium; the social stability with emphasis on the values and cultural, ethnographic resources of the area and the economic stability - to ensure a pattern of increase through the reasonable exploitation of the resources of the area.

Within a strategy of the development of rural tourism of an area we must consider protecting and preserving the tourist environment and implicitly:

- the evaluation of the natural capital in accordance with its diversity and vulnerability, the objective being that of reaching the weighting of the protected areas imposed by the EU in a few years;
- the consistent application of the legislation regarding the environment protection;
- the development of a system of monitoring the providers of accommodation, nourishment, entertainment services involved in rural tourism, that ensure a level of quality connected with the price policy and especially to contribute to the increase of the customers' level of trust;
- creating a system of professional training of human resources specialized in this form of tourism, flexible and adapted to the suppliers' demands so as to ensure the easy access of all those interested, but also the development on complementary domains on historical, cookery and ethnological valencies;
- promoting a constructive dialogue between the authorities, the entrepreneurs in the area and the tourism operators about the strategies, the policies, programmes and decisions that endorse the impact of the tourist activity on the environment;
- The increase of the level of awareness at the level of population from the rural underprivileged areas regarding the importance of sustaining a initiative in tourism by promoting some patterns of social economy.

The cohesion of entrepreneurship with the stable rural tourism must be structured in concrete actions to consider the harmonization of the interests of those involved in the economic and social life from each area with the objectives and priorities of the valorification of tourist potential, but also as alternative of economic development.

The rural tourist management of such an area must be based on :

- the compliance of all regulations that influence the economic development in perspective, of the stronger and stronger impact of the globalization process;
- the satisfaction, in the best way possible, of the demands of the customers of rural tourist services;
- the direct and indirect coordination of all efforts in view of ensuring the access to the tourist products offered by the area: modernized roads, diversified range of services, creating a safe climate for the physical integrity and protection of the tourists' stuff;
- the orientation towards tour packages devoted to limited groups or even personalized tourism;
- creating some data and information bases, devoted to stable rural tourism, to gather all the specific information of interest for all those involved, including customers and ensuring an appropriate level of transparency and promotion in all the mediums considered of interest. Permanently updated, this can include from public local and

central authorities to potential bidders, providers of services, centers of tourist information, tourist agencies, completed with information, documents of general interest, it will become a proactive tool of stimulating the development of this form of tourism.

The success and performance of economic strategies for the development of stable rural tourism must be based on the force and value of the resources specific to the area, on the support of the central and local authorities in initiating and unfolding complex actions, to integrate the immediate social –economic interests with the principles of stable development and which to ensure the natural habitat and the national patrimony of material and spiritual values.

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