

## RURAL TOURISM – ELEMENT OF INTEGRATED LOCAL POLICIES OF ECONOMIC GROWTH

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### *Abstract*

*The article presents the main characteristics of rural tourism, the premises for its apparition and development, the components of the rural touristic product and of this activity's management, proposing also a 7-day tour product entitled “Holiday in the Mountainous Banat”.*

**Key words:** rural tourism, touristic product, brand, local policies.

### **1. Introduction**

The touristic activities represent a factor of fast local and regional economic development due to the preponderance of SMEs in this field. For the mountain rural areas situated near powerful urban economic centres (within 50-100 kms), tourism represents a prominent factor for creating and securing jobs. Grace to the effect of economic multiplication, tourism is a multi-valent domain, the touristic services providing imposing the carrying on of a multitude of economic activities: accommodation, food supply, recreation, transport. Moreover, touristic activities have a strong triggering effect upon the development of retail, both at the destination area and along the touristic flows.

### **2. Rural tourism**

Rural tourism is carried on in relatively unpolluted unperturbed areas, inhabited by traditional communities, satisfying a set of needs:

- The need for “evasion” in order to reduce the stress condition, being accompanied by an active or passive participation in the deployment of touristic activities;
- The need for health maintaining or recovery;
- The need for belonging and affection;
- The need for knowledge and education;
- The need related to the desire to visit relatives and friends;
- The need for beauty and novelty, etc.

Modern society, extremely dynamic, will continue to promote new cultural values and new creators of spiritual values. However, for these values to be sustainable, it is necessary that those who create them should dispose of the competence and correct and complex prediction information, and the oral culture retains as perennial products only what represents a genuine necessity.

Rural architecture has in its turn inevitable problems it has to cope with. The village as important element of administrative structure is a specific result of social and historical evolution. Rural settlements are equally the work of different communities and of time. They should be preserved as cultural heritage of mankind.

In the context of accented industrialisation after the Second World War, the exodus of rural population towards the city has taken mass proportions throughout the world, which raised stringent problems regarding the conservation the rural habitat.

The issue of conservation is situated within a much wider frame than the policy for preserving the quality of the built environment. It is obvious that the inhabitants of villages want to and must profit from the progress of modern life.

Consequently, the character of villages changes from day to day as man gets integrated into his epoch. The result is a conflict between tradition and modernity, between conservation and evolution, which is manifested differently in accordance with the conditions of each geographic space.

Schematically, the fundamental elements constituting the premises for the apparition and development of rural tourism appear as follows: (figure 1):

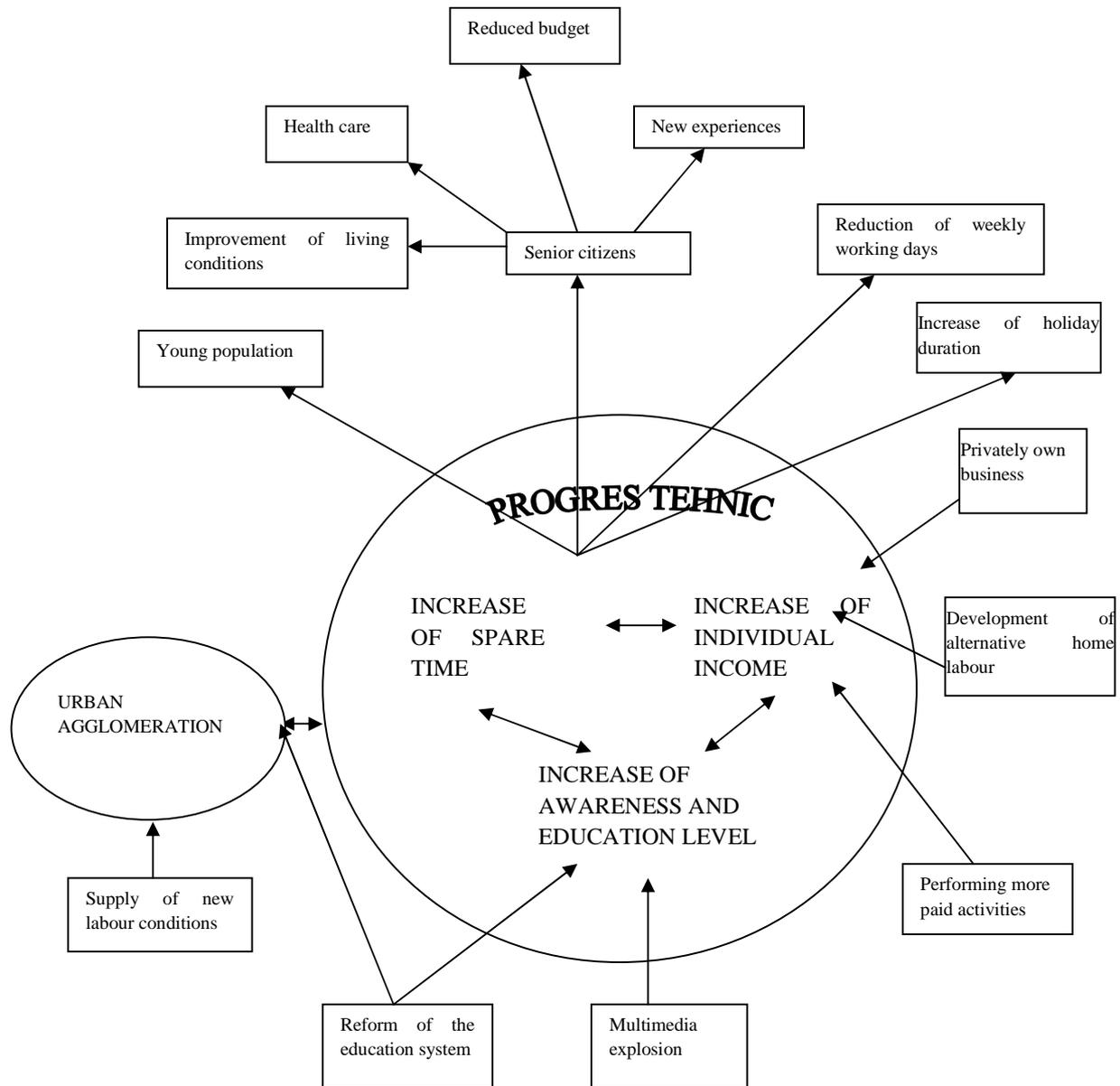


Figure 1 – Fundamental elements constituting the premises for the apparition and development of rural tourism

The combination of fundamental elements determine the apparition of other components which favour the development of sustainable rural tourism, as follows:

- The market segment made of the senior citizens express their demand for practising rural tourism in view of recovering their health, visiting a natural picturesque relaxing environment, which may also offer new experiences, as they have a reduced budget;

- As main starting point, the technical-informational progress triggers on the one hand the enhancement of the equipment specific to rural tourism which grants the tourist extra comfort and safety, and on the other hand ensures the development and modernisation of transport and telecommunications, improving the situation of the general infrastructure;
- The creation of the conditions for improving farming activities would determine a larger-scale practising of agro-tourism, as integrating part of rural tourism;
- The process of enhanced use of touristic resources, especially those constituting unique features that may be amplified by promotion, which in its turn should be perfected.

The rural touristic supply is in fact identified with the rural touristic product, which is more and more demanded on the touristic market at present.

The components of these products include traditional elements specific to the rural space included in the local touristic circuit, so that the particular features might be shaped based on the local touristic patrimony, the labour force resources and the services involved in the carrying on of touristic activity, in the context of ensuring the principles of sustainable development.

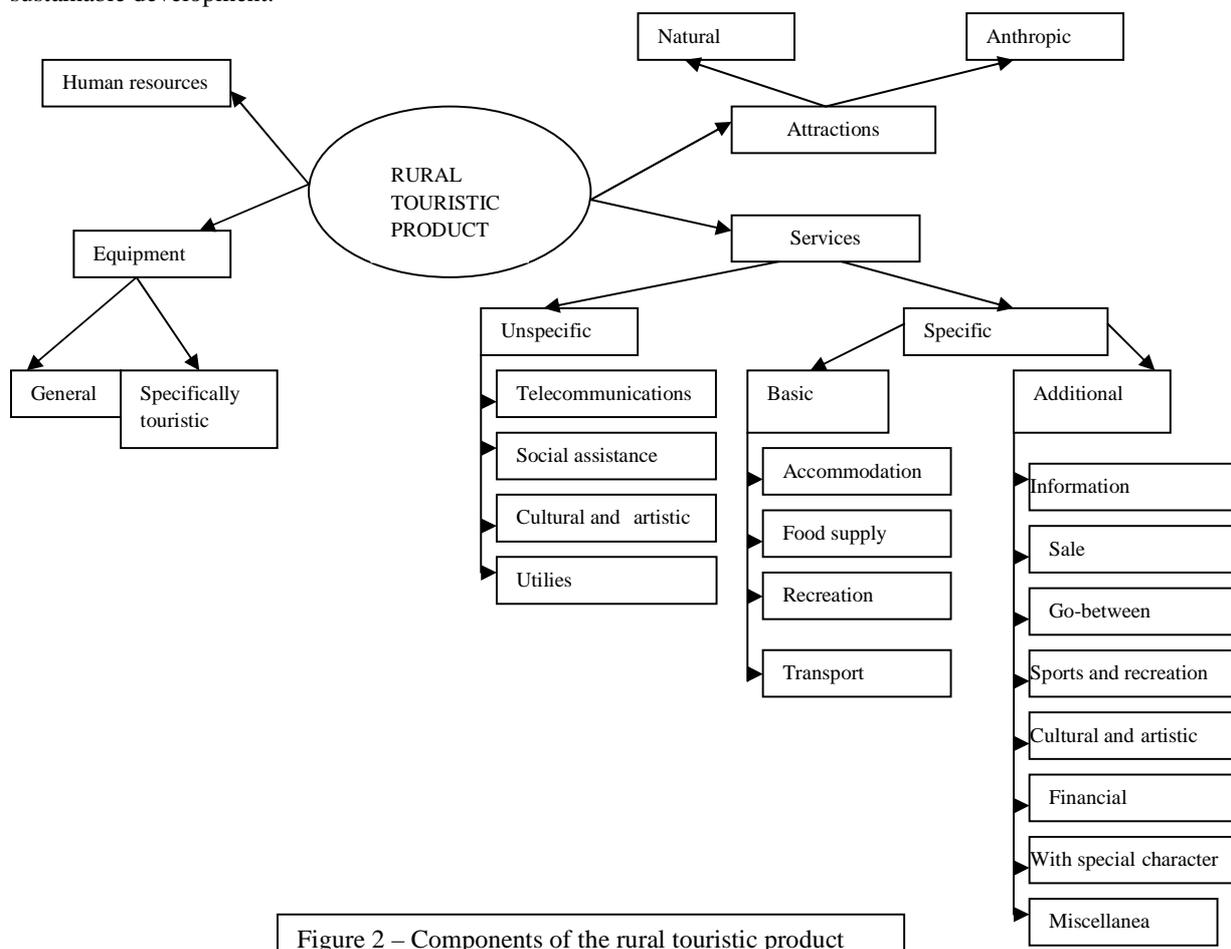


Figure 2 – Components of the rural touristic product

The traditional Romanian hospitality, specific feature of the Romanian peasant, becomes an offer of rural tourism, within the conditions of its channelling along the direction of the actions taken for preparing the peasant household in order to reach the stage where it can be the bearer of commercial offer.

It should allow the services providing both for gaining an income, part of which being reinvested for its development, as well as for the increase of the level of the services provided.

Each household owner should be assisted and helped to obtain the attestation of his household in order to become able to provide touristic services, conferring him the right to be introduced into the database and implicitly into the rural tourism network, making thus the household known.

We must create the structure and managerial technique able to supervise the preparation of the household's commercial offer. We need to ensure the connections between the rural tourism supply and tourists – consumers of the rural tourism programmes.

The activities aimed at the detailed preparation of the rural products' offers at all levels, of preparing the households and economic agents may be put into practice only by means of a functional management, both local and global.

One needs to decide and approve, first of all, the way of identifying the potential of rural tourism in all its aspects, as it has to reunite and harmoniously combine the natural, material and spiritual factors, both from the host's and the tourist's point of view. In order to harmonise these resources it is necessary, in the beginning, to test and identify the person who has a minimum of necessary qualities and knowledge and who will be implicitly trained, becoming the factor that should act in view of training and preparing the potential of local rural tourism.

The evolution of the rural tourism potential is made by “attesting” the area from the viewpoint of the existence of a minimum infrastructure, a built frame harmoniously integrated in the nature, the possibility of identifying and creating programmes of rest and recreation meant to activate traditions and trades which will constitute elements of attraction for tourists.

The interlacing of local and global management is presented in detail through their components, as a management of rural tourism, in diagram 3:

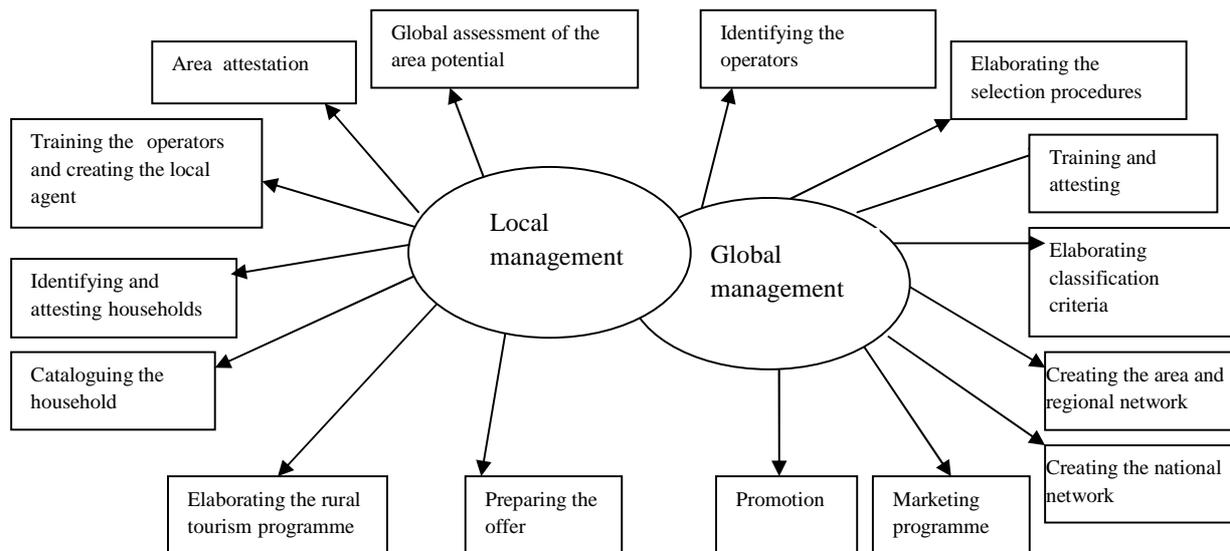


Figure 3 – Basic components of rural tourism

The local agent, trained and attested, has thus proceeded to the deployment of activities also within agencies or organisations with the purpose of connecting the area to the national and international network.

In order to facilitate the entering into correspondence with internal and external partners, at all levels, on the horizontal and the vertical, it is necessary to adopt certain standards as regards the assessment criteria, the manner of realising advertising, publicity and the visual elements used etc.

### 3. Proposing the touristic product « Holiday in the Mountainous Banat »

**Anina** (town, 9 125 inhabitants, ancient mining location and powerful centre of energy industry –the first Romanian thermoelectric power plant using bituminous shales). *The permanent exhibition of coal mining history* in the area possesses collections, historic archives and memorial and mineralogy phototheques, as well as coal samples, models related to the mining exploitation technique.

*Surroundings:* the Buhui lake and cave, the Mărghitaș resort and lake, the Miniș Gorges and the Caras Springs— mixed natural reservation.

Due to its mountainous location, Anina has a picturesque natural frame, being the starting point for one of the most important touristic routes in the Semenic – Caraș Gorges Natural Park.

Moreover, considering the fact that tourism has new valences by practising rural tourism, this new type being adequate for the present modern epoch, we consider it opportune to include the town of Anina in the proposed programme.

The implementation of the project, through which the town of Anina would be one of the main elements of the creation and development of a Regional Park for Recreation and Tourism, supposes passing through the following stages:

- Ensuring or creating the basic instruments;
- Facilitating or creating the basic conditions;
- Defining the project priorities;
- Defining priorities;
- Monitoring the development;
- Synthesising and comparing the results obtained.

This implementation process represents a first step in the creation of the integrated system of information as regards the touristic demand and supply, thus implicitly of rural tourism and of development of the Anina town community.

One of the touristic products offered would be a 7-day tour meant to offer the group of tourists the possibility to get acquainted with the main touristic attractions and sights of Caras Severin county.

**Day 1** - Meeting the group of tourists at the Timisoara airport and transfer form the airport,

- Accommodation in Resita – Romanian welcome night
- Presentation of the holiday programme

**Day 2 Visit to the Semenic –Caras Gorges National Park**

It is situated at the core of the Caras – Severin county. The main entries to the park are the localities Resita, Iabalcea, Carasova, Anina, Prigor, Crivaia, Garâna. Inside the park, access is allowed along the 9 marked touristic tracks and from the public roads. The touristic route Resita – Danube (in course of marking with blue band) makes the south connection to the Nera Gorges - Beusnita National Park. It has a surface of 36,214 ha with altitudes ranging from 200 to 1447 m (the Gozna Peak). The national park is situated on the mountain units Anina and Semenic, has a Karst –type and wooded area characteristic landscape

**Attractions:**

- The Caraș Gorges 200 m deep, 19 kms long, of which around 10 kms visitable, with numerous calcareous walls and specific vegetation.
- The Gârliste Gorges 100-200 m deep, visitable along its entire length of 9 km.
- The largest surface of quasi-virgin wood of Europe, over 5000 ha, with trees aged 350 years and more.
- The Poiana Gropii Aven, the deepest aven of Banat, with level difference of – 236 m containing a sequence of wells of considerable dimensions.
- The Comarnic Cave with 1750 m of visitable route where one may remark numerous formations, galleries and halls of impressive size, an underground river, underground landscapes offering the satisfaction of “exploration”.
- The medieval city of Grat of which remained the wall and the defence ditches.
- Folk events and traditions in the localities Carasova and Garâna.
- Hiking
- Visits to arranged and unarranged caves
- Climbing
- Observations of flora and fauna
- Winter sports
- Facilities for accommodation, meals serving, food supply, medical assistance in Resita, Carasova, Anina,

Valiug )

**Day 3 The Iron Road. Railways uniting us.**

- The concept of railway tourism is well established as an area of niche products, with many international examples of renowned touristic products such as Orient Express and Palace on Wheels
- The proposed route is the secondary railway Anina - Oravita, through the Semenic Mountains, monument of engineering art (1863) and generator of touristic activities.
- **The Railway** Oravița – Anina – the first mountain railway of Romania – unique in Romania and in the South-East of Europe.
- **The marketing strategy: railway tourism**
- The railroad, with its entire real estate infrastructure: stations, annexes, signalling systems, tunnels, bridges, viaducts;
- Epoch locomotive and carriages (mid 19<sup>th</sup> century);
- Touristic services specific to epoch tourism;
- The staff should be dressed in the attire specific to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, railway uniforms, including the station heads in the stations along the route;
- The stations should be set-up in the 19th century style, especially to the exterior;
- In Oravița, in a room of the station or in an abandoned depot one should arrange a railway museum, with the discarded objects from the stations traversed (signalling systems in the stations and at the entry and exit from the stations' perimeters, plates with the name of the stations, images from diverse events related to this railroad section, books, articles, illustrated cards and old photos, the volume of merchandise and number of voyagers transported, types of fare tickets, trains timetables, transportation and changes in time, maps, plans, sketches with the route of the railway etc.)
- Touristic services complementary to the transport ones;
- Visits to touristic sights in the main towns along the railroad: Anina, Oravița, Biserica Albă-Vârșeț;
- Visits to the Nera Gorges - Beușnița National Park;

#### **Day 4 Visiting the Nera Gorges-Oravița- Beusnita Valley National Park**

It is situated in the south of the Caras – Severin county. The main entries to the park are in the localities Anina, Oravita, Ciclova Româna, Ilidia, Sasca Româna, Carbutari, Sopotu Nou, Moceris. Inside the park, access is allowed along the 5 marked or under marking touristic tracks, and from the public roads. It has the surface of 37,100 ha with altitudes ranging between 200 and 1116 m (the Leordis Peak). The national park is situated in the Anina Mountains and has a predominant Karstic characteristic landscape.

#### **Sights:**

- The Nera Gorges 300 m deep, visitable along its entire length of 21 km, with numerous calcareous walls, springs, caves and specific vegetation alternating with depressions.
- The Miniș Gorges 200 m deep, visitable along its entire length, with calcareous tuffs, springs, caves.
- The Simionului Hills offering a remarkable bird's eye view.
- The Scratches Cave, with a level difference of - 156 m and a length of over 3 km, attractive for adventure speleology.
- The caves Gaura lui Miloi, Gaura Porcariului, Ponor-Uscat, Av. Bigar and others with visitable touristic routes, not arranged, where one may observe numerous formations, galleries and halls.
- The Ilidia medieval city with the remaining defence wall.
- The Ciclova Monastery
- Folk events and traditions in the localities Carbutari, Moceris, Lapusnicul Mare.
- Hiking
- Visiting non-arranged caves
- Climbing
- Observations of flora and fauna
- Boating on the river and the lake
- Visiting historical vestiges, participating in cultural events
- Facilities of accommodation, meals serving, public food supply, medical assistance in the localities Anina, Oravita, Bozovici, Carbutari, Sopotu Nou.)

#### **Day 5 Organising hunting and fishing trips**

- (In Caras Severin there is a wide range of game species, the most representatives 2 species being the wild boar and the common deer).

- The hunting cabins in Caraș-Severin county are rather well endowed, perfectly combining the rustic with the useful. Most of them host foreign hunters for different game parties, and their requirements, although high, are fully met.
- Sasca Montana Villa I Bei Valley ; Sasca Montana Villa II Bei Valley; Oravita Racasdia ;  
**Day 6 – Visiting Oravita, return to Anina** , the Romanian specific dinner, camp fire, Romanian local folk evening  
**Day 7** – Breakfast, transport to the Timisoara airport

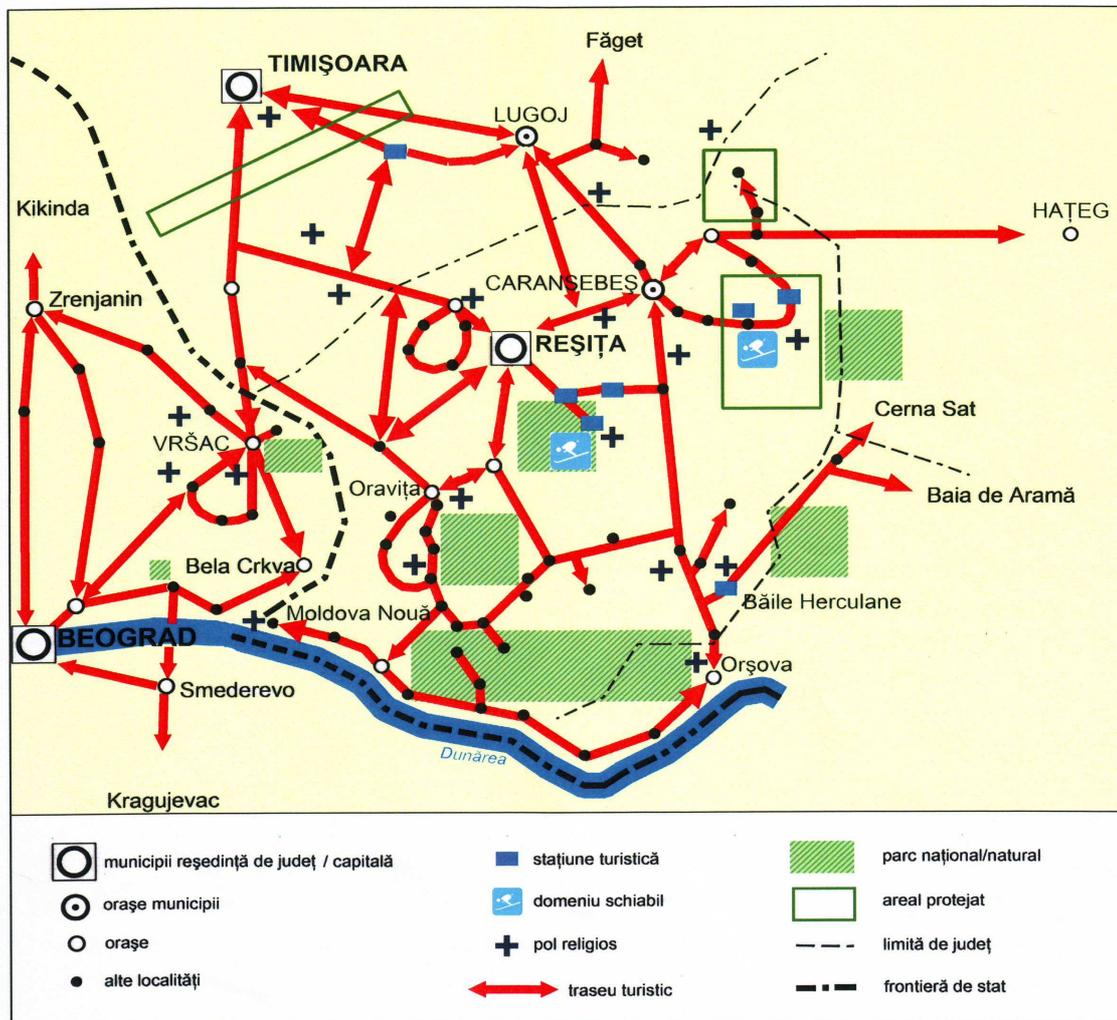
Due to the importance of the concept of “Experience” in tourism, the brand of a touristic destination has an important role in differentiating the respective destination on the market. The brand communicates in fact the promise of a powerful experience which is associated in a unique manner to the destination. Its role is not only to attract new tourists, but also to remind and consolidate the voyage impressions of tourists who have already visited the destination, motivating them to do it again. The implications of the destination brand are varied and complex.

Unfortunately, from the touristic viewpoint, Caras-Severin county was known in the past for two main locations: the Baile Herculane Spa and the Semenic winter resort, both undergoing a process of dramatic decay.

In this context, the establishment and promotion of this local touristic brand is extremely important and the research team of the Centre for Research in Tourism and Sustainable Development (CCTDD) within the University “Eftimie Murgu” Resita (to which the authors also belongs), attempts, through the studies performed, to scientifically set and ground the marketing strategy managed by the local authorities and thus to offer viable information necessary for the integrated policies of local economic-social growth and development .

TOURISTIC CIRCUIT IN SOUTH  
BANAT

CIRCUIT TURISTIC ÎN BANATUL DE SUD



#### 4. Conclusions

Rural tourism represents one of the solutions for the development of the entire rural area. Its apparition and set-up in the village frame offers new income sources for the population, especially if the area has a remarkable potential, quality human resources, as well as an adequate infrastructure.

The expected success may be reached by an overall development of the rural area, based on a moderate growth in time and for the benefit of the rural area, because a rapid or random development of rural tourism may deteriorate the environment, may lead to harms brought to the ambient of the local population.

Thus, rural tourism may be inscribed in the ensemble of the touristic activities of the region as well as in the context of the integrated zonal policy.

Modern society, extremely dynamic, will continue to promote new cultural values and new creators of spiritual values. But for the respective values to be sustainable it is necessary that those who create them should dispose of the

competence and correct and complex prediction information, whereas oral culture retains as perennial products only what represents a true necessity.

Reanimating rural settlements, passing from traditional architecture to modern architecture without them hindering one another represents a difficult effort requiring study, time and funds; and a solution for the revitalisation of villages has proved to be their insertion in the great touristic circuits.

The number-one priority is the conservation of the richness and diversity of the patrimony by protecting traditions and connections' forms of expression for the consolidation of the population's cultural identity, as well as the stimulation of associative life..

The role of a global management is to unite all individual initiatives in view of connecting them to a national and international network, ensuring their transposition into standards that should be easily accessible, both in management and for the offer of rural tourism.

The organisation form under which this type of management takes place is either a professional or non-profit association, or a commercial company with dispatcher role which may built its own network of agencies, local branches specialised in such services.

From this perspective, in our country the Romanian Federation for Mountainous Development has elaborated such a global management for the development of rural tourism, concretised in a specific conception which resulted in a standard prescribing the organisation and implementation of this type of tourism.

It has its own network, created on the basis of the standards elaborated, in comparison with which the activity of rural tourism is benchmarked.

On the national level it is necessary to put into practice a policy of rural development, able to stimulate the efforts for the taking of the Romanian village out of its isolation, a set of regulations meant to allow its use as well as certain institutions functioning to the same purpose, and, last but not least, the existence of funds allotted to the desired direction.

The international community is willing to allot free or lent financial resources for the rural development. Consequently, the European Union, through the SAPARD programme, allotted important amounts to Romania for applying the strategies of rural development, the support granted is oriented toward the application of community achievement (acquis), the strengthening of the weakest links of the economic and social life specific to candidate countries, as our country was.

For Romania, at present these preoccupations have widened, the acceptance of this development representing a responsible way of long-term development, in accordance with the national interest and the requirements of international co-operation.

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