

STUDY REGARDING THE INTEREST FOR BIHOR COUNTY AGRITOURISM AREAS-ANALYSIS AND PROPOSALS

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Abstract: *The interest in supporting a "smart" development of the rural environment is increasingly in vogue in last years, and where this interest is folded over a vast potential, the success can be translated into sustainability. The use of agritourism activity in order to ensure the development and increase the visibility of the rural environment can generate the co-interest of the locals in agritourism activity direction. At the level of Bihor County, there are numerous areas with agritourism potential, during this scientific approach three areas were analyzed: Cărpinet, Budureasa and Chișcău. The purpose of the research carried out is to identify the potential for agritourism activities, starting from the interest of tourists for each of the three areas studied, Carpinet, Budureasa and Chiscau, and based on the information obtained to come up with certain development proposals.*

Key words: *agritourism, Bihor rural area, tourist interes, development proposals*

INTRODUCTION

The development of the rural environment [3,6,9] and implicitly of the traditional village, in a sustainable way, [5,11,12] by stimulating entrepreneurial activity [10] in the rural community, is a current topic. The fact that the rural environment is the holder of some of the most varied resources is a certain aspect, but this aspect does not necessarily ensure its future profitability. The agritourism activity can be considered "a durable/sustainable activity" [4,7] with multiple beneficial implications for the rural environment, being the possibility of sustainable assembly of agricultural, gastronomic, tourist, cultural resources, and the agritourism product is an innovative product. [13] Not only that the agritourism activity is a sustainable one, at the same time it is a "smart" one, due to the fact that it unites the agricultural and tourist field. The emerging advantages support the addition of vitality to the rural environment economy, characterized by a high degree of poverty, through the transfer of capital, the provision of additional income and employment, in a word, it ensures a sustainable development for areas practicing this activity. [1,2,8,14,15]

From rural area of Bihor, three areas are representative for agritourism activity. The *Carpinet commune* includes four villages and stands out for: specifics of rural life, ceramic articles and crafts (Leheceeni), traditions, the purest limestone from European continent.

Budureasa commune also comes with numerous tourist attractions:

- Natural reserve "Karstic Complex from Valea Ponorului" (168 ha)
- Natural reserve "Smeilor Cave from Onceasa" (0.50 ha), natural monument
- Natural reserve "Cerbului Cave Karst System" (45 ha)
- Natural reserve "Buteasa Peak" (2 ha)
- Natural reserve "Molhasurile din Valea Izbuclor" (80.02 ha)
- Natural reserve "Faneța Izvoarelor Crisul Pietros" (1 ha)
- Natural reserve "Carligati Peak" (10 ha)
- Natural reserve "Piatra Graitoare" (5 ha)

As for the *Chiscau commune*, the reasons why it holds an important place on the map of agritourism potential at the county level could be: Bears Cave (1.0 ha), Flutur private ethnographic museum, Sighistel Valley, the wooden churches from Bradet, Tapu Mountain and Groapa Ruginoasa, Cheile Galbenei, Padis Plateau.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research took place during the 2024 year, and in order to obtain the desired information, a questionnaire was used, comprising six questions, applied in the three areas with agritourism potential from Bihor County (Carpinet, Budureasa, Chiscau), with 485 answers obtained, 120 from Carpinet, 182 from Budureasa and 183 from Chiscau. The EXCEL program was later used to structure and centrally present the collected information. It was desired to find out aspects such as: (figure 1)

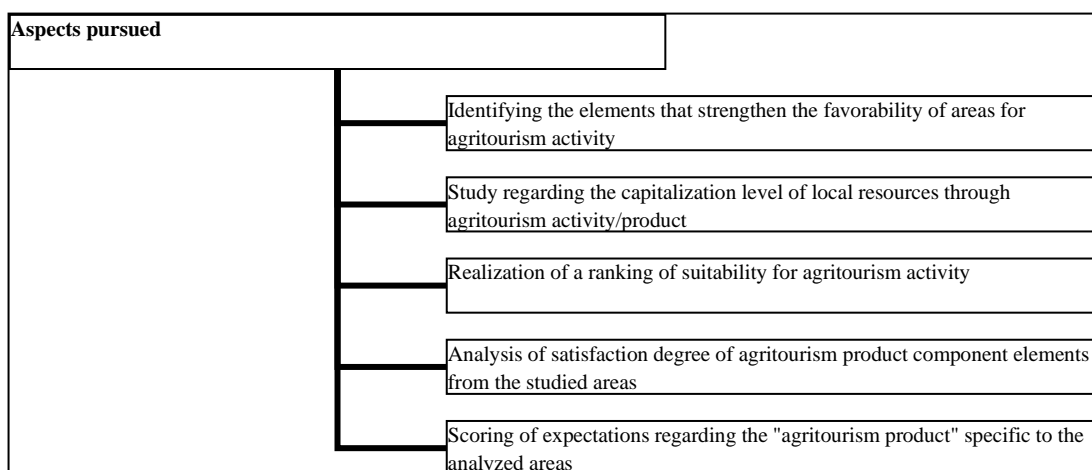


Figure 1. Aspects pursued in the research carried out to identify tourists' interest in the three studied areas

485 respondents took part in the study, questioned after visiting the studied areas. Centralizing the information, some gratifying aspects are noted: first of all, the increased interest in this form of tourism came from young people, a share of 30.51% of the respondents being framed in the 20-34 age category, and more than half of the total participants at study, 64.94%, in the 20-50 years category; secondly, there is a predominance of tourists with higher education, 54.63%, an aspect that underlines the ability of this form of tourism to attract through originality and the orientation towards "bio", sustainable. (figure 2)

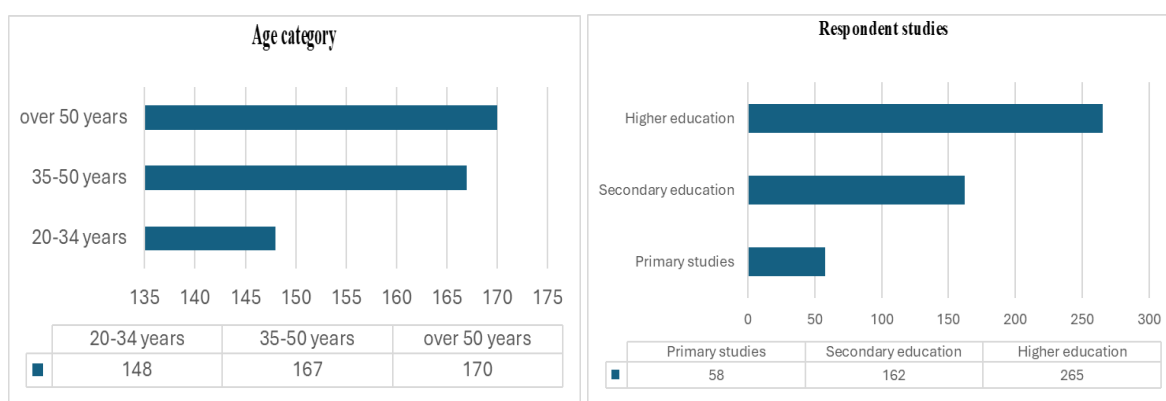


Figure 2. Statistical information regarding the respondents participating in the study

RESEARCH RESULTS

The identification of the elements that strengthen the favorability of the areas for agritourism activity was divided into two lines, aiming at: the identification of the favorability of the three areas for agritourism activities and the identification of the motivation underlying this statement. Regarding the favorability, 99.17% of those

surveyed answered that the three areas are suitable to support agritourism activities. (figure 3)

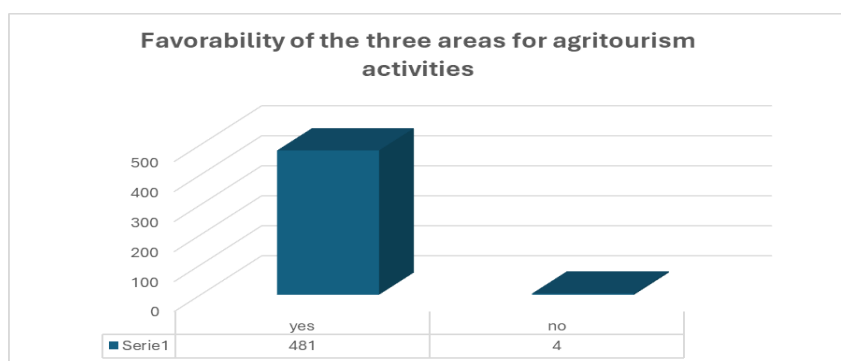


Figure 3. Favorability of the three areas for agritourism activities

This answer was based on different motivations, starting from the prevailing particularities of each individual area. In the general way, the respondents motivated in proportion of 21.03% with the gastronomic element, based on healthy products, 20.61% with original possibilities of spending free time, 20.00% through the reduced price of the agritourism product. (figure 4)

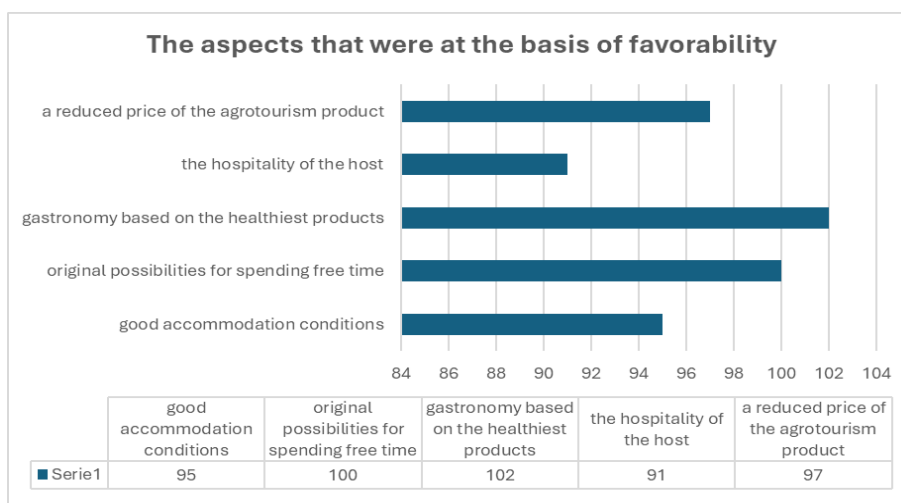


Figure 4. The aspects that were at the basis of favorability

It is certain that the differences between the answers received, which would motivate the favorability of the areas for agritourism activities, are very small, therefore it can be said that, in the eyes of tourists, the three areas have good accommodation conditions, unique possibilities for spending free time and original gastronomic products, most of them from own production. And if two other aspects are added: local hospitality and the moderate price of the agritourism product, the conclusion is supported that all three studied areas are favorable for this type of activity.

Study regarding the capitalization level of local resources through agritourism activity/product. The fact that each of the three analyzed areas has representative resources to be used through agritourism activity is an aspect analyzed and demonstrated, but not necessarily the existence of resources is relevant for the development degree of agritourism activity, but the level of their capitalization through agritourism product. Also, this level of capitalization is best accounted by the tourist. The question with which it was sought to obtain information about this aspect assumed three possible predetermined answers, with the possibility of choosing only one.

42.88% of those surveyed believe that the capitalization level of local resources in the three analyzed areas is low and 37.73% that it is average. At the basis of the answers of those 80.61% surveyed tourists, regarding the medium and low capitalization degree of the rural community resources through agritourism activities, sits some motivations: the "newness" of the field from the analyzed areas, the lack of experience and specialized consulting, the inability to achieve a product that includes all three elements (accommodation, food and entertainment), non-involvement of local authorities, lack of adequate promotion, etc. (figure 5)

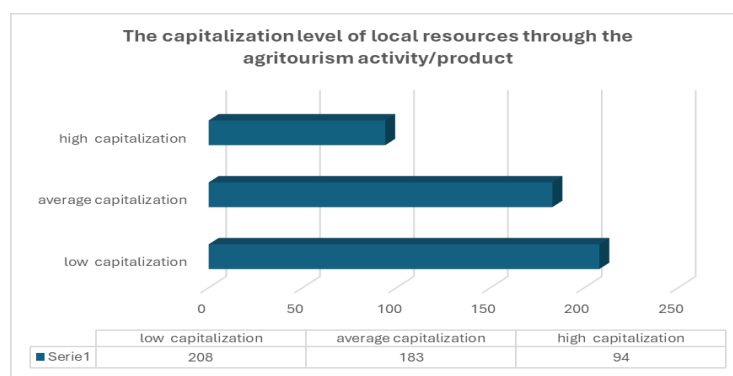


Figure 5. The capitalization level of local resources through the agritourism activity/product

Realization of a ranking of suitability for agritourism activity. Very discreetly it is positioned as more representative Chiscau area, perhaps starting from the fact that the Bears Cave is located on the territory of the commune, the area is better known, and the flow of tourists is thus greater. But the other two areas are not inferior either. Budureasa has numerous natural reserves with a unique character and is famous for the dowry boxes craft, or specific gastronomic products, therefore the suitability for agritourism activity is also high in this area. Carpinet area is not inferior either, standing out for its unique natural resources (Calugari spring), for the pottery craft (Leheceni pottery) and for the specific way of life, therefore also in the case of this area the suitability for agritourism activity is high.

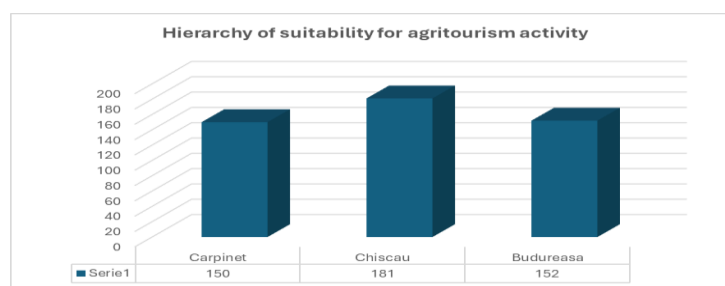


Figure 6. Hierarchy of suitability for agritourism activity

The question included, in addition to the choice of the area more suitable for agritourism activities, also the motivation of the answer. Regarding this aspect certain aspects can be mentioned: (figure 6)

- Chiscau is a more recognized, more promoted area, there is already an infrastructure that allows the development of tourist activities, the flow of tourists is greater, these are the motivations that were the basis for placing the area in the first position in terms of favorability for agritourism activities;

- Budureasa is placed second in terms of favorability for agritourism activities, the poor infrastructure and the lack of a specific agritourism product are seen as minuses, even if the area has natural resources, unique crafts and representative gastronomic products;

- Carpinet is also known, especially by tourists who come on pilgrimage to the Izbuc Monastery, the infrastructure is somewhat deficient to support tourist activities, but the compensation is achieved with the help of natural resources and the hospitality of the locals.

Analysis of satisfaction degree of agritourism product component elements from the studied areas. In order to achieve the desired goal proposed by this direction, the question was provided with the possibility of answering "satisfied", or "dissatisfied" for each element of the tourist product: accommodation, food and leisure, the situation centralized by localities being presented below. In the case of this question, the 485 answers are distributed differently by localities: 120 from Carpinet, 182 from Budureasa and 183 from Chiscau. (table 1 and figure 7)

Table 1.

Presentation of the satisfaction degree on component elements of agritourism product in the studied areas

	Carpinet		Budureasa		Chiscau	
	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied
1. Accommodation	22	98	37	145	22	161
2. Food	8	112	18	164	12	171
3. Leisure	43	67	84	98	58	125

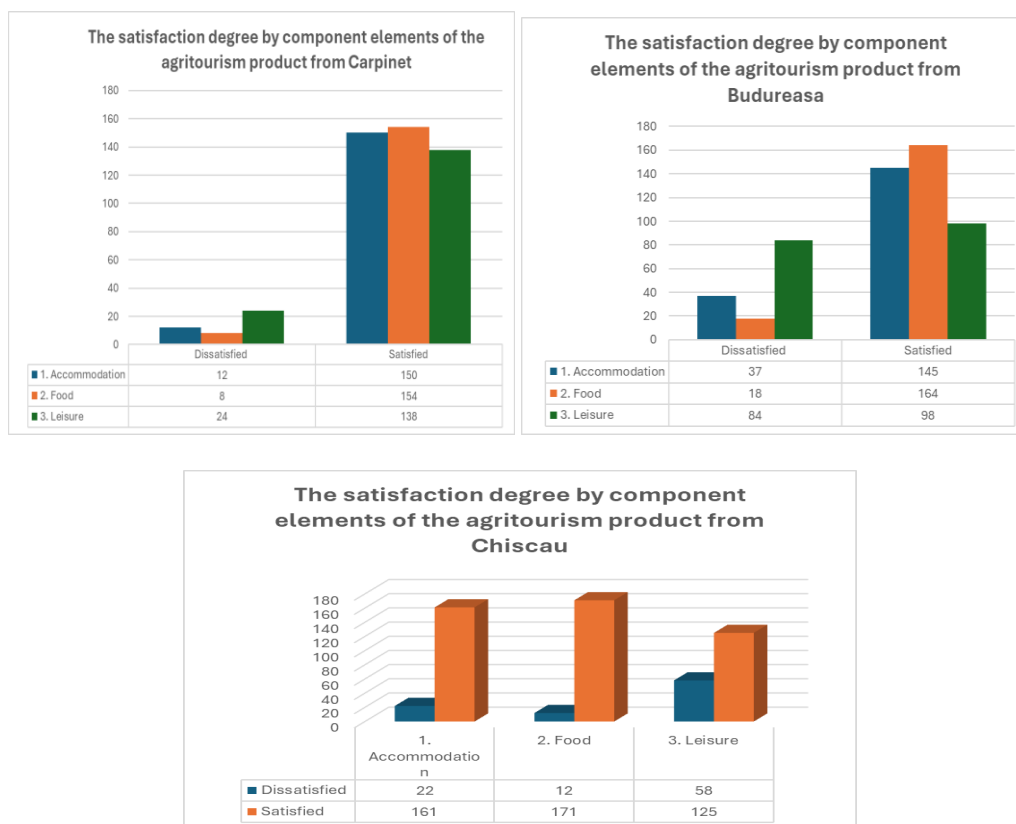


Figure 7. The satisfaction degree by component elements of the agritourism product from the studied areas

In the case of the Carpinet locality, from those 120 answers, for the element of accommodation, 81.66% of the respondents are satisfied. 93.33% are satisfied with the

food part. In the case of recreation, the percentage of those satisfied is lower, only 55.83%, but it is an easy-to-understand aspect for areas that are new to tourist activities.

Regarding the first element of the tourist product, accommodation, Budureasa satisfies 79.67% of those surveyed. And food satisfies 90.10% of respondents. Also, this area is a beginner in tourist activities, which is why the experience of creating a complete agritourism product is lacking, and this aspect is most visible in the case of leisure. Also, in the case of this area, the leisure part is deficient, an aspect signaled by the lower percentage of those who declare themselves satisfied, 53.84%.

In the case of Chiscau, 87.97% of those surveyed are satisfied with the accommodation element, 93.44% with food and 68.30 with leisure. It is certain that this area still has work regarding the improvement of leisure part, even if the notoriety is greater due to the presence of the Bear Cave.

Scoring of expectations regarding the "agritourism product" specific to the analyzed areas. Starting from the premise that the direct consumer of the tourist product can most easily identify the minuses, we started this direction of research. Also, the consumer is also the one who comes up with a proposal to "repair" these disadvantages. The question was provided with free answers from the consumers of the tourist product in each individual area. And in the case of this question, the 485 answers are distributed differently by localities: 120 from Carpinet, 182 from Budureasa and 183 from Chiscau.(table2)

Table 2.

Expectations related to the "agritourism product"

	Expectations	No/Percent
Carpinet	- improving the access infrastructure - creating thematic tourist packages with accent on traditional aspects - increasing visibility through leaflets, website, fb, etc. - improving the booking possibilities	45 / 37.50% 21 / 17.50% 32 / 26.66% 22 / 18.33%
Budureasa	- greater emphasis on the creation of an original agritourism product - the introduction of local crafts in new agritourism product - collaboration with professional associations - creation of a thematic tourist product for weekend tourism - collaboration with school units for the implementation of short thematic programs	28 / 15.38% 48 / 26.37% 25 / 13.73% 56 / 30.76% 25 / 13.73%
Chiscau	- making some thematic proposals that include the local community and not only Bear Cave - creation of an entity to manage tourist activity from the area - strengthening collaboration with locals to attract local entrepreneurs and to the tourism field - correlation of leisure activities from the area and adding other possibilities	46 / 25.14% 23 / 12.57% 54 / 29.50% 60 / 32.78%

In the case of the Carpinet area, the answers concerned: setting up the access infrastructure, indicated by 37.50% of the respondents; the creation of thematic tourist packages with a secular and traditional focus as the desire of 17.50% of those surveyed; increasing visibility through flyers, website, fb, etc. desired by 26.66% of respondents; the ease of booking, reported by 18.33% of tourists arriving here.

For Budureasa, tourists' expectations are oriented towards: greater emphasis on the creation of an original agritourism product, a necessity identified by 15.38% of respondents; 26.37% of the tourist product consumers from the area request the introduction of local crafts in agritourism product; collaboration with professional associations, as a request from 13.73% of respondents; creating a thematic tourism product for weekend tourism, desired aspect by 30.76%; collaboration with school units for the

implementation of short thematic programs, future direction identified by 13.73% of those surveyed.

Regarding the Chiscau area, the expectations of the surveyed tourists are oriented in the future towards: making some thematic proposals that include the local community and not only the Bear Cave, a necessity requested by 25.14%; 12.57% consider it necessary to create an entity to manage the tourist activity in the area; 29.50% of those surveyed believe that strengthening collaboration with locals will attract local entrepreneurs to the tourism field; correlation of leisure activities in the area, by adding other possibilities for spending free time, as desire of 32.78% of the respondents.

CONCLUSIONS

Starting from the premise, already demonstrated, that all three studied areas have specific resources for agritourism activity, that in the case of all of them concrete information was obtained regarding the future wishes and expectations of tourists who consume agritourism products, certain conclusion can be draw and based on them some proposals can be made regarding the future development of the local agritourism product:

- for the *Carpinet* area, the proposals refer to:
 - correlation of the infrastructure with the tourist activity in the sense of supporting them;
 - the centralization of local resources that can be used in tourist activities;
 - creation of thematic routes to support several types/forms of tourism;
 - increasing the visibility of the local tourist product through modern means of communication;
 - specialized trainings and support for the owners of local tourist structures for the organization of a reservation system;
 - attracting the local community to involve in the tourism field in various forms: either as entrepreneurs, or as a workforce, etc.;
 - improving knowledge and capacity for self-management and coordination at local level;
 - creation of agritourism products with a local "brand" character.
- for *Budureasa* area, the proposals refer to:
 - capitalizing the craft "brand" of the area, by including it as a central part of the created agritourism product;
 - capitalizing local gastronomic resources;
 - partnerships with certain entities for the purpose of training for the creation of the new agritourism product and support for its promotion and marketing;
 - encouraging local entrepreneurs to create thematic tourist packages targeted at certain categories of consumers, targeting long-term tourism;
 - attracting the attention of young consumers to the rural environment and specific crafts by establishing partnerships with school institutions.
- for *Chiscau* area, the proposals refer to:
 - sustainable development of the activity by attracting local residents and specific entities to manage the activity;
 - diversification of leisure opportunities by including other local resources beside the Bear Cave.
 - creating a holistic agritourism product with an emphasis on local resources and events.

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