

The Importance of Promoting a Rural Touristic Destination: The Case of Racoș Village

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Abstract

Rural tourism is one of the most promising tourism sectors for Romania's on medium and long-term development. Within this type of tourism, tourists enjoy relaxation and enjoy the simple life, with natural food, time spent together with family, excursions and interesting activities. Racoș village has a high touristic potential, but the degree of its valorization does not amount to its true value, requiring better promotion. In this paper, using a marketing research, it was highlighted how Racoș village is seen by the tourists and how they perceive the promoting activity of this area and the other Romanian rural areas in general.

Key words: rural tourism, promotion, touristic destination, marketing research

J.E.L. classification: M31, M37, Z32

1. Introduction

With over 19 million inhabitants, a good geo-strategic position, and a developing market economy, backed by EU accession, Romanian tourism has a healthy development potential in a strong regional destination on medium term and in a truly international long-term destination.

Rural tourism represents an attractive economic activity for many countries during the contemporary period, especially for Romania, being aware of its economic, social, cultural and natural benefits. Organizational and investment efforts should be directed towards this activity, resulting in an increase of touristic traffic and direct and indirect revenues (Blumer, 2002, pp. 28-34).

The agrotourism has been officially established in Romania for over two decades, through the promotion of rural settlements with ethnofolclorical, cultural and picturesque nature, as tourist villages. This activity is practiced by small landowners in rural areas, usually as a secondary activity. The activity carried out in the household or on their own farm remains the main occupation and source of income (Candrea, 2011, pp. 76-77).

The agrotourism, as a specific form of rural tourism, has some specific features, such as:

- ✓ tourism consumption is taking place in rural areas, avoiding the big tourist agglomerations that can be found on the seaside, in the spa and mountain resorts;
- ✓ requires much lower investment compared to other forms of tourism such as hotel tourism;
- ✓ it is carried out in peasant farms as complementary activity, generally providing few accommodation units (Băltărețu, 2007, pp. 54-62);
- ✓ it is an offer characterized by authenticity, being organized by farmers, by the inhabitants of the village, with their specific hospitality;
- ✓ it is not a business created by a large capital contribution from different people, but it is a small family business, whose income comes directly to the providers of these services, helping to raise their standard of living;

✓ it is an important consumer of natural and built environment but does not harm them too much, contributing and helping to conserve them (Nistoreanu, 2010, p. 115).

2. Presentation of the Racoș area

The Racoș village is located in the northeastern part of Brașov county and presents the geographical characteristics specific to a mountain area because forests and pastures are predominant.

The most important tourist attractions in the area are:

- Little Canyon;
- Sukosd-Bethlen Castle;
- The Unitarian Church;
- Basalt columns;
- Volcanic score career;
- The Mihai's Citadel;
- Dacian Castles;
- Olt Gorge;
- Brazi Lake;
- The Monument of the Heroes Fallen during the First World War in the village of Mateias.

Regrettably, none of the authorities are taking care to capitalize on the touristic potential of the area. Analyzed from the point of view of the number of tourist units and their accommodation capacity, Racoș is disadvantaged with no hotels, tourist complex, boarding house, cottage or villa. The only accommodation possibilities for a visiting tourist in Racos are the personal tent or home of a local people.

Although it would be a plus for the locality and would attract tourists, the commune does not benefit from facilities for recreation (skiing, skating, riding, cable cars, etc.).

3. Research method

Through a quantitative exploratory empirical research, 90 tourists were interviewed, the results obtained permitting the determination of how tourists were found out about the touristic destination of Racoș village, of their accommodation preferences and how they perceive the activity of promoting this rural area and rural areas in Romania in general.

Within the quantitative research, the questionnaire survey technique was used, as a tool for collecting the data. This marketing research considered tourists who visited the last 5 years the Racoș village as the sampling population.

The research focused on issues related to opinions, attitudes and intentions of tourists visiting Racoș village regarding how is promoted this area. The questionnaire included 16 questions on which 3 were identification questions.

The most important objectives of this research were:

- Identifying the information sources used by tourists to find out about rural areas in Romania and about Racoș village;
- Identifying the types of accommodation used by tourists in rural areas;
- Identifying the tourists' opinions about the touristic objectives in Racoș village;
- Identifying tourists' opinions about the promotion activity of the rural areas in Roamnia.

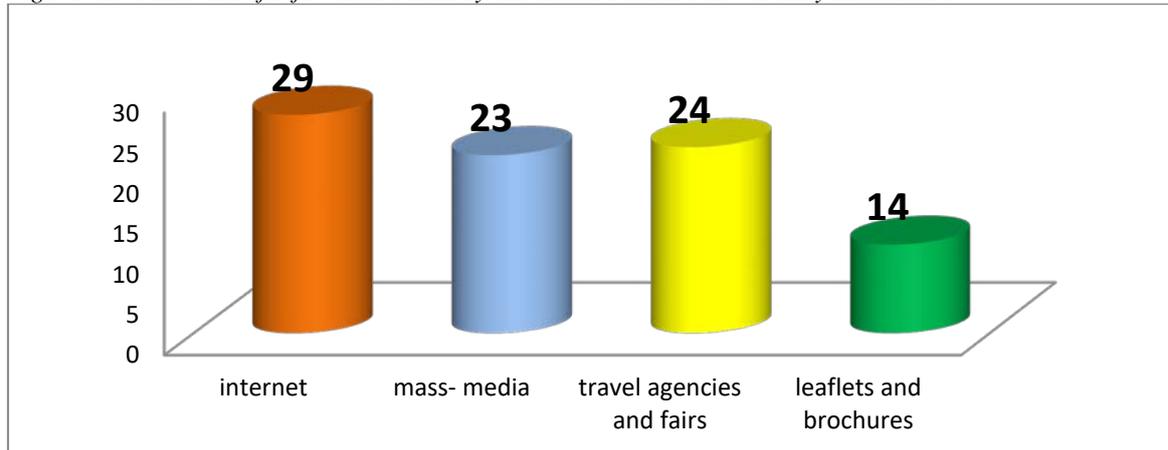
The processing and analysis of the data from the 90 interviews were conducted using the SPSS system (StatisticalPackage for Social Sciences). This system is used in data processing to obtain useful information for decision-makers. The most common outputs are tables and graphs. The multiple processing possibilities (data grouping, data analysis, statistical tests etc.) offered by this software made it very popular when analysing data for marketing or sociological research (Constantin, 2012, p. 98).

4. The results

A first element examined in this research was to identify the sources of information used by tourists when deciding in general to choose their holiday destination.

It is noted (Figure 1) that among the 90 subjects surveyed, the majority (29 of them) turned to the internet to document their touristic destination. Of the subjects, 23 have been documented from the media and 24 have contacted travel agents to find out more about their vacation destination. Leaflets and brochures occupy the last place as the source of information, so only 14 of the respondents turned to this means of information.

Figure no. 1. Sources of information used by tourists to choose their holiday destination

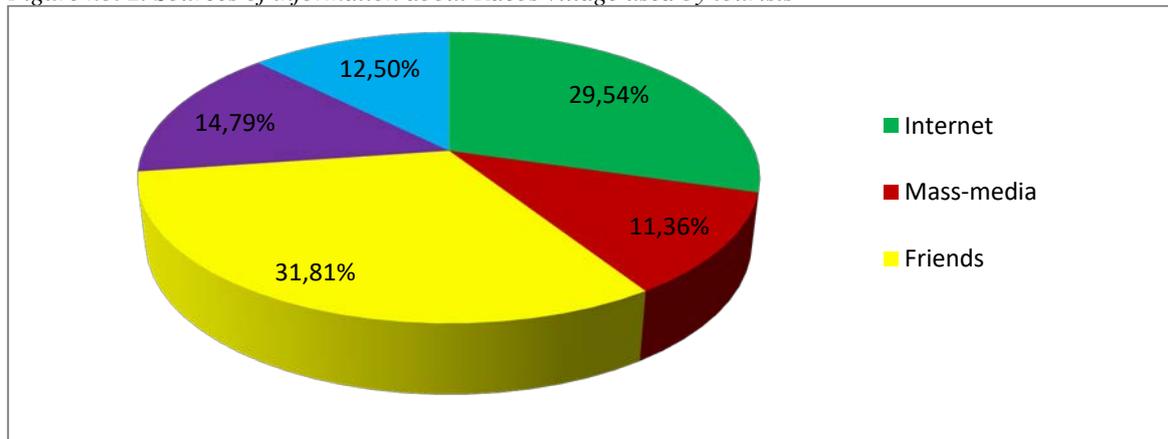


Source: Own research of the authors

An important aspect that has been researched referred to how tourists found out about Racoş village as a possible touristic destination. Thus, most of the questioned tourists found out about Racoş village from the internet (29.54%), but mostly from friends' accounts (31.81%). Much less found out from travel agencies and fairs (14.79%), leaflets and brochures (12.5%) and media (11.36%) (Figure 2).

These responses indicate that the activity of promoting Racoş village and especially agro-tourist areas in Romania at the level of tourism agencies and specialized fairs should be stepped up.

Figure no. 2. Sources of information about Racos village used by tourists



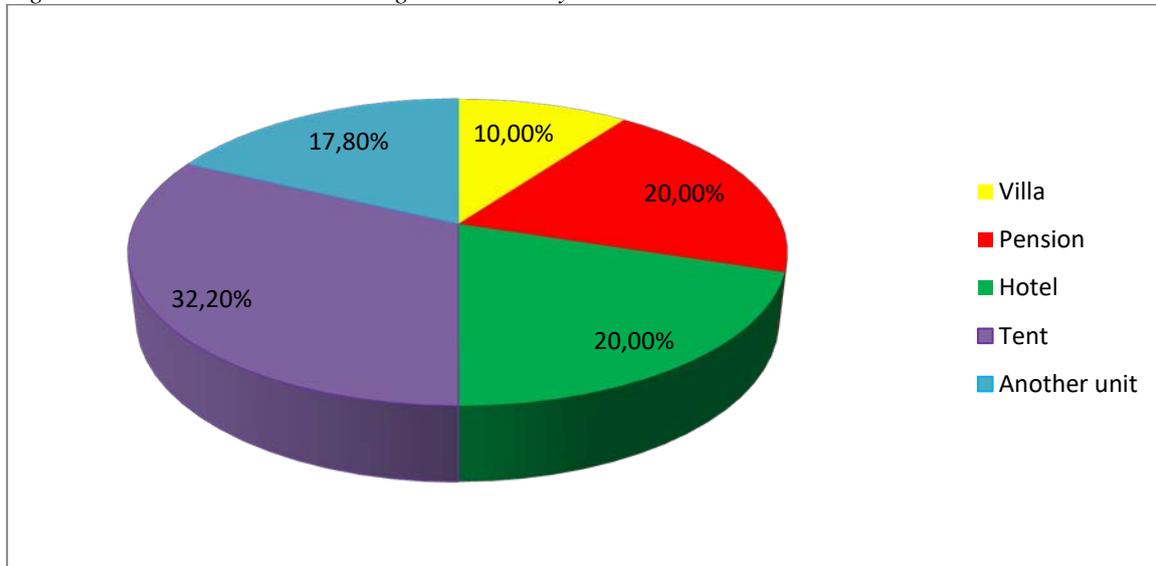
Source: Own research of the authors

Another question addressed to the subjects referred to the form of accommodation they generally choose when spending their holidays in a rural area. Of the surveyed tourists, 29 (32.2%) prefer the tent as a way of accommodation when spending their holidays in a rural area.

A high number of tourists, 36 of the 90 interviewed (40%), prefer accommodation in hotels and boarding houses, which is a problem for the touristic activity in the Racoş area because there is no accommodation unit of this type.

Only 9 (or 10%) of the 90 interviewed subjects prefer accommodation at a villa type (Figure 3).

Figure no. 3. Accommodation arrangements used by tourists

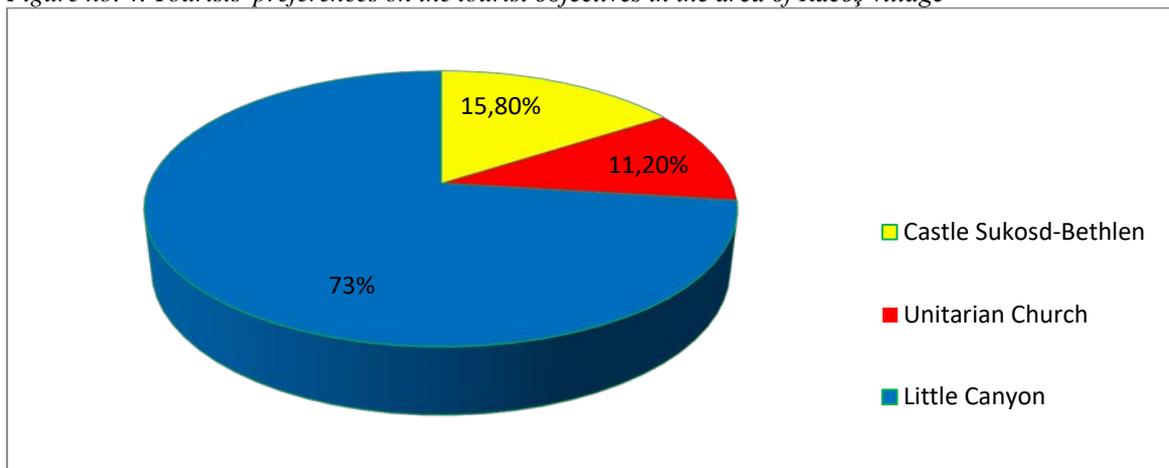


Source: Own research of the authors

Another important aspect that was pursued in the research was the touristic attractions in the rural area of Racoş known and preferred by tourists. The most important touristic attractions in this rural area are: Little Canyon, Sukosd-Bethlen Castle and Unitarian Church. The research looked at whether these objectives are known and the order in which they are preferred by tourists, so that in a future promotion campaign they will be used.

To this question from the 90 tourists surveyed only 89 responded and it can be seen that in the top of tourist preferences it is the Small Canyon, with 65 votes (73%), than Sukosd-Bethlen Castle 10 votes (11.2%) and The Unitarian Church received 14 votes (15.8%) (Figure 4).

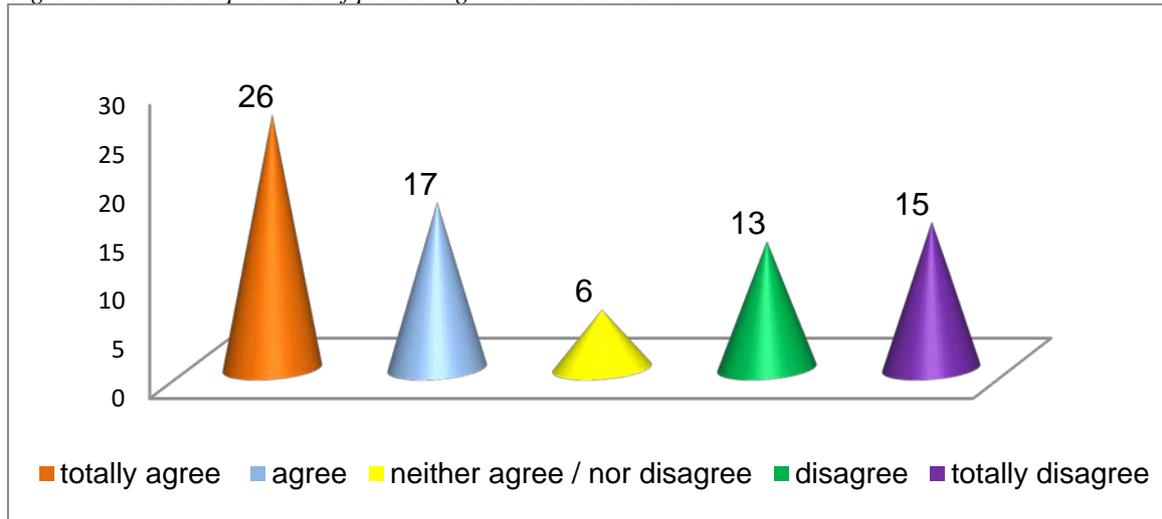
Figure no. 4. Tourists' preferences on the tourist objectives in the area of Racoş village



Source: Own research of the authors

Regarding the statement "Promoting a locality has a major importance in the decision of the tourists to visit it" most of the subjects surveyed chose the variant "total agreement" (26) and "agreement" (17), and a small number of them (6) opted for "neither agreement nor disagreement" (Figure 5).

Figure no. 5. The importance of promoting a tourist destination



Source: Own research of the authors

5. Conclusions

Romania has an essential advantage over other countries because, due to its rich and varied touristic potential, it can offer all the requested forms of tourism: spa resorts, mountain resorts, seaside stays, winter sports, hunting, fishing, cultural touristic circuits. The Romanian touristic potential - mountains, sea, beach, climate, folklore, culture, history - is insufficient to represent by itself a real and strong touristic attraction.

The non-existent promotion of Racoş and its touristic objectives make the area not perceived by tourists and tour operators as a touristic destination with its own image, clearly differentiated from other destinations.

Research from this article shows that the Racoş rural area is very poorly promoted among tourism agencies and specialized fairs (like most rural areas in Romania), so most tourists have not heard and know about this area.

The development of tourism in this area must be seen in direct relation to the protection of nature (protected natural areas), the preservation of authentic history and culture and the involvement of the authorities at all stages of this process. Local public administration is one of the promoters of tourism heritage management, having tools to initiate local tourism restructuring, as well as land-use planning.

Romania has many rural areas with high touristic potential, but unfortunately not capitalized due to poor promotion both in the local tourists and among foreign tourists.

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