

Equestrian Tourism

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Abstract

The work “Equestrian Tourism” contains in its structure information related to the activities carried out in equestrian tourism, the organizations that implement quality standards in the leisure riding and equestrian tourism industry in Romania, as well as the methods and tools used to promote and attract tourists. The central idea of this paper is based on the fact that equestrian tourism creates conditions for restoring work capacity, while having a pleasant and instructive leisure and acquiring new knowledge, information and even skills. We specify that Romania has an extraordinary potential, composed of anthropic natural resources and of state and private studs and wild horses.

We believe that the beneficial effects of equestrian tourism must force decision-makers in this field to create a strong image or brand for this form of tourism, because a compelling message is needed to attract tourists from the country and abroad.

Key words: equestrian tourism, equestrian activities, equestrian centers, recreational riding instructor, riders.

J.E.L. classification: M31, M37, Q13, Q26, Z30, Z32

1. Introduction

Equestrian tourism is a form of tourism that has begun to develop in recent decades and is accessed by more and more people. We specify that this type of tourism is realized due to the existence of natural and anthropic resources, due to the presence of different forms of relief, due to the increasing number of riding centers, equestrian pensions, equestrian tourism guides and state and private stud farms.

Currently, Romania ranks second in terms of per capita horse population in the European Union (8-www.statista.com) and 7th in Europe in terms of wild and semi-wild equine populations (World Horse Welfare and Euro group for Animals).

All these elements lead to the realization of equestrian tourism and to the creation of an attractive offer for tourism. Therefore, equestrian tourism offers various tourist products that contribute to the harmonious development of the body, to the creation of a good mood, to relaxation and spending free time in a pleasant way. In other words, riding in nature, exploring new places, horseback riding in special and unique places, camping in the camp are some of the strengths of equestrian tourism. People's needs and desire to relax in nature have led to the practice of equestrian sports, the offer of horse shows for tourists, the offer of riding lessons, riding lessons for children, sleigh rides or horse-drawn carriages etc. A synthetic analysis of this form of tourism highlights the fact that in Romania tourists can benefit from the services offered by approximately 20 riding centers, a number of over 10 studs located in various places in the country and many destinations for riding.

This infrastructure is supported by the Romanian Equestrian Tourism Federation (FRTE) (9-www.facebook.com) by developing quality standards for centers, specialized courses for professionals and a riding training program for riders. This federation (FRTE) is an NGO made up of equestrian associations and centers and aims to implement quality standards in the leisure riding and equestrian tourism industry in Romania. In the same context, we specify that the federation (FRTE) has a series of basic principles that refer to the safety of the rider and the welfare of the horse.

2. Theoretical background. Promoting equestrian tourism

The existence of equestrian infrastructure and the diversified supply of products have contributed to the increase in demand for weekend programs and equestrian tourism. Also, the promotion in the most well-known travel guides, the existence of leaflets, brochures, magazines, books, posters, banners, billboards, mobile technology, TV / radio / internet commercials have the role of helping the tourist to obtain the information he needs and benefits from such equestrian services. Therefore, the presentation of the equestrian tourism offer helps to develop this form of tourism and related fields.

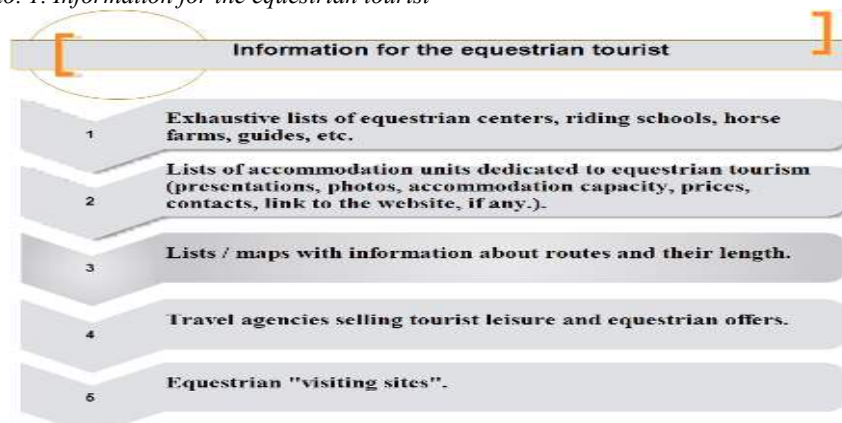
At the same time we specify that a series of actions such as: Leisure Riding Monitor courses - dedicated to the leisure riding and equestrian tourism industry developed by the Romanian Equestrian Tourism Federation (FRTE) and internationally recognized by the International Equestrian Qualifications Group (IGEQ), Leisure Riding Instructor courses, Equestrian Tourism Accompaniment Guide course, Equestrian Tourism Guide courses; equestrian competitions: Transylvania Horse Show, Karpatia Horse Show and Karpatia Pony Show; introduction of the occupation of Equestrian Tourism Guide in the Classification of Occupations in Romania (COR 511313); equestrian destinations (in Dornelor County, Apusenii Mountains, Măcin Mountains or in Rodna Mountains) and trips to studs in the country are methods of promoting equestrian tourism.

Also, in order to promote equestrian tourism, it is necessary to support the local authorities at local and national level (10-www.vacanteleluimirea.wordpress.com), the economic agents, travel agencies and guides, specialists in the field and the entire population. An important role in the promotion of equestrian tourism is played by legislation that must be well developed and with a correct applicability.

Equestrian guesthouses and hotels, country studs and equestrian centers can participate in national and international fairs, specialized conferences, festivals, forums or competitions to make themselves known. At international fairs, it is important to talk about equestrian routes in Romania, and travel journalists and bloggers should publish as many articles about equestrian tourism as possible. The initiation of a National Equestrian Tourism Day in Romania, the organization of equestrian-themed fairs and the establishment of equestrian tourism museums in Romania are ideas and ways of promotion that help to develop the field of equestrian tourism.

In this context, we show that the promotion of equestrian tourism has the role of helping the tourist to obtain in the shortest possible time the following information: (figure no.1)

Figure no. 1. Information for the equestrian tourist



Source: Authors' own construction

An important role in promoting equestrian tourism can also be played by travel agencies - which can deal with incoming and which should promote this niche combined with gastronomic, cultural, wine tourism and others. Equestrian tourism can also be promoted by residents who have this potential in the area and through objects: napkins, calendars, clothing, office supplies, mice, pens, glasses, etc.

The offer can be promoted online, on its own website or third party sites, or at profile fairs. If there is a database with former or potential customers, newsletters can be sent. A form of promotion is also the one that is transmitted through online social networks and various tourist platforms (7,11,12,13- AER, 2017), but also from "word of mouth" from satisfied customers.

In other words, the desire to discover new places in the horse saddle can be supported by elements such as: practicing recreational riding in a responsible way and promoting equestrian tourism as a beneficial activity for the mind and body.

However, equestrian tourism is very little promoted, and the Romanian potential for the development of this tourist product is not intensely exploited.

3. Research methodology

Our methodology is based on theories developed in the field of equestrian tourism, on studies conducted in this field, as well as on existing reviews and comments on social networks. The construction of this study involved knowing the activities that are carried out in this field, getting acquainted with the names of specialists who provide specialized services, as well as marketing information.

We used indirect deduction as a working method, a method that allows us to apply general rules in specific situations. I noticed that Romania has natural and anthropic resources and numerous horse studs, which can help the development of equestrian tourism. Another observation refers to the fact that equestrian tourism contributes to the restoration of work capacity, to the pleasant and instructive spending of free time, to the acquisition of knowledge. Therefore, the deductive method by observation helps us to obtain logical conclusions that will help equestrian tourism service providers.

4. Findings. The effects of equestrian tourism

Equestrian tourism has development potential in Romania, because the practice of this type of tourism is possible in all areas of our country. At the same time, equestrian tourism has an important role in the economy, society and culture. In this context, we specify (1-Constantinescu, 2011) that equestrian tourism contributes to:

- job creation and income growth;
- increasing the competitiveness of Romanian tourism products on current and potential foreign markets;
- increasing the state budget, through the possibility of taxing prosperous economic activities through the development of equestrian tourism;
- promoting the image of certain areas in Romania both nationally and internationally (3,14-Gratzer, 2006);
- the increase of incomes in the areas where this type of tourism is practiced, an increase generated by the capitalization of the local resources and of the local traditional activities;
- protecting and conserving the environment and improving the infrastructure and living conditions of the inhabitants of these areas;
- increasing domestic and international tourist traffic;
- meeting the demands of tourists by developing and promoting tourism
- activities such as: horse riding, equestrian sports, relaxation in nature, carriage rides;
- the increase of the living standard leads to the participation of more and more people in equestrian activities;
- the development of the equestrian tourism offer and infrastructure has helped to increase the demand for this type of tourism;

- promoting and attracting domestic and international tourists by organizing events, horse riding competitions, etc.
- capitalization of anthropic and natural tourist resources through arrangements specific to equestrian tourism.

In the same context, we specify that Romania is affiliated to the International Equestrian Tourism Federation, an affiliation that helps it to be known internationally as a country with a great potential in the practice of equestrian tourism.

Also, the equestrian centers have a diversified offer that includes horseback riding for different categories of tourists:

- beginner riders or inexperienced riders who can benefit from long walks at a slow pace in an attractive natural environment;
- experienced riders or regular riders who can benefit from unique moments obtained by walking on very long routes or endurance.

Therefore, the desire for freedom and relaxation can be satisfied by practicing equestrian activities, and the offer in this field is diversified.

5. "The Cinderella of Tourism"

Equestrian tourism is a niche of tourism but it is little represented in the market and we can call it "Cinderella in tourism". This situation is due to the fact that:

- there is no real and beautiful image in the equestrian tourism market;
- a large part of equestrian pensions do not work with travel agencies in Romania;
- a small percentage of equestrian pensions offer quality services;
- a large part of the equestrian guesthouses are not known by tourists passionate about this type of tourism;
- there are a small number of equestrian tourism guides throughout the country;
- there is no classification of riding centers or riding centers (1,2 or 3 horseshoes);
- there is no list of equestrian pensions and hotels on the Ministry's website.

All these problems can be solved by improving, adopting and implementing marketing strategies for equestrian tourism products.

The conclusions extracted from the information presented, lead me to say that online and offline promotion can be the panacea of equestrian tourism. Thus, the creation of specialized sites, e-mail, Google Ads and social media networks can convey to potential tourists the offer of equestrian centers. These promotions can be achieved through one-off campaigns (holiday packages for children / young people / families, etc.) and long-term campaigns (Teambuilding services / Private events).

Attracting tourists from the online to offline environment can be done through a unique offer and sent regularly through newsletters. These newsletters can keep in touch with those who have benefited from the products offered by equestrian centers and equestrian guesthouses, as well as with those who want to consume equestrian tourism products.

Also, social networks Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, YouTube, Pinterest, WhatsApp, Twitter, blogs, etc. offer a number of advantages to equestrian tourism. We can talk about social benefits (defined by expanding online links, debating specific issues, etc.), economic benefits (brand interaction with consumers, cheap and easily accessible transmission environment, market research, financial benefits, etc.), and educational benefits. (direct interaction between teachers and students, etc.). This online environment is beneficial for any form of tourism and not only because these platforms are accessed by individuals of all ages and from all corners of the world.

Statistics show that social networks are accessed because people:

- want to communicate with friends and relatives,
- want to know information;
- want to keep in touch with colleagues from school / high school / college;
- they want to make new friends;
- they want to have fun;
- they want to be up to date with socio-cultural events;

- they want to know the opinions of other people who have benefited from certain services;
- they want to post photos with and about the moments they lived;
- they want to share their experience with others;
- want to meet other people;
- they want to develop their business, etc.

These social networks are beneficial because they reduce communication costs and help maintain thematic groups. Offline promotion is done through prints (magazines, posters, leaflets), media, thematic programs (discover, learn, explore), thematic camps (riding camps for children, riding camps for adults, etc.), organization of festivals etc.

The promotion aims to show that tourism products have a certain value by satisfying human need and that the equestrian tourism service is provided in all its forms through the horse.

The efficiency of this form of tourism results from the fact that the equestrian tourist is involved in carrying out activities involuntarily taking over a part of the functions of service providers and obtaining a double role: that of provider and consumer. Also, the organizational measures necessary for the preparation of tourist consumption and the facilities offered by the material base are factors that contribute to the increase of the demand for such services.

On the other hand, we can show the fact that equestrian tourism offers consumers the opportunity to practice activities specific to leisure (5-Obodinski, 2006):

- interaction with horses (washing them, brushing and combing the mane, weaving, cleaning or priming hooves, mumbling, feeding, guided movement, restraint, harnessing, saddling, etc.);
- admiring the landscapes while riding or during horse-drawn carriage rides or sleigh rides;
- visiting different tourist objectives;
- learning riding practices and riding figures;
- visiting museums with equestrian profile, participation in equestrian festivals or competitions;
- spending time around horses for horse-assisted therapy activities.

We note that equestrian tourism involves ensuring an active rest (2-Cosmescu, 1998) of the tourist that contributes to meeting his physical and mental needs. In other words, equestrian tourism outlines the framework required for "pleasant and instructive leisure" (4-Minciu, 2004).

In order to achieve all these things, it is necessary to apply a leisure development strategy, which takes into account, on the one hand, "the motivations, aspirations and expectations of tourists, and on the other hand, the profile, structure and specifics of the resorts" (6-Savu, 1987).

We consider that equestrian tourism is dynamic, has positive effects characterized by economic, social and cultural benefits to local communities, but also negative effects resulting from its chaotic, uncontrolled exploitation and development. Therefore, there is a need to adopt regulations on environmental protection and to create development strategies related to the tourism development strategy at national level.

6. Conclusions

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