

Alba County - Rural Tourism Destination?

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Abstract *The purpose of this paper is to identify the main rural touristic resources available in Alba County and also the preferred tourist destinations, highlighting the role and the importance of the rural tourism and agro-tourism in the economy of Alba County and, not least, identifying the main direction for its development and promotion. In other words, the aim of this paper is to answer the question "Is it or not Alba County a rural tourist destination?"*

Keywords Rural tourism, Alba County, rural touristic destination

JEL Codes: M31, L83

1. Introduction

Given that Romanian tourism is booming, we consider it appropriate to analyze tourism activity both at regional and local level, in all its forms. The objective of this paper is to outline Alba County, an area in Romania, as rural tourism destination. Even if in this territory are practiced many forms of tourism, due to the rural character of the county, more precisely the location of the attractions, the specific tourist infrastructure (rural and agro-tourism pensions, ski areas etc.) or holidays/products for tourists taking place throughout the rural areas, we can say that Alba is a tourist destination, primarily rural.

In order to be considered a destination, a territory must have a proper touristic potential and include tourist facilities and items of general infrastructure (access roads to the objectives and tourist facilities, utilities, telecommunications) commercial network, other goods and services that travelers need during their stay at the destination, all of which contribute to increasing attractiveness. To complete the system of a tourist destination should be added tourism services and qualified human resources that complement the physical components of that territory and without which we cannot talk about specific tourism products of a destination.

In terms of tourism potential given, Alba County can be set on national and international touristic map thanks to its resources that are characterized by diversity and attractiveness or uniqueness. These range from the natural elements such as landscapes of Șureanu or Apuseni Mountains to the anthropogenic ones: historical, cultural, religious, ethnographic or gastronomic located though the county's settlements.

These components of the tourism potential are not only for reasons of travel, but it represents the "raw material" necessary for the development of the touristic activity, showing the valorification of the opportunities at tourism level and offer a specific functionality of the territory.

Outstanding touristic sights belonging to rural areas of the county Alba can be considered the following: Apuseni Natural Park, Râmeț Gorges, limestones from Ampoia, Întregalde Gorge, Glacier Cave Scărișoara, the geological sanctuaries of Detunata Goală and Detunata Flocoasă, glacier lake lezerul Șureanu, the natural sanctuaries of Negrileasa daffodil meadow, Prigoanei Meadows, Râpa Roșie, Sebeș Valley picturesque rural villages - Săsciori (feudal fortification, pottery), Laz (glass icons VIII-XIX), Șugag (folklore and ethnography area of interest), Aries Valley - Poșaga (ethnography and folklore), Sălcuia (one of the most iconic places in the Apuseni Mountains), Lupșa (history, folk architecture, ethnography), Albac (first rural county where they were created guesthouses, late 90s), Scărișoara, Gârda de Sus, Arieșeni (winter sports resort), Vidra, Avram Iancu (folkloric and ethnographic area), Geoagiului Valley - Râmeț, Stremț or Aiud Valley - Rimetea (old mining center, ethnography and folklore), Livezile (amazing natural setting).

There are also many touristic trails, in the mountains and rock climbing, which capitalizes the main components of the natural and anthropogenic touristic heritage that is specific for Alba County, routes developed especially in rural areas. There are about 32 trails and mountain roads in Trascău Mountains, over 20 in Șureanu Mountains and Sebeș Valley and over 40 in the Apuseni Mountains.

All this can be better harnessed through the development and marketing of specific tourism products. For example, on routes that cross the Wine Country could be created gastronomic touristic products, on those from Sebeș Valley ethnographic holidays, for mountain sports or adventure. From this perspective, Alba County can be considered a rural tourism destination of medium national importance, because, even if it has a great tourism heritage, it is not fully exploited.

2. Literature review

From a conceptual point of view, until the eighties of the last century "tourist destination" had a classic content, corresponding to the stage of mass tourism. If in tourism literature (unfortunately little known in Romania) the change of "tourist destinations" concept began in the ninth decade of the twentieth century, in the real economy we find it only around the year 2000 through the organization of "tourist destinations" especially in the US, then in Western Europe. Thus, Gunn (1994) defines "tourist destination" from a spacial point of view and Vallas and Becherel (1999) include besides the attractions also the tourist services.

The researcher Butler (2011) is known mainly by adapting the life cycle theory to a tourist destination (Pop, 2009). Also in terms of tourism marketing, tourist destinations were investigated both internationally and at European level by some specialists (Avraham and Kettler, 2008; Beirman, 2003; Kozak, 2008; Morgan *et al.*, 2010; Pike, 2004, 2008) or some similar organizations (European Commission Travel, 2008, 2009, ATLAS, 2004). There were also approached aspects such as tourist destinations impact on the local economy (Vanhove, 2005), organization, development and competitiveness of tourist destinations (Laws *et al.*, 2011; AIEST, 2008; Ritchie and Crouch, 2003). Being more recent, there are not many Romanian researchers who have studied the issue of tourist destination. Among these may be mentioned: Țigu *et al.*, 2008; Rotaru, 2008; Neacșu *et al.*, 2011.

The previous research on rural tourism in Alba County is centered on the management of tourist services (Ciugudean-Popa, 2009; Coci-Drăgolea, 2009) or represents market research or strategies that include this form of tourism (Market Scope, 2008, IHS Romania, 2007, University "1 December 1918" of Alba Iulia, 2015).

Of course there are other specialists (Borza, 70s) who focused on studying tourism activity in the county, specifically on the tourism market, but also on proposals of touristic capitalization, but the results of these studies are not of recent date (the re-edited paper „Touristic capitalization of tangible and intangible heritage of the county Alba is the most comprehensive study that reveals the place occupied by the tourism activity in the county's economy in the 70s).

3. Methodology of research

To characterize the specific phenomenon of rural tourism in Alba County, were taken the following actions:

- it was studied the literature to identify studies or papers that present the coordinates of rural tourism in Alba County,
- there were investigated the existing statistical data on tourist flows and infrastructure and also were inventoried the main resources and tourist destinations in the county
- it has been undertaken direct research among the tourism market players and stakeholders interested in the development of this sector.

4. Results and Discussions Alba County rural coordinates as a tourist destination

"At the crossroads of ancient roads used until today, Alba county is imposing with authority in the Romanian tourist landscape not only as an inevitable place of travelling from the many in the country, but as the precise location with its own entity decided by a rich, sometimes unique, natural heritage, history and art" (County Office of Tourism Alba, 1983). Even if time has passed since these words were written, it also happens

today in terms of tourist potential of the territory analyzed, as its components, inherent characteristics or attractive power.

Of course between attractions and destinations there is a strong link, considering the fact that a major attraction stimulates the development of destinations, whether the attraction is a natural component (beach or other forms of relief, lake, flora/fauna, etc.) or anthropogenic (ski area, amusement park). As tourist destination develops, appear side attractions aimed to better exploit a certain area.

Starting from this premise, *we identified the main tourist attractions in Alba County which are located in its rural areas*. For their beauty and attractiveness, it is noted:

- the components of the natural touristic potential: Apuseni Natural Park (28% of its area is in the territory of Alba County), Râmeț Gorges, Vălișoara/Aiudului Gorges, limestones of Ampoita, Întregalde Gorge, Glacier Cave Scărișoara, geological sanctuary Detunata Goală, Detunata Flocoasă, Iezerul Șureanu glacial lake, nature sanctuaries: Negruleasa daffodil meadow, Prigoanei Meadows or Râpa Roșie;
- specific elements of anthropogenic heritage: the famous center of glass painting (VIII-XIX) from Laz (Sebeș Valley) or folklore interest area Aries Valley and Trascău Depression, Câlnic peasant fortress - belonging to the UNESCO World Heritage, the ruins of Dacian fortresses from Căpîlna and Craiva or noble fortress of Colțești (XIII-XV), rural settlements belonging to the "Wine Country" or "Wine Road" - Ighiu - vineyards, Țelna - top-quality wines, cellars with over 150 m of galleries dug by the peasants in revolt in 1784 (County Office of Tourism Alba, 1983), Cricău, the mining Museum in Roșia Montană gold mine, where it functioned the first in Europe mentioned by Herodotus (484-485 BC), Râmeț Monastery (sec. XIV) where it functioned the first Romanian school in the county and the "St. Gheorghe church", Lupșa (1421), extensive network of ethnographic collections and exhibitions spread across the entire rural county.

Unlike the attractions, considered to be generally, single units, places or geographical areas small and easily defined, based on a single feature, the tourist destinations are wider areas, including a number of individual attractions, such as the services offered to the tourists (Vallas and Becherel, 1999). Moreover, the destination is created both for tourists and locals so that they can feel at home through the utilities that are naturally found (Rotariu, 2008).

According to the tourism literature, there can be many types of travel destinations: independent tourist resorts, cities, *villages where they develop as forms of specific tourism: rural tourism and agri-tourism*, areas that have a specific theme, such as national parks, regions defined by administrative boundaries or zones with specific name (Hațeg Land, Stone Land, Oaș Land etc.) countries or groups of countries and continents, classic or for business, natural destinations for short stays.

The rural tourism and agritourism, as a form of tourism prevalent in Alba County, is motivated by the desire to return to nature, to the traditional life and customs and assumes the stay in a traditional peasant home (farm villages, agritourism) or in a boarding house in rural area. The tourist may be involved more or less in the traditional activities of the zone or the households. The rural tourism and agro-tourism has gained a particular importance in recent years in our country and Alba County meets special conditions for conducting this type of tourism. In general, the rural settlements, still keep the old customs and traditions, a rich and varied folklore, and the original features of ethnography and crafts. The rural areas of the county have, from picturesque landscapes, unpolluted and multiple choice recreations a valuable cultural and historical potential. Combining the rustic charm with natural attractions, the agro-tourism is one of the forms of tourism that has seen a remarkable development in recent years and is well represented in the Apuseni Mountains (e.g., Arieș Valley High, Rimetea village of Trascău) (Alba County Council and “1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia, 2015).

In terms of agritourism, Arieș Valley is the most developed area of Alba County called „Țara Moșilor” followed by Rimetea micro-region. Important locations for rural holidays are in Arieșeni Apuseni, Abrud, Albac, Avram Iancu, Horea, Scărișoara or Vidra where you can visit the wooden churches or traditional households. Ampoița, Sălcuia and Rimetea are other places where there are accommodations in the agritourism system, being located in areas of high tourist interest in Trascău Mountains.

Since most of Alba County tourist attractions and receiving units are in rural areas, we can say that this is primarily a rural tourist destination.

Regarding *the tourist rural offer of the county*, Alba ranks 7 in a ranking of the main 15 Romanian counties who together hold over 80% of the accommodation capacity of rural tourism, with more than 390 guesthouses and respectively 46 % of accommodation comfort classified in category 3 stars and above. Also, Alba falls into the category of *counties acknowledged in rural tourism*, which recorded increases in the quota of boarding houses along with other Romanian counties, the main advantages of this development is *the picturesque landscapes and the authentic traditional rural country specific* Țării Moșilor, Sebeș Valley, Țării Secașelor, Trascău Depression or Târnavă area.

Specifically, in terms of size, the rural and agro tourism specific infrastructure in Alba County are characterized as follows (table 1):

- through a total of 84 rural and agritourism pensions at the level of 2016, represents 53% of the county tourism specific infrastructure;
- an increase in the number of tourist units of type boarding houses located in rural areas during the period 2010-2016, from 36 to 84, 2.33 times respectively.

Table 1. The evolution of the number of the receiving tourists units in Alba County during 2010-2016

Type of the tourists receiving units	Number of units						
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Hotels	10	13	12	15	15	19	19
Hostels	2	2	2	1	1	3	3
Motels	1	3	6	7	7	7	6
Tourist vila	3	3	3	3	6	6	5
Tourist chalets	6	5	5	7	7	8	9
Campings	-	1	1	1	1	1	1
School and preschool camps	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Urban boarding houses	6	17	20	22	25	30	28
Rural boarding houses and agritourism boarding houses	36	53	61	62	75	81	84
TOTAL	67	100	113	121	140	158	158

Source: Author's contribution based on the data collected from INSSE, <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/>

As it can be seen, the number of tourist units in Alba almost tripled in the period under review, based on the spectacular growth in the number of urban and rural guesthouses. To these are added the tourist chalets, camps for school and preschool, and some tourist villas or other receiving tourists units located in rural areas.

The dynamic analysis of the number of units receiving tourists in rural Alba county reveals that it has experienced a significant growth during the period 2010-2016 (table 2), with the same trend as the overall tourism infrastructure.

Table 2. The evolution of the rural and agritourism boarding houses in Alba County between 2010-2016

Type of tourist accommodation unit	Number of units						
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rural boarding houses and agritourism boarding houses	36	53	61	62	75	81	84
<i>Dynamic indicators</i>	100,0	147,2	169,4	172,2	208,3	225,0	233,3
TOTAL	67	100	113	121	140	158	158
<i>Dynamic indicators</i>	100,0	149,2	168,6	180,6	208,9	235,8	235,8

Source: Author's contribution based on the data collected from INSSE, <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/>

This fact is explained through the intense demand for specific rural tourism and agritourism in Alba County, that manifests intensely, and on the other hand, the investments in such units were supported by with European funding. According to a study on tourism guesthouse in Romania (N.F.Y.M., 2012), the Arieșeni resort in Alba County stood in 2012, on the 27th place (1.7% like Bran and Moeciu - BV) from 630 domestic tourist destinations visited by Romanian tourists, ahead of destinations such as Durău (1.4%) or Lepșa (1.1%).

Regarding their territorial spreading, from the total of 84 tourist receiving units - type rural tourism and agritourism accommodation, the majority are located in the upper valley of Aries - Arieșeni (18), Gârda de Sus (10), Albac (6) - Depression Trascău - Rimetea (6) Sălcuia (5) and Sebeș Valley - Șugag (3), Săsciori (2).

Some rural areas in Alba County are recognized nationally and internationally for their tourist attractiveness. Thus, in 2014 the title of the most beautiful village in Romania was granted by the site mondonews.ro to a village in Alba County. It's Rimetea village, a famous settlement, unique architecture, its tumultuous history and wonderful scenery. Rimetea, it is also the first rural place who was awarded the prize "Europa Nostra" by the European Commission in 1999 for preserving cultural and architectural heritage.

According to a ranking conducted by Lonely Planet (Unirea Newspaper, 2015), the largest publisher of travel guides, Transylvania and implicitly Alba, was the first in the world among the regions visited in 2016, followed by Iceland Western Valle de Vinales - Cuba Friuli - Italy, Waiheke Island - New Zealand, Auvergne - France, Hawaii, Bavaria - Germany, Costa Verde - Brazil and St. Helena. The authors of the tour guide say that in the area there is something more besides the legends about vampires, Saxon villages and fortified churches, and in the Carpathian Mountains there are many caves and also you can go hiking or skiing.

But these data, although official, does not fully reflect the reality, because many units located in rural areas that receive tourists are not included in the tourist circuit, representing secondary homes of the residents from Alba County and other counties.

According to some specialized studies (N.F.Y.M., 2012) the number of boarding houses¹ is 390, Alba County being in a hierarchy at a national level on 7th place (according to estimates, in Romania there are about 8,000 boarding houses with a capacity of 140,000 beds and at the Centre Region level 2,800 boarding houses with a total capacity of about 47,000 seats), of which 46% are boarding houses with a low degree of comfort (1-2 stars). Alba stands out among the 8 counties of Romania who have experienced a significant tourism development of boarding housing in the last

¹ For the purpose of the mentioned study, the segment "boarding houses" brings together conceptually also the categories of units "villas" and "chalets".

decade along with other counties as: Arad, Buzău, Covasna, Dâmbovița, Mehedinți, Tulcea and Vrancea.



Source: <http://www.worldwideromania.com/2014/04/30/cel-mai-frumos-sat-din-romania/>

Figure 1. Rimetea Village

The accommodation capacity of the boarding houses and agri-tourism boarding houses, urban and rural, currently existing in our county, has grown continuously since the mid-90s when the first guesthouses were created, reaching in 2016 to 1819 accommodation places. In the period 2010-2016 they have increased the capacity of receiving tourists 2.89 times, which demonstrates that there are many investors interested in tourism and therefore in the specific tourist demand.

According to the market research in tourism field in Alba County, *the most visited tourist destinations in the county* are the micro-regions Alba Iulia, Rimetea, Arieșeni – Cîmpeni, Valea Frumoasei and *the most attractive tourism resources* are: Alba Iulia city with the fortress Alba Carolina, the Apuseni mountains area with Arieșeni and Albac resorts, Rimetea village, Șureanu ski area, and the settlements Scărișoara and Aiud, the karst area from the north of the county, the Heaven's Gate area and Râmeș gorge (Alba County Council and "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia, 2015). So, except the main city of the county, all other resources and tourist destinations are located in rural areas, which print to the tourist activity of the county a rural character. Regarding the number of tourists circulation at the county level, the exact size registered by the tourist demand of the rural tourism and agro tourism in the last period, can be highlighted the following aspects (Table 3):

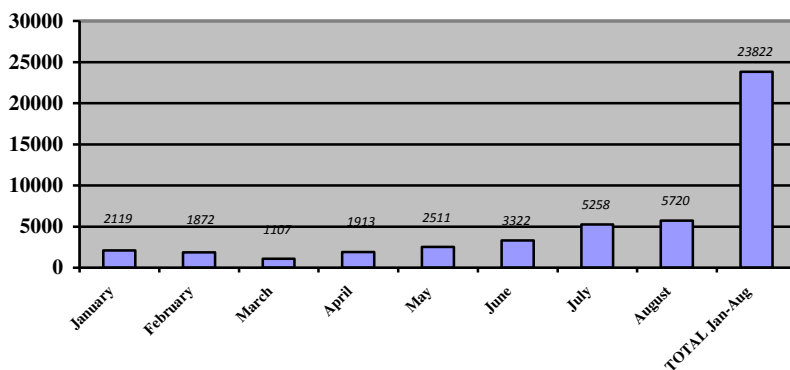
- during 2010-2015 has been recorded an important evolution in the number of arrivals at both the county level (increase of 3.22 times) and at the level of tourist units in rural areas, specifically in the rural and agro tourist pensions, from 8329 arrivals to 31,643 (by 3.80 times); But besides these should be added the arrivals from other types of units as: tourist chalets and villas, as well as school and preschool camps located in rural areas Arieșeni, Roica and Poiana Vadului.
- the largest share in the Romanian and foreign tourist arrivals in Alba County is hold by the hotels followed by rural and agro-tourist boarding houses with an annual average of 22.83%;
- a dynamic analysis of tourist traffic from the rural county environment in the period 2010-2015, namely the number of arrivals in rural boarding houses and agro tourist boarding houses highlights their growth with an annual average of 205.2%.

Table 3. The number of arrivals by types of tourist accommodation at county level during 2010-2015

Type of tourist accommodation unit	The number of arrivals					
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total county from which:	47.838	78.496	95.918	101.869	107.271	154.210
Hotels	23.356	35.461	34.156	43.687	49.568	73.920
<i>The share of total arrivals in hotels reported to county's total</i>	49%	45%	36%	43%	46%	48%
Hostels	5.142	3.319	4.412	201	321	2.569
Motels	504	1.266	4.635	6.040	4.499	8.523
Tourist villa	2.535	4.474	4.677	5.080	4.445	4.624
Tourist chalets	2.135	3.106	3.812	4.505	1.844	2.710
Campings	-	173	205	295	350	483
School and preschool camps	2.762	2.722	2.812	2.048	1.668	1.337
Urban boarding houses	3.075	10.382	13.843	15.780	18.355	28.392
Rural boarding houses and agro boarding houses	8.329	17.593	27.366	24.233	26.217	31.643
<i>The arrivals percentage in rural guesthouses and agritourism boarding houses reported in the county</i>	17%	22%	29%	24%	24%	21%
<i>Dynamic indicators for arrivals in rural and agritourism boarding hoses</i>	100%	211%	329%	291%	315%	380%

Source: Author's contribution based on the data collected from INSSE, <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/>

Partial statistics for the year 2016, namely for the first 8 months demonstrates maintain the growth trend of the number of arrivals in boarding houses located in rural areas (figure 2).



Source: author's contribution based on the statistic data from press releases of the Alba Regional Statistics Department (January-August 2016)

Figure 2. Number of rural tourist arrivals in rural boarding houses in Alba County during January-August 2016

The number of nights spent by tourists in the establishments of tourists' reception from the county (with minimum 10 seats bed) recorded in 2015 was 312 762, of which those recorded in tourist boarding houses located in rural areas represented 76 117, the majority (88%) of these being achieved at the expense of Romanian tourists and only 22% were generated by the movement of foreign tourists. Viewed in a regional context this indicator, it can be said that in August last year (2016), as well as in the counties of Brasov, Harghita, the accommodation in guest houses in the countryside was the second option after hotel stay for the tourists that chose Alba as a holiday destination.

The average length of stay in tourist reception units with functions of tourist accommodation type - rural boarding houses in 2015 was 2.41 days, almost half a day over the county average of 2.03 and very close to the national average (2.37 days).

According to the Alba County's tourism market study, conducted by "1 December 1918" University from Alba Iulia, for Alba County Council and regarding *the purpose of stay in Alba County*, more than half of the tourists (63.84%) chose Alba as a destination for rest, recreation and relaxation. Also, a significant percentage have the tourists who

practice mountain tourism, rural tourism and agro-tourism and other forms of tourism such as: visiting relatives and friends, religion and pilgrimage (figure 2).

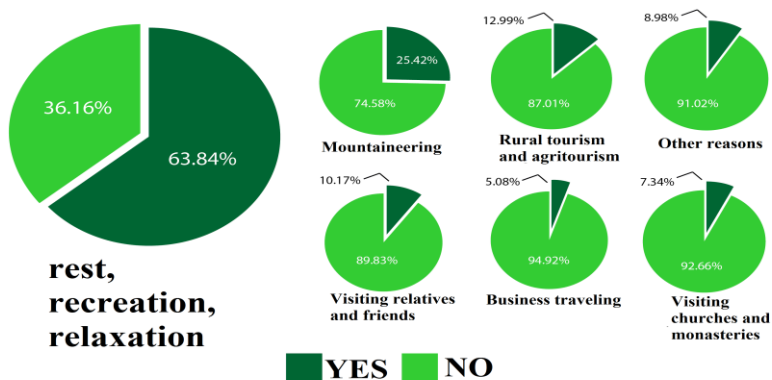
Table 4. Overnight stays of tourists in the establishments of tourists' reception with functions of tourist accommodation in the Central Development Region in the month of August 2016

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Types of tourist accommodation	Central Development Region						
	Total	Alba	Braşov	Covasna	Harghita	Mureş	Sibiu
TOTAL, from which:	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
-hotels	57,3	40,7	56,9	81,7	46,9	61,0	51,0
-motels	2,3	2,5	2,6	0,2	0,5	3,3	2,9
-tourist villas	4,1	4,2	4,6	5,0	1,8	4,0	4,0
-tourist chalets	2,3	4,1	2,1	0,6	3,5	0,4	4,8
-boarding houses	14,2	15,2	14,4	3,9	18,9	15,3	15,4
- agritourism boarding houses	13,2	27,8	15,4	4,7	17,6	6,0	13,9

Source: Alba Department of Statistics, Press Release no. 61 / 10.27.2016

The purpose of stay



Source: Alba County Council, "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia, Departamentul de Ştiinţe Economice şi Gestiunea Afacerilor, Studiul de piaţă în domeniul turismului în judeţul Alba, 2015.

Figure 2. Purpose of stay in Alba County

5. Conclusions

A holiday in Alba County will tell you more about the authentic Romanian culture and history that has made us unique. It is a destination full of charm and tranquility, enjoying beautiful landscapes and other elements of the natural or anthropogenic environment concentrated on a relatively small territory, rarely meet at European or international level.

Through the definition given to "tourist destination" as "any territorial administrative unit (country, region within a country, city, village, resort or other complex) whose economy is dependent of the significant increase in revenue from tourists," we cannot say that Alba overall, is a tourist destination, with the amendment that rural areas benefiting from an important and attractive tourist heritage, the specific infrastructure and tourist movement are tourist micro-destinations. If all stakeholders involved in tourism activity become more aware of the importance and the role that is played by sector in the economy of the county and take the necessary measures for the development and diversification of tourism currently practiced, including rural tourism and agri-tourism, certainly Alba will become a rural tourist destination.

Precisely because of the increasing importance lately, of the organization and promotion of tourist destinations internationally, we must insist on Alba to become an authentic rural tourist destination where tourists can spend memorable tourism experiences.

The main lines of action to develop and promote rural Alba County as a rural tourist destination, it refers to:

- the optimal arrangement in terms of tourism planning and rural heritage components, particularly natural, especially since the county comprises 20 Natura 2000 sites, which do not have a proper recognition; more specifically it is about improving access ways, separation of areas for tourist traffic, development or redevelopment of certain trails, appropriate signage etc. (e.g., searching Detunatele, tourists might wander as access roads are not properly equipped)
- the integrated tourism micro-destination organization and arrangement, as Tara Moșilor, Sebeș Valley, Wine Country, etc. to provide more specific tourism products and to become engines of the rural county tourism development;
- the training of human resources involved in the rural tourism and agri-tourism, because without real professionals because it is difficult to provide quality tourism services;
- the animation of tourist information and promotion centers, which, unfortunately, at present, are only building created with EU funding without adequate skilled employees and tourist information;

- the development and diversification of tourist services offered by the receiving tourists units from the area, eighter guesthouses or agritourism boarding houses, villas, cottages or secondaries homes included in the tourist circuit;
- the development and commercialization of themed holidays to revitalize or to highlight better than village life;
- the investment opportunities in the rural environment of Alba County must pursue and capitalize the various aspects, including potential growth, priority on the tourism potential. Thus, it would capitalize on a higher level the touristic heritage, the local products, being able to expand the brand "Made in Alba" also to the tourism sector;
- the serious involvement of local authorities in tourism activity particularly where it is not clearly outlined.

Also, Alba county should have a rural tourist infrastructure more varied and better distributed from the territorial point of view, one to be able to support the development of the tourism products, specific for the rural area - more rural boarding houses, private farms, touristic accommodation locations created in old mills (one example may be given is - the old mill from Rimetea owned by the Ecology and Mountain Tourism Club - Albamont), the diversification of establishments providing leisure – entertainment services, and increasing their comfort level from inferior to medium.

To this subject is added the permanent correlation of tourism demand and supply, considering the conditions that on the tourism market is great competition between tourist destinations to attract as many tourists, aspect important for the intermediaries in the tourism market, namely the tourism agencies, who should be the ones more concerned on the developing, selling and promotion of tourism products representative for Alba county and attraction of tourists to this aspect of the offer.

The rural environment of Alba County has two primary treasures, recognized over time and preserved until today, namely the nature and the culture. As long as the authentic Romanian spirit and its eternity originate in the village, and Alba County is predominantly rural, there is no doubt that the rural tourism and agro-tourism could become a path of capitalization and the engine of the tourism activity development in Alba County.

Consequently, the answer to the question "Is or is not a rural tourist destination Alba county?" is "Yes, Alba is a developing rural tourist destination".

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