

The Role of Rural Tourism in the Economic Diversification of Rural Space in Romania

J. Benedek, St. Dezsi

1. Introduction

The rural space in Romania concentrates about 48% percent of the total population and is characterised by the predominance of subsistence oriented agriculture, low level of incomes and a bad provision of infrastructure and services. Under this circumstances it becomes obviously that the rural development strategies in Romania will focus on the economic diversification. One of the possibilities is offered by rural tourism, which represents a new activity, developed in the new political and economical framework after 1989. This paper presents the main results of a field inquiry on the rural tourism in Romania. The inquiry was made by applying the questionnaire technique directly, through operators, during the months of July and August 2001. We should underline that the same instrument of research was applied in the year 2000 within a project financed by ANSTI. Then we inquired 195 households of 15 settlements, lying in geographical regions characterised by the functional and territorial clustering of a number of tourist settlements, a premise for the genesis of touristic micro regions. The reiteration of the inquiry in the year 2001 represented an immense progress both methodologically and cognitively. For the first time in the Romanian geographical research, the possibility of a longitudinal analysis by the inquiry method was created.

The questionnaire and the evaluation of the field inquiry was based on the analysis of the following issues (a total of 84 variables):

- A) To emphasize the features of the households which practice the rural tourism (the number of persons in the household, the number of active persons in the household, the gender, the age, the education, the profession and the social mobility of the person who practice the rural tourism, the presence of the telephone, car);
- B) The motivation for practicing the rural tourism form the perspective of the implied actors;
- C) The way in which the households attract the tourists, the services they provide (the foreseen improvements), the number of beds, the prices they ask;
- D) The problem of seasons and the intensity of tourist traffic;
- E) The income made out of tourism;
- F) The character (internal or international) of tourism and the source areas of tourists;
- G) The degree of satisfaction/non satisfaction, the reasons for the latter and the intention to go on or to abandon rural tourism.

2. The basic features of the rural households that practice the rural tourism

Similarly as in the situation underlined in the 2000 analysis, the households of only one person continue to have a minimum weight. The households comprised of 2 up to 4 persons have the biggest percentage (86,2%). This situation can be explained by the complexity of the activities of rural tourism (including various activities like accommodation, meals, other services); all these are difficult to provide by the households made by one person.

Even if the great majority of the active members of the family are engaged in other diverse activities (their basic profession covering quite a large spectrum), they are actively involved in rural tourism, allocating a great deal of spare time. Thus, they bring an important contribution to the entirety, diversity and optimisation of the services provided to the tourists, by diverse time combinations and weights of the activities.

Supporting the above-mentioned statements is the relatively high weight of the active persons of the households implied in the practice of rural tourism. The class of households with 1 or 2 active persons has a weight of 70,8% of the total number of households.

On the other hand, there is still a high number of households without active persons, which are implied in rural tourism, although the percentage of the category grouping the pensioners, housewives and the unemployed has marked a slightly increasing trend: + 1,0% compared to the year 2000. A series of causes determine this situation:

- the increasing assent of this form of tourism in the rural environment, generally speaking;
- the increasing number of inactive people, as a consequence of the massive dismissals of the last 10 years, and respectively, as a consequence of the reduction of the retirement age (a part of this category of people, having an extra spare time, reoriented themselves towards this economic branch). These persons are inactive statistically, but they practice this type of activity as a secondary occupation, so it has no relationship with their position on the real working market.

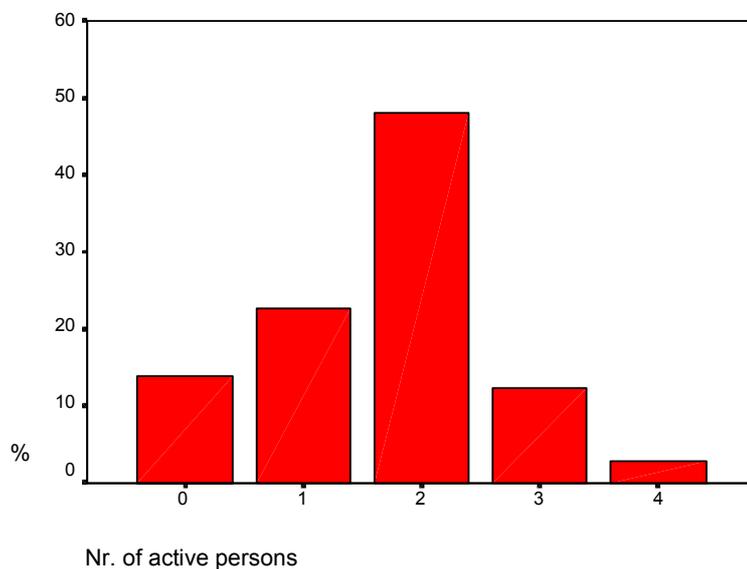


Fig. 1. The number of active people of the inquired households

Concerning the basic occupation of the persons who are implied in the practice of rural tourism, the situation that existed at the level of the year 2000 revealed a very high cumulated weight of a group of persons with relatively heterogeneous social status (intellectuals, people with secondary studies, but also retired qualified workers, housewives, all these having a 78% of the total number of questioned persons). A year after, it comes out that the same level is maintained (77,5%) regarding the cumulative

weight of these persons, mentioning an enlargement of the number of occupations the persons implied in the rural tourism phenomenon have. Thus, new occupations have appeared in comparison with those entered in the last year “hierarchy”, such as manager in tourism, or people whose main profession is the provision of tourist services. The weight of some categories recorded a series of changes and even overthrows of the hierarchy: the intellectuals registered an obvious decrease in the analysed period, from 29,7% to only 21,7%, while the pensioners recorded an increase from 21,1% to 26,8%. The differences, positive or negative, are not so significant concerning the other categories.

Obviously, the explanation for the continuously high importance of the category of “intellectuals” (grouping such professions like doctor, priest, teacher etc.) is due to the advantage offered by a higher cultural capital (in comparison to other social classes) and their easier adaptation to the rigours imposed by the competition on this specific market. More than that, their advantage is determined by the knowledge of one or more foreign languages of international relevance, a favourable premise generally capitalized to attract higher income from tourism. The possibilities to communicate with the foreign tourists facilitated, even in the first years after December 1989, the establishment of collaboration relations with a series of Western European settlements (especially in France and Belgium), which continue today. They allow, further on, an easier contact with people from foreign countries, including their attraction and transformation from “occasional customers” into faithful clients of the rural tourism product. Generally speaking, in this purpose, one can remark a higher number of foreign tourists in the households administrated by people belonging to the class of intellectuals.

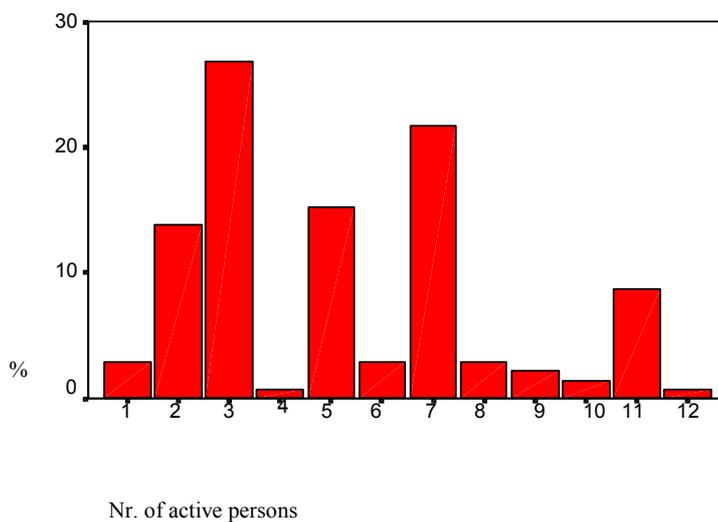


Fig. 2. The basic occupation of the people involved in rural tourism. 1. no answer; 2. retired; 3. housewife; 4. unemployed; 5. unqualified labourer; 6. qualified labourer; 7. employer; 8. intellectual; 9. technical expert; 10. civil servant.

The high percentage (which have increased in comparison with the last year with 6.7% and 0.7% respectively) of the other two social classes represented in the top of the basic occupations of the people involved in the rural tourism phenomenon,

the retired (26.8%) and the housewives (13.8%), has a double cause. On the one hand stands the fact that they may use most of their spare time in activities related to rural tourism and implicitly there is a higher efficiency of their organisation. Secondly, they have a clear perspective of completing their family budget or having a supplementary income due to the rural tourism practice, as long as these two above mentioned social classes are recognized as occupying a low position regarding their real average income. In the same context, it comes out that, within a year, many social classes involved in this activity have abruptly diminished their numbers, even to extinction. For instance, the farmers have totally disappeared, the weight of the technical experts diminished from 5.1% to 2.9%, the unemployed decreased from 2.9% to 0.7%, while the unqualified labourers from 2.9% to 0.7%. Hypothetically speaking, one can assert that most of these have passed into the new class of people employed in tourism. This category represents 8.7% of the inquired persons, emphasising that this activity becomes, step by step, an important occupation in the rural environment. This completes, having a weight ascribed on an increasing trajectory, the entire range of occupations of the rural population, succeeding in successfully supply and offer a viable alternative to the unemployed and half-paid segment of the population, quite numerous in the rural space, following the massive restructurations of most of the industrial branches in the last ten years.

The analysis of the educational level of the people offering tourist services (hosts) in the rural area reveals the presence of a very high cumulated weight (95.7%) for the social class in possession of a medium and high cultural capital, that is, graduates of secondary schools or University (much above the Romanian rural space average, generally ... the national level average). This fact confirms the higher impact and receptivity among these people, concerning their involvement in rural tourism, to which one can add a more realistic approach and perception and a faster adaptation to the economic mechanisms which function in the rural tourism activity in the new conditions of the tourist market (free initiative, the character of competition between the bidders etc.). As a consequence, these people effectively engaged in the competition for attracting and winning numerous and faithful customers (both in the country and, especially, abroad). They were supported by an easier access to the facilities that were laid at the disposal of the implied persons through the diverse programmes initiated and unfolded in the period 1994-1997 in order to stimulate and develop the rural tourism in Romania. These categories implicitly obtained higher profits in comparison with the lower educational level categories.

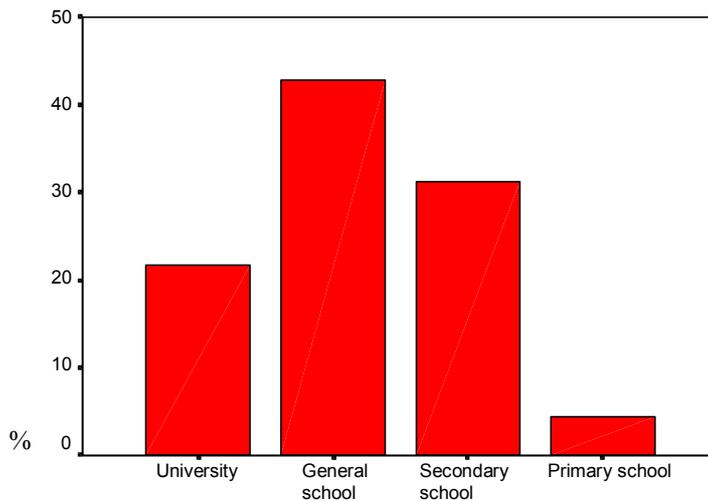


Fig. 3. The educational level of the people involved in rural tourism

In this context, the initiatives and links created with similar organisations from Romania and abroad, and also the motivated impulse of the tourist bidders for their formation and education, will offer another chance to a category of population which is to become professional in this area.

The necessary conditions for a fast spread of the information and people movement, which are essential for the organisation and efficient integration of the households in the tourist circuit, are assured according to the results of the poll in the case of a great majority of the households implied in this activity. Thus, **the households' degree of endowment** with telephone, increasing from the last year, reaches relative weights over 90% (93,5% in comparison to 87%, both values placing these households way over the national average in the rural space). Also, the weight of the car owners among the actors implied in the tourist supply reaches remarkable values (66,4%, 2,4% more than the recorded value during the 2000 inquiry). This fact reflects, on the one hand, the attainment of a certain degree of welfare, which allows the acquirement of such a product, and, on the other hand, the fact that the car is absolutely necessary for dynamic people, always on the run, obliged to move fast from one place to another in order to make this activity more efficient.

3. The motivation for practicing rural tourism

Together with the satisfaction of recreational and cultural needs, the aim of any tourist act has a clear and well-defined economic component, whose efficiency is quantified in strict financial terms: the belief that rural tourism can contribute to the completion of the incomes and, on medium term, even to capital accumulation. These facts prevailed in the employers' option to engage in this kind of activity. As expected, the great majority (84%) of the inquired persons stated exactly this type of reasons as a main motivation for practicing rural tourism, even if the weight of the people whose motivation was related to financial estimations decreased by more than 10 points in comparison to the previous poll. The other categories, whose frequency is not at all a negligible one, yet having different weights, include people having other motivations added to the above mentioned one, such as: contacting other people –

47,5% mentioned this reason, the pleasure to take part in this activity – 22,3%, or the marketing of the settlement – 8%.

Thus, on the whole, it can be stated that rural tourism selectively stimulates the local population in order to diversify the occupations by new activities, requested by the tourist demand, which is also in a continuous process of differentiation and “searches”. This form of tourism welcomes a more and more important segment of people, for whom leisure and recreation in the rural environment may offer various possibilities for spending their spare time.

4. The role of tourist networks

The emancipation of the households under the trusteeship of tourist networks, a tendency revealed by the 2000 inquiry, continued also in 2001. If the tourist network (ANTREC or OVR) was considered important in attracting the tourists (generally combined with other factors) in 77% of the cases in 2000, a year later it comes out that the majority of the households (67%) have already a relatively stable network of tourists. This points out the increasing importance of the information given by former tourists in attracting new tourists. The attraction of the tourists through the medium of tourist networks remains important (59% of the cases), but it diminished quite a lot. The use of the personal network of acquaintances comes next (39%), and then, having a lower weight, the variant of marketing (29%). In fact, comparing the data from the figures below, the importance of the households’ relational capital in attracting the tourists is clearly emphasized. This is based, in many cases, on the experience accumulated in the last years and on the circle of tourists who appealed to the tourist services supplied by the rural tourist pensions. Thus, 43,5% of the total number of households attract more than 50% of the tourists accommodated through personal relations, while only 22,4% of the total number of the households attract more than half of the tourists accommodated through formal tourist networks.

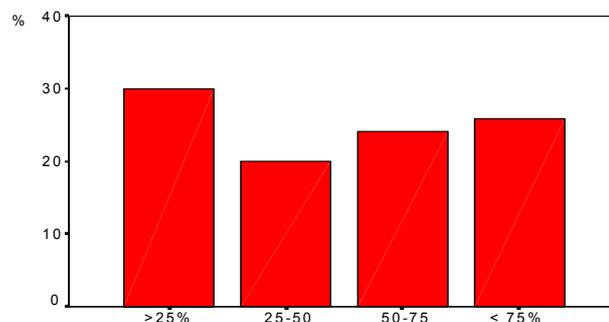


Fig. 4. The weight of the tourists attracted through personal relations

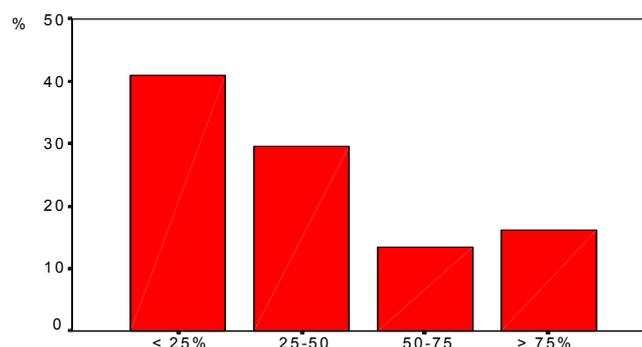


Fig. 5. The weight of the tourists attracted through tourist networks (OVR, ANTREC)

The much diminished role of the two major tourist networks (ANTREC and OVR) in attracting the tourists is also illustrated by the source of information about the possibility of practicing rural tourism (fig. 5). As it comes out from the figure below, the non-profit organisations (ONG) have the most important role in providing information about tourism (43%), but this has much diminished in comparison to the year 2000, when the weight was 55%. On the contrary, the personal relations increased their importance (32% compared to 20% in 2000), while the state institutions come only third, having more or less the same weight of about 11% in both years. One should notice that a new category for providing the information, represented by tourist agencies (9%), appears in 2001. They were unimportant in the previous year, which can mean the establishment of a new labour division between the rural households practicing rural tourism and the tourist agencies generally located in big urban centres emitting tourist flows, for the profit of both parts, and to the prejudice of the relations between the households and classical tourist networks represented by ANTREC and OVR, on the one hand, and a more professional rural tourism, by commissioning the task of marketing organisation to more competent actors, on the other hand. One can also add the increased degree of independence of local structures, especially from already classical tourist networks such as ANTREC and OVR. No significant correlation has been found between the tourist network and the origin of the foreign tourists. Thus, a small dominance of the classical tourist networks in attracting the tourists can be noticed only in the case of tourists from Switzerland, Great Britain and Hungary, while personal relations are dominant in the case of tourists coming from Austria and Germany, many of these probably having “roots” in Romania. Concerning the internal tourists, only those from Craiova and Iași appeal mostly to the networks’ services, the proportion between the network and personal relations being very balanced in the case of Cluj and Timișoara. Personal relations prevail in other areas of origin.

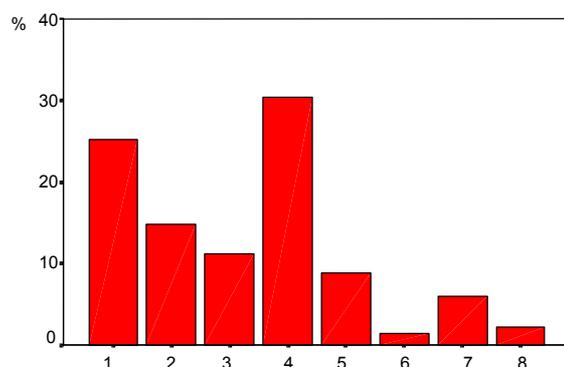


Fig. 6. The households' source of tourist information: 1. relatives, acquaintances; 2. mass media; 3. state institutions; 4. ONG; 5. tourist agencies; 6. mass media, state institutions; 7. mass media, ONG; 8. tourists.

The services provided to the tourists are reduced to meal provision in most of the cases. Other services are supplied by a smaller number of providers (32%). Among these, one can notice the organisation of fieldtrips (57% of the total number of households supplying other services), the involvement in activities related to local cultural traditions (11%) and other various leisure activities (11%). The demand for other services is probably reduced because the tourists organise themselves their leisure activities in intensely urbanised areas, having less traditional communities, as in the case of Bran, where the services provided by the host are generally reduced to the provision of meals. Another restrictive factor in the development of more diversified services should be added, that is the generally short duration of stay, a very obvious phenomenon in Sâncraiu and Rimetea, for instance.

But it should be noticed that, compared to the 2000 situation, when almost a third of the households did not foresee any improvement of the services provided, a very small number of such cases (4,5%) was recorded during the 2001 inquiry. The majority of the households have the intention to ensure different kinds of improvements: the overhauling of the house together with the diversification of the leisure possibilities detains the highest weight (54%), followed by those which request a higher capital investment, that is an increase of the accommodation capacity and the building of modern bath chambers (25%). The latter tendency, that of developing rural tourism through investments in the accommodation capacity, was obvious also last year, but had smaller values. It seems that the majority of the rural tourism actors understood, from their experience gained so far, that the investments made in the household and in rural tourism are needed to increase their appeal. As a consequence, the weight of the households having an accommodating capacity of more than 6 places increased from 30% to 44%, which can constitute a factor of tourism development. If the households did not expect an increase of the accommodation demand, they wouldn't invest, probably. In other words, the increase of the number of households having more than 6 places for accommodation can be also interpreted as a sign of the intensification of the tourist circulation and demand.

Regarding the **average accommodation prices** (with half pension, fig.7), several important territorial differentiations are noticed. One can point out: tourist regions with high prices, regions with low prices and regions with average prices. We have delimited three regions or areas with high prices: an extended one in the north of the Eastern Carpathians: Maramureş and Bucovina, all having average accommodation prices of 450000 ROL/day. The region of Bran, with 300000 ROL/day and that of Novaci with 200000 ROL/day are close to the average value. The regions having low accommodation prices are: the Apuseni Mountains, Praid and the northern limit of the central Southern Carpathians (Gura Râului and Râu de Mori).

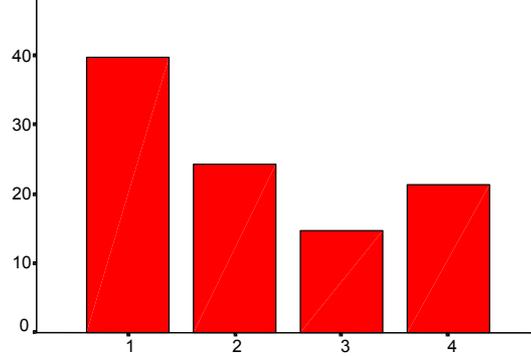


Fig. 7. The average accommodation price practiced by the inquired households. 1 – up to 100000 ROL/day; 2 – between 100000 and 200000 ROL/day; 3 – between 200000 and 300000 ROL/day; 4 – more than 300000 ROL/day.

During the period of the inquiry, the prices were placed between 50000 and 600000 ROL for one night, the average value being 210000 ROL.

5. The intensity and seasonality of tourist flows

The phenomenon of seasonality is quite obvious in the case of rural tourism, too (fig.8). Of course, the households receiving tourists only during the peak periods of tourist demand (in summer or winter) are in the most unfavourable situation. The tourist potential and superstructure of the region is decisive in this direction. It seems very interesting that none of the inquired persons perceived seasonality as a limitative factor of tourist circulation, although all the specific handbooks indicate seasonality as the main limitation factor of tourist circulation.

The intensity of tourist flows is analysed through the number of stays overnight. A clear result is that the reduced flow of tourists is one of the major problems of rural tourism, 29% of the households having 1 or 2 stays overnight per week during the summer season. Anyway, the positive effects of an expanding rural tourism are visible in comparison to the last year (when 43,1% of the households recorded only 1 or 2 stays overnight per week during the summer season). Even more spectacular was the drop of the weight of the households recording only 1 or 2 stays overnight per month in the summer season (from 11,3% to 2,1%). It comes out that about a third of the households cannot manage to attract a sufficient number of tourists, who may ensure higher incomes, but this is a much reduced weight in comparison to the last year. It should be pointed out that about a quarter of the households have more than 3 or 4 stays overnight per day in the summer season, which constitutes a favourable premise, generally capitalised, in order to register higher incomes from tourism.

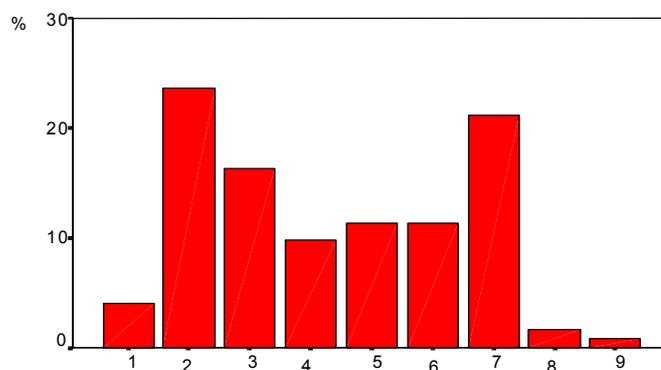


Fig. 8. The number of seasonal stays overnight declared by the inquired households. 1 one/day; 2 two/day; 3 three/day; 4 four/day; 5 more than four/day; 6 one/week; 7 two/week; 8 one/month; 9 two/month.

The problem of seasonality, shortly mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, is added to it. This is present in the case of more than half of the households. Thus, we have recorded a high weight of “missing value” cases within this variable, that is the percent of no answers, which reaches 45%. That is why the analysis of the valid field of answers should be looked at warily, but we can consider the non-answers as negative answers in this case, so it can be practically stated that more than half of the households have no tourists accommodated outside the tourist seasons. Some of them succeed in attracting tourists apart from the two main seasons because of the special tourist potential and superstructure of the area. The majority of those who accommodate tourists outside the main seasons register a reduced tourist flow (1 or 2 stays overnight per month for 8% of the total), but there is a nucleus of households (reaching 22% of the total) that have a higher frequency (1 or 2 stays overnight per week). This situation is due to the favourable geographical position of the settlements, and the different degree of development of the tourist superstructure, respectively. The villages lying in mountainous areas with possibilities for practicing winter sports are advantaged (Arieşeni, Vama, the latter being very close to Vatra Dornei, while the former has its own endowments for practicing winter sports). Others are well known for the folk traditions presented during the winter holidays (Maramureş, the Călata area, the Szekler area etc.).

6. Incomes achieved from tourism

At the level of the sample, the average value of the calculated gross incomes was 49 622 000 ROL. We mention that we did not deduct the expenses of the households from the sums, so the incomes represent gross values. The values are distributed between 1 600 000 ROL (the minimal value) and 394 800 000 ROL (the maximum value), which clearly show the presence of important inequalities between the households, sometimes between the tourist areas, regarding the capitalisation of tourist products. On the basis of the field gathered information, we defined the main tourist season as the period from May 15 and September 15 (four months). The income realized by the households was calculated by multiplying the number of stays per day and the accommodation price indicated by each household.

Analysing the six major income categories (fig.9), one can remark the obvious domination of the two categories having the lowest incomes, that is under 15 millions ROL and between 15 and 30 millions ROL, reaching together to 53% of the total number of inquired households. The next two categories (having incomes lying closely to the average value) have together only about 20%.

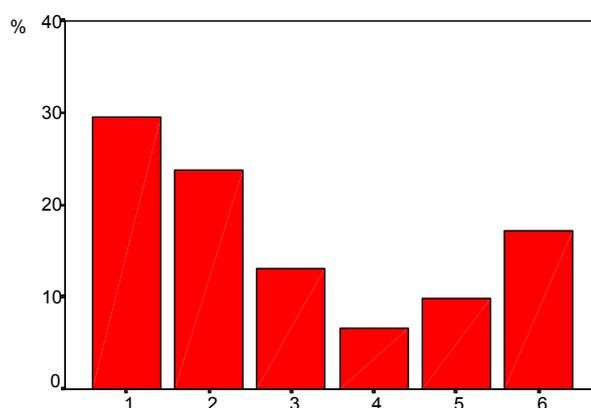


Fig. 9. The gross incomes of the households implied in rural tourism (in August 2001). 1 very low incomes (1 to 15,000,000 ROL); 2 low incomes (15,000,001 to 30,000,000 ROL); 3 average-low incomes (30,000,001 to 45,000,000 ROL); 4 average-high incomes (45,000,000 to 60,000,000 ROL); 5 high incomes (60,000,001 to 100,000,000 ROL); 6 very high incomes (over 100,000,000 ROL).

A special category is formed by the households having high and very high incomes, representing approximately a quarter (27%) of the total number of households. In fact, the differences are not so important if we compare this structure with the one from the previous year. The analysis of the correlation coefficients show significant direct correlations between the incomes and the following items: the tourist season ($r = 0.199$ at a significance level of 0.05), the contribution to the formation of the family budget ($r = 0.263$, and 0.01 respectively), the accommodation practiced prices ($r = 0.404$ and 0.01 respectively), the number of stays overnight ($r = -0.324$ and 0.05 respectively), the number of accommodation places ($r = 0.264$ and 0.05 respectively), a specific way of life ($r = 0.194$ and 0.05 respectively), the number of active people within the household ($r = 0.202$ and 0.05 respectively), the importance of personal relations in attracting the tourists ($r = 0.296$ and 0.01 respectively), the importance of the relations through the network in attracting the tourists ($r = -0.282$ and 0.01 respectively). It comes out from these correlations that a high level of the income from rural tourism is determined by:

- the existence of a secondary maximum of tourist circulation during the winter season;
- the level of the accommodation prices;
- the intensity of the tourist circulation (expressed by the number of overnight stays);
- the accommodation capacity of the rural tourist pensions;
- the level of life of the people from the households, the financial capital necessary for investments being probably of high importance;
- the social and relational capital of the households is also important in attracting the tourists. It is very interesting that the correlation has also a high level of signification in the event of the tourist networks (ANTREC or OVR) playing an important role in attracting the tourists, mentioning that the correlation is negative in this case: the higher the weight of the relations through the network, the lower the income level recorded in the households, due to the fact that the networks keep for themselves a share of the tourist returns.

It must be emphasized that no significant correlation could be established between the level of the incomes and their contribution to the formation of the family budget. In fact, we found out that an important weight of the income gained from tourism in the households' budget appears very often in the case of the households having a generally low level of incomes or when there is a reduced intensity of the tourist circulation. Another interesting aspect is that the relationship between the

financial capital of the households and incomes has been emphasized by quantifying the households' ownership of a car. Thus, 95% of those having very high incomes do have a car, while the weights within the other categories vary between 55 and 65%, with the exception of the fourth category, with just 37%, the explanation being related to the small number of individuals forming this category.

We also draw the attention towards some relations proved too by the data from the associative tables below. It is about the tight relationship between the basic occupation and the educational level, on the one hand, and the level of the income, on the other hand. Thus, the categories having high and very high incomes are mostly formed by people likely to be intellectuals as a basic occupation (teachers, engineers, priests etc.) and having a high or secondary educational level (university graduates or at least high school graduates). All these reveal the certain relationship between the level of instruction and the cultural and social capital. The people having a higher cultural capital are likely to have better chances to succeed, generally recording higher incomes. Of course, the contribution of other factors must not be omitted, such as the length of the tourist season, which itself depends on the superstructure and the tourist supply of the region and of each household.

The analysis of **the weight of the incomes proceeding from tourism in the household budget** (fig.10) reveals, in most of the cases, the same aspect: the complementary subordinated character of the tourist activity in the rural space. Thus, 38% of the households declared that tourism contributes with less than a quarter to the household budget, which is much below the last year's proportion (71.4%). Yet, the number of the households with an average, important or high contribution is bigger: especially the second category registered a significant increase, from about 22% in 2000 to about 39% in 2001. No household is 100% specialised in this activity. It is important that about 3.6% of the households realize their incomes almost entirely from tourism-related activities, fact well illustrated by the appearance of a new profession, through self-identification, that did not exist in the year 2000: worker in the field of tourism. As a consequence, we can state, within this chapter too, that the year 2001 represented an important leap in the improvement of the situation of the rural households implied in rural tourism. Though the structure of the incomes did not change much, yet their contribution to the formation of the budget increased.

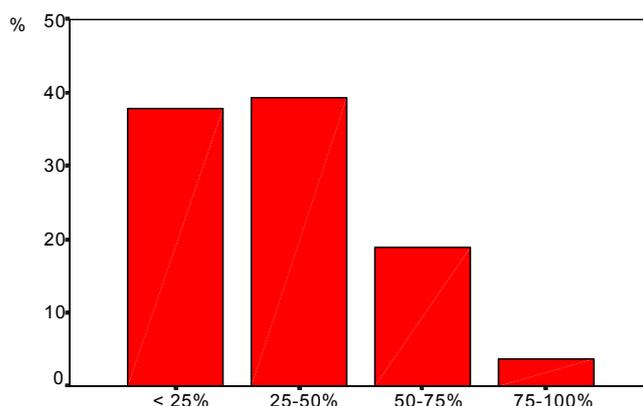


Fig. 10. The participation of rural tourism to the formation of the inquired households' budget

7. The evaluation of the level of living

Regarding the evaluation of their own level of living by the actors implied in the tourist supply, the results indicate the maintenance of the last year's tendency, that of appreciating their own level of living as higher than the average one at the level of the entire country. There should be mentioned that one can notice on an intensity scale from 1 to 10 a certain bias of the frequencies of the inquired people's options towards more positive appreciations, apart from the dominance of the average values (generally between 5 and 8). For instance, the weight of the value 8 on the above-mentioned scale raised by 7.6%, to the prejudice of the level 7, whose evolution recorded a slight decrease of -5.5%, and of the level 9, where the negative tendency was a less abrupt one, -4%. It also comes out the extremely small weight of the extreme values (1,2 and 10 respectively), the majority of the inquired actors' options pointing to the average values, between the levels 5 and 8, as in the year 2000 (their cumulated weight amounts to no less than 76.7%).

In the event of the estimations made by the same actors regarding the level of living at the scale of the entire country, a small tendency of homogenisation of the given "grades" can be noticed. Most of the appreciations pointed to the levels between 5 and 7, the differences between the weights corresponding to various average-low levels, which were prevailing the previous year, being obviously nearer than in 2000.

Unlike the 2000 inquiry, when no correlation was established between this attitude and the beneficial effects of rural tourism, measured by the items of income or budget contribution, a certain direct, though weak, correlation ($r = 0.19$) has been recorded in 2001, having an acceptable level of significance ($p = 0.05$). As a consequence, we can state that the sudden change of rural tourism for the better during the year 2001 is confirmed by this correlation. The increase of the tourism income contributions to the household budget is also perceptible in the evaluation of their own level of living. Our finding during the 2000 inquiry remains valid: this attitude may be the effect of social desirability or, as the social psychologists define it, the defence of the ego through the attribution mechanism. Every rural household tried to find different management strategies in moments of crisis, rural tourism being one of them.

8. The source of the tourists

Regarding the source of the tourists, the predominance of the mixed variant of attracting the tourists (72%), that is both from the country and abroad. The households look for the maximisation of their profits by enlarging their area of attraction through this strategy. In some cases, the internal tourists are advantaged (protected) because of the lower prices of tourist services, in comparison to the prices settled for foreign tourists. More or less the same number of households is specialised in international tourists (11%) and internal tourists (17%) respectively. One should also notice that the areas inhabited by Hungarian population are specialised in international tourism, mainly tourists coming from Hungary. More than that, on the whole, Hungary occupies the second position concerning the weight of the households receiving tourists from this country (35.5%, approximately the same value like the last year, but then was only third in the hierarchy of the countries). France detains the first place (38%), and below Hungary in the hierarchy are: the Benelux countries (especially Belgium) and Germany having the same value (23%), Italy (13.8%), USA and Canada (11.6%), Austria (8%), the Scandinavian countries (4.4%, especially Finland), Great Britain, Switzerland and Japan (all having 4.3%) and Spain (3.6%). A smaller number of foreign tourists proceed from Poland, Ireland, China, Ukraine, Israel etc. In

comparison to the last year, it comes out that the weight of the households receiving tourists from France, the Benelux countries, the Scandinavian countries and Great Britain has decreased, but other countries had a dynamic positive evolution: Italy, Austria, Japan and Spain.

Concerning the internal tourism, the dominant position of the great cities is remarkable. They ensure the vast majority of the demand. Among these, several cities play a major role. The first place is by far occupied by the City of Bucharest (64% of the households receive tourists from this city). The majority of the internal tourists come from the capital city in the Bran area, but also in some neighbouring areas (the Prahova valley and Poiana Braşov) specialised in other types of tourism. Other cities should also be mentioned: Timişoara (21.7%), Constanţa (19.6%), Oradea (16.7%), Cluj-Napoca (15.9%), Arad (10.1%), Iaşi (8.7%), Târgu Mureş (8%), Craiova (7.2%), Satu Mare (5.8%) and Bacău (5.1%), where the majority of the internal tourists come from, being oriented to the most attractive rural areas. The above-mentioned cities are the biggest of the country, but they also have the strongest economic potential and a social stratification favourable for rural tourism (a higher percentage of middle and upper social classes). There were no important changes since 2000, apart from the increase registered in the case of cities like Timişoara, Oradea and Arad and the presence of some cities with quite high weights, such as Târgu Mureş, Craiova, Satu Mare and Bacău, which played an unimportant role the previous year. The appearance of new settlements in the 2001 sample may be explained only in the case of Craiova: 80% of the tourists from Craiova have been accommodated in three settlements: Novaci, the Sarmisegetusa area and Gura Râului. It is still very surprising that some great cities are missing from the list: Ploieşti, Buzău, Brăila, Sibiu, Braşov. In some cases there might be the practice of other types of tourism (week-end tourism or in their own holiday chalets), the absence of tradition regarding the practice of this type of tourism or the orientation towards other settlements, not included in our sample.

9. The degree of satisfaction with the results of rural tourism

A considerable increase in the number of households expressing their wish to continue the rural tourism activity has been recorded (99.3%) in comparison to the previous year (“only” 92% in 2000). This fact is reflected in the larger palette of the foreseen improvements at the level of tourism supply, both regarding the increase of the accommodation capacity and the animation and provided services, generally. This proves an increase of the implied people’s faith in the possibilities offered by rural tourism, especially concerning the gain of important incomes on short and medium term, obviously based on the general good results obtained during the year under way. The analysis of the frequency of the answers regarding **the degree of satisfaction people have doing this type of activity** comes to support this statement. This analysis practically reveals the inversion of the ratio between the weight of the content households (57.2% in 2001 compared to 38.3% in the previous year) and partially content households (34.1% in 2001 compared to 50.3% in 2000) during one year.

Fig. 11. The degree of satisfaction with the results of rural tourism

Within the same context, the weight of the households expressing their discontent towards the results of practicing rural tourism decrease from 11.4% to just 8.7% within the same referential period. The most encountered factors found at the basis of it are: the little implication of the local and central administration to support

rural tourism, the weak general and tourist superstructure, small profit compared to high investment, small number of tourists (especially outside the main season), the policy imposed by the tourist networks, the absence of financial and logistic support necessary to improve the tourist supply, insufficient marketing and promotion and inadequate graphics etc.

10. Conclusions

The analysis made in this paper, like in others previously published (Studia UBB, series Geographia 1/2002 and 2/2002), reveals several general conclusions, which can be grouped as such:

- **The incomes** gained from rural tourism are generally low, their small contribution in the formation of the household budget confirming the hypothesis that rural tourism, at the level of tourist supply, is a subordinate activity having a role of completing the incomes gained in the rural space traditional economic branches: agriculture, forestry, mining, to which tertiary activities are added. Yet we cannot ignore the good results of some households, which succeed in gaining important incomes from rural tourism. These are, generally speaking, households that have a high cultural capital, adequate superstructure, a favourable position within the existing networks or constant relations with the foreign tourists. Yet, the number of households having an average or high weight of the incomes proceeding from tourism in the household budget increased in 2001 compared to the previous year. It should be also underlined that about 3.6% of the households realize almost entirely their incomes from rural tourism-related activities, an absolute novelty compared to the year 2000.
- Rural tourism is a selective activity both spatially and socially, and we believe it will stay like that on a medium term. Concerning spatial selectivity, several regions, such as Bran, Maramureş and Bucovina, succeeded in occupying an important segment of the Romanian tourist market. The most important flows of tourists within rural tourism are recorded there. These regions accumulated an important relational and economic capital. They benefit from a positive tourist image, which make us believe that their dominant position will be maintained in the future. Other regions having an important tourist circulation follow, such as the upper basin of the Arieş river, the area around Sibiu, Sâncraiu from the Cluj county and several settlements of the Harghita county. The other regions or settlements having a high tourist potential remain in a peripheral position on the tourist market because of the weak developed territorial superstructure, the absence or weak development of the tourist arrangements, or due to the reduced marketing activity. Concerning the social selectivity of the rural tourism extension, the inquired people enumerated a number of causes of this selective development: aging; the children during their holidays and the relatives coming to visit occupy the summer spare time; the dwellings do not reach the minimum standards; the people do not have spare time because of the outdoors agricultural labour; they are not content with the practiced prices; they do not have enough knowledge about this activity and do not know how to behave with the tourists, being unaware of their pretensions.
- Another major conclusion is that rural tourism is not a local one, although it should have this fundamental feature. Thus, the tourist networks played an important role in attracting the foreign tourists in the last decade of

the 20th century. They also contribute to the distribution process of the tourists at the level of the households, most of the discontents being related to this and the high taxes imposed by these networks. One can remark in 2001 an increased tendency of separation from these organisations together with the appearance of local tourist associations and individual employers who benefit from the experience and the capital accumulated during this period of time. The majority of the households (67%) have a stable network of tourists in 2001, giving up their collaboration with the important tourist organisations (ANTREC, OVR).

- **New professions** appeared in comparison with the ones from the previous year hierarchy, like manager in tourism, or people whose main occupation is the provision of tourist services. This is the expression of the positive evolution and tendency in the rural space and the individualisation process of the tourist supply, described above.
- The intensity of tourist flows reveals so far low values, about a third of the households recording a low number of tourists during the summer season (1 or 2 overnight stays per week). This is one of the major impediments in the development of this type of tourism. There should be emphasized though the existence of a certain category of households (a quarter of the total number) which register an important tourist circulation (more than 3 or 4 overnight stays during the summer season), which constitutes a favourable premise generally capitalised to get higher incomes from the tourist activity.
- Romanian rural tourism must also face a harsh competition, represented by:
 - the tourism developed in the neighbouring countries, having a well developed superstructure, Hungary especially;
 - the internal urban centres as accommodation points, which can also organise tourist routes;
 - other types of tourism of the rural space, especially that represented by residential second homes (holiday chalets).

In the end we can state that, so far, the Romanian natural and human tourist potential is far from being capitalised by the type of tourism known as rural tourism, on the basis of the major conclusions inferred from the empirical analysis of the Romanian rural tourism. This cannot generate a spectacular economic revitalisation of the rural on the short term, excepting small geographical areas and a relatively small number of households, which puts under question the myths formulated by a number of authors related to the role of rural tourism in the development of this process.