

AGRITOURISM-CAPITALIZATION POSSIBILITY OF RURAL COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Ramona Ciolac – Tabita Adamov – Gabriela Popescu – Diana Marin – Karoly Bodnar

Abstract

Agritourism activity supports rural development because it capitalizes agricultural resources from rural areas and communities and it also uses crafts, traditions, and other resources of the local community, thus ensuring long-term sustainable development.

Agritourism can come as a salvation for the sustainable development of localities with specific resources, but also as a salvation in terms of passing on to future generations valuable resources, largely lost in many rural areas. In the maintenance of the tourist vocation of these localities, the inhabitants of these areas and the tourists must participate equally, the desired goal being the increase of tourists' interest in these areas, the maintenance of the specific lifestyle, and why not the profitability of the conservation of these resources for those involved. Where it is possible to ensure the conservation and valorization of these resources through tourism, villages have "a new chance at life", turning into permanent tourist locations.

The sustainability of agritourism, or the "health" of the rural environment, derives from the fact that this activity cannot be dissociated from the economic, social, and cultural life of the community. Between tourism and the environment, there is a close relationship based on: environmental elements considered tourist attractions; tourist facilities and infrastructure; and the impacts generated by tourism development. The link between agritourism and the sustainability of rural communities derives from the definition of this activity.

Keywords: agritourism, resources, local community, capitalization

JEL: Q18

Introduction

The current trend, specific to many rural areas, implies a strong decline from an economic point of view, the disappearance of the interest in involvement in agricultural activities, or starting some businesses in the rural environment. At the same time, however, there has been a change in habits/consumption patterns and consumer behavior in the sense of registering a strong demand for "natural, organic, bio" in all areas, and in this context, agritourism can be a way of diversifying both the local economy (Adamov 2006, Karabati 2009, Bujdosó, 2009, 2016, Khademi-Vidra, 2014, Adamov, 2016), as well as an opportunity to capitalize on local values.

Indeed, this growth could not be a 100% sustainable one, the reason why the focus should be on the authenticity of the traditional products which represent the identity of the popular localities, and also on strong partnerships to ensure mixing/merging cultural activities, gastronomy, agriculture, or simply put, ensuring a "short chain" aimed at supporting rural communities (Bakos–Khademi-Vidra, 2019). It is certain that in the rural areas where the emphasis was placed on the valorization of authentic local resources through agritourism activities, the development was a sustainable one (Comisia Europeana 2009, RNDR 2014, Koncz et al, 2018). So, the benefits of the agritourism activity development (Praptiwi R.A., 2021) on the quality-of-life standards

can be sustainable one, in so many ways, the rural areas where this form of capitalization of local resources will be used can become the areas where the elements of local sustainable development can lay the foundations for the future sustainable local economy. (Călina A., 2017, and Ciolac, 2019) There will be interest and why not the opportunity to improve the infrastructure, to bring to light the spiritual life of rural localities. (Beeton 1999, Iorio 2010, Nistoreanu 1999).

Table 1. Agri-tourism-capitalization possibility of rural community resources

Capitalization possibility of rural community resources	
Why agritourism?	Quietness
	Quality and healthy food
	Take part in some particular agricultural activities
	Preservation/revival of local crafts
	Knowing and learning the specificities of rural areas and rural life

Source: authors' processing

Material and method

The main objective of this scientific research is to highlight that agritourism activity can be taken into consideration as a future possibility of capitalization on the resources of local communities. Thus the main objectives pursued are: establishing what is the connection between agritourism activity and rural community and establishing the resources and local products specific to the rural way of life that can be exploited through agritourism activities.

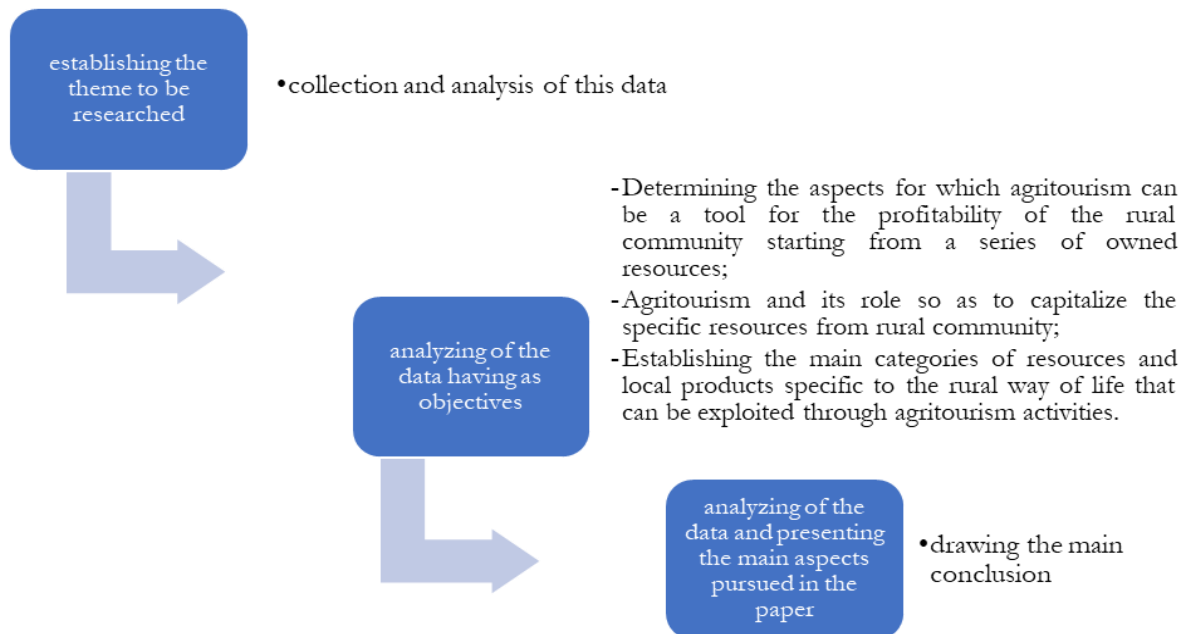


Figure 1. The steps and objectives of the current research

Source: own creation

The study method used was qualitative, using several research stages: a collection of the data, analysis of this data, interpretation, and drawing of the main conclusions. The first step of the research was establishing the theme to be researched, followed by a collection of the data using some studies and research from the field, having as objectives:

Determining the aspects for which agritourism can be a tool for the profitability of the rural community starting from a series of owned resources.

Agritourism and its role to capitalize the specific resources from a rural community.

Establishing the main categories of resources and local products specific to the rural way of life that can be exploited through agritourism activities.

The next step was analyzing the data and presenting the main aspects pursued in the paper based on the aspects found were drawn the main conclusion, exposed in the paper.

Results

Why agritourism? and which are its connections with the rural community?

Starting from the aspects that generate this awareness and concern about the significance of rural areas can be argued the need to support its sustainable development. This necessity depends on the way of finding smart ways of development, to constitute a revolution related to how to integrate and correlate several structures/domains from rural areas that support innovation in integrated non-agricultural activities enabling the capitalization of the territory from several points of view.

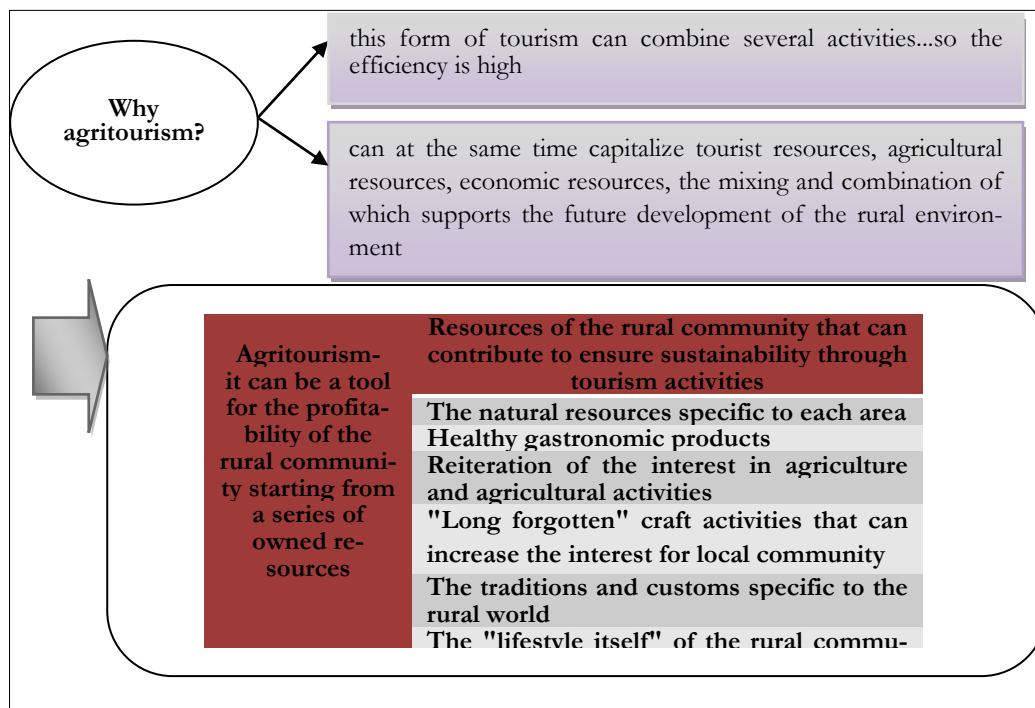


Figure 2. Agritourism-means of making the community profitable taking into consideration the resources owned

Source: own creation

Which is the role of agritourism activity? This type of tourism activity supports rural development because it capitalizes agricultural resources from rural areas and communities and it also uses crafts, traditions, and other resources of the local community, thus ensuring long-term sustainable development.

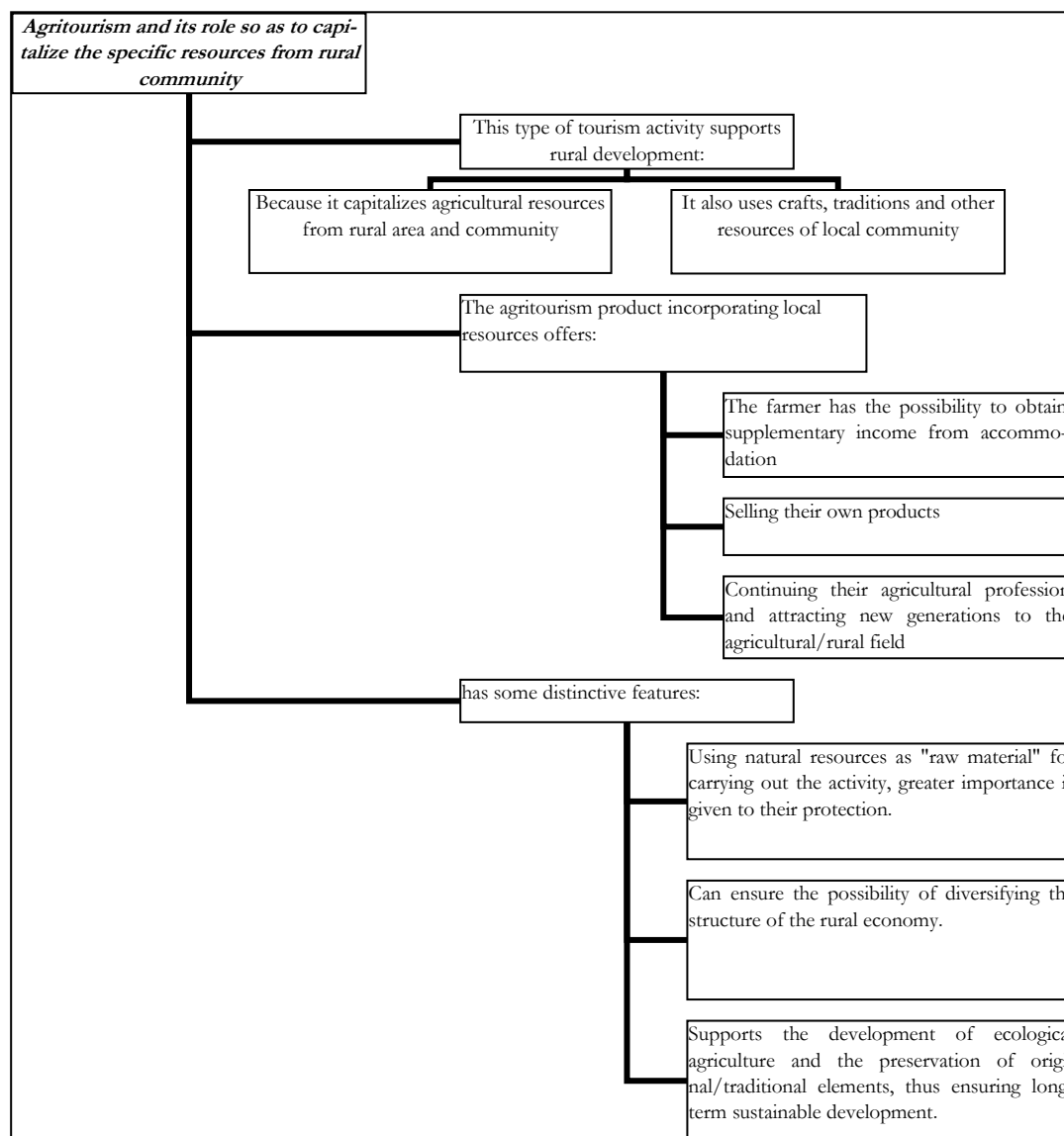


Figure 3. Agritourism and its influence in capitalizing on the resources particular to a rural community

Source: processing from various sources (Bausch, 1995, Tinsley, 2001, Ciolac, 2009)

Resources and local products specific to the rural way of life that can be exploited through agritourism activities

Before identifying traditional, local resources and products that can and should be exploited through agritourism, we must point out that a study carried out by the EU indicated three types of rural tourism products, through which rural resources and traditional products could be exploited:

- *Classic, general products*, for example, the human need to consume image, require a strong image of the area and therefore massive investments in communications are necessary (the customer chooses a destination rather than activity). This is a relatively simple product; it can be used and it is of particular interest to the organizers of tourist circuits.

- *Specialized products* require real local potential (not all areas, for example, are equally suitable for excursions or equestrian tourism); this type of product requires reaching a certain type of clientele and a sophisticated market strategy, which facilitates direct marketing through specialized agents.

- *Current consumer products* are aimed at individual customers, they are sold on related markets, through direct sales.

The main local resources, owned by many Romanian villages, which in time can and should be exploited through agritourism activities, start from the specific rural way of life, the inclusion of these elements in the tourist product being in the future a "must have" it is wanted to acquire a place among genuine/original tourism products from international tourism market:

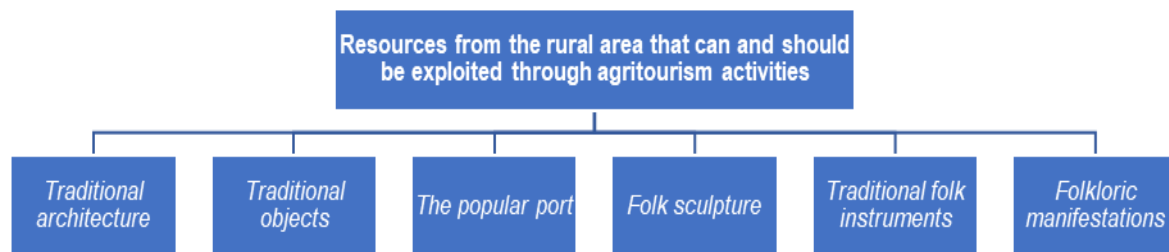


Figure 4. Resources specific to the rural way of life that can be exploited through agritourism activities

Source: own creation

- *Rural architecture with a traditional character*, formed over time, comes with a particular specificity for each area, starting from the construction materials used, style, or specific ornaments, generated by local, geographical, and economic conditions, in fact, "the story of the place", in the most beautiful way possible. Even if this local architecture is simplistic, rather rustic, it has been shown that, within the limit of keeping a minimal functionality, it attracts the tourist towards this "return to the origins" towards minimalism and at the same time it is the "teacher" of the evolution and preservation over time of some functional rural styles on the verge of extinction. In the current conditions, of the return to simplicity, and originality, rural architecture can represent one of the original elements that must be incorporated into tourist products.

- *Objects with traditional specificity*, derive from the occupations found in each rural area: agricultural, forestry, and pastoral. Even if many of the rural households/farms no longer use these traditional objects, they are part of the elements that "tell the story of the place" for the tourist. Keeping them and why not capitalizing on them through the organization of handicraft activities for tourists can be a way to draw attention in a new, original way to the local tourist product and why not encourage farmers, and locals to rethink the usefulness of these objects old and yet "fashionable".

Another resource specific to the rural environment is *the popular port*. It is another "possible visiting card" of the rural environment, different from one area to another, influenced by occupations, and local crafts, of an incomparable value and hierarchical position from a social point of view. If we bring the Romanian countryside into a discussion, we find that there are still many

areas where the popular port is at the rank of honor, that for some areas the popular port was the element that took them out of anonymity and placed them in the rank of "original, novel tourism destinations" at an international level. Therefore, the identification of ways to place the folk costume in the tourist product, to transmit to the tourist original information about life in the rural environment through the prism of the folk costume for example, and the craft (on the verge of extinction) of its manufacture are future support needs of the exploitation of the resources of the rural environment through tourism.

- *Folk sculpture*, another resource that can tell a lot about "country life", is also sought by tourists on an exemplary and commercial level. The manufacturing method of local gates, specific furniture, porch pillars, etc., aroused curiosity among tourists, but also the desire to purchase these products when going home, this beneficial aspect stimulated local craftsmen to continue producing such products, but more to pass on these crafts to the next generations, who find interest and the possibility of financial support when returning to the countryside. So the inclusion of this local resource in the tourism product will bring originality to it, but also sustainability for the rural environment in the future.

Another local resource, specific to the rural environment, is made up of *traditional folk instruments*. The interest lovers and connoisseurs of nice to learn to play some of the archaic instruments, like the buhai, bucium, and whistle, but also to follow and know some aspects related to their manufacturing process. The inclusion of these resources in the tourism product can meet requirements related to the pleasant pastime of free time, learning a melodic line, or acquiring knowledge vis-à-vis the authenticity of the process of obtaining the instrument. The organization of musical evenings, with rural specifics, can draw attention to the simplicity and yet the beauty and originality of the rural environment.

Currently, is not allocated necessary importance to the capitalization of these local events through tourism, but *folklore events* would be another locally specific resource, through which information about the "rural way of life" can be transmitted to the tourist, but at the same time the possibility of contact directly and establishing relations between the local population and tourists. Among the tourist events which can be of interest are included: the traditional customs and traditions that are held on fixed calendar dates, annual, weekly, or various other occasions.

Implications and recommendations

The main objective of organizing the agritourism activity is the rational use of the three important resources, namely: land, capital, and labor. Regardless of size, these resources are found in every agritourism unit. The role of the local community in supporting the development of the agritourism field, and with it the integrated sustainable development at the local level should be embodied in a series of actions:

- the ability to initiate and subsequently support collaboration in the form of partnership between all entities interested in the tourism field and those in related fields, the final goal is to ensure future development in a coordinated manner.

- the creation of long-term strategies aimed at directing local contributions from the turnover of various businesses towards various local improvement works (the infrastructure that ensures access, water supply, heating, telecommunications, technical and building facilities, the network commercial, the provision of leisure facilities) and later capitalizing on them to support the tourist activity.

- the stimulation of local initiative and the co-interest of future rural entrepreneurs towards carrying out activities in the network if possible, starting from the creation of the tourist/agritourism structure, continuing with the integration of local agricultural product producers and with the orientation towards the integration of craft and ethno-folkloric resources in the future created product.

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