

**BANAT UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES
AND VETERINARY MEDICINE TIMISOARA**

FACULTY OF FARM MANAGEMENT

BRĂTULESCU MARIN

DOCTORAL THESIS

**THESIS ADVISOR:
PROFESSOR, IOAN PETROMAN, Ph.D.**

**TIMIȘOARA
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**CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF
THE MANAGEMENT OF AGRITOURISTIC FARMS
IN THE CARAS-SEVERIN COUNTY**

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ABSTRACT

THE GOAL of the present doctoral thesis entitled “CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE MANAGEMENT OF AGRITOURISTIC FARMS IN THE CARAS-SEVERIN COUNTY” was to suggest, on the ground of positive and negative aspects established as a result of the field studies, an integrated model of implementation of **agritourism** in the Caras-Severin County, a county in which, despite the extraordinary **tourism potential**, in general, and of the extraordinary **agritourism potential**, in particular, tourism and agritourism resources have not been fully valorised.

THE WORKING HYPOTHESIS we started from was that neither at governmental nor at private initiative levels they have got aware of the value of tourism and agritourism heritage of the Caras-Severin County or of the proper valorising solutions. The causes of the failure such as identified over the research whose results are presented in the present doctoral thesis:

- improper understanding of key-concepts related to the practice of agritourism (agritourism, cultural tourism, educational tourism, rural area);
- destination planning (globalisation, economic growth);
- destination planning resources (*key-words of the notion **agritourism** – culture and local community; *planning instruments; data sources; key-institutions* playing a decisive role in tourism, in general, and in agritourism, in particular).*

Agritourism, a sub-category of tourism referring to the **practice of tourism in the rural area together with agricultural activities**, was defined as we show in *Chapter 1, General View on Agritourism*, from every important perspective of human existence – anthropological, artistic, cultural, ecological, economic, ethical, financial, industrial, informational, historical, judicial, linguistic, political, sociological, technical, etc. – evolving together with the evolution of the concept tourism, a concept approached from as many perspectives, to which we could also add the behaviourist, educational, philosophical, logistic, psychological, semiotic, etc.

It is important to note that, studying the literature related to **tourism management**, we could draw the conclusion that the difference they usually make between two important types of tourism – **urban tourism** and **rural tourism** – tend to vanish, subordinating, thus, to a wider concept – **agritourism**.

At the same time, we could see that the most serious problems **agritourism** has to face both worldwide and in Romania (and, implicitly, in the Caras-Severin County) are **destination planning** (*what and how to choose*) – because of **globalisation** – and **destination planning**

resources (*what information to rely on and how to communicate new information*), starting from basic elements – *key-words of agritourism* (culture and local community), *planning instruments*, *data sources* and *key-institutions* playing decisive roles in tourism, in general, and in agritourism, in particular (elements that can help us answer the questions *What information can we rely on?* and *How to communicate new information?*)

THE INFORMATION collected in the present doctoral thesis can be grouped as follows: first, our own tourist experience; then, the usual ways local administration or tour-operators promote their destinations; finally, a rich bibliography in the field of tourism and agritourism – books, articles, official documents, sites, etc.

THE LITERATURE in the field of **agritourism** is not very rich in Romania: the studies carried out so far are either conceptual or general ones, or merely regional market studies. In the present doctoral thesis, we supply both comparative data concerning agritourism in the Caras-Severin County and data analyses – that could be used by decision-makers in the tourism industry as a basis for analyses of development trends of agritourism in Romania.

Together with literature such as shown in the **Bibliography** at the end of the present doctoral thesis (a bibliography that speaks itself about the state of research in agritourism worldwide and in Romania), we have also used our own modest contribution in the field: a few scientific papers in which we deal with agritourism aspects (case studies).

Starting from these considerations and on the ground of the literature we studied, the present doctoral thesis, we structured it in eight chapters, as follows:

CHAPTER 1. GENERAL VIEW ON AGRITOURISM, covers the basic concepts and issues related to **agritourism definitions**, very thorny issues not only because both the concept **tourism** and the concept **agritourism** have very wide meanings, but also because both – concepts are changing: the proof – the large number of synonyms: *agrarian tourism*, *agricultural tourism*, *farm tourism*, *village tourism*, *countryside tourism*, and *rural tourism*. The tens of definitions of agritourism speak themselves about the difficulty of defining this concept in a satisfactory manner. The difficulty of defining this concept is also generated by the extraordinary dynamism of this type of tourism which changes in a very alert way, dictated by both the economic factor and by the changing tourism demand. Though it seems almost impossible to define the concept agritourism, we present, in the first part of **Chapter 1**, several definitions as a starting point in defining **agritourism** such as practiced in the world, in Europe, in Romania, and in the Caras-

Severin County. From the perspective of the present doctoral thesis, we have adopted the definition of agritourism that implies, besides **spending one's free time in the rural area, involving the tourist in agricultural activities**. We structured and analysed **agritourism products in the Caras-Severin County** in relation to these components of **agritourism**, and we present them in the last three chapters of the present doctoral thesis. The *typology of activities* circumscribed to the concept **agritourism** is not less thorny because, given the wide variety of the definitions given to agritourism, it is normal that the typology of agritourism activities also vary from one type to another – it is true, within more restricted limits. Finally, we underline, once more, the **importance of agritourism** for the recovery of agriculture.

CHAPTER 2. AGRITOURISM AT INTERNATIONAL, EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL LEVELS, presents broadly the state of **agritourism** worldwide, in Europe and in Romania underlining the way in which the three levels intertwine and condition each other. We underline the lack of direct involvement of the UNESCO in the development of agritourism, a body that involves in the development of the rural area and in identifying **determining factors** – demographical, economic, political, and technological – one should take into account during the period 2001-2020, wherever they need to develop the tourism industry or to gain new niches on the tourism market, among which **agritourism**. It is interesting to note that it was only in 2008 that UNESCO re-established the role of **cultural tourism**, whose basic component is multiculturalism – a very important component from the perspective of practicing agritourism in the Caras-Severin County, a county with enviable agritourism potential. To do so, UNESCO initiated 12 cultural tourism projects – very strongly marked by the ecological vision – which we present in detail in *Chapter 2* – projects whose great absent is Romania. Among European initiatives in the field of agritourism we need to mention here the rare initiatives (also related to the development of the rural area) of the following European bodies: the **European Parliament**, the **Council of Europe**, the **European Commission**, and the **Council of the European Union**. Ranged on a better place from the point of view of its heritage compared to its neighbouring countries, Romania does not seem to valorise enough the huge tourism potential it possesses as we show in *Chapter 2*. The same goes for the Caras-Severin County. To also note the still shy presence of the ANTREC on the agritourism market in Romania.

CHAPTER 3. SOCIAL IMPORTANCE OF AGRITOURISM, presents the theoretical ground for studying agritourism (with deep roots in geography, sociology, art sociology), analysing both the factors that model **agritourism consumption** and the **impact of agritourism**

on agriculture. We insist, in this chapter, on several important topics: **the rural as a tourism object**, the **agritourism consumer**, **types of expenses generated by agritourism**, **agritourism resources** (*production of agritourism and globalization and/or localization and regionalization in agritourism*), **impact of agritourism on the rural area**, and **impact of the rural area on agritourism**. The most important of all seems to be the **consumer of agritourism** who is different from other types of consumer because of the following parameters: *demographical* (size of the family of the agritourism consumer, occupation, religion, sex, age, and income of the agritourism consumer); *social* (social class, personality and style of life of the agritourism consumer); *behavioural* (attitude, knowledge, way of using agritourism services, and type of answer to tourism services of the agritourism consumer); *personal* and *tourism-related* (free time and tourism profile – here come the following elements: *rural attractions* – almost not existing, at present, in Romania, because of the very strong links between the town dweller and the rural, the urban dweller having just left the rural to live in town; *sources of information* – very few and inaccurate and still lacking professionalism; the *moment the decision of travelling was made* – rather lacking relevance since the Romanians do not practice this type of tourism; the *way travelling tickets were booked* – rather lacking relevance since the Romanians do not practice this type of tourism; the *means of transportation* – rather lacking relevance since the Romanians do not practice this type of tourism; the *type of accommodation and food of the agritourism consumer* (inclined rather to find in the rural environment the urban comfort and not the authenticity of the rural way of life the Western tourists are after). A new and more and more important concept is that of **agritourism resources**, seen as the opportunity of turning into a tourism object an item that did not have this value initially – an extremely important concept given the fact that both tourism demand and offer, in general, and agritourism demand and offer, in particular, are extremely dynamic. In this context, **globalization and/or localization and regionalization in cultural tourism** are key-elements in agritourism management. *Chapter 3* ends with an interesting debate of the relationship *agritourism → rural environment – rural environment → agritourism* from the perspective of the **agritourism management**.

CHAPTER 4. ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF AGRITOURISM, focuses on the issues of financing rural infrastructure, in general, and agricultural production, in particular, underlining the role of the state, of the market, and of the voluntary sectors in agritourism. The most important aspect in this chapter is the analysis of the economic impact of agritourism that has become a true industry (from the point of view income and jobs) the last decades in Western Europe and North America. Two are the main issues we treat in this chapter: *inputs* and *outputs*

in agritourism. As far as **inputs in agritourism** is concerned, we analyse, one by one, possible sources of financing in agritourism (*financing from the government* – which not always proved to be the best solution, *financing from local and regional administrations* – whose share should overrun the governmental one, *financing by the commercial sector* – the overwhelming trend in most European countries, *financing by the voluntary sector* – an excellent idea but with no effect in Romania so far, *financing from gambling and lotteries* – a solution with good results in countries with tourism traditions, *turning cultural institutions into commercial cultural institutions* – a risky solution from an artistic point of view, and *privatising cultural institutions* – a dignified western example impossible to follow in Romania at least short and medium term) – all this from the perspective of **associating the activities specific to cultural tourism with activities specific to agritourism.** Likewise, **outputs in agritourism** can be approached from two points of view: that of the *models of cultural expenses* and of *economic impact (analysis, applications, types* – primary and secondary effects, *effects of multiplication* – spending and re-spending the sum initially paid by a tourist for a tourism product or service, *measuring, types of approach* – volume of tourisms, volume of expenses, volume of multipliers, *stages of the study of economic impact, goals of the study of economic impact, and costs of the study of economic impact in agritourism)* – with its two main aspects: **incomes from agritourism** and **developing new jobs.** We also discuss the new type of tourism named “tourism for the poor” whose financial recipe has overrun any expectation, and the last models of analysis of the economic impact in tourism – **General Calculable Balance** and **Satellite Tourism Accounting.**

CHAPTER 5. POLICIES IN AGRITOURISM, analyses the issue of developing coherent policies in agritourism at European, national, regional, county, and local levels, and the way in which the geographical element determines these policies. At **European level,** the policies in agritourism are developed by at least nine bodies: the International Association for the Promotion of Danube River Tourism, the European Commission for Tourism, the Council of Europe, the World Council for Travel and Tourism, the Central-European Initiative, the World Tourism Organisation, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the European Union, and the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation. At **national level,** the policies in agritourism are included and detailed in the **Master Plan for the Development of National Tourism 2007-2026,** while the **National Authority for Tourism** are responsible for the implementation of governmental policies and strategies in hospitality and tourism. To also note, from the point of view of our doctoral thesis, the **National Association of Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism** – an association whose role in agritourism

development is still far from what it should be: an argument is that of faulty inventory of all agritourism pensions in Romania. At **regional level**, tourist activity is controlled in the eight **regions of development** by **Regional Development Agencies** that operate on the ground of legal basis in regional development as foundations. At **local level**, the decision concerning agritourism activities belongs to **County Councils** and **Local Councils** that are **policy-establishing authorities**, while mayors have executive functions. To note, here, the particular attention from local administrative authorities for development perspectives in the agritourism of the Caras-Severin County, materialised in good programmes that also extend over the county and country borders.

CHAPTER 6. CASE STUDY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRITOURISM IN THE CARAŞ-SEVERIN COUNTY, presents a critical analysis of agritourism such as practiced at present in the county, detailing both positive and negative aspects and analysing the causes that generate the latter. To note, at the level of the Caras-Severin County, the existence of three strategic development programmes of the rural and of tourism to be followed by other counties in Romania: *Tourism Strategic Development Programme in the Area of the Timiș, Caraș-Severin and Mehedinți counties*, *Tourism Integrated Development Strategy in the Caraș-Severin – Vrșac – Banatul de Sud Area*, and *Rural Development Strategy in the Caraș-Severin County – the LEADER IV AXIS*. The analysis of the cultural tourism profile (the only solution of implementing agritourism in the county) of the Caras-Severin County is done at three levels: county, locality, and already existing agritouristic pensions (Anina, Belobreșca, Borlova, Dognecea, Gărbăna, Poiana Mărului and Sasca Română) and of the main cultural components of the county. Agreeing with M. C. Hall, who considers that there are three **cultural components** (*high culture*, *pop culture*, and *multiculturalism*) divisible, in their turn, into sub-components that allow the establishment of a typology of **cultural tourism products**, we analyse **high culture** with everything that means **heritage** – *art galleries* (very few and improperly promoted), museums (numerous, but not always open and not always well managed: Băile Herculane, Bănia, Caransebeș, Gornea, Ilidia, Jupa, Mehadica, Ocna de Fier, Oravița, and Reșița), *historical monuments* that are unexpectedly numerous but almost unknown to the great public (Anina, Dognecea, Gărbăna, and Sasca Română) and **performing arts** (very well represented, but still lacking notoriety); then comes **folklore and pop culture** with everything that means **styles of life** – *festivals* (numerous, but lacking quality), *gastronomy* (well represented but not enough popularised), *social environments* (a sociological experience in Banat and, implicitly, in the Caras-Severin County), *crafts* (traditional ones are disappearing in the county), *traditions* (still

present, particularly in the rural area) and **mass culture** – *vernacular architecture* (an excellent fusion of styles), *folk art* (the ethnographic areas Valea Almăjului, Valea Bârzavei, Valea Bistrei, Vașea Carașului, Valea Cernei, Valea Dunării, and Valea Timișului), *shopping* (lacking attractiveness in the urban area but with potential in the rural one), *entertainment* (very varied, but not always of good taste), *film* (with a single cinema hall in the county), *mass media* (tributary to social trends) and *sports* (dominated by fishing and hunting); at last, **multiculturalism** with everything related to **language** (a rare linguistic cocktail of 9 languages) and **ethnic symbols** – *religious events* (among which the *saint patron's day* is the star), *ethnic festivals* (mainly German, Hungarian, and Serbian) and *community festivals* (whose master is the *community's sons day*).

CHAPTER 7. DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING NEW AGRITOURISM ACTIVITIES IN THE CARAȘ-SEVERIN COUNTY, contains, apart from nine suggestions of trips that also cover agritourism activities, an analysis of the real agritourism potential of the Caras-Severin County. Among the factors preventing optimal practice of agritourism in the Caras-Severin County, the most serious seems to be the **disastrous state of infrastructure** of Romania, in general, and of the Caras-Severin County, in particular. Of the cultural components of the Caras-Severin County, we speak only about the ones in which we are confident they could really do something to broaden the range of agritourism offers or to recover agritourism activities in the Caras-Severin County. Thus, as far as **high culture** is concerned, we suggest activities related to **cultural heritage**: *museums* (for which we make suggestions meant to reconsider museum institutions and to reform them with a view to education), *historical sites* (for which we suggest possible strategies of valorisation), and *natural sites* (with suggestions concerning the visit of nature reserves and protected areas in the Caras-Severin County with protected plant and animal species). We also refer to rural architecture (in the localities in which agritourism has started to develop). As for the **folklore and pop culture**, we refer to life styles – particularly to *gastronomy*, a field in which we suggest activities meant to promote both *Banat cuisine* (an excellent example of *fusion cooking*, unidentified and not valorised so far, unfortunately), and ethnic groups cuisine in the county, and also *social environments* (referring to tourists' trend to spend their free time in the rural area) and to *traditions* (for which we suggest a route map including 45 localities of ethnographic value in the Caras-Severin County) and to **mass culture** – particularly sports and their main directions – *fishing* and *hunting*. Of all the aspects illustrating **multiculturalism** in Banat and Caras-Severin County, we retained ethnic symbols and their two aspects – **religious events** (for which we suggest cultural-religious route maps to the monasteries and hermitages in the county) and *community festivals*. In **Chapter 1**, we **present programmes**

for the visiting of agritourism farms by schoolchildren, and the management of this type of agritourism activities on two types of agritourism farms – *vegetal agritourism farm* and *animal agritourism farm*. We also suggest **education agritourism trip for schoolchildren of all ages and for undergraduates in biology**, **education agritourism trip for schoolchildren of all ages and for undergraduates in history**, **education agritourism trip for students of technical schools and for undergraduates of technical universities**, **tour of the main forestry and lumber centres for students of forestry schools and for undergraduates of forestry colleges**, **tour of the monasteries and hermitages in the Caraş-Severin County for parishioners of all ages**, **agritourism farm overnight stay for hunting and fishing amateurs**, **food tourism for active adults and pensioners**, and **tourism shopping village**.

The *Bibliography* contains both works from international literature and works from Romanian literature – books, articles, official documents, and sites.

The *Annexes* contain a few suggestions of teaching materials that could be used within educational trips in the rural area.