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RESOURCES AND CHALLENGES OF RURAL TOURISM IN THE BANAT REGION OF ROMANIA

MUNTEAN THEODOR^{*1}, BRISCAN LARISA-ELENA¹, IANCU TIBERIU¹, ADAMOV TABITA-CORENLIA¹

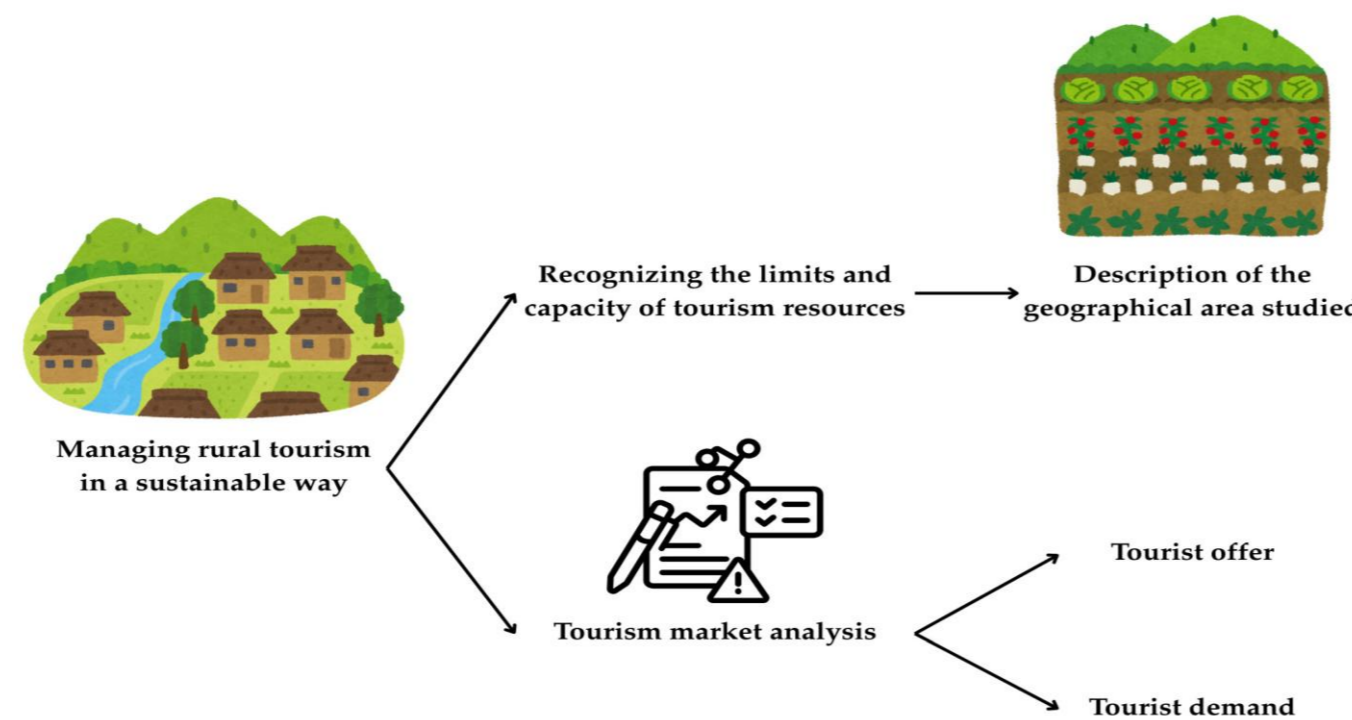
University of Life Sciences "King Mihai I" from Timisoara, Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism

* Corresponding author: theodor.muntean@usvt.ro

Abstract: The Banat region, strategically located in the western part of the country, plays an important role in tourism and stands out through a diverse tourism offer, based on ethno-folkloric traditions, cultural diversity, and valuable natural resources. The study analyzes the natural, cultural-historical, and socio-economic resources of these areas, highlighting the role of rural tourism in stimulating local economies, preserving traditional practices, and promoting sustainable development. The aim of this article is to analyze the potential of rural tourism in the Banat region by emphasizing its natural, cultural-historical, and socio-economic resources, as well as possible directions for sustainable development. The study seeks to identify the contribution of rural tourism to the revitalization of local economies and the preservation of heritage, in the context of existing challenges such as deficient infrastructure, lack of qualified personnel, and insufficient promotion. The research methodology integrates qualitative analysis of field data, statistical indicators, and regional development documents. The findings show that interest in rural tourism is continuously growing, but several challenges persist, such as infrastructure deficiencies, shortage of specialized personnel, and limited promotion in certain areas.

• Introduction

Tourism has become a complex phenomenon with significant economic, social, cultural, and educational implications, emerging as one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy. In western Romania (Caraș-Severin, Timiș, Arad, and Hunedoara), tourism is rapidly developing due to rich natural, cultural, and historical resources. In Caraș-Severin, effective management of agritourism farms is crucial for rural tourism, while in Arad, tourist flow is increasing as a result of local development strategies. In Țara Hațegului, sustainable resource use is promoted, and active and adventure tourism is gaining ground in Caraș-Severin. Cultural tourism in Banat capitalizes on the region's multicultural heritage, and adapting tourism products to customer preferences is seen as essential. Development strategies emphasize integrating tourism into the regional economy, with rural tourism and agritourism in the Almăj Depression acting as key drivers for socio-economic recovery. Overall, tourism in western Romania is a strategic sector that relies on local resource valorization, effective management, and sustainable promotion. In this context, rural tourism and agritourism play a vital role in the sustainable development of the Banat region, supporting local economic revitalization, heritage preservation, and environmental protection.



• Material and method

The study used descriptive and interpretative analyses focusing on seven localities in Caraș-Severin County. Data were gathered from documents, statistics, and field observations. The analysis focused on tourism resources, infrastructure, tourism types, development projects, and management strategies.

Conclusions

Rural tourism and agritourism in Banat have become key tools for sustainable development, supporting economic diversification, reducing migration, and reinforcing local identity. They create jobs, boost local economies, and offer alternatives to traditional agriculture. Despite growth, challenges like poor infrastructure and lack of skilled personnel remain. Strategic planning and expert support are essential, alongside projects such as revitalizing the Oravița–Anina railway and developing agritourism in Văliug. Environmental restoration and community education are also priorities. With coordinated efforts, Caraș-Severin and the wider western region of Romania can become national examples of sustainable rural tourism.

• Results and discussions

The mountainous area of Caraș-Severin County has strong tourism potential due to its rich natural and cultural heritage. Tourist numbers are rising in resorts like Semenice, Poiana Mărului, and Văliug, supported by the growth of agritourism, which boosts the rural economy. Arad and Țara Hațegului also show positive trends through product diversification and sustainable practices. Active, adventure, and cultural tourism are expanding, attracting diverse visitors. Although the average stay is high, low accommodation use suggests the need for better promotion. Projects like the Banatia Tourism School and Oravița–Anina railway enhance the offer. A SWOT analysis confirms strong resources and community involvement, but highlights infrastructure and staffing issues. Strategic planning is essential for sustainable tourism in Banat.

SWOT Analysis – Rural Tourism in Banat (Caraș-Severin)

Strengths

- Exceptional natural resources
- Diverse cultural heritage
- Rising interest in agritourism
- Community engagement
- Regional promotional initiatives

Weaknesses

- Poor infrastructure
- Lack of qualified staff
- Uneven promotion
- Low accommodation usage
- Need for extensive car travel

Opportunities

- Growing demand for ecotourism
- Available EU funding
- Extended tourist seasonpotential
- Unique resources to capitalize
- Local experience to offer

Threats

- Youth migration
- Climate change risks
- Urbanization pressure
- Regional depopulation
- Strategic inconsistency

Category	Key Results
Tourism Growth	↑ interest in rural tourism, tourist flow rising in Arad & Caraș-Severin
Rural Tourism Impact	Economic revitalization, job creation, preservation of traditions
Challenges	Poor infrastructure, lack of qualified staff, low accommodation usage
Opportunities	EU funds, ecotourism demand, longer tourist season
Cultural & Natural Heritage	Rich resources, multicultural identity, local cooperation
Strategic Recommendations	Local investment, better promotion, improved service quality