

Păun Ion OTIMAN*, **Gabriela BOTICI****,
Violeta FLORIAN*, **Cornel IONESCU*****

* *Institute of Agricultural Economics, Romanian Academy, Bucharest*

** *University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Banat, Timișoara*

*** *Institute of Financial and Monetary Research "Victor Slăvescu", NIER, Bucharest*
otiman@acad.ro

STUDY ON THE NATURAL AND ANTHROPIC TOURISM RESOURCES – FACTORS OF SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE AREA HAȚEG–RETEZAT *

ABSTRACT

The rural area from Țara Hațegului – Retezat is one of the richest area in Romania in natural and anthropic tourism supplies, determined by the natural, socio-cultural, economic and historical potential that can be used for tourism purposes. As the tourism potential comprises few economic resources that can be used only "in situ", their inclusion in the economic circuit of values represents the premise of a superior economic process of rural development in the rural area Țara Hațegului–Retezat.

Starting from the great variety of the tourism supply, the specialists in economy and tourism management can find optimum solutions for the development of the rural and agro-tourism services as a sustainable rural development component, while the optimization of the rural tourism services activities can be based on mathematical models and adequate system analyses.

Key words: sustainable rural development, tourism potential, tourism resource, tourism objective, tourism supply, tourism circuits.

JEL Classification: O13, O18, Q01.

1. INTRODUCTION

Romania's rural economy, which consists of the agricultural (agrarian) economy and the non-agricultural economy (food and non-food industry, rural services), is still in a non-convergent economic situation as compared to most EU Member States, both as absolute size (per capita) and by structure. The previous statement is based on the following facts:

- The final agricultural output value in Romania is 2.2 times lower than that in the EU countries (888 €/ha in România; 1944 €/ha in EU);

* Research study under the project "Bio and Geodiversity Conservation as Support to Sustainable Development and Economic and Social Growth in the Area Hațeg–Retezat" (project RO-0023; RO-0056 EEA FM 2009–2010), project leader Acad. Prof. P.I. Otiman, senior researcher I.

- The commercial agricultural output value in Romania is 4 times lower as compared to that obtained by the EU farmers (426 €/ha in Romania as against 1710 €/ha in EU);
- The endowment in assets on the Romanian agricultural holdings is 34 lower than in EU;
- The share of agriculture in rural economy is 4.3 times higher in Romania (60.5% in Romania as opposed to 14.1% in EU), which reveals the strong agrarian character of the Romanian rural economy;
- The share of services in the Romanian rural area in rural economy is only 9.8%, as opposed to 42.2% in EU (i.e. by 4.4 times lower);
- **Agro-tourism in EU accounts for 4.4% of the rural economy (14% of the total value of services), while in Romania agro-tourism represents only 0.1 % (about 1.1% of total services in the rural area).**

Out of the above-mentioned indicators for the research study under the project “*Bio and Geodiversity Conservation as Support to Sustainable Development and Economic and Social Growth in the Area Hațeg-Retezat*”, one indicator stands out, i.e. the extremely low share of rural tourism in Romania’s rural economy, as well as the insignificant contribution of this economic activity to the population’s and rural communities’ incomes. In this respect, in our research studies, we intended to present the tourism supply as potentiality of tourism development, in general, and of rural tourism, in particular, in the 11 communes and 92 villages from Țara Hațegului.

The rural area from Țara Hațegului, as one of the most endowed natural geographic and social-economic areas from Carpații Meridionali, by its specific tourism supply potential, has a large and rich range of natural, historical, socio-cultural and economic resources that can be used for this purpose. As the tourism potential comprises few economic resources that can be used only “in situ”, their inclusion in the economic circuit of values represents not only a superior economic process of its exploitation but also an important factor in the sustainable development of the rural area from Țara Hațegului – Retezat.

The natural tourism resources (the great variety of relief forms and the unequalled beauty of the natural landscape, from the glacier lakes to the high peaks of the Retezat and Țarcului mountains), from the rich biodiversity (flora and fauna) to the unique geodiversity represented by the Dinosaur Geopark from Țara Hațegului, the National Park Retezat and the Scientific Reserve, as “peaks” of the natural resources from this area. We found the most beautiful description of the National Park Retezat in the scientific writings of the Acad. Al. Borza, as a “sacred land for science, a sacred monument, a huge sanctuary of nature” (*A. Bavaru, 2007*).

From the point of view of the anthropic resources, few zones from Romania can be compared to Țara Hațegului. An unencountered density of ancient Dacian remnants (Sarmisegetuza), Roman ancient monuments (Villa rustica), citadels and defense towers (Colț, Nălațvad, Răchitova), churches (Densuș, Sântămăria Orlea), castles and manor houses (Berthelot, Kendeffy) that belonged to the mediaeval civilization, the rural architecture, the ethnography and genuine folklore from Țara Hațegului represent exceptional tourism attractions in the area Țara Hațegului–Retezat.

2. PRESENT STAGE OF RESEARCH

Looking into the specialty scientific literature, we found out a conceptual and methodological “vacuum” in relation to the two main components of tourism: **1) the monitoring and evaluation (quantification) of the complex tourism potential** of rural localities (rural tourism) and, on this basis, **2) the management of supply optimization** (of tourism routes, circuits) in a certain rural area.

We discovered classifications with regard to the tourism potential (supply) typology in the literature, as follows: tourism ethno-folkloric villages, tourism villages of artistic and artisanal creation, tourism spa and landscape villages, tourism fishing or hunting interest villages, vine-fruit tree tourism villages, pastoral tourism villages, tourism sports villages (G. Erdeli, A. Gheorghilaş, 2006) as well as in a paper on the rural area from Țara Hațegului: pastoral agro-tourism villages, fruit-tree tourism villages, agro-tourism villages with mixed character, tourism landscape villages, tourism villages with cultural-historical potential, tourism villages – starting base for mountain climbing, support villages for the dispersion area of the vacation houses, support villages for the transit tourism (mountain, alpine tourism), villages with economic objectives of tourism interest (N. Popa, 1999). N. Popa goes even further, stating the fact that “*the hierarchy of the tourism villages from Țara Hațegului had in view the extent in which the rural communities could get organized so as to put into value the local potential and to generate mostly important tourism flows*”.

The author of the above-mentioned study feels the need to establish a hierarchy of the tourism villages from the area Hațeg depending on “**the local rural tourism potential**” (rural is the term added by us), and to generate the “**tourism flows**”. The author next differentiates the following villages in Țara Hațegului: **villages with precarious tourism infrastructure** (55 sate), **villages with satisfactory infrastructure** (14 villages) and **villages with obvious tourism development perspectives** (10 villages); the classification was based upon two factors, namely: transport infrastructure and habitat quality (the present factors) and the quality of natural resources (supply) and anthropic resources (potential factors).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Methodological conceptualization

Starting from the previously mentioned research study, we find it necessary to make a methodological conceptualization of the monitoring and quantification of the tourism potential of rural settlements (A_i), in different tourism zones (areas) (Z_k), starting from two basic requirements in this field:

- **Sustainable (prioritized) development of the zones and villages** with natural and anthropic potential for **rural tourism and agro-tourism**;
- **Optimization of the rural and agro-tourism management activities** in the rural tourism zones and localities.

From the point of view of targeted objectives (evaluation – quantification) with regard to the complex rural tourism potential of villages and supply optimization (tourism routes, flows, circuits), we also consider that certain terminological classifications are necessary (insufficiently specified in the specialty literature), in relation to the following categories: **tourism potential, tourism resource, tourism objective, tourism supply, tourism infrastructure.**

The tourism potential of a zone (locality) consists of all the natural and anthropic resources and the tourism infrastructure existing in the respective rural area structure.

The tourism resource represents “suitable (potential) tourism resources to be visited” and “possible (present) tourism attractions to be directly exploited through tourism activities” (*Mariana Ramona Ciolac, 2009*), found in the rural area under the form of tourism objectives (natural or anthropic) or as “raw materials” used in the production of different tourism products”.

The tourism supply is a commercial (economic) term included in a rural tourism program (plan) or in a tourism circuit. In general, the tourism supply comprises several thematic tourism objectives (pastoral roads, glacier lakes, dinosaur nests, the plum brandy or wine route, the old churches route, etc.)

The tourism objective, in our vision, represents a natural or anthropic entity that is well-delimited in space, being a permanent tourism attraction (the Church from Densuş, the Retezat mountain range, the mountain pastoral life, the plum brandy traditional distillery from Răchitova, the households that prepare the traditional sausages *virşli* from Sălăş etc.).

The tourism infrastructure comprises the existing and/or necessary technical facilities for the general and tourism organization management of the rural territory, localities and houses.

3.2. The mathematical model for the evaluation and quantification of the rural tourism potential

The sustainable development of the zones and villages for rural tourism and agro-tourism is based upon the evaluation and monitoring of the tourism potential of the zones starting from the classification of tourism resources or objectives. In most countries, the tourism resources and objectives are classified into three classes* (three stars or classes 1, 2, 3).

Starting from the tourism resources present in a certain rural locality (A_j) and its classes, $r_i, r_i \in [0,1,2,3]$, where:

$r_i = 0$, non-existing resource

$r_i > 0$, existing resource of class 1, $r_i = 1$; class 2 $r_i = 2$; class 3 $r_i = 3$,

* In reference to the classification of tourism resources or objectives, we must make a specification so as not to create a confusion in their classification, by three levels (three stars) with the classification of tourism establishments (hotels, motels, chalets, resorts, which is made by five levels).

its tourism potential is calculated:

$$P(A_j) = \sum_i r_i$$

The tourism potential of zone $P(Z_k)$ is obtained by the relation:

$$P(Z_k) = \sum_j (A_j) = \sum_i \sum_j r_{ij}, \quad i = 1, 2, \dots, m; \quad j = 1, 2, \dots, n$$

The calculation elements of the rural tourism potential of a certain rural locality (A_j) function of the tourism resources r_i lie in the resources matrix:

$$r_{ij} = \begin{pmatrix} r_{11} & r_{12} & \dots & r_{1n} \\ r_{21} & r_{22} & \dots & r_{2n} \\ \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots \\ r_{m1} & r_{m2} & \dots & r_{mn} \end{pmatrix}$$

The rural settlement with maximum tourism potential is obtained by:

$$\max P(A_j), \quad j = 1, 2, \dots, n$$

The hierarchy of rural settlements results from:

$$P(A_1) > P(A_2) > \dots > P(A_n)$$

The management optimization of the tourism activities is obtained by the same algorithm, starting from their tourism objectives $o_i > 0$,

$$M(A_j) = \sum_i t_i$$

$$t_{ij} = \begin{pmatrix} t_{11} & t_{12} & \dots & t_{1n} \\ t_{21} & t_{22} & \dots & t_{2n} \\ \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots \\ t_{m1} & t_{m2} & \dots & t_{mn} \end{pmatrix}$$

Starting from the tourism objectives $t_i > 0$ from each tourism locality A_j , in the zone Z_k , optimum zonal thematic itineraries can be established:

$$D = \max \sum_i \sum_j t_{ij}, \quad i = 1, 2, \dots, n; \quad j = 1, 2, \dots, m.$$

4. OBTAINED RESULTS

4.1. Typology of villages from Țara Hațegului by rural tourism resources, objectives and infrastructure

The different types of rural tourism were established in Țara Hațegului according to the **natural and anthropic resources, the tourism objectives and the tourism infrastructure** existing in the rural area.

The tourism types (forms) practiced in Țara Hațegului (*Popa, N., 1996*) are the following: mountain tourism, cultural, spiritual and scientific tourism, week-end tourism, transit tourism and agro-tourism.

- **The mountain tourism** has the largest coverage, determined by the exception natural resources provided by the mountain ranges Retezat, Țarcu, Șureanu and the mountains Poiana Ruscă. The Retezat Massif is by far the “royal” resource from Țara Hațegului due to the unequalled natural beauty of the Retezat National Park, the Gemenele Scientific Reserve, with the 40 peaks of over 2,000 m and the 12 peaks over 2,300 m, as well as the 82 glacier lakes. A mountain tourism variant is represented by the **winter sports tourism** on the ski track equipped with cable transportation at the Râușor (Râu de Mori) or as the **nautical sports tourism** on the accumulation lake on the river Râul Mare. Due to the wilderness and spectacular character of the mountain massifs, in recent times a kind of sports tourism has been practiced that is extremely harmful to the environment, landscape and tranquility of the mountains, i.e. **enduromania** (extreme sports involving autocross or motocross circuits on rough land). This kind of mountain sports tourism is increasingly contested by both local people and ecologists, forestry people and tourists who enjoy the peacefulness and beauty of natural landscape.

- **The cultural, spiritual and scientific tourism** developed on the basis of the cultural and architectural objectives, (ancient and mediaeval) archaeological remnants, churches, natural parks and scientific reserves provided by the rural settlements and areas from Țara Hațegului.

A particular place in the scientific tourism is held by the rich biodiversity (mainly in the Retezat massif) and geodiversity (Dwarf Dinosaur Geopark from Țara Hațegului).

The historical objectives, such as the Dacian Amphitheatre from Sarmisegetusa, Roman remnants (villa rustica), mediaeval castles (manor houses) from Sântămăria Orlea, Berthelot (under full reconstruction), Nalațvad, Densuș, the citadels from Suseni-Colți, Răchitova, Crivadia, Sălașu de Sus etc.

The mediaeval churches, the churches from Densuș in the first place (the oldest in Romania), from Sântămărie-Orlea, Nucșoara, Peșteana, Ostrov, Suseni from the 13th–15th centuries, are special attractions for the tourists eager to get familiar with Christian spirituality.

The ethnographic and folkloric patrimony, based upon the rich folk traditions and customs (traditional mountain fests and the agrarian and pastoral rites), the folk songs, dances and popular costumes, local cuisine (traditional sausages *virşli* from Sălaşu, sheep and goat cheese (*telemea*) plum-brandy from Răchitova, bee honey, wild berry jam and more recently, truffles) are part of the exceptional supply in Țara Hațegului.

- **The week-end tourism** is, in our opinion, the most common form of tourism in Țara Hațegului at present. The development of tourism boarding houses and of the vacation houses both in the area Clopotiva – Râul Mare – Gura Zlatna (over 100 boarding houses and vacation houses), the valley of the Râușorului river and in many other areas (almost in all the villages at the foot of the Retezat, Șureanu, Țarcu, Poiana Ruscă mountains) made it possible to enjoy the week-end getaways. The week-end getaway is common with many families from Deva, Hunedoara, Petroșani (the Jiului river valley), Orăștie, Caransebeș, Lugoj and even Timișoara, who still have their parents' houses in Țara Hațegului. Many week-end houses, in case they also have their own household (a vegetable garden round them, fruit-trees, vineyard and animals), are also used under the form of hobby-farms, which are well-known in Western Europe.

- **The transit (or intermediary) tourism** is practiced by the tourists who are on a larger tourism circuit, such as Banat-Țara Hațegului–Valea Jiului–Oltenia or Banat-Țara Hațegului–Deva–Hunedoara. In transit in Țara Hațegului, both the tourists who travel in this area for the first time and the tourists who frequently go through Țara Hațegului cannot resist the temptation of going to Sarmisegetusa, Densus, Retezat, Sântămăria – Orlea, Sălașu or Berthelot.

- **The agro-tourism** in Țara Hațegului is rather a potentiality than a reality. The agro-tourism potential in Țara Hațegului stems from the beauty and peacefulness of the villages and rural households, the future endowment for the land management projects, the wide range of agricultural production activities (field crops, fruit-tree farming, pastoral activity in the summer time), natural landscape attractiveness from the villages and the agrarian traditions specific to each rural locality. Yet, agro-tourism development and generalization presupposes the reshaping of rural infrastructure and adequate equipment with tourism facilities on the agro-tourism households (farms). Besides the equipment with facilities on the agro-tourism households (farms) and the rural infrastructure improvement for agro-tourism development, a promotional tourism management is also necessary, as well as the development of tourism information networks that should bring the agro-tourism supply closer to the demand, the agro-tourism promotion as a form of educational tourism for school-children (and even for the inhabitants) from the cities who do not sufficient things about life in the countryside and the activities from agriculture, fruit-tree farming, dairy cow raising, sheep raising, rural traditions and customs, etc.

4.2. Characterization of rural tourism (and agro-tourism) in the localities from Țara Hațegului–Retezat

Even since the first half of the 20th century, scientists appreciated the beauty and importance of the area Hațeg–Retezat: “*Transylvania is extremely beautiful, but the most beautiful part of it is this very corner that has been called Țara Hațegului since old times*” (Nicolae Iorga) and “*What a rich and great amount of Romanian local civilization is gathered in a single mountain village, in that priceless living ethnographic museum, called Țara Hațegului*” (Dimitrie Gusti).

Among the rural economy branches from Țara Hațegului, rural tourism has developed the most after 1989. The rural tourism development premises in this area were anticipated even since the sociological research works conducted by the royal student teams of the Romanian Institute for Social Studies managed by D. Gusti: “*At Gura Zlata, the valley opens up. From the right side, the Zlata “impetuously” comes from the foot of the Retezat mountain and flows into the river that changed its name from Lăpușnic into Râul Mare (the Great River) at Vadul Apelor. At the confluence with the Zlata, the valley opens up like a round piece between the mountains. It is there that the academician Brătescu-Voinești built his house, laying the foundation of a future balneary resort*” (I. Conea, 1935).

On the Râului-Mare river valley, from the Zlatna confluence with the Lăpușnicul river (from Brătescu-Voinești’s house) to the exit from the mountain pass, on a 20 km distance, over 100 agro-tourism boarding houses and vacation houses have been built, meeting the sociologist and geographer I. Conea’s expectations.

Before we characterize from the tourism point of view each rural locality (commune) and its sustainable rural development potential, we shall generally assess the rural tourism activity in the zone Hațeg–Retezat, on the basis of the five first-size (three star) tourism objectives:

1. The Colony Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacia Sarmisegetuza (sec I d.C.);
2. The historical monument Church Densuș (13th century);
3. Retezat National Park – Gemenele Scientific Reserve
4. Dwarf Dinosaur Geopark Hațeg–Retezat;
5. Cetatea Colț (Citadel Colț) – the castle from the Carpathians, in the village Suseni, commune Râu de Mori (14th century).

All the above-presented tourism objectives, as part of different classes of main tourism resources (attractions), as it can be noticed in the case of the five objectives (historical, spiritual-religious, architectural, paleontological (geodiversity), natural (biodiversity) and landscape, represent an extremely important and attractive tourism route for the tourists who visit the area Țara Hațegului–Retezat.

The commune Râu de Mori, consisting of 10 villages and a hamlet, became well-known both in the country and abroad due to two objectives of main tourism interest: **Cetatea Colț** from the village Suseni, mediaeval fortress built in the 14th century, known from Jules Verne’s novel “*The Castle from the Carpathians*” and

Retezat National Park with a total area of 38,047 ha (the oldest in the country, established by Acad. Alexandru Borza in the year 1935, when its area totalled 13,000 ha), out of which the Scientific Reserve Gemenele, under the protection of UNESCO and of the Romanian Academy.

The two tourism objectives, undoubtedly of main interest (three stars) are not sufficiently put into value from the tourism point of view, as well as from the point of view of protection against a “wild” tourism.

Besides these two tourism objectives, there are also some other objectives of tourism interest in the commune Râu de Mori: the tourism resort Râu Mare, with more than 100 boarding houses, chalets and vacation houses (on the 20 km distance of the defile), the resort Râușor with ski track with ski lift, with many (over 60) hotels, boarding houses, chalets and vacation houses for accommodation, the church Colț (14th–15th century), the orthodox church from Ostrov (historical monument from the 14th century), the orthodox church Râu de Mori (attested in the documents in the year 1526), the ruins of the noble court of the Cându family (14th–15th century, featuring a high degradation level), the calcareous rocks from the botanical reservation from Fața Fetei, the accumulation lake and dam from Gura Apei, the downstream hydro-technical system Clopotiva, the pastoral mountain traditions and customs from Clopotiva etc.

The commune Densuș. The name of the commune Densuș, consisting of seven villages, is related to the famous family of intellectuals Densușianu (with two members of the Romanian Academy). In the commune, the tourism objective of the highest historical and spiritual value for the Romanian Orthodox Church (three-star) is **the orthodox church – historical monument Saint Nicholas** from Densuș, dating from the 12th–13th century; the great historian Nicolae Iorga considered the church as “*unequaled in Romania*”. According to certain historical interpretations, the church was built up on the place of a former ancient temple dedicated to Zamolxis, in other opinions to the god Mars, with the materials brought from Sarmisegetusa Ulpia Traiana.

In the commune Densuș, at Peșteana, we find the orthodox church Sfântul Proroc Ilie from the 13th–14th century, built with stone from Sarmisegetusa Ulpia Traiana, the mediaeval monument church Peșteana, from the 15th century, the Village Museum Peșteana and the botanical reservation the Moor from Peșteana, oligotroph moor with plant populations of *Drosera rotundifolia* (the common sundew), a glacier relict species.

The commune General Berthelot is intimately linked to two historical names (the family Nopcea-Nopsca and the general Henri Mathias Berthelot) and an institution (the Romanian Academy) of first importance in the gallery of famous persons and institutions from Romania.

The commune General Berthelot has the following five villages in its structure: General Berthelot (former Fărcădinul de Jos until 1923, General Berthelot in the period 1923–1948, Unirea 1948–2001, which regained the name General Berthelot in 2001), Tuștea, Crăguș, Fărcădin (former Fărcădinul de Sus until 1923) and Livezi.

There are two main tourism and scientific objectives in the commune General Berthelot: the **Manor House Berthelot**, built in the year 1762 by the family Nopcsa, into the ownership of the French general Berthelot in the period 1923–1926, donated to the Romanian Academy, which had it into its ownership in the period 1926–1948 and recovered by the Academy after the year 2001; at present, it is under full reconstruction, with the destination of **Research Center in geo, biodiversity and sustainable rural development in the area Hațeg-Retezat of the Romanian Academy and the paleontological reservation with dwarf dinosaur bones and eggs from Tuștea**.

The commune Sântămărie Orlea is attested in the documents since 1363, and is linked to Iancu de Hunedoara's name, who, in the year 1447, offered the locality as a gift to the brave sons of Ion Cănde, with function of fair and customs house.

The commune consists of nine villages (Sântămărie Orlea, Balomir, Bărăștii Hațegului, Bucium Orlea, Ciopla, Sânpetru, Subcetate, Vadu and Nălaț).

The commune Sântămărie Orlea has a multitude of tourism objectives, the most important being the following: the reformed church from Sântămărie Orlea, built up in Gothic style in the 12th century, documentary attested in the year 1363, the castle Kendeffy, built in Baroque style in the year 1782, the Hațegului Fortress in the village Subcetate, Saint George Church (14th century) from Sânpetru, Villa rustica Grindanu - Sântămărie Orlea (2nd–3rd century), etc.

The commune Sarmisegetusa. It is without doubt that the commune Sarmisegetusa (named Grădiște until 1931), by the **archaeological complex from the Colony Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica Sarmisegetusa, the capital of Dacia under the Roman emperor Traian** (2nd century A.D.), consisting of the amphitheatre, forum, palace, sanctuary, necropola and the Roman thermae, is the tourism objective of utmost interest from Țara Hațegului.

The commune Sarmisegetusa has five villages into its structure: Sarmisegetusa, Breazova, Hobița, Pănănești and Zeicani (the Western limit of Țara Hațegului that links Transylvania with the region Banat through the Iron Gate of Transylvania); in all the villages, the local people have agrarian, pastoral and fruit-tree farming occupations, which are important for the piedmont and mountain tourism by the rural life dominated by various well-preserved traditions and customs.

The commune Baru. This commune has four villages into its componency (Baru, Livadia, Petros and Valea Lupului) and it stands out by its Folk Art Collection Maria Mord Gârbea that exhibits great value objects from Țara Hațegului (popular costumes, towels, sewings, pottery, furniture, home appliances, old peasant weaving looms), the speological reservation Tecuri from the village Petros with its beautiful stalagmites and stalactites, the defile *Streiului superior*, *Cleanțul Lola*, trout fishing area from the Stei river, etc.

The commune Sălașu de Sus. Besides the main village Sălașu de Sus where the town hall lies, the commune has other ten villages, namely: Coroiști, Mălăiești, Nușoara, Ohaba de sub Piatră, Paroș, Peștera, Râu Alb, Râu Mic, Sălașu de Jos

and Zăvoi. Endowed with a unique landscape, the villages lying as pearls at the foot of the Retezat Massif, on the rivers stemming from the mountain, the commune Sălașu de Sus has one of the richest highly attractive tourism supplies.

The commune was documentary attested in the year 1360; following the archaeological diggings, different objects from the Neolithic Age and the epoch of the primitive commune and ancient history were found: (carved stones, copper coins, Roman coins, Macedonian coins, funeral monuments, bricks, earth vessels belonging to the 12th Legion Gemeni, etc.

The most important historical monuments are the following: the fortified ruins of the noble court Jaroslav (14th century), the Orthodox Church (15th century), fortified site (15th century) from Sălașu de Sus, the mediaeval fortress from Mălăiești (16th century), the ruins dating back from the Roman period from Ohaba de sub Piatră, the Church from Paroș (15th century).

Besides the historical monuments, the commune Sălașu de Sus is extremely rich in scientific, botanical and geological reservations, the most important being the following: the Scientific Reserve Gemenele from Retezat (located on the cadastral territory of the commune); the grasslands with daffodils (where the daffodil festival takes place in later May or early June every year; the natural reservation with *plantago holostei* (rare botanical species) from Vârful Pietrii in Ohaba de sub Piatră.

The commune Răchitova consists of seven villages: Răchitova – commune center, Boșta, Ciula Mare, Ciula Mică, Gotești, Mesteacăn and Vălișoara; it was documentary attested for the first time in the second half of the 14th century.

The commune Răchitova is well-known in Țara Hațegului and throughout Transylvania for its large plum plantations, from which the local people prepare the famous **Răchitova plum-brandy**.

The most representative historical monument in the commune, besides the churches from the 15th and 16th centuries from Răchitova, Ciula Mare and Vălișoara, is the watchtower – fortress built up from massive stone on a promontory in the 14th century.

On the territory of the village Răchitova, traces of gold exploitation in ancient times, in the Roman occupation period and from Middle Ages were discovered. In the village Ciula Mare pottery from the Bronze Age was discovered, and in the village Vălișoara 14 golden rings and tools from the Neolithic Age.

The commune Pui is the commune with the highest number of villages: Pui where the town hall lies, Băiești, Federi, Fizești, Galați, Hobița, Ohaba Ponor, Râu Bărbat, Râușor, Șerel and Uric.

The commune Pui has the most remarkable tourism attractions for those interested in the knowledge and research of the natural reservations and protected areas and of caves with dwelling traces, such as: the natural reservation Peștera Șura Mare (Ohaba Ponor) with the 4,500 m length cave where the largest bat colony in the country is found; the Natural Park Grădiștea Muncelului–Cioclovina, important from the scientific point of view for its archaeological, geological,

speological, flora, fauna, anthropological and ethnological variety; eight fortified fortresses; the Cave Tecuri etc.

There are eight caves on the territory of the commune Pui: Federi, Coasta Vacii no.1, no. 2, no. 3, Cocoşului, Piatra Muntenilor and Tecuri.

The town Haţeg is the only town in the area, economic and social centre of influence, which also includes three belonging villages: Silvaşu de Sus, Silvaşu de Jos and Nălaţvad. The Aurochs Reservation from Silvăţ Forest (the most important reservation of this kind in Romania) also lies on the cadastral territory of Haţeg. The belonging villages include two objectives of maximum interest: the nun monastery Prislop from Silvaşu de Sus, dating back from the 14th century, located in an extremely beautiful scenery and the Manor House Nalatz-Fay from the village Nălaţvad.

4.3. The rural tourism circuits in the area Haţeg–Retezat

Although Țara Haţegului – Retezat has priceless tourism assets, materialized into an extremely rich natural and anthropic supply, as it has been mentioned in the previous presentation of the rural localities, from the conducted survey it results that the tourism activity indicators (utilization of tourism spaces, organization of tourist information points, existence of tourism companies, etc.) are much under the profitability limit. We found no commercial company – organizing tourism activities (tourism circuits), no professional tourism promotion company in the area.

According to the researchers' opinion from the Romanian Academy, the following rural tourism circuits in the area Haţeg – Retezat can be developed in the future:

- **the spiritual (religious) tourism circuit** in which the main churches in the area are included: Densuş, Peşteana, Sântămărie Orlea, Colţ, Ostrov, Râu de Mori, Sânpetru, Monastery Prislop, etc;

- **the archaeological (historical) circuit**: Sarmisegetusa Ulpia Traiana, Cetatea Colţ (the Castle from the Carpathians), the Manor House Berthelot, the Castle Kendeffy, Villa Rustica Sântămărie Orlea, the Fortress from Haţeg – Subcetate, the Castle Nălaţvad, Tower - Fortress Răchitova, etc.;

- **the scientific–tourism circuit**: Dwarf Dinosaur Park Haţeg, Gemenele Scientific Reserve (with special tourism access only for researchers), Retezat National Park, Grădiştea Muncelului – Cioclovina Natural Park, the caves from the commune Pui (speological circuit), Aurochs Reservation Haţeg etc.;

- **the cultural rural tourism circuit** includes almost all the villages from Țara Haţegului where the tourists can participate to different traditional agrarian, pastoral fests and festivals;

- **the mountain tourism circuit** includes the most developed tourism activities related to mountain hiking, mountaineering, on different mountain routes from the Retezat, Şureanu, Țarcu, Poiana Ruscă mountains;

- **the sports tourism circuit** for skiing in the resort Râuşor or for the nautical sports on the accumulation lakes;

- **the week-end tourism** in the boarding houses and vacation houses on the Râul Mare river, in the resort Râușor as well as in different mountain chalets;
- **the agro-tourism in the accredited agro-tourism household farms**;
- **hunting and fishing tourism** in the mountain waters (trout).

Taking into consideration the great variety of the natural and anthropic tourism supply, we appreciate that the specialists in tourism economy and management can find solutions for the sustainable rural development of the area Hațeg – Retezat, in general, and of several tourism companies, rural boarding houses, agro-tourism households, etc.

5. CONCLUSIONS

1. Following the presentation of the natural and anthropic tourism resources, a first conclusion can be drawn, which is extremely important for the development of the rural tourism activities in the area: **Țara Hațegului – Retezat is one of the rural areas from Romania with the largest density of main tourism objectives, of a great diversity and variety, responding to the various demand in this respect.**

2. The large supply of tourism objectives in the area Hațeg-Retezat creates most favourable conditions for the development of rural tourism, in general, and of agro-tourism, in particular, as premises of sustainable development in this area.

3. The amplification of rural tourism activities in the area Hațeg-Retezat is possible only by quality management, with special focus on the optimization of tourism routes and circuits in relation to the tourists' interest.

4. The tourism management and marketing in the area Hațeg-Retezat should start from the design of tourist guides, by professionals in the tourism field. The tourist guides should be designed both geographically (supply of rural localities) and thematically, including the supplies, by types of tourism routes and circuits.

5. The well-known tourism offer, presented at national and international level, will represent a **development factor of the rural economy in all its components: agriculture, agro-processing, services, tourism infrastructure**; in a word, it will favour **the sustainable rural development of the area Țara Hațegului**, in general, and of each tourism agent, in particular.

REFERENCES

1. Bavaru, A. și alții (2007), *Biodiversitatea și ocrotirea naturii*, Editura Academiei Române, București.
2. Ciolac, Ramona Mariana (2009), *Management în turism rural și agroturism*, Editura Eurostampa, Timișoara.
3. Conea, I. (1935), *Clopotiva un sat din Hațeg – monografie sociologică*, Institutul de Studii Sociale al României, București.
4. Erdeli, G., Gheorghilaș, A. (2006), *Amenajări turistice*, Editura Universitară, București.
5. Popa, N. (1999), *Țara Hațegului – Potențial de dezvoltare al așezărilor omenești*, Editura. Brumar, Timișoara.

