

ANALYSIS OF THE TOURISM POTENTIAL OF VAMA COMMUNE, SUCEAVA COUNTY

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Abstract

Analysis of the tourism potential of Vama commune, Suceava County aims to identify the resources that can support and influence the development of tourism activities in the area. Tourism resources identified in the reporting area are: natural resources, anthropical resources, capital resources and human resources. The evaluation was performed through specific and synthetic indicators, represented by: index of attractiveness of the area, number of units, number of beds, employment in tourism. The analysis of these indicators confirm that Vama commune is an area with high tourism potential. Given these factors, it can be said that Vama is an outstanding touristic destination, offering premises to spend some unforgettable holidays in nature. However, in relation to the real potential of the area, the exploitation of tourism resources is still at a low level, this being demonstrated by the number of tourists and by the accommodation capacity of the area. Capitalization of tourism potential must be accomplished by investing in accommodation and catering infrastructure, by applying innovative strategies with real impact on the market.

Key words: tourism, tourism potential, resources, analysis

The starting point in this paper is the answer to the following question:

- What are the resources that determine the tourism attractiveness of Vama commune?

MATERIAL AND METHOD

This paper is based on qualitative and quantitative analysis of the tourism potential of Vama, given by natural, anthropical, capital and human resources.

The material used for the determination of indicators has been represented by Touristic Breviary of Suceava County.

Index of attractiveness of the area was determined using the method of assessment grids.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Vama commune is located in the North of the country, in Suceava County, in the depression of the same name, between Moldova and Moldovita rivers.

The study on natural resources revealed the following elements:

- Vama commune is located between Obcina Feredeului, Obcina Humorului and Rarau Massif and that gives a distinctive tourism potential to the area;

- In Vama and in its surroundings there are numerous natural sights, among which we mention: Natural Reservation Pietrele Doamnei from Rarau Massif, Codrul Secular from Slatioara, Piatra Soimului (a wall of rock that gives a fascinating view toward neighboring valleys and mountains), Popii Rarăului (an assembly of rocks situated on the main ridge of Rarau Mountains), Cheile Moara Dracului (an area of very narrow-keys between 2-3 meters wide, 40 meters long, located on Caselor Beck).

The study on anthropical resources revealed the following elements:

- Vama is known as “private museum commune” (numerous local museums are opened by people in their own houses);
- Anthropical tourist attraction elements are represented by: **Nicorescu Memorial Home Museum**, a traditional Bucovina’s house, older than 200 years, which was demolished and rebuilt piece by piece, in which traditional atmosphere is reconstructed by authentic objects: stove, loom, ceramic pots, embroidered clothes and old icons, photographs, books, magazines and documents of the time; **Dragos Olas House-museum**, one of the objectives listed in the tourist map of the Vama area, where hundreds of carved wooden works of various essences gathered over time, prompting the owner to convert his „new” house into a permanent

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exhibition of sculpture; **Painted Eggs Museum „Letitia Orsivski”**, that shelters the largest collection of decorated eggs in the region, local and international exhibits, made in various techniques; **numerous religious buildings** (the wooden church "Sf. Nicolae" Church "Ascension of the Lord", Catholic Church).

- Ethnographical elements, represented by: traditional house, traditional crafts, traditional costumes, folk and folkloric traditions, emphasizing the tourism potential of the area.

- Life in Vama is marked by a series of events, celebrations and festivals that take place yearly (Plugusorul Bumbierilor, Pilgrim Road, Wedding in Bucovina);

- A special attraction is Festivalul Hribului which includes gourmet exhibitions, cooking contests, exhibitions of handicrafts.

The analysis of tourism potential conducted to identification of index of attractiveness of Vama commune. Index of attractiveness is used for natural or anthropical touristic improvement of an area.

Index of attractiveness of the area was determined using the method of assessment grids, considering the following items: natural resources, anthropical resources, the level of environmental pollution, the acces to the area, types of tourism that can be practiced. The quality level of these items is represented by a grade inserted in the [1-4]

range, with the following meanings: 1-unsatisfactory, 2-enough, 3-good, 4-very good.

In „Natural resources” category are included the landscape, climate, rivers, lakes, ponds, mineral waters, hunting fauna, woods, reservations, nature monuments, ski area. These items have received grades from 1 to 4, resulting in an average of 2.83.

In „Anthropical resources” category are included boroughs, old castels, courts, urban buildings, wooden churches, churches and monastic ensembles, ethnography. These items have received grades from 1 to 4, resulting in an average of 2.67.

At „Environmental pollution” category, Vama meets the highest quality level and obtains the highest grade - 4.

In „Acces to the area” category are included access by road, rail and air, rated from 1 to 4, resulting in an average of 2.67.

In „Types of tourism” that can be practiced are included mountain tourism, balneary, rural, cultural and agri tourism. These items have received grades from 1 to 4, resulting in an average of 3.6.

Index of attractiveness (I) was estimated according to the following formula

$$I = \sum qi \cdot ci, \text{ where:}$$

q = share of each element (resource) in total;

c = quality level of each item (the grade);

i = 1,2...n – number of items.

Table 1

Index of attractiveness of Vama commune, Suceava county - method of assessment grids

No.	Components of the tourist offer	Share (qi)	Quality level (ci)	Index of attractiveness (I)
1.	Natural resources	0.25	2.83	0.71
2.	Anthropical resources	0.30	2.67	0.80
3.	Environmental pollution	0.10	4.00	0.40
4.	Acces to the area	0.10	2.67	0.27
5.	Types of tourism	0.25	3.60	0.90
TOTAL		1.00	3.15	3.15

Analyzing the results, we can note that the index of attractiveness is 3.15, exceeding the middle of [1-4] range. Therefore, it can be said that Vama commune has an high index of attractiveness and a high capacity to attract people and make them stay. Index of attractiveness shows also that in Vama commune can be realized touristic improvements, ensuring the viability of tourism investments.

Capital resources of Vama commune are represented by local accommodation structures.

In the “List of tourist reception with classified functions of accommodation, which operated in 2012 year in Suceava County” written by the Ministry of Tourism, from 433 accommodation units, 29 belong to Vama commune. These 29 tourist accommodation have a capacity of 460 beds and can receive over 100000

people per year. The tourist flow in Vama commune can be characterized using the indicators outlined in the Table 2.

Table 2

The tourist flow – Vama commune Vama – 2011

No.	Indicator	Tourist origin	
		Romanian tourists	Incoming tourists
1.	Total of nights spent - Ns	13800	3360
2.	Total number of tourists - NT	4600	1400
3.	Average length of stay (days) - S	3	2,4
Formula: S = Ns/NT			

Source: National Institute of Statistics and own calculation

According to Order no. 1296 from 15th of April 2010 approving the Methodological Norms regarding the classification of tourist reception, the

29 units of accommodation of Vama are divided into 23 touristic pensions, 5 agritouristic pensions and 1 hostel.

From touristic pensions:

- One pension is framed in „one flower” category;
- Eight pensions are framed in „two flowers” category;
- Nine pensions are framed in „three flowers” category;
- Five pensions are framed in „four flowers” category.

From agritouristic pensions:

- One pension is framed in „two flowers” category;
- Two pensions are framed in „three flowers” category;
- Two pensions are framed in „four flowers” category.

The hostel from Vama commune is classified at „3 stars” rank. (fig. 1)

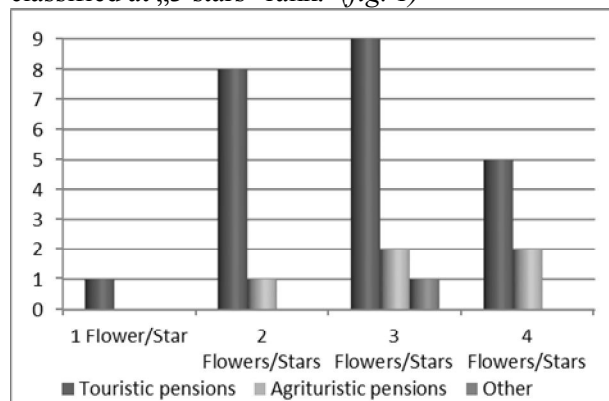


Figure 1 Ranking of accommodation units from Vama commune

The study regarding capital resources revealed that the accommodation capacity of the 29 tourist accommodation places is over 100,000 tourists/year, but Vama has received, in 2011, 6000 tourists. Therefore, we can speak about an underutilization of capital resources, but we cannot quantify the real number of visitors (which also have benefited from food services and other types of services and have purchased traditional products or handicrafts). The investments in building and development of accommodation facilities are supported by European Fund for Agriculture and Rural Development (EFARD) - Measure 313 - Encouragement of tourism activities. This program funds investments in rural tourism, agritourism and recreational area.

The grant received is accounted for 50-85% of the eligible value of the project and the maximum amount is 200000 euros.

According to the Table 3, during 2007 – 2013 period, in Vama commune a number of 37 projects have received funding agreement. A

percentage of 13.5% of investments were completed, and the remaining 86.5% are in implementation.

Table 3

Projects funded by EFARD – Measure 313 – Vama commune

No.	Type of investment	Number of investments	General amount (mil. euro)
1.	Agritourism	31	3,59
2.	Rural tourism	4	1,19
3.	Recreational infrastructure	2	0,68
TOTAL		37	5,46

Source: Payment Agency for Rural Development and Fisheries - Selections Reports - Measure 313

The effects of these investments can be found at the social, economic, technical and environmental level. The main social effect is the increase of income stability (incomes issued by non-agricultural activities) and increasing the living standards of the population.

Human resources are the most valuable asset of the tourism industry because they are able to provide quality products and services.

According to the results of Population and Housing Census conducted in 2011, the population structure of Vama commune is the following:

- Total population-5872 inhabitants;
- Stable population-5307 inhabitants;
- Active population-3368 inhabitants.

In Vama commune, labour force has the structure revealed in Table 4.

Tabelul 4

Labour force structure – Vama – 2011

No.	Active population - Categories	No. of people	% from total
1.	Unemployed people	281	8,34
2.	Populatia working in:	3087	91,66
	• agriculture	2571	76,34
	• tourism	223	6,62
	• industry	170	5,05
	• other services	70	2,08
	• other domains	53	1,57

Source: National Institute of Statistics

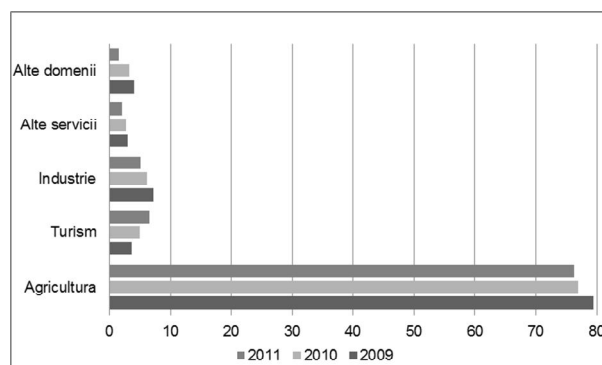


Figure 2 The evolution of employment - 2009-2011 (%)

Analysis of the data included in Table 4 reveals that the population employed in tourism is

6.62% of the total active population, while the farming population is 76.34%. We can see, therefore, the dependance of population on agricultural activities, even if Vama is classified as under-privileged mountain area. If we follow the evolution of the employment in tourism (fig. 2), we can notice the increase tendency in the reported period (2009-2011) with 79.3%. One of the main factors of this indicator's evolution is the implementation of projects linked to tourism domain, co-financed from European funds in a percentage of up to 85%.

Vama commune has a high concentration of tourist resources and from this point of view is framed into the 8th position in Suceava County, in accordance with Annex 4 to the Government Emergency Ordinance No. 142/2008 approving the plan for the national landscaping-section VIII-areas with tourist resources. On the first three places are located Patrauti, Vatra Moldovita and Sucevita communes. Capitalizing on high tourism potential must be realized by investing in the accomodation infrastructure, diversification of entertainment services, through the application of innovative promotion strategies, with real impact on the market.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The resources that determine the tourist attractiveness of Vama commune are:
 - natural resources;
 - anthropical resources;
 - capital resources;
 - human resources.
2. Vama is one of the most attractive tourist areas in Romania, due to the available resources.
3. Both natural and anthropical resources allow practicing many forms of tourism: mountain tourism, rural tourism, agritourism, cultural tourism, religious tourism.
4. Capital resources have a great influence on touristic flow in Vama commune.
5. The comparison from annual accomodation capacity and the total number of tourists, shows that the tourism potential of the area is under-exploited.
6. Human resources contribute decisively to the development of tourist activity and are considered the most valuable asset of the tourism industry.

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