

THE TOURISM ACCOMODATION INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE SETTLEMENTS IN MOȚILOR LAND

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ABSTRACT. *The Tourism Accommodation Infrastructure of the Settlements in Moților Land.* In Romania, though there were some attempts to develop the rural tourism during the communist times, this domain has really started developing only after 1990. In Moților Land the exact extent of this development is hard to grasp from the official documents as most of the tourism accommodation infrastructure is still not fully certified. The present paper would like to size as accurately as possible the difference between what the official documents are saying and the reality of the situation. We concentrate our analysis on the evolution of the accommodation infrastructure before 2010 and after. We also take a short look at the road and rail infrastructure as it plays a significant role in the development of tourism in the area.

Keywords: *“Moților Land”, accommodation, infrastructure, development.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Moților Land is an ethnogeographic region of Romania located in the Apuseni Mountains, on the upper basin of the Arieș River. The exact extension of the area is subject to many studies, but for us the one presented by C.N. Boțan in his doctoral thesis “Moților Land. A Study of Regional Geography”, that includes the areas of the main valleys of Abrud, Sohodol, Arieșul Mic and Arieșul Mare (upstream from Bistra), seems the most accurate and well documented. From an administrative point of view, the region covers 1068.89 km² of the NW part of Alba County and has a population of 38397 (2020). The only towns in the region are Câmpeni with 7375 inhabitants and Abrud with 5248. The rest of the 322 settlements are comprised in 14 communes²: Albac, Arieșeni, Avram Iancu, Bistra, Bucium, Ciuruleasa, Gârda de Sus, Horea, Poiana Vadului, Roșia Montană, Scărișoara, Sohodol, Vadu Moților and Vidra.

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² Commune= the smallest administrative unit in Romania, comprised of several villages.

The region of Moșilor Land has been confronted with both demographic and economic problems for a very long time. From a demographic point of view, the region has faced continuous depopulation throughout the last sixty years which has led to the feminization and aging of the population and to a high dependency rate. From an economic point of view, the main traditional activities in the area have been for many years, animal breeding, mining for silver and gold and forest exploitation. Agriculture is limited by the restrictions imposed by relief and climate. In the 1990s, the mines of Roșia Montană and Bucium closed and the locals had to find other sources of income so they started to invest in rural tourism and to develop the accommodation infrastructure.

Generally speaking, the tourism infrastructure is made up of the *accommodation infrastructure and the tourism facilities* on one side and the *communication network* (the road infrastructure) on the other side. The level of development of the tourism infrastructure is determined by the way and the degree in which the tourism resources of a region are capitalized so implicitly by the level of development of the administrative units that comprise the Land of Moși.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The accelerated dynamics of the development of tourism in the area within the last 30 years, makes difficult the process of inventorying and updating the list of the number of the accommodation units due to the rapid change in ownerships, in classification, and beds available, as a lot of the boarding houses are still in the process of being certified, some working with permits from the local administrations and a lot more working without any permit. On the webpage of the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism, one would find that only 50 from the total number of 211 accommodation units were considered classified in 2011. Abrud, Cămpeni, Scărișoara and Horea each had one classified accommodation unit, Vidra 2, Vadu Moșilor 3, Albac 10, Gârda de Sus 13 and Arieșeni 18. On the A.N.T.R.E.C.'s webpage we find that there were a series of boarding houses from Moșilor Land that belonged to this organisation: one in Vadu Moșilor and Cămpeni, 2 in Abrud, 12 in Gârda de Sus and 18 at Albac. O.V.R. member boarding houses were significantly less: 5 in Gârda de Sus and Arieșeni and 2 in Albac while there was only one boarding house located in Albac that was a member of B&B network. In order for our study to represent the situation regarding the accommodation infrastructure as accurately as possible, we completed the data obtained from the sources mentioned above with information obtained from the numerous web pages dedicated at promoting accommodation units, from the National Institute of Statistics data for Alba County and the field

inquiries we completed in the period from 2005 to 2020. The bibliographical resources consulted only partially represent the reality of the situation as they mainly refer to board houses members of A.N.T.R.E.C. and O.V.R. and those that exist on the Ministry of Tourism website. The difference between the numbers these studies present and the reality on the field is significant.

The accommodation infrastructure in Moților Land is composed of several types of units: boarding houses, hotels, villas, motels, chalets, rooms for rent and campings. In the present study we counted also the entire number of accommodation units located in the holiday village of Vârtop even though administratively some belong to the Bihor County as the border between Alba and Bihor counties goes right through the middle of the tourist village developed around Arieșeni ski slope.

3. RESULTS AND DISSCUSSIONS

3.1. The accommodation infrastructure before 2010

Before 1990, within the studied region the level of development of the tourism infrastructure and thus the degree of capitalization of the tourism resources was relatively low. At that time there existed only two campings on Arieșul Mare Valley, at Gârda de Sus and at Arieșeni, two hotels, one in Abrud and one in Câmpeni, and one ski slope in Arieșeni.

After the fall of communism, the area went through a process of assertion of the rural tourism as a result of the logistic and financial support of the European Community, especially due to the non-governmental organizations like A.N.T.R.E.C. (National Association of Rural Ecological and Cultural Tourism) and O.V.R. (Opération Villages Roumains) and to the involvement of the local authorities and the rural communities. The Land of Moți, in particular the communes Albac, Scărișoara, Horea, Gârda and Arieșeni were included in two sets of programmes that were developed in the 1990s: *the pilot villages project launched by O.V.R.* (1991) that aimed to establish an inter-communal partnership among Romanian communes and foreign ones and the project coordinated by A.N.T.R.E.C. that aimed to implement the programme *Phare Tourism (1993-1997)*. As a result of these projects, the accommodation infrastructure went through some significant changes regarding both the number of accommodation units and their diversity and quality, but in an unbalanced way at the regional level. Thus, on the Arieșul Mare valley, there was a significant leap in both the quantity and quality of the accommodation infrastructure while in the other communes this „leap” was comparatively smaller or it lacked completely.

In 2010, the accommodation capacity of the Moșilor Land comprised 3326 beds. The majority of the accommodation units totalling 171 (other 27 located in Vârtoap-Bihor) were boarding houses out of which just 4, all located in Abrud, would qualify as urban boarding houses, the rest being rural boarding houses. The greatest majority of them, 66 (without the 10 located in Vârtoap-Bihor), were located in the *tourist resort of local interest* of Arieșeni (Government Decision no. 329/2006) while in Gârda de Sus and in the *tourist resort of local interest* of Albac (Government Decision no. 801/2005) there were 34 boarding houses in each of them. Significantly less boarding houses had Scărișoara with 10 units and Horea with 9.

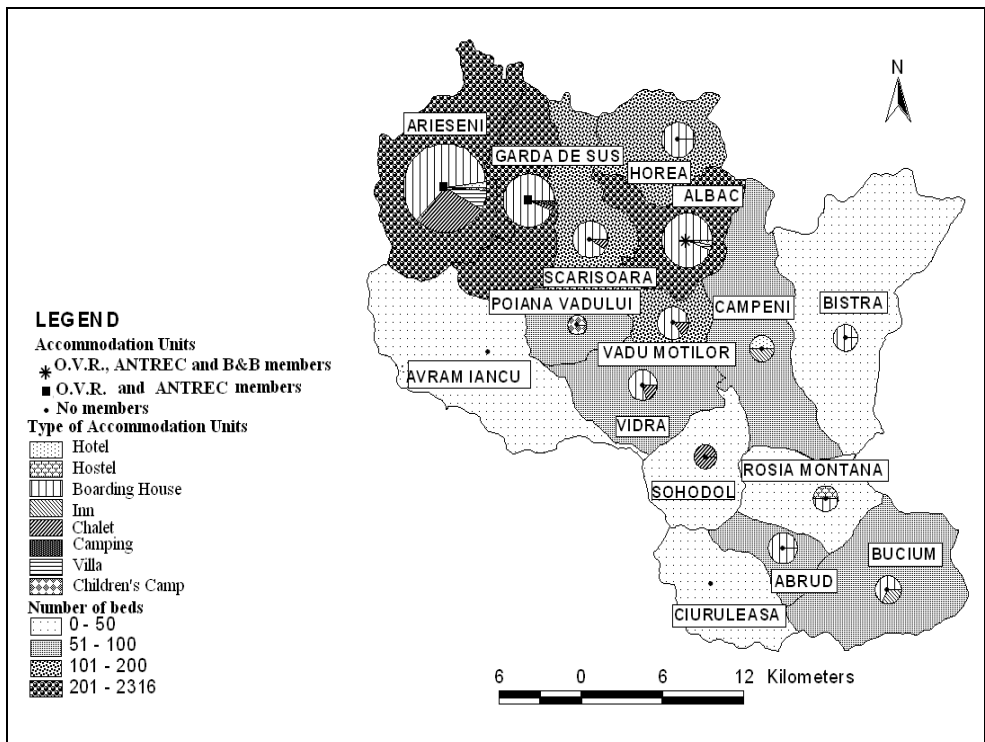


Fig. 1. The Accommodation Infrastructure in Moșilor Land (2010)

The rest of Moșilor Land was characterized by the presence of very few boarding houses. The rural tourism had just recently started to develop there due to the fact that the support of the non-governmental organizations and of the authorities had been far less than in the case of the previously mentioned 5 communes on Arieșul Mare Valley. Added to this, in some cases the problem had been the restrained attitude of some of the communities towards tourism,

while in others, like in the case of Roșia Montană, the local authorities actively opposed any attempt to develop tourism infrastructure as they supported the approval of the mining project of the company Roșia Montană Gold Corporation. Thus, for the remaining part of Moților Land, we had the following situation: Vadu Moților with 6 boarding houses, Abrud and Vidra with 4, Bistra and Bucium with 2, Roșia Montană with 1, Câmpeni, Sohodol, Poiana Vadului, Avram Iancu, Ciurulesa with no boarding houses. In the region of Moților Land there were 2596 beds available in boarding houses (another 157 beds in Vârtoș-Bihor), so an average of 15.18 beds per boarding house, the highest number of available beds being in Arieșeni which had an average of 16.72 beds/boarding house.

The following type of accommodation structure in what regards the number of units is that of chalets. Within the studied region there were a number of 30 chalets (other 10 were in Vârtoș-Bihor with 178 beds) with an accommodation capacity of 423 beds, so an average of 14.1 beds/chalet. As in the previous case, the most numerous accommodation units were in Arieșeni, 25, while only 1 chalet could be found in each of the following communes: Gârda de Sus, Scărișoara, Sohodol, Vidra and Vadu Moților.

Significantly less in number were the other types of accommodation units. There were 4 hotels with 276 beds available (one in Câmpeni and Abrud and 2 in the Vârtoș-Bihor area), 1 hostel with 6 beds in Roșia Montană, 2 inns with 50 beds, one in Câmpeni and one in Bucium, 10 villas with 268 available beds (10 units in Vârtoș-Bihor, 6 in Arieșeni and one at Albac) and just 1 camping with 20 beds in Gârda de Sus. Besides these types of accommodation units, two children's camps functioned at Poiana Vadului and Arieșeni within the local boarding schools during summer. The bigger one was in Arieșeni, with 100 beds.

In conclusion, in Moților Land the development of rural tourism has made a significant leap from the level it was before 1990 to the level it was in 2010, when there were 238 accommodation units with a total number of 3938 beds available (including the Vârtoș-Bihor area that had 27 accommodation units totalling 612 beds). The Arieșeni-Vârtoș area had the highest average of beds per accommodation unit, 18.32. The majority of the accommodation places were classified as two stars/daisies units. The highest numbers of boarding houses had developed slowly paced by the owners' income level and had few tourist facilities.

3.2. The accommodation infrastructure in 2020

The region, in spite of its great natural and anthropogenic attractions, is one in which tourism has only begun to grow within the last 30 years and as a result the health and recreation facilities are few and of lower quality. Scărișoara Ice Cave, the biggest attraction of the area, was electrified and properly equipped for tourists only in 2001, while the other beautiful caves in

the area remain completely unequipped. The ski slope in Vârtop, Arieșeni commune, was extended and equipped with a ski lift in 1996 and only in 2005 a ski lift started functioning also on the second ski slope, Vârtop II.

Table 1. The size and the structure of the accommodation units in Motilor Land (2020)

	TOTAL	ARIEȘENI	VÂRTOP	HOREA	GÂRDA DE SUS	SCĂRIȘOARA	ALBAC	BISTRA	CÂMPENI	VADU MOȘILOR	AVRAM IANCU	POIANA VADULUI	VIDRA	SOHODOL	ROȘIA MONTANĂ	BUCIUM	ABRUD	CIURULEASA
No of accommodation units	343	93	52	18	63	3	46	2	13	10	4	2	10	2	13	8	4	0
No. of beds	5309	1595	1080	167	845	32	634	38	275	176	32	60	97	17	107	84	70	0
Hotel	8	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No of beds	335	0	171	0	0	0	0	0	164	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Motel	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No of beds	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Boarding house	142	33	12	12	30	2	24	0	2	3	1	6	0	0	4	5	4	0
No of beds	2113	588	258	111	477	20	323	0	46	43	12	0	56	0	59	50	70	0
School Camps	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
No of beds	154	106	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chalet	75	15	20	2	17	0	7	1	2	4	1	1	1	2	2	0	0	0
No of beds	1101	264	405	29	194	0	65	14	23	47	6	12	10	17	15	0	0	0
Villa	13	5	5	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No of beds	339	165	78	13	0	0	51	0	0	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Camping	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
No of beds	45	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	0	0	11	20	0	0
Rooms for rent	104	40	12	3	16	1	15	0	4	2	0	3	0	0	6	2	0	0
No of beds	1274	578	168	14	174	12	195	0	42	24	0	31	0	0	22	14	0	0

In the winter ski season of 2010-2011, a new ski slope equipped with a ski lift, was opened nearby, at Piatra Grăitoare, Nucet, Bihor County, but no connection with the Vârtop slopes was made due to a mix of economic, administrative and political dissensions. Another ski slope was in construction in Gârda de Sus, and was scheduled to open in the winter season of 2011-2012 but did not, due to divergent interests between the investor and some local businesses, though it was 90% built.

In spite of the limited investments from the authorities and all the dissensions, the biggest one being the Roșia Montană Gold Corporation mining project, tourism continued to develop in the period between 2010 and 2020 mostly due to private initiatives especially in the accommodation sector. The number of accommodation units rose in the region to 343 and increased by 44.11%, while the number of places available rose to 5309, an increase by 34.81%. One should bear in mind that these are mostly small accommodation units, with an average of 15 beds per unit.

To get a better picture of the development of tourism in the region, we divided the administrative units according to the number of accommodation units present on their territory, as follows:

- Communes/Towns with very poor tourism development, that have less than 10 accommodation units: Abrud, Bucium, Sohodol, Poiana Vadului, Avram Iancu, Bistra, Scărișoara, Ciuruleasa, the last one having none.
- Communes/Towns with poor tourism development, that have between 10 and 15 accommodation units: Roșia Montană, Vidra, Vadu Moților, Câmpeni.
- Communes/Towns with a good tourism development, that have between 15 and 30 accommodation units: Horea.
- Communes/Towns with a very good tourism development, that have over 30 accommodation units: Albac, Gârda de Sus, Arieșeni.

As one can see, the most developed of all the communes continue to be Albac, Gârda de Sus, Arieșeni, the local resorts that developed around the two main attractions: the ski slopes of Vârtop and Scărișoara Ice Cave. The Abrud region and the Arieșul Mic valley are least developed due to the uncertainty caused by the mining project in the first case and due to the geographical position, in a cul-de-sac, for the latter.

The most numerous accommodation units continue to be the boarding houses (142), followed by rooms for rent (104) and then chalets (75). Boarding houses also have the greatest number of beds available, 2113, followed by rooms for rent, 1274 and chalets with 1101. The great number of rooms for rent type of accommodation is a sign that locals are highly involved in the tourism business and that they have not been overtaken by big outside investors. The last ones can be mostly found in the Vârtop slope area.

In 2010, the number of overnight stays, according to the INSS data, was 18668, while in 2019 it amounted to 81613 (2020 was a pandemic year and tourism declined). The index of net utilization of accommodation capacity in operation was about 35.49% in 2010, while it was 53.76% for 2019. In both cases, this is an upward trend compared to the period before 2010.

3.3. Communication and transportation network

In Moților Land, the communication and transportation network is solely terrestrial - roads and railways - and presents significant restrictions in its development due especially to the nature of the relief: height, steep lime slopes and isolated plateaus. The main road routes follow the important valleys of the region: Arieș, Arieșul Mare, Abrud and Arieșul Mic. The national roads that cross the region are DN 74 between Bucium-Sat - Abrud - Ciurulesa - Buceș Pass, DN74A between Abrud - Abrud sat - Coasta Henții -Câmpeni, DN1R (former DJ108) limit of Cluj County - Mătișești - Horea - Albac, and DN75 between Bistra - Câmpeni - Vârtop Pass. The secondary road network is made of ten county roads, DJ 762 that connects Avram Iancu and Vidra with DN75, DJ107I Aiud - Mogoș - Bucium Sat, DJ742 Gura Roșiei (DN 74A) - Iacobești - Roșia Montană, DJ750 Gârda de Sus - Ordâncușa - Ghețar, DJ750A Gura Sohodol - Sohodol, DJ750B Vadu Moților - Burzești - Poiana Vadului, DJ750D Arieșeni - Stei - Arieșeni - Buciniș - DN75, DJ750E from DN 75 - Holiday Village - Vârtop, DJ762A Vidrișoara - Muntele Găina - limit of Arad County and numerous commune and local roads that connect the localities that form up the commune. Though on paper there are 10 county roads, in reality the quality of these roads is most of the times very bad, in fact DJ750D and DJ705E are dust roads. Arieșeni mayoralty expressed its desire to change the category of these roads into that of communal roads in order to be able to access European funds to modernize them.

The railway transportation is limited at present. There used to be a narrow gauge railway nicknamed „Mocănița” that connected Turda and Abrud and was used mainly for ore transportation, but it also transported people. It was closed in 1997. A part of it, 12 km, was rehabilitated in 2004 on the route between Câmpeni, Abrud and Roșia Montană and was reintegrated in the tourist circuit in 2020.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Concluding, the not so good state of the national roads and the bad one of the other types of roads added to the degradation of the Turda-Abrud narrow gauge railway are considerably limiting the movement of tourists and thus the development of tourism in the whole region.

The accommodation infrastructure in Arieșul Mare area continues to be the most developed as a result both of the programs launched by OVR and ANTREC in the early 1990s and the existence of the two main attractions: the ski slopes of Vârtop and Scărișoara Ice Cave. The accommodation infrastructure is otherwise deficient, with some notable improvements over the last 10 years in Roșia Montană (from 2 to 13 units), Bucium (from 3 to 8 units) and Vidra (from 5 to 10 units).

Though rural accommodation type of two daisies predominates, most boarding houses are not officially registered and classified, there are major differences between the data held by the authorities and the real ones regarding the tourist phenomenon in the region. And in this aspect resides the originality of our paper as there are many studies that have as a focus the tourism development in this area of the Apuseni Mountains but fail to have an in depth analysis of the situation on the ground as they focus only on the official data. For example, Roșia Montană does not appear in any of the official documents as having tourism accommodation, neither in the National Institute of Statistics' data, nor on the ministry's website, when in reality there are 13 units. Overall, according to the data from Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism there are 179 accommodation units in the region for the year 2020, while in the National Institute of Statistics' data there are 82. From our detailed research we found out that there are 343, a statistically significant difference when it comes to an accurate study regarding the development of tourism in the area.

Finally, though it is a tourist area with a natural and anthropogenic tourist potential of great value, the area is still deficient in tourism infrastructure, especially in terms of recreation and treatment equipment and the state of the roads, which considerably slows down the development of tourism, even though there is a significant local initiative shown by the fact that the number of accommodation units increases over time and that most of them are boarding houses and rooms for rent type of accommodation which is a sign that locals are highly involved in the tourism business.

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