

EVENT TOURISM AND ITS IMPACT ON RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

CHIRILENCO Dinalidina, *student*
Moldova State University

CONOVCIUC Vitalina, *student*
Moldova State University

CEAIKOVSKY Alexander, *PhD., Associate professor*
Moldova State University

Abstract

The 21st century is a time of high technology, hectic urban living, skyscrapers covering the skyline, perpetual motion and noise. All of this tires one out, and there is a growing need for a quiet and peaceful place, without the usual hustle and bustle, where one can feel relaxed. Rural tourism is a great way to meet these needs. Today, rural tourism is a fast-growing branch of tourism on account of the fad for environmentalism, care for nature and digital detox.

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JEL: *F44, M51, P35*

When talking about the definition of rural tourism, it is most often defined as a type of tourism, the main characteristic of which is the stay of visitors in the countryside, far from industrial enterprises but close to nature.

Often the development and promotion of rural tourism is carried out with the help of event tourism, various festivals, master classes and folk art exhibitions being held.

The aim of this article is to investigate the impact of event tourism on the development of rural tourism in the Republic of Moldova.

The goals of this paper include:

- To consider the potential of rural tourism in the Republic of Moldova.
- To analyze event tourism in the development of rural tourism in the Republic of Moldova.
- To develop proposals for a more efficient development of rural tourism in the Republic of Moldova.

Moldovan villages preserve their authenticity even today. Quite often in the villages one can see how people draw water from wells and springs, cook local traditional dishes in a Moldovan oven, raise and graze their cattle in the fields and hills, grow vegetables and fruits in their gardens, and ride horse-drawn carts through the rural streets.

Our villages are ideal for escaping from the eternal hustle and bustle of the cities and gaining unrivaled emotions and feelings from the ambience of people's rural life.

Moldova's tourist villages have the resources to attract more tourists to the countryside. In many cases, the standard package of rural tourism includes accommodation in a guesthouse or farmhouse with preservation of Moldovan authenticity, meals in the form of traditional Moldovan dishes, participation

in Moldovan national festivals, hikes to local natural and man-made sights, knowledge of local culture and traditions.

River rafting, quad biking, paragliding, horse riding, cycling, fishing, participation in harvesting, master classes in Moldovan crafts, etc. can be added to the standard package.

Veleni is a good example of such a tourist village. The inhabitants of the village, located in the south of Moldova, offer tourists accommodation in several rural houses, delicious traditional food, boat rental for lake trips and fishing, walks on the golden hills, visits to the local museum, bread museum. The village has also been hosting the "Sweet Acacia Blossom" festival for nine years now, which attracts increasing numbers of tourists and is attended by more and more people.

The impact of event tourism on the development of rural tourism can be assessed on the basis of statistical data concerning the number of agritourism residences and the number of overnight stays of tourists in agritourism residences.

The increasing number of agri-boards facilities in the Republic of Moldova, over the last 5 years, is presented in the figure below.

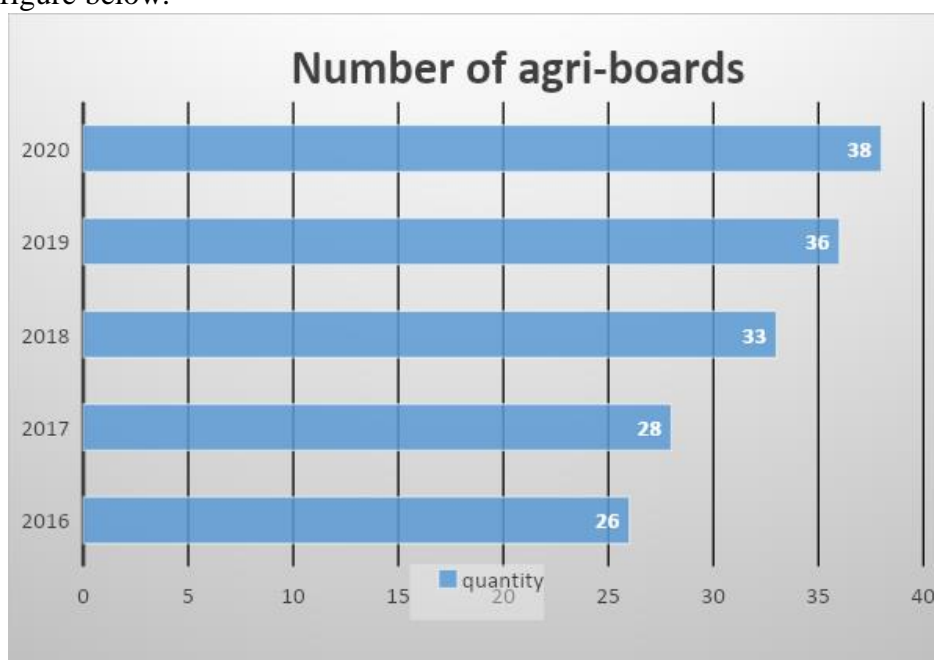


Figure 1. Number of agro-boarding facilities in the Republic of Moldova.
Source: the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova.

According to the above figure, it can be noted that in the last 5 years the number of agri-boarding is increasing, which is due to the development and increasing popularity of rural tourism.

For a more detailed analysis of the impact of event tourism on rural tourism, consider the data for the last 5 years on the number of overnight stays of tourists in agri-pensions.

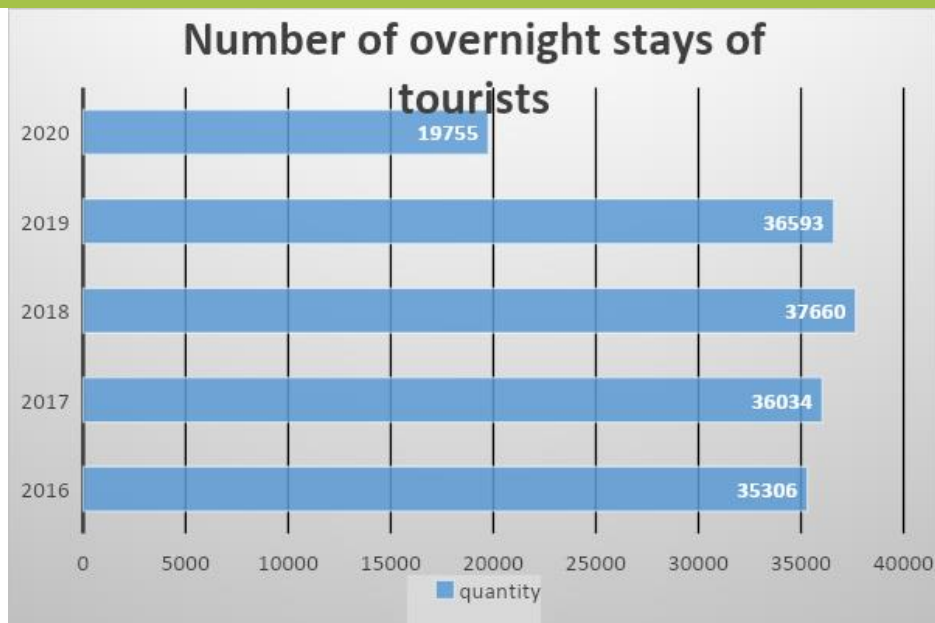


Figure 2. The number of overnight stays of tourists in agro-residences.
Source: the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova.

Based on these figures, it can be concluded that rural tourism has gained popularity among tourists and every year an increasing number of people come to Moldova. However, with the advent of the pandemic and the subsequent border closures, the level of visitors to the Republic of Moldova almost halved with no tourist events at all.

So far, the situation has improved, tourism events have resumed, including in the development of rural tourism. The following are examples of such events: DescOpera Butuceni, iProsop Cimislia, Hodina Criuleni, Bones Festival Straseni, etc. Consider these examples in more detail.

The DescOpera Festival in Butuceni offers tourists the opportunity to enjoy live classical music in the open air led by the famous Austrian conductor Friedrich Pfeiffer.

The iProsop Festival in Cimislia aims to revive interest in folk traditions and customs in modern society and to show the true value of folk crafts. The event includes several master classes for children and teenagers on traditional towel weaving techniques, folk crafts and trades, weaving and embroidery.

The Osier Festival which takes place in the village of Lozova offers tourists the opportunity to get acquainted with the art of vine weaving. Locals offer various master classes in embroidery, crochet, national food cuisine, as well as homemade wine tastings.

The themes of the festivals, as can be seen, depend to a large extent on the region and the knowledge passed down from previous generations. Nowadays, all festivals taking place in the countryside are more traditional, where tourists are introduced to the Moldovan culture.

However, event tourism can bring something new to rural tourism, unrelated to the traditions, and customs of the Moldovan people. Event tourism can actively develop rural tourism while combining modern trends.

For example, a festival dedicated to the dragon theme can be organized in the countryside. Villagers can actively participate in organizing the festival, providing accommodation and meals, as well as selling their organic products to the tourists. The festival can include modern fire shows, ATV rides, archery or crossbow shooting, a concert and a competition for the best dragon-themed cosplay.

A festival of this kind combines the beauty of the countryside, taking a break from the hustle and bustle of the city and experiencing a completely different ambience, while gaining an appeal unlike other rural festivals.

Combining all the aforementioned, it can be concluded that the Republic of Moldova has a high and diverse potential for the development of rural tourism, not only within its traditionalism, but also in the mix of modern and natural resources.

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Corresponding author:

CEAIKOVSKII Alexandr

ORCID: 0000-0003-2233-1225, alexandr.ceaikovskii@usm.md