"PIŢĂRĂII" – TRADITION AND REALITY

PIŢĂRĂII ÎNTRE TRADIŢIE ŞI REALITATE

R. MUNTEANU [1], ANDREEA IONICĂ [1], CAMELIA STAMATE [1]

[1]University of Petrosani, Petrosani, Romania; rares73@yahoo.de

Abstract: *The Jiu Valley has many unknown treasures. In this paper we present one of these treasures, which is the ancient tradition called „piţărăii", a custom related to Christmas. Analysing the opinion of the inhabitants of the town Petrila, we see that they consider this tradition a valuable one, they wish this tradition to continue and they also are willing to valorize it for tourism.*

Key words: *piţărăi, Christmas, tourism, Petrila, hotel*

INTRODUCTION

According to some legends, the christian Christmas appared as a competitor to the pagan celebration of Saturn. In the romanian calendar we kept a combination between the pre-christian and christian elements. Christmas became a celebration of joy which marks the birth of the Lord and brings a series of customs, carols and gifts.

To carol means "to walk from house to house singing carols". The "piţărăi" fit in this habit of carolling, well wishing to every house. These are encountered in most of the regions of the country, either on this name, either on others, having approximately the same characteristics, of course having some differences, too. In the Jiu Valley (Valea Jiului), the "piţărăi" have some particularities that make the difference as compared to the other regions of the country.

The "piţărăi" have traditional rules, lasting along the centuries, that nobody tries to change. They respect the same place of gathering, the same route and the same course of events. The suite of carol singers gather at the known point, they dance on the music of the pipers, then at about 10-11 o'clock they start going. The suite goes by the house of every householder, where the members of the suite are awaited with bags full of gifts consisting of apples, pears, nuts, Christmas tree candies, and especially those little

knot-shaped breads named "țipăi". The route is invariable, covering the whole village. At departure, the number of the "pițărăi" is smaller, but after every house visited the hosts join them, carolling continuing until the end point which is reached at nightfall. In the "pițărăi" suite of the Jiu Valley we can see children, young people, grown-ups, even elders, women and men, in a word, everybody. All the participants wear bags to deposit the reward for caroling.



Fig. 1. Pițărăii

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The aim of the research is to study the opinion of the citizens of the town Petrila which is very important in order to see if there is potential to include this tradition in the touristic activity.

This tradition is known in Petrila, Jiu Valley, and a few regions of Romania, but can be more famous by developing strategies to promote the touristic potential based on traditions specific to the region of Jiu Valley. The tourists can be attracted to the Jiu Valley due to the tradition of "pițărăi", but the region has also other precious places that wait to be visited and this fact can be emphasized only by intensive advertising.

If the tradition of the "pițărăi" is included in the touristic activity, investments must be done in order to develop some business plans for issues like: opening a hotel in the town of Petrila (where the tourists will be accommodated and will benefit of the best services) and establishing a

museum specific to the eastern Jiu Valley. The type of research is descriptive because the income and the location of the respondents are taken into account; the research is also foreseeing, because the situation analysed is the anticipation of some future values. The source of the information is primary, because these information is gathered for the first time.

The questionnaire was structured as follows:

1. Do you live in the town of Petrila? □ Yes.
□ No.

2. Do you know the tradition of the "piţărăi"? □ Yes.
□ No

3. Did you take part at this tradition? If YES, go to the next question, if NO, go to the item no. 10. □ Yes.
□ No

4. What is the reason to participate at this tradition?

□ Because it is a tradition in the town of Petrila inherited since the ancient times.

□ I like the "momârlănesc" (local peasant) clothing, the coloured flags and the suite which transmits the warmth and foresees the winter holidays.

□ The pleasure to meet all the acquaintances and wish them Merry Christmas.

5. Do you think that persons from other regions should take part at this tradition?

□ No, because I do not wish this tradition to be copied in other regions of Romania.

□ Yes, because this tradition should be known in other regions of Romania and possibly be spread.

□ No, because every region has its traditions and I don't think that they would be interested in ours.

6. If you were from another region of Romania, would you like to participate at this tradition?

□ Yes, if it recommended by someone trustworthy.

□ Yes, if it is intensively publicised.

□ Yes, out of pure curiosity.

□ No, because I don't know the region.

7. Petrila is a small town in process of modernisation; do you think that there is a potential to include this tradition in the touristic activity? Argue your answer. □ Yes.

□ No.

8. What is the role of the "piţărăi" in the town Petrila?

□ To announce the Christmas.
□ To sing carols and party together with the villagers.
□ I don't think that they play an important role.

9. What attracts you most in this tradition?

□ The carolling and the specific flags.
□ The national clothing and the "momârlănesc" dance.
□ The traditional goodies offered by the hosts.
□ Nothing special attracts me.

10. Would you like this tradition not to disappear? Argue the answer.

□ Yes.
□ No.

11. How old are you?

□ 18-35 years old.
□ 36-45 years old.
□ 46-65 years old.
□ More than 65 years old.

12. What is your monthly income?

□ Between 600-1000 lei.
□ Between 1001-1500 lei.
□ Over 1500 lei.

13. In what sector of the economy are you working?

□ Primary.
□ Secundary.
□ Tertiary.
□ Quaternary.

For the total population of Petrila of 25840 inhabitants, the size of the relevant sample was considered to be 379 respondents, for a level of reliability of 95% and a risk of error of +/- 5%. 360 of them were extremely communicative and interested, the other 19 respondents avoided answering to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was applied in the town Petrila but also in other localities for a period of 4 months, from September 1st 2010 until December 1st 2010.

RESULTS AND DISCUTIONS

For the question no. 1: 80% of the respondents live in Petrila and were very interested and willing to answer the questions, 20% do not live in this town but said to be impressed by this tradition and willing to participate at this tradition of the town Petrila.

For the question no. 2: 61% of the respondents know the tradition of the "piţărăi", being born in this town, have experienced this tradition since they were children and were educated to respect the Christian spirit of the "piţărăi";39% do not know this tradition, as they came from other regions of Romania due to the mining industry, but in time they got accustomed to it.

For the question no. 3: 76% of the respondents participated at this tradition because it is the only tradition of the town and is awaited with high pomposity by the inhabitants and 24% did not participate because they were not interested.

For the question no. 4: 38% participate at this tradition because it is a traditional custom in Petrila, inherited since ancient times, 42% participate because they like the "momârlănesc" clothing, the coloured flags and the suite transmitting the warmth and announcing the Chrismas and 20% participate at this tradition to meet all the acquaintances and wish them Merry Christmas.

For the question no. 5: 20% do not wish this tradition to be imitated in other regions of Romania, 48,5% agree that this tradition from the Jiu Valley to be known in other parts of Romania in order to possibly spread this custom and 31,5% think that every region has its own traditions and the others are not interested in ours.

For the question no. 6: 19,6% would participate at the tradition of the "piţărăi" if it were recommended by a trustworthy person, 35% would participate if it were intensively publicised, 26,1% would participate out of simple curiosity and 19,3% would not participate because they do not know the region.

For the question no. 7: 86% think that there might be a potential to include this tradition in the touristic activity because it would attract the investors and tourists who could generate local economical development; 14% think that even if it exists, this tradition would attract nobody, because this town is very little known from touristic point of view.

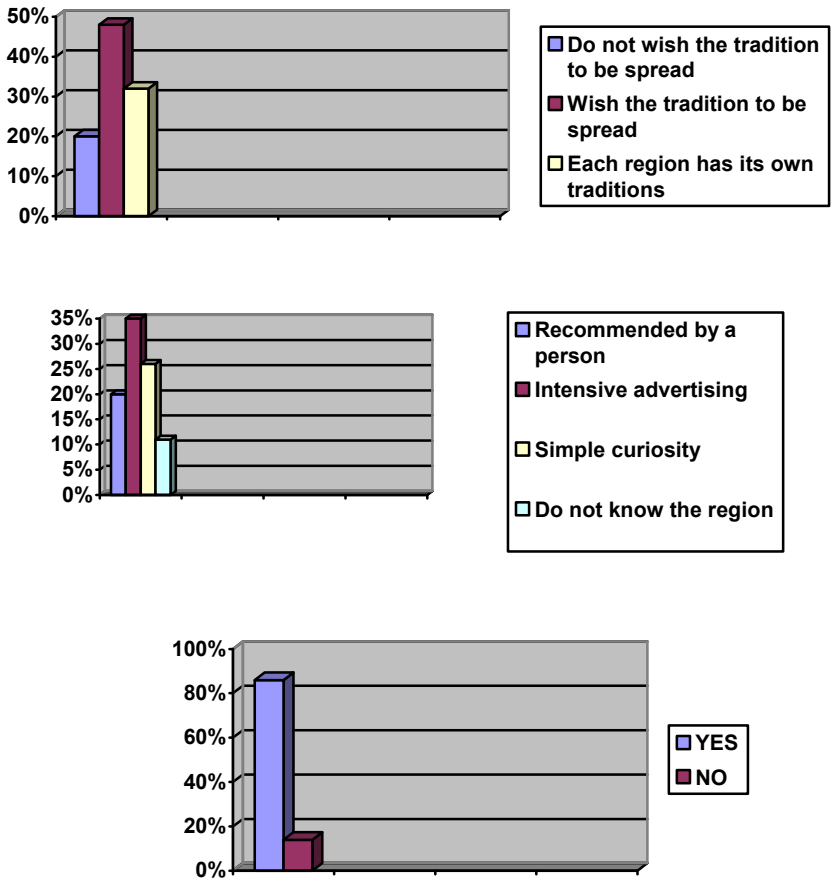


Fig. 2. Graphical representation of the results for the questions no. 5, 6, 7

For the question no. 8: 44% think that the role of the "piţărăi" is to announce the Christmas, 39% think that their role is to sing carols and party together with the villagers and 17% consider that they do not play an important role.

For the question no. 9: 39% say that they are attracted by the carolling and the specific flags, 36% are attracted by the national clothing and the "momârlănesc" dance, 8% by the traditional goodies offered by the hosts and 17% have no interest in this tradition.

For the question no. 10: 91% say that they would like that this tradition would not disappear in order to be kept by their descendants as they kept it up to the present days; 9% are indifferent.

For the question no. 11, the age of the respondents, 25% are between 18-35 years old, 34% are between 36-45 years old, 20% are between 46-65 years old and 21% are over 65 years old.

For the question no. 12, the monthly income of the respondents, 44% have between 600-1000 lei, 39% have between 1001-1500 lei and 17% have over 1500 lei.

For the question no. 13, the sector of the economy the respondents are working in: 48,5% in the primary sector, 20,5 in the secondary sector, 17% in the tertiary sector and 14% in the quaternary sector.

The conclusion is that the analized region has potential for tourism. A strategy of development of the tourism in the whole Jiu Valley can include touristic circuits for visiting all the localities of the region, since every locality has its treasures from the touristic point of view. In particular, in the town Petrila the following can be visited: beautiful mountain landscapes, the gorge of Taia, the Natural Reservation of the Gorge of Jieț, the Memorial House I. D. Sârbu, the tradition of the "pițărăi".

The market of the touristic product consists of goods and services conceived to satisfy the demand for leisure and business travel. The tour-operators launch tourist packages sold either directly, by the own distribution network, or by travel agencies in exchange for a commission. So, the tourist packages represent travels organised according to a preset programme, detailed on touristic services. The packages are sold in advance for a fixed price.

In the town of Petrila, the accommodation of the tourists can be done at the Hotel Petrila. The Hotel Petrila was established on March 28th 2010 and is located in the centre of Petrila on the Republicii street no. 70, having a series of facilities, including private parking. The competition is very weak because it is the only hotel in this town and has a superior quotation (3 stars). It will be easy to penetrate the market by an adequate price policy and reach the position of leader on the hotel market.

The main objective is to satisfy from the qualitative and quantitative point of view a segment of the social need, on conditions of high profitability. The aim is the best possible satisfaction of the clients, mainly

by offering high quality products and by a proper distribution of these products.

Establishing a hotel is quite difficult, also developing a hotel is difficult as it requires time, a professional marketing department and competent employees.

The key factors to success for this business are:

- the quality of the services,
- the selling prices for the services,
- promoting the name and the activity of the firm,
- the degree of loyalty of the clients.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the questionnaire used for a sample of 379 respondents we came to the conclusion that most of the respondents are aware of the tradition of the "piţărăi", participated on this tradition and would be delighted if it went on and got spread.

This tradition should be promoted within the Jiu Valley as well as in the rest of Romania, but this is possible only by intensive advertising and by developing the touristic infrastructure in order to attract the tourists.

I think that this region should be promoted not only by the tradition of the "piţărăi", but also by other treasures of the Jiu Valley.

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