# PROMOTION OF QUALITY TOURISM IN THE COMMUNE OF COŞEŞTI, ARGEŞ COUNTY

# PROMOVAREA UNUI TURISM RURAL DE CALITATE ÎN COMUNA COŞEŞTI, JUDEȚUL ARGEŞ

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***Abstract:*** *Rural tourism is a key element in achieving the overall objectives of the European Union, primarily in promoting the interests of European citizens, promoting economic growth, reducing unemployment, regional development, natural and cultural heritage management, as well as strengthening European identity. Promotion refers to all activities, information resources and the ways to capture the attention of potential customers in order to meet their needs and desires and also to increase the economic efficiency of tourism products and services provided.*

***Key words:*** *promotional mix, quality management, tour operator*

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism can contribute to the preservation and continuation of the rich and valuable traditions of the Romanian people as a living phenomenon in constant transformation and enrichment, where each generation has its own contribution. Coşeşti village, situated in Argeş county, benefits from a natural tourism potential (scenic landscapes, strenghtening and sparing bioclimate, valuable species of flora, rich hunting grounds) and great folk, but hardly exploited in terms of tourism. Although the villagers are hospitable and want their village to be developed through tourism, lack of information on special tourist resources and advantages some form of rural, environmental or mountain tourism development would bring, are factors contributing to the stagnation of tourism activities in Coşeşti village as seen from observations on the ground.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The high quality European rural tourist product as shown in Coşeşti village, Argeş County, asserts itself through an old rural tradition, folk art and crafts, and their production and promotion are segments of vast interest.

Coşeşti village in Argeş County is located in the area known as the Hills (or Gruiuri) of Argeş that are integrated in the great Piedmont unit known in the geographical literature as the Getic Plateau or Getic Piedmont. Lady's River (Râul Doamnei) crosses the village from north to south, being the main tributary of Argeş river, collecting small streams that drain the area. Mathematically, the village is positioned near the meridian of 25 ° east latitude and the parallel of 45 ° north longitude, their intersection being only 20 km away, on the territory of Davideşti village. Administratively, Coşeşti village is incorporated in Argeş County, located in its central part at only 25 km from the city of Piteşti. The village occupies an area of 64 km ² (Image 1.), and within its administrative structure are the following villages: Lăpuşani, Leiceşti, Păcioiu, Petreşti - located on the left side of Lady's River, and Priseaca and Jupâneşti - on the right.



**Image 1 View over Coşeşti village**

Rural and ecological tourism development would bring significant benefits to local communities, preservation of habitats and ethnographic values.

***Natural touristic potential*** is very rich and diversified: picturesque landscapes, soothing and tonic bioclimate, rich hunting grounds, the commune fitting into the categories of rural landscape, villages with a hunting interest and villages with scientific interest objectives.

The landscape is very varied and favors the practice of many types of tourism: a Carpatho-Subcarpathian interference area.

The maximum altitude of Coşeşti village in the piedmont is 726 m in the Păcurarul Hill. This elevation is recorded in the springs of the Păcurarul stream.

Landforms generated by monoclinal structures are: slopes, structural surfaces, structural controls, structural valleys.

***Climatic- touristic potential***

Inside the perimeter of Coşeşti village the bioclimate is a transition one between the soothing-indifferent (or relaxing) bioclimate specific to hilly and depression areas and the stimulant tonic bioclimate of the mountains. Average yearly values (6-8$^0$C) and monthly air temperature, high annual average rainfall (800-900mm), air humidity (75%), moderate winds, provide the body with maximum thermal comfort. Climate therapy is also based on the positive effects of negative aeroionization and vegetal aerosols which, along with the other climate elements has a sedative effect, relaxing and refreshing, being recommended in the treatment of rest and neurasthenia.

***Touristic potential of the waters in the area***

The valleys of Lady's River and its tributaries offer great scenery everywhere: thresholds, rapids and gorges, small areas of beach. In the Nucşoara - Coşeşti area Lady's River collects a rectangular river system, consisting generally of small rivers, both as basin area and as water flow and length, their drainage system featuring a number of peculiarities determined by the conditions specific for the area they drain.

*Flora and fauna potential:* Coşeşti village is situated at altitudes ranging between 600-900m, where the Subcarpathian Getic lower nemoral floor develops, consisting of oak forests and hornbeam, oak, lime sulfur, sycamore, maple. At altitudes of 800-1200m the nemoral floor develops, consisting of beechtrees of the following species: beech, hornbeam, oak, mountain maple, mountain elm. At altitudes above 1200m and up to 1500m there is a development of undergrowth of beech forests and mixed conifer. In Lady's River meadow there are black alder clearings, willows, elm, ash. Some of them were cleared, those lands being converted to pasture.

Among the faunal elements representative to the beech forest floor and conifers we mention: bear, deer, lynx, wolf, deer, wild boar, wild cat, fox, tree marten, squirrel. In Lady's River and its tributaries there is trout, and downstream broad snout, barbel, minnow, bullhead, chub.

***Ethnocultural potential:*** Coşeşti village belongs to the ethnographic area of North Argeş and Muscel, where folk art has made its mark on all aspects of social and cultural life: the traditional architecture and rural house, folk costumes, crafts, customs and folk events.

The peasant cottage has undergone changes over time. The main construction materials are fir and oak. The house is usually located in the central area of the land, in front being usually planted flower beds and fruit trees, and in the back there are the annexes of the cottage, a small garden, an orchard or a pasture[1].

The specificity of residential dwellings erected in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century lies in the arrangement of living spaces at the upper level and at lower level the space is destined for storing agricultural products.

The **dress style** is specific to the Argeş and Muscel area. Raw materials used were hemp, wool, floss silk or cotton. Also, the traditional female costume is very beautiful and richly decorated with floral or geometric models. It consists of tunics, underskirts, vest, ‚fotă' (wrap round skirt), opanaks and ‚broboadă' (large square scarf). The tunic is made of gossamer, hemp or cotton; it was ruffle at the collar and weas richly ornamented. The vest was worn over the tunic and over the underskirt a

[1] Mazilescu Sorin, 2009, *„Lady's River- habitat and identity "* Piteşti University Publishing House, p. 39

wrap round the skirt (‚fota') tied with a girdle was worn, both made of woven black fabric decorated with vegetal and geometric models, red, green and yellow.

Men's costume was simple, comprising of white tight winter trousers (‚cioareci'), shirt with a low collar and few ornaments, black vest, short and long jacket, wool girdle or belt, lamb fur hat, opanaks or boots .. (Image 2).

Folk dances were held on Sundays or public holidays, being a celebration of joy: the Brâul, Hora, Alunelul, Banu Maracine, Ungurica and others. Of all traditions and customs, some rituals still remain, such as the rituals of birth, baptism, wedding and funeral, some calendar-related traditions (Ignat of the pig and carols round Christmas time, goat's dance and Plugusorul for the celebration of the New Year, the celebration of Saint Basil on January 1, Iordănitul on Epiphany day, Healing Spring on the first Friday after Easter, the Choosing of sheep on 15 September, the fire of Sumetru on Saint Dumitru day) and even incantations and spells. Culinary products based on milk and meat are outstanding: barbequed ram, bulz (specialty made with polenta and cheese), sweet cheese, smoked cheese, ricotta, jintiță (whey mixed with ricotta), etc.



**Image 2.Traditional men's costume**

Women also wear opanaks with white wool socks, with patterns made by the weaving of the threads, and about knee-length. The opanaks are tied with hemp cords or ‚târsâne' (image 3). The ‚fota', made of dark-colored wool or gossamer, is embelished with different designs of arnica, silk or silver threads (glitter), or sometimes with golden threads, the latter ones being called „threaded wrap round skirts".



**Image 3. Traditional women's costume**

To show that folk costumes are the definition of our nation, at the Coşeşti School and Coşeşti Mayoralty each year on November 7 are held exhibitions and folk festivals under the names of „Grandma's dowry chest" and the „Pear Brandy Festival", as well as a contest with prizes for „The most authentic folk costume".

***Economic potential:*** Cultural goods, folk traditions and customs are all part of the Romanian folk culture and are characterized by originality, beauty and vitality, of centuries past up to the present day, in Coşeşti village of Argeş County. Proof of this heritage is the sometimes millennial persistence of a large number of elements confirmed in all areas of traditional folk arts and crafts, especially the shepherds' activities, in traditional costume, and the coopers and notches in wood.

**Coopers' trade** in the Coşeşti- Argeş area is an old, milennial, tradition, it's a craft that uses oak, beech and locust wood, making lags which are later used for making different-sized barrels.

**Pottery** is practiced mainly because of the presence of clay soil, being a traditional occupation perpetuated from generation to generation, practiced with professionalism, regardless of sex, in compliance with the morphological features revealed by the structure and ornamental ceramic products.

As elements of material and spiritual culture, **folk art and crafts** reflect the specific characteristics of the Muscel area and have a profound social character with a clear role in achieving balance between the useful and the beautiful,between the utilitarian and material requirements and the aesthetic ones.

## RESULTS AND DISCUTIONS

Lately, the European Union has drafted a document in which a series of recommendations are formulated in order to promote quality tourism. This led to the development of several core principles of this document, based on "quality provision"[1] , namely:

- **Authenticity –** tourists in rural areas are in search of new, original experiences;
- **Distinction -** tourists travel trying to benefit from unique experiences. The distribution of quality should be identified with bringing forth the peculiarities, the distinction of touristic destinations;
- **Realistically evaluated market potential –**usually a quality management system is based on where realistic assessment of the potential of that area, identifying strengths in relation to competition.
- **Sustainability and integration** - we can say that any touristic destination in rural areas that wishes to provide quality must be concerned about the impact of tourism on the area;

[1] Noica C., 2003, *International Tourism. Touristic product development and distribution practices*, All Beck Publishing House, Bucharest, p. 98.

- **Consumer orientation** – quality management refers to being as close to a tourist as possible, to understanding his or her needs and to assessing how they have been met;
- **Fidelity** - rural tourism entrepreneurs should not rely on the provision of quality service to only a small group of people. All visitors should benefit from such services, especially those with special needs
- **Partnership –** quality management is the involvement of all the inhabitants of a community, and teamwork is a positive element, and of course, a factor of success;
- **Connection** - Quality rural tourism depends and supports many other activities in a particular area, such as agriculture, handicrafts, transport and other local services;
- **Involvement and effective communication** - are fundamental requirements for all residents of the community where rural tourism is practiced. With all those involved in rural tourism it is a key element in achieving success;
- **Monitoring -** Quality management requires monitoring and periodic evaluation of the impact on visitors, businesses, environment and local community

The European rural touristic product in this area will increase its quality and attractiveness by means of leisure and relaxation available to tourists. Both outside and within rural areas the following recreational activities can be carried out:

- trips, short hikes through the forest, on the banks of Lady's River;
- Mountaneering and short mountain climbing on mountain massifs close-by (Făgăraș and Iezer Păpușa );
- Skiing, sleighing, cycling, horse-drawn carriage rides, wagon rides, sled rides, depending on the season;
- Practice of light sports: tennis, jogging, minigolf;
- Visiting cultural objectives: monasteries, village museums, memorial houses (Corbii de Piatră Monastery);
- Participation in some cultural activities, contests, festivals;
- Learning and practicing a craft (pottery, coopers, embroidery, woodcarving, icon painting, egg decoration, etc.).

## CONCLUSIONS

Quality management is a concept that is based on efficient local economy, enhancing tourist satisfaction, environment protection and improving life in local communities. De asemenea, managementul calității în turism trebuie să reprezinte un proces continuu şi nu o inițiativă pe o perioadă limitată de timp. Also, quality management in tourism should be a continuous process and not an initiative for a limited period of time. Promoting rural tourism product in Coşeşti commune, Argeş county relies mostly on intermediaries (travel agencies, webhosting companies on the Internet) or is made directly through catalogs and advertising leaflets. In these circumstances, the customer purchase decision depends solely on the image intermediaries (distribution channels) give this service, in terms of rural tourism services quality.

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