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THE ROLE OF CRAFTS AND TRADITIONS IN PROMOTING RURAL TOURISM SERVICES

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Abstract: *The paper examines the role of traditional crafts and customs in promoting rural tourism services in Caraș-Severin County, Romania. In a context in which tourists increasingly seek authentic experiences and direct contact with local communities, traditional activities such as weaving, wood processing, wickerwork and decorative hand-stitching can strengthen the cultural identity of rural destinations and diversify their tourism offer.*

The study is based on a review and synthesis of bibliographic sources and information concerning local crafts, their connection with rural tourism, and the opportunities and challenges involved in their promotion. The analysis highlights the cultural and educational value of craft demonstrations, workshops and handmade products, which allow visitors to engage with local knowledge and traditions while supporting craftspeople and rural communities.

At the same time, limited promotion, the declining number of practitioners and reduced interest among younger generations threaten the continuity of these practices. To support their tourism potential, the paper proposes a cultural itinerary entitled "In the Footsteps of Traditional Crafts in Caraș-Severin", designed to connect visitors with representative localities, traditional techniques and Banat gastronomy. The study concludes that integrating traditional crafts into rural tourism services can contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage, the strengthening of local identity and the sustainable development of rural communities.

Introduction

Rural tourism is a way of making use of a village's natural, cultural, and socio-economic resources, giving visitors the opportunity to learn first-hand about the way of life of local communities. Compared with standardized tourism products, the rural experience stands out for its authenticity, interpersonal contact, local cuisine, and participation in traditional activities. These characteristics can help differentiate destinations and strengthen their cultural identity.

In Romania, the diversity of landscapes and the preservation of traditional practices provide favorable conditions for rural tourism development. Crafts, community customs, folk costumes, and local dishes have more than symbolic value: they can become components of tourism services through demonstrations, workshops, visits to households, fairs, and the sale of locally made products. In this way, heritage is presented as a living practice rather than merely as an exhibited object.

Material and method

The research is descriptive and applied in nature and is based on bibliographic research, consultation of institutional sources and online materials cited in the original thesis, and comparative analysis of craft examples and ways in which they can be linked to tourism services. The descriptive method was used to present the techniques and local context, while comparative analysis was used to identify opportunities and limitations in integrating them into the tourism offer.

Results and discussions


Source: via-profi.ro
Woodworking


Source: via-profi.ro
Wooden product


Source: via-profi.ro
Loom weaving


Source: via-profi.ro
Traditional fabric


Source: via-profi.ro
Clay vessels


Source: via-profi.ro
Rammed-earth construction


Source: InfoCS.ro
Wickerwork


Source: InfoCS.ro
Wicker baskets


Source: via-profi.ro
Folk costume

Conclusions

The analysis suggests several priority actions: compiling an inventory of craftspeople and activities able to receive visitors; establishing cooperation with guesthouses and information centers; developing a shared presentation of routes and workshops; organizing educational programs for young people; and periodically assessing economic and cultural effects. These actions can be implemented gradually, beginning in localities where interested practitioners are already active and expanding the offer as cooperation strengthens.