UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES "KING MIHAI I" FROM TIMISOARA
"YOUNG PEOPLE AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH IN APPLIED LIFE SCIENCES"

05-06 November 2026



RURAL TOURISM SERVICES AND ECUMENICAL TOURISM IN GORJ COUNTY

MANUELA MARIA ŞERBULESCU[1], SIMONA CRISTINA CONSTANTINESCU[1]*
[1]***University of Life Sciences „King Mihai I" from Timisoara, Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism, Romania***
*Corresponding author e-mail: simona_constantinescu@usvt.ro

Abstract: *This research aims to analyze the role of ecumenical tourism in the development of rural tourism, by highlighting the contribution of religious heritage to increasing tourist attractiveness, stimulating the local economy and preserving cultural and spiritual identity. The study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the localities of Tismana and Polovragi, in Gorj County, two representative destinations for religious tourism in Romania, characterized by the existence of monastic settlements with special historical and spiritual value. The importance of monastic heritage in the development of tourist activities is highlighted, as is the favorable perception of the contribution of ecumenical tourism to the development of the local economy, by stimulating accommodation services, public catering, traditional trade and tourism promotion. The main difficulties identified concern the insufficiently developed infrastructure, limited tourism promotion and the need for additional investments. Ecumenical tourism represents an important component of the development of rural tourism in the two localities, contributing to the valorization of religious heritage, the diversification of the tourist offer and the support of local communities. The study emphasizes the need for integrated tourism development strategies, based on infrastructure modernization, the promotion of cultural and natural heritage, and the involvement of local authorities and communities.*

Introduction

Ecumenical tourism, considered an important component of religious tourism, is based on the movement of people to places of worship and spiritual centers, for religious, cultural or spiritual recreation reasons. Monasteries, churches and other religious sites are points of attraction for numerous visitors and pilgrims, becoming true poles of tourism development. At the same time, rural tourism offers the possibility of capitalizing on traditional resources, natural landscapes and the authentic specificity of the Romanian village, through tourist services and local experiences.



Source: own creation

The relationship between ecumenical tourism and rural tourism

Material and method

In carrying out the work, research methods such as bibliographic analysis, observation, comparative study and interpretation of information regarding the tourist and religious potential of the two localities were used, as well as the application of a questionnaire, the purpose of which was to identify the perception of tourists and residents regarding the influence of ecumenical tourism on the development of rural tourism in the localities of Tismana and Polovragi, Gorj County. The sample was 100 respondents for each locality, applied during February - April 2026. The results of the questionnaire highlight the fact that ecumenical tourism represents an important factor in the development of rural tourism in both the localities of Tismana and Polovragi. The presence of monasteries attracts constant flows of tourists and pilgrims, contributing to the dynamization of the local economy, the promotion of cultural heritage and the development of tourist services.

Results and discussions



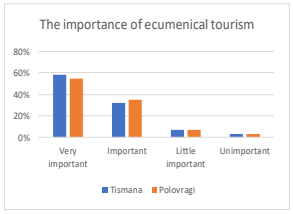
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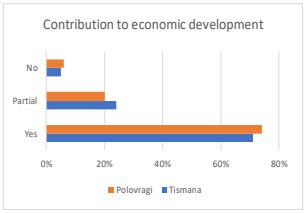
Tismana Monastery

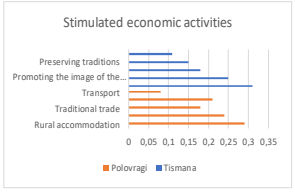


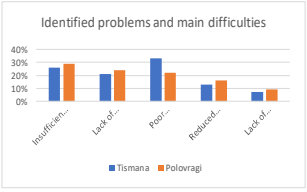
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Polovragi Monastery









Conclusions

The study confirms the existence of a close relationship between ecumenical tourism and rural tourism, the two forms of tourism complementing each other by capitalizing on traditions, spiritual heritage and the natural setting specific to rural areas. In the case of the analyzed localities, monasteries represent the main tourist attractions and contribute to promoting the cultural and spiritual identity of the area.

The research results show that the majority of respondents consider ecumenical tourism to be an essential element for local development and for promoting the tourist image of rural communities. The flows of tourists and pilgrims generate positive economic effects through the development of accommodation structures, public catering, traditional trade and tourist services. At the same time, tourist activity stimulates the capitalization of local products and the preservation of traditions and customs specific to the area.