

## **State of Fact and Trends of Tourism Activity in Alba County**

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**Abstract.** This paper relieves the main characteristics of tourism activity in Alba County through the help of some specific indicators such as: accommodation capacity, arrivals and overnights stay in the guesthouses, and tourist traffic indexes. All the indicators taken into the analysis confirm the intense activity from the guesthouses. The actual state of fact, but also the trend confirms the fact that tourists prefer the guesthouses with a lower level of classification, mostly one and two flowers accommodation.

**Keyword:** rural tourism, guesthouses, accommodation capacity, evolution trends in rural tourism development

### INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism has encountered a growth in Romania after 1990 and particularly in recent years. More and more entrepreneurs have started to shy to invest in places with a tradition started (county of Brasov, Prahova), extending later to other locations in the country. Currently offer enough variety. This is largely due to devolution of the classic hotel system, the facilities and equipment obsolescence, charged high prices and poor services. Therefore, rural tourism has emerged as a viable alternative, which turned on more and more tourists.

Most hostels offer a package of rural tourism services - accommodation and meals, the latter form of half or full board. There are accommodation facilities in which it appears that the tourist can assist in preparing a meal or even to actively participate in this activity.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main objective of this paper is to analyze the situation of rural tourism in Alba County and the calculation of indicators as the quality of rural tourism activity on fact based decision making. These were complemented by the development of theoretical and practical tools that can boost the total quality management approach to enhance economic efficiency and ensuring stable development of rural tourism in this county. For the purpose of this paper data were collected from the National Association of Rural, Ecological and Cultural - Alba Branch, the owners of hostels, staff and travelers.

Based on own researches was obtained a fairly complete set of data on physical and economic side of rural tourism in the county of Alba. Also, to characterize rural tourism district in terms of economic, social and natural sources have been also used different studies from literature, geography, monographs, and publications of local government. Beside national legislation regarding the organization of rural tourism activity, also numerous national and international papers related to the issue, quality management and total quality management were studied.

The mains methods used were those of the indices and adjusted trends (Merce and Merce, 2009).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The number of rural tourist guesthouses can be considered one of the most important indicators for the smooth running of the business of rural tourism, because no such activity could be held without the existence of a rural tourist accommodation structures. An important issue that arises in Alba County is the quality of accommodation facilities services in terms of comfort category. Analysis of rural tourist guesthouses comfort categories (Tab. 1) reveals that there are very few guesthouses with higher comfort level (three, four and five daisies), predominantly those two daisies but the market trend impose the necessity of development of higher comfort category.

Tab. 1

Number of rural tourist hostels in Alba County in the period 2000-2007 by category of comfort

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
1 daisy	1	12	12	12	22	30	30	25
2 daisy	14	20	34	39	63	94	94	99
3 daisy		1	3	5	7	12	13	13
4 daisy						2	2	5
5 daisy					1	2	4	4
TOTAL	15	33	49	56	93	140	143	146

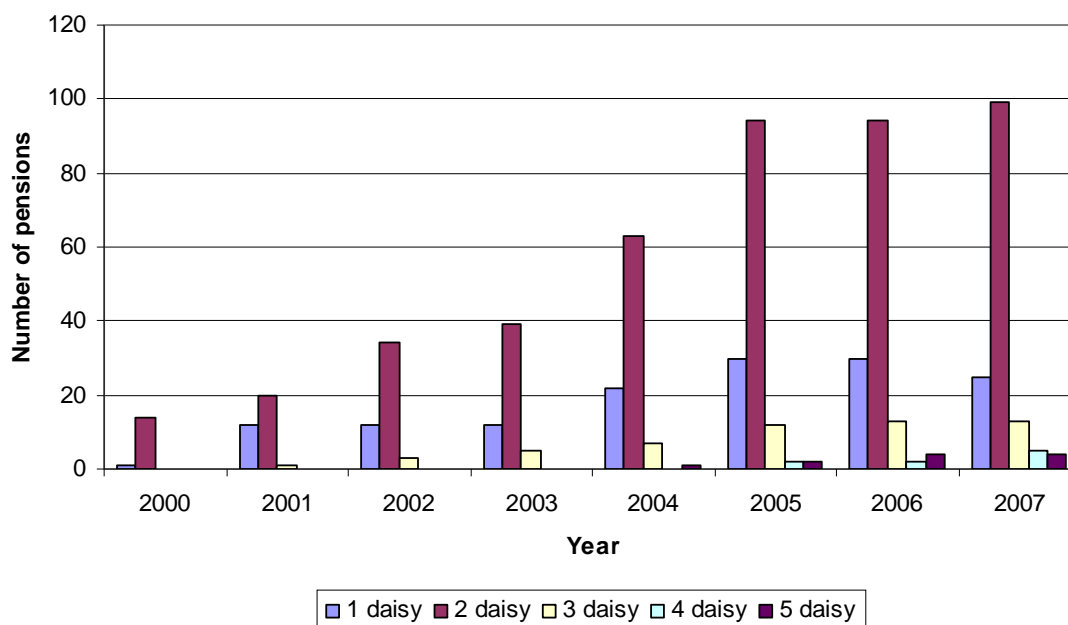


Fig. 1. Development of rural tourism hostels accommodation in Alba County functions during the period 2000-2007 by category of comfort

A slight trend also had one daisy guesthouses from 1 in 2000 to 25 in 2007. A significant increase of these took place in 2001 when were registered 12 guesthouses for one daisy comfort category; this number was maintained until 2004 when was registered 22

guesthouses for this category. In 2005 and 2006 there were 30 guesthouses for one daisy and by the end of 2007 remained only 25 (Fig. 1). This decrease is due to improvements in the quality parameters of five guesthouses and so they were included in the two daisy comfort category, as required by law. As a share of total guesthouses, one daisy guesthouses in 2000 represented 6.66%, getting to 17.12% in 2007 (Tab. 2).

Tab. 2

Share of rural touristic guesthouses (%) of Alba County in the period 2000-2007 by category of comfort

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
1 daisy	6,66	36,36	24,49	21,43	23,66	21,42	20,98	17,12
2 daisy	93,33	60,60	69,38	69,64	67,74	67,14	65,73	67,81
3 daisy		3,03	6,12	8,92	7,52	8,57	9,09	8,90
4 daisy						1,43	1,39	3,42
5 daisy					1,07	1,43	2,80	2,74
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Guesthouses of two stars represented 93.33% in 2000 from the total number of guesthouses in Alba County. In 2007 two daisies rural touristic guesthouses, while declining, still have a high share of total guesthouses, 67.81% (Tab. 2). Most accommodation facilities were built on existing residents, bringing them the minimum investment to match the comfort category classification of 2 stars. The percentage decrease is due mainly to the rise of the high comfort accommodation facilities, on the one hand and on the raise of one daisy guesthouses on the other hand.

A shy appearance is observed in the case of 3 daisies guesthouses. Their number increase from one in 2001 to 13 in 2007. In 2001 they held a share of 3.03% of total guesthouses, and 8.90% in 2007 (Tab. 2). This is due to lack of investment in rural areas due to low income residents. 4 stars guesthouses are very few, ranging from two in 2005 to five in 2007. They represented 1.43% of all guesthouses in 2005, reaching 3.42% in 2007. A relatively small number of rural guesthouses 5 stars began to take shape in 2004 to 1-4 in 2007. They had in 2004 accounted for 1.07% of total guesthouses, compared to 2.74% in 2007.

The small number of three, four and five daisies guesthouses comfort category existing in the Alba County is mainly due to the lack of quality parameters specified in the current classification criteria categories of comfort. From the total of 146 accommodation facilities that were studied in 2007 only 124 are classified, representing 84.93% of the total share. Table 3 examines developments in rural touristic guesthouses graded comfort during 2000-2007.

Tab. 3

Number of classified rural tourist hostels in Alba County during 2000 to 2007 the category of comfort

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
1 daisy	1	12	12	12	21	27	27	22
2 daisy	10	16	30	32	56	76	76	81
3 daisy		1	3	5	7	11	12	12
4 daisy						2	2	5
5 daisy					1	2	4	4
Total	11	29	45	49	85	118	121	124

Source: Alba ANTREC

Out of the 13 existing accommodation 3 daises in 2007 were classified 12, representing 92.31%. All the 4 and 5 daises guesthouses are classified.

Graphical representation (Fig. 2) shows a dramatic increase in the number of two stars classified hostels throughout the period studied. This is due to significant contribution of the subsidiary Alba ANTREC following discussions with the owners of accommodation facilities. They have been explained that only by receiving the classification certificate can be justified for a certain category of comfort, so it can be recognized by tourists from the qualitative point of view.

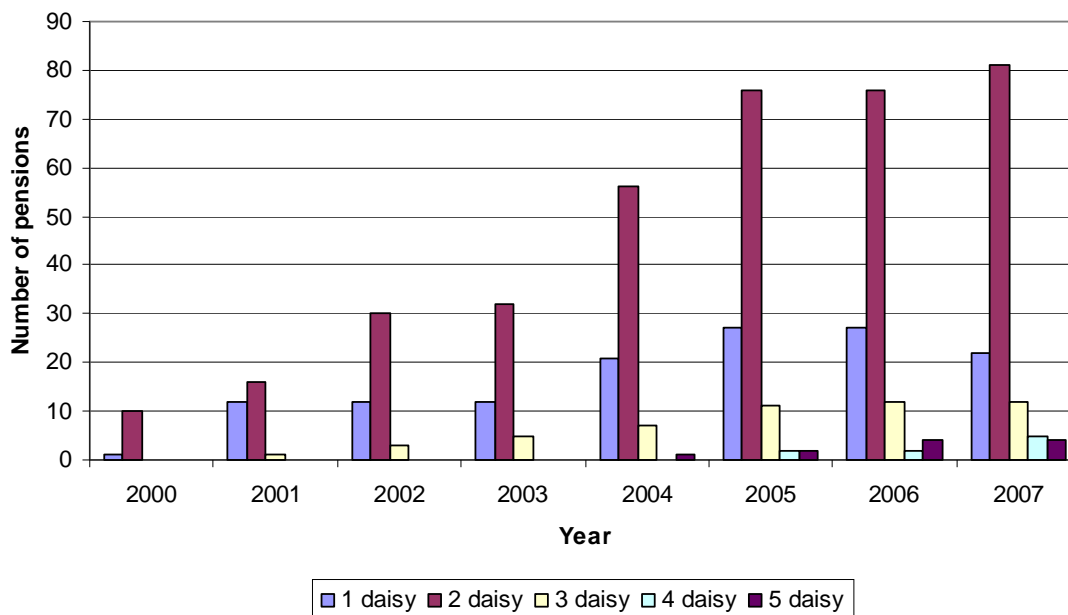


Fig. 2. Development of rural tourism hostels accommodation functions classified in Alba County over the period 2000-2007 by category of comfort

There is also observed shy growing in the case of three daises accommodation facilities, which main destination was the tourist one. Since 2005 in Albac (Guesthouse Poiana Verde) and Arieşeni (Guesthouse Casa Noastra) was classified only one 4 daisy, carried out through the SAPARD funds, for each case. In 2007, also through SAPARD funds were classified as 4 daises Vraja Muntelui Guesthouse in Arieseni, Anda Guesthouse in Vadu Motilor and Conacul Secuiesc in Coltesti and especially built for the development and practice of rural tourism.

Tab. 4

Total number of beds available to rural tourist hostels in Alba County 2000-2007

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
1 daisy	6	36	36	46	100	123	123	103
2 daisy	44	84	200	274	346	512	512	540
3 daisy		10	40	66	82	180	208	208
4 daisy						42	42	100
5 daisy					16	36	72	72
Total	50	130	276	386	544	893	957	1023

Source: Alba ANTREC

Basic services in rural tourism are represented by accommodation, food and beverage and entertainment. Existing accommodation capacity is expressed as the number of accommodation offered by rural tourism guesthouses.

During 2000-2007 there was an upward trend of accommodation in all categories of comfort, with the exception of one daisy, where there is a decrease from 123 seats in 2006 to 103 seats in 2007 (Tab. 4, Fig. 3). This is because some of the existing guest houses of one daisy category in Rimetea increased their comfort level by improving the quality of tangibles elements, tourism product and services, as required by law, having the opportunity to apply for a new classification for two daisies comfort category. There is an increase of 20.46 times the total number of existing beds in 2007 compared to 2000, namely 973 seats.

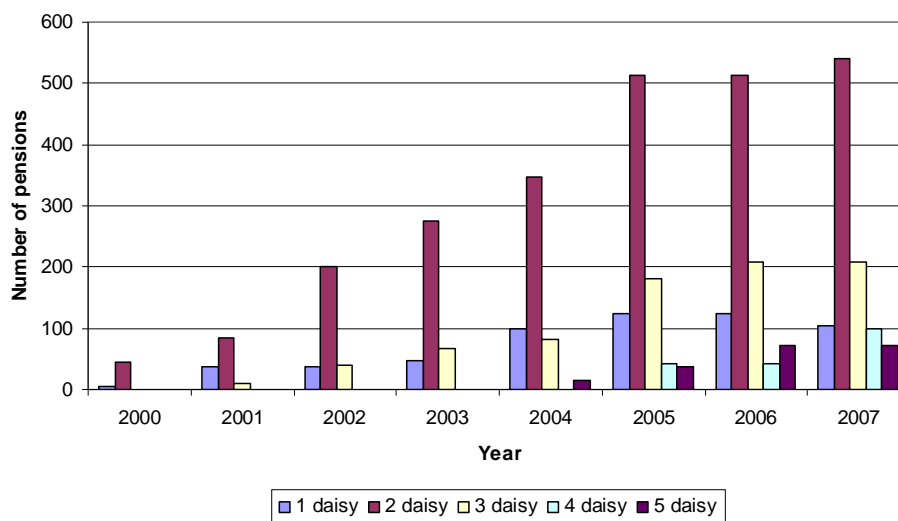


Fig. 3. Structure of the total number of existing beds in rural touristic guesthouses by year and category of comfort

Index of use of accommodation capacity in function in rural touristic guesthouses, based on own calculations in Alba County, in 2007 is in average 46.13%, with substantial variations in the degree of comfort (Fig. 4).

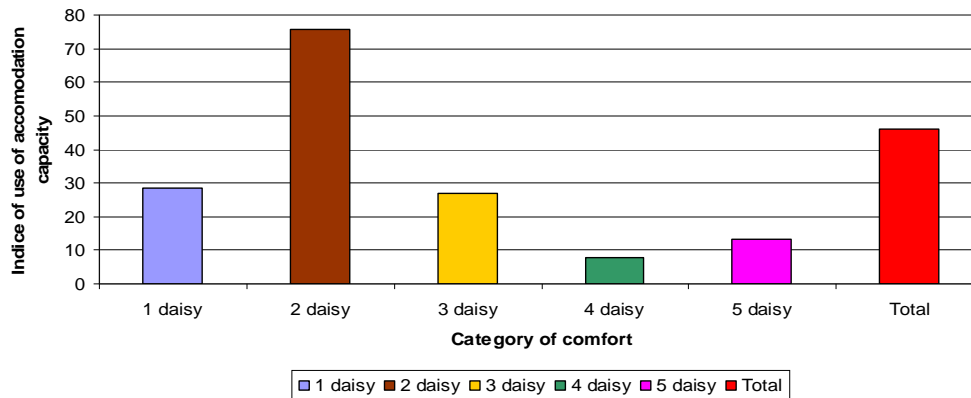


Fig. 4. The indices of capacity utilization in service accommodation to rural tourist hostels in Alba County, in 2007, the category of comfort

Comparing the indices of use of accommodation capacity in operation, it is found that the highest efficiency of capacity utilization in service accommodation in the hostels is a lower quality of comfort. This is due to the large number of guesthouses held Alba County to this category but the fact that most tourists were from low-income category of social caste and not allowed to pay higher tariffs for accommodation at accommodation facilities with a high quality environment or comfort (Popa, 2009).

The level and dynamics of the number of tourists arriving in hostels in Alba County confirmed the increased activity in the area of interest for the entire period of time 2000-2007 (Tab. 5 and Fig. 5).

Tab. 5

Evolution of chronological indicators in the number of tourists staying in hostels in Alba County

Year	Absolute indicators			Indicators relative			
	Level	Absolute Change		Indices		Rate	
	$y_t$	$\Delta_{t/1}$	$\Delta_{t/t-1}$	$I_{t/1}$ (%)	$I_{t/t-1}$ (%)	$R_{t/1}$ (%)	$R_{t/t-1}$ (%)
2000	1942	-	-	-	-	-	-
2001	7774	5832	5832	400,31	400,31	300,31	300,31
2002	11178	9236	3404	575,59	143,79	475,59	43,79
2003	12103	10161	925	623,22	108,28	523,22	8,28
2004	14349	12407	2246	738,88	118,56	638,88	18,56
2005	18893	16951	4544	972,86	131,67	872,86	31,67
2006	20548	18606	1655	1058,08	108,76	958,08	8,76
2007	23551	21609	3003	1212,72	114,61	1112,72	14,61

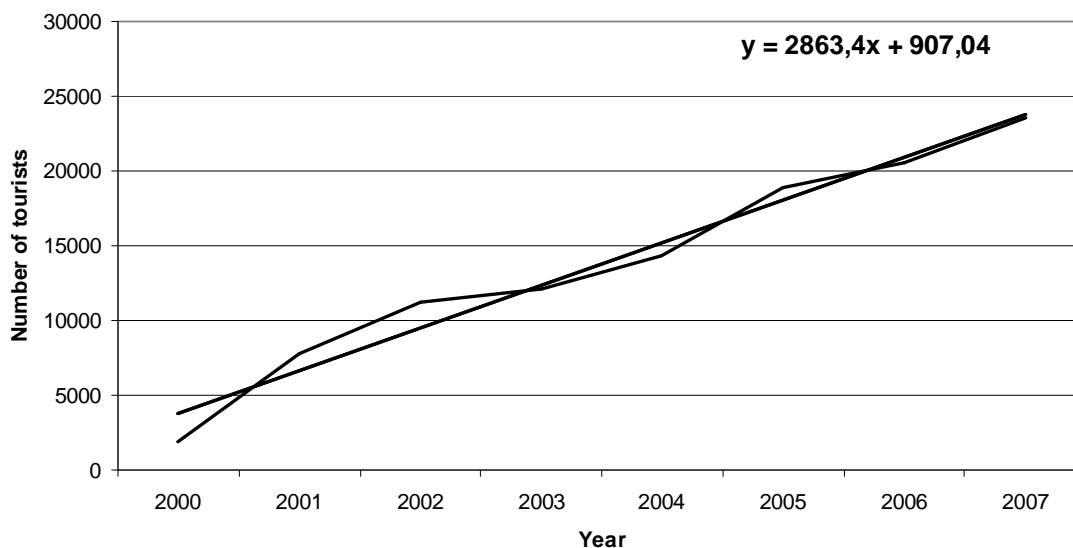


Fig. 5. Dynamics of tourists arriving in White County during 2000 to 2007

### CONCLUSIONS

As a result of changing living conditions and the desire to escape into the wild in places less crowded and polluted as many tourists, the demand for rural tourism has grown from one year to another.

Following research work was carried out a blueprint for rural tourism in Alba County on the calculation of tourism in terms of quality indicators based on the principle of total quality management based on fact data decision making. There were also highlighted aspects of total quality management correlated with customer orientation.

The main conclusions drawn from research carried out are:

1. More than half of the existing municipalities in the Alba County have tourism potential, more or less valuable, with a significant degree of attractiveness what is appropriate rural tourism development. Yet only 3.46% of total have rural guesthouses.

2. The analysis of the number of classified rural touristic guesthouses highlights the growing trend in the number of rural tourist guesthouses in Alba County during 2000-2007.

3. During 2000-2007 there was a continuous increase of accommodation capacity exists due to increased number of rural tourist guesthouses in the district. Substantial increase in process of accommodation in the form of accommodation available to tourists, locals can be explained by the desire to start your own business and to obtain additional income to the basic result of increased requirements for rural tourism. Most of the accommodation is owned by the two stars classified tourist hostels in Rimetea, Albac, Arieșeni, Garda. Also, the largest accommodation capacity in operation in 2007 is classified in two daisies guesthouses, followed by those with three stars.

4. Evolution of tourism registered a sustained growth is the result of demand and consumption gains for this form of tourism. The large number of tourists accommodated in hostels of one, two or three flowers can be explained by the fact that they are primarily aimed at escaping from stressful daily work looking for a quiet place with fresh air, taking care to place the less to rest at night.

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