

CHARACTERISTICS OF HOLIDAY VILLAGES IN ROMANIA – TOURISM AND TERRITORIAL IDENTITY ORIENTED APPROACHES

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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.23740/TID120225>

ABSTRACT

The concept of “holiday village” has recently turned fifty. Holiday villages are found in non-urban areas, rich in nature-based and human-made resources. By implementing the planning principles of this type of accommodation, Romania has also developed its tourism supply over the past years, currently providing twelve holiday villages which are spread throughout the country. The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of these holiday villages both from a tourism analysis perspective and in relationship with territorial identity. In order to achieve this goal, a series of quantitative and qualitative methods were employed, starting with the analysis of statistical databases in parallel with the review of bibliographic materials, and the observation and analysis of the official websites of these accommodation structures, respectively. It turned out that three counties (Brașov, Suceava and Tulcea) hosted 50% of the existing holiday villages in Romania, confirming once again the importance of local tourism potential derived from geographic location and cultural heritage. Based on various tourist needs and preferences, a wide range of activities and services both basic (accommodation and catering) and additional ones (entertainment and leisure, business, etc.), which became available for different groups of guests were also identified. Eventually, a multicriterial analysis, including aspects related to architectural elements, landscape integration and links to local or regional traditional values highlighted five levels of authenticity according to which almost half of the examined units established a stronger connection with the territorial identity of the geographical-historical regions, which hosted these establishments.

Keywords: accommodation, facilities, services, local architecture, authenticity

Cite this article as: Răcășan, B. S., Egresi, I., Dezsi, Ș., Gaman, G. (2022). Characteristics of Holiday Villages in Romania – Tourism and Territorial Identity Oriented Approaches. *Territorial Identity and Development*, 7(1), 71-94. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.23740/TID120225>

INTRODUCTION

The first holiday villages started operating in 1967 and consisted of “lodging, leisure and nature” (Zotic, Puiu & Alexandru, 2012). Holiday villages are generally made up of low-rise, low-density buildings (Gürsoy & Yüğrük Akdağ, 2019) and tend to be found in rural areas, far from major centres of population, surrounded by natural beauty and rich in human-made resources, such as archaeological sites, traditional cultural assets, and folklore (Dönmez & Aciksoz, 2010; Martins & Cavaco, 2018; Çorbacı, 2019). These villages create an environment that is completely opposite to the urban environment in which most guests tend to spend their hectic professional lives (Dönmez & Aciksoz, 2010; Çorbacı, 2019). In these villages, guests can live closer to nature and can relax or engage in recreative activities, such as sports or arts (Çorbacı, 2019).

A number of studies deal with the planning principles of holiday villages (Unutmaz, 2000). In general, land use depends on local context (Andriotis, 2003). Previous studies have, indeed, pointed out that construction of holiday villages should be adapted to local topography, climate (Ayala, 1991), and vegetation (Dönmez & Aciksoz, 2010). For example, Zotic, Puiu & Alexandru (2012) emphasised that, in order to attract tourists, holiday villages should be placed on sites with pleasant microclimate and abundant vegetation. Another aspect that planners need to consider is the aesthetic value of the environment (Ayala, 1991). This is why many holiday villages are built nearby some body of water, as water is important both for aesthetic and for recreational activities reasons (Gürsoy & Yüğrük Akdağ, 2019).

In Romania, most holiday villages appeared after 1989, but have seen relatively little development during all this time (Ciangă & Dezsi, 2007; Zotic, Alexandru & Puiu, 2011; Zotic, Puiu & Alexandru, 2012). Holiday villages are defined in Romania as a group of buildings in the form of villas or bungalows located in a well-defined area (Zotic, Puiu & Alexandru, 2012; Răcășan, 2018) with high tourist traffic (Zotic, Alexandru & Puiu, 2011). In Romania, holiday villages have primarily a lodging function (Zotic, Puiu & Alexandru, 2012; Răcășan, 2018), but some also offer some form of food services and the possibility to engage in leisure activities, sports, or arts (Zotic, Puiu & Alexandru, 2012).

Most holiday villages in Romania are in the Carpathian Mountains, the Danube Delta, and on the Black Sea Coast (Zotic, Puiu & Alexandru, 2012). Holiday villages, in general, appeal to children, elderly and high-income tourists from urban areas (Muntele & Iașu, 2003), which is very similar to the international situation (Inbakaran & Jackson, 2005).

In terms of planning, in Romania, many holiday villages do not meet the minimum requirements of design, organisation and functioning (Zotic, Puiu & Alexandru, 2012; Ciupe, 2020) and this situation affects the quality of tourism services, the level of tourist attraction and profitability (Zotic, Puiu & Alexandru, 2012).

Territorial identity

Territorial identity refers to the perception of sameness by the inhabitants of a territory. This sameness could manifest through two aspects: similarity in behaviour and geographical homogeneity (Panzera, 2022). Geographical homogeneity results from the interaction between human-made landscape and nature (Fialová et al., 2010; Titisari, 2021) within a certain bounded space (Paasi, 2003; Alaoui & Abba, 2019).

Furthermore, identity refers to something that is imagined but “becomes real in people’s lives” (Capello, 2018) and is “a process of becoming rather than being in which the choices that we make define who we are and who we become” (Hall & du Gay, 1996, p. 4).

Territorial identity and tourism are inextricably linked together. On the one hand, territorial identity is shaped by tourist consumption (Urry, 1990) as the new type of tourist looks for authenticity (Peterson, 2005). Tourism has an impact on place identities (Silva & Leal, 2015) by actively constructing or reconstructing them (Kneafsey, 1998). On the other hand, local cultures, identity, representation and image – and their relationship with the place – are also important for tourism promotion (Clarke, 2005).

In fact, territorial identity might be one of the most important factors for the attraction of tourists (Jäntti, Tiensuu & Rusko, 2013), especially in rural areas (Răcășan & Egresi, 2019). Many studies have shown that most tourists visit the countryside for its traditions and authenticity (Ilovan et al., 2016; Plăiaș, Ghereș & Pop, 2010). Authenticity is very important today as rural tourism is based on the commodification of local cultural resources (Kneafsey, 2000) and is very sensitive to the existence of a “sense of place” (Jepson & Sharpley, 2015).

Holiday villages and territorial identity

Architecture and building style are important features in maintaining local identity (Dovey, 2010). Indeed, many studies have pointed out that local architecture contains unique cultural identity values (Erarslan, 2018). Thus, traditional dwellings help maintain norms, traditions and values and ensure the continuity of folk culture in rural areas (Günçe, Ertürk & Ertürk, 2008). Besides this, traditional houses (Putra, Lozanovska & Fuller, 2015) and the preservation of local rural architecture (Jaźewicz & Zienkiewicz, 2019) are important for tourism.

This does not mean that only old buildings are valuable in preserving local territorial identity. The neo-vernacular ones are buildings with a vernacular appearance using contemporary methods and materials (Zhao & Greenop, 2019). Although modern in terms of comfort, they preserve local architectural traditions, building materials and fit well into the surrounding landscape (Lopes Fernandes, Ferreira Gomes & Beato, 2020).

Like second-homes, holiday villages could provide a link to rural heritage (Vágner & Fialová, 2011). To be successful, holiday villages must preserve the local character, which is given by the materials used, as well as building style and function (Titisari, 2021). Thus, the architectural and building style of the holiday village must not only be adapted to the environment (Günçe, Ertürk & Ertürk, 2008; Erarslan, 2018), but also conform to the local or regional traditional values and heritage (Dönmez & Aciksoz, 2010; Hassan, Emalgaftha & Hassan, 2010). In order for this to happen, those involved in the holiday village business need to use local traditional construction materials (Sayan, 1998) and traditional building techniques (Ayala, 1991).

Some villages were, indeed, built with these principles in mind. For example, the design of the Ulusoy Holiday Village in Kemer (Province of Antalya, southern Turkey) was inspired by the Antalya Kaleici traditional architecture (Dönmez & Aciksoz, 2010). Houses in this holiday village were built of stones with wood fixing, with few windows on the first floor towards the street and bay windows on the second floor, with narrow streets made of cobble stones (known locally as *Arnavut kaldırım*) and private gardens not visible from the street (Alkis, 2001; cited in Dönmez & Aciksoz, 2010). Similarly, in North Cyprus, traditional dwellings are made of sun-dried mud bricks and stone materials (Günçe, Ertürk & Ertürk, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of illustrating the current situation of holiday villages, from the perspective of both tourism and territorial identity, a series of methods and techniques were employed. To begin with, relevant bibliographic materials were reviewed for the establishment of the theoretical framework which revolved around concepts such as holiday villages and territorial identity both independently and combined. Since the relevant literature itself made reference to geographical aspects and tourist resources, as well as to authenticity and local architecture as a manifestation of territorial identity, a multicriterial analysis was used, proposing a holistic approach to:

- number of accommodation units, bed-places and bedrooms;
- degree of comfort and operation licence;
- geographic location and tourism potential;
- identity and image combined with tourist motivation factors;
- tourism services and facilities;
- architectural analysis and authenticity.

Thus, depending on the selected approach, quantitative or qualitative methods prevailed in the processing and interpretation of the collected data. First of all, the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism provided all statistical data for both diagnostic and descriptive analytics related to the characteristics of the tourist supply of accommodation. Another source of pertinent information that has been taken into account consisted of the official websites of the examined holiday villages, which enabled us to observe qualitative elements and to estimate their importance for tourism and territorial identity in the process of tourist promotion and tourist motivation. Finally, cartographic and tabular representations as well as a photographic collage were used to express, mainly in a synthetic and comparative manner, the results of the research focused on the key characteristics (identity, services, authenticity) of the twelve accommodation units which represent all holiday villages from Romania (Figure 1).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Diagnostic Analytics: Number of accommodation units, bed-places and bedrooms in Romania

According to the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism, at the end of June 2022, there were *18546 tourist accommodation units* registered in Romania. More than half of these units (64.17%) were represented by both guesthouses (6,629 tourist, agritourist, rural and urban establishments) and rooms to rent (5,272) scattered all over the country. However, not each category had the same popularity and representativity as the first two types of units and while some of them did gather around 2,000 units (e.g., hotels) or 1,000 units (i.e., tourist villas), almost half of the existing types of tourist accommodation accumulated less than 100 units (Table 1). Among them, the situation of *holiday villages* turned out to be the less successful of all, quantitatively, and, as the report showed, only *a dozen units* became available nationwide.

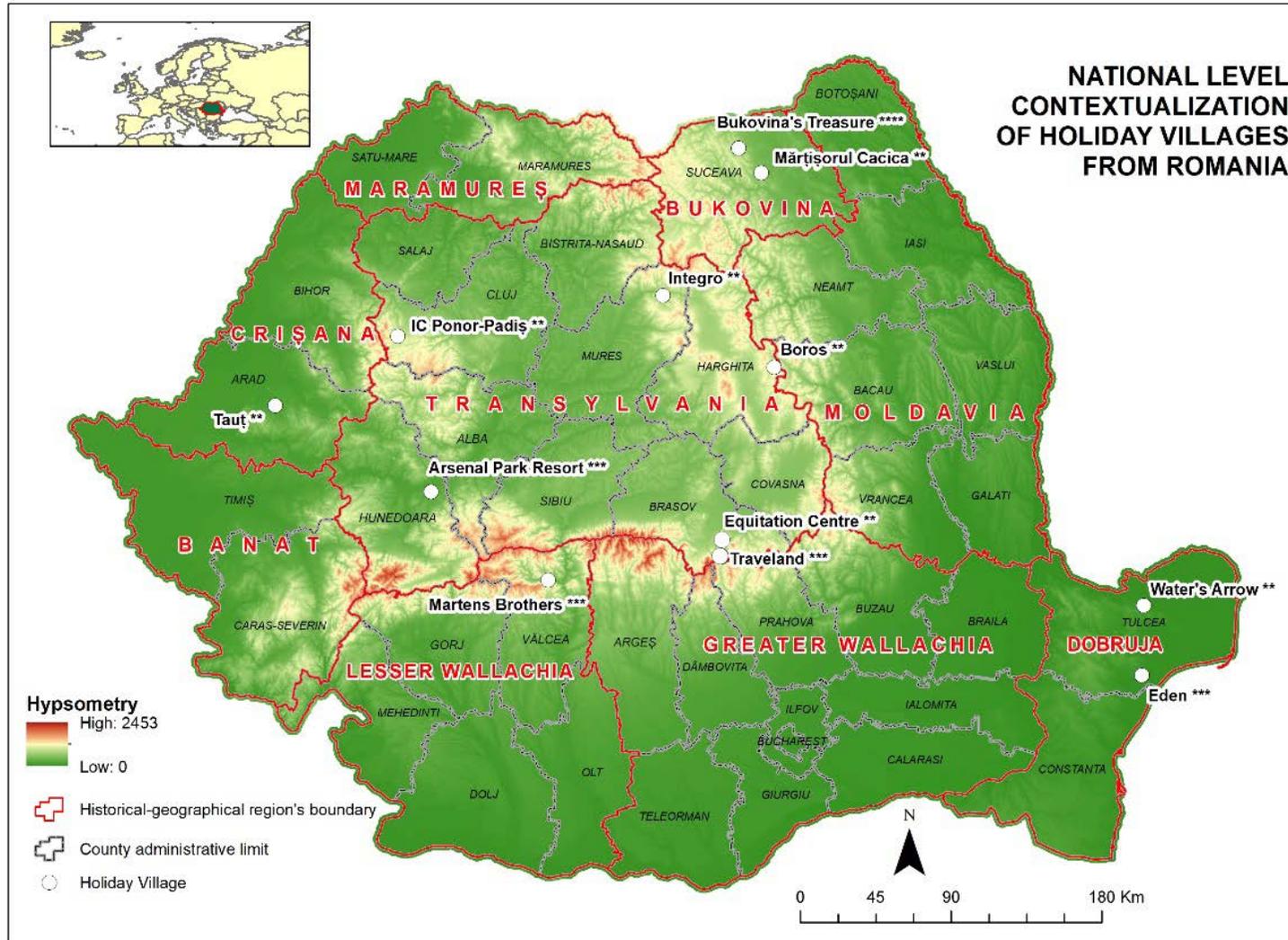


Figure 1: Map of the holiday villages in Romania (June 2022)

Source: authors' elaboration, 2022 - processed by G. Gaman, based on Open-Source Geographic Information System (QGIS, 2022)

Table 1: Tourist accommodation structures in Romania (June 2022)

No.	Type of tourist accommodation unit	No. of units	Percentage (%)
1.	Rooms to rent	5,272	28.43
2.	Tourist guesthouses	5,026	27.10
3.	Hotels	1,828	9.86
4.	Apartments to rent	1,819	9.81
5.	Agritourist guesthouses	1,510	8.14
6.	Tourist villas	1,123	6.06
7.	Hostels	595	3.21
8.	Tourist chalets	316	1.70
9.	Camping houses	259	1.40
10.	Motels	257	1.39
11.	Bungalows	164	0.88
12.	Camping structures	89	0.48
13.	Tourist resting-points	63	0.34
14.	Rural tourist guesthouses	57	0.31
15.	Campsites	45	0.24
16.	Urban tourist guesthouses	36	0.19
17.	Apartment-hotels	33	0.18
18.	Naval ships	25	0.13
19.	Floating pontoons	17	0.09
20.	Holiday villages	12	0.06
TOTAL		18,546	100.00

Source: Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism, 2022a

However, unlike any other type of accommodation with low capacities (e.g., villas, chalets, guesthouses), holiday villages are characterised by a relatively high number of bed-places that sometimes can overpass 100 places per unit. Having a *total capacity of 769 places* (in 315 rooms), the 12 studied establishments' situation results in an *average size of 64.08 bed-places/accommodation structure* (and 26.25 rooms/accommodation establishment), varying from 12 bed-places (i.e., 6 rooms in Ic-Ponor Padiș** in Cluj County) to 140 places (i.e., 70 rooms in Arsenal Park Resort**** in Hunedoara County) as presented in (Table 2):

- less than 50 bed-places/holiday village: Cluj, Mureș, Tulcea (the establishment in Nufăru commune);
- 50 – 100 bed-places/holiday village: Tulcea (the unit from Jurilovca commune), Vâlcea, Brașov (both accommodation structures), Suceava (both units), Harghita, Arad;
- more than 100 bed-places/holiday village: Hunedoara.

Table 2: Holiday villages in Romania – location and data analytics (June 2022)

Region	County	Address	Holiday village	Number of bed-places	Operation licence
CRIȘANA	Arad	Tauț Commune, Tauț Village	TAUȚ**	99	13.05.2014
TRANSYLVANIA	Brașov	Brașov Municipality, Poiana Brașov Settlement	CENTRUL DE ECHITAȚIE [Equitation Centre]**	62	10.03.2014
	Brașov	Brașov Municipality, Poiana Brașov Settlement	TRAVELAND***	68	18.12.2012
	Cluj	Mărgău Commune, Răchițele Village	IC PONOR-PADIȘ**	12	13.10.2014
	Harghita	Lunca de Jos Commune, Valea Boroș Village	BOROȘ**	76	03.09.2020
	Hunedoara	Orăștie Municipality	ARSENAL PARK RESORT***	140	09.12.2009
	Mureș	Lunca Bradului Commune, Salard Village	INTEGRO**	22	12.05.2011
BUKOVINA	Suceava	Cacica Commune, Cacica Village	MĂRȚIȘORUL CACICA**	72	14.04.2021
	Suceava	Sucevița Commune	BUCOVINA [Bukovina's Treasure]****	82	16.11.2010
DOBRUJA	Tulcea	Jurilovca Commune, Gura Portiței Resort	EDEN***	50	24.03.2011
	Tulcea	Nufăru Commune	SĂGEATA APEI [Water's Arrow]**	32	02.09.2011
OLTENIA (LESSER WALLACHIA)	Vâlcea	Brezoi City, Păscoaia Settlement	FRAȚII JDERI [Martens/ Jderi Brothers]***	54	22.05.2012

Source: Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism, 2022b

Descriptive analytics: Degree of comfort and operation licence of Romanian holiday villages

The classification of holiday villages on the basis of the star system, according to Romanian methodological norms, should have displayed two categories represented either by three stars or by two stars. Still, this rule applies to 11 out of 12 cases (Table 2). Thus, while *more than half of the researched holiday villages (58.33%) were rated two stars*, five of these accommodation units are considered three-star establishments in terms of amenities and quality of services provided; and, as one of the most important tourism companies in Romania points out, Eden Holiday Village was the first holiday village in Romania classified in the three-star category. Even so, it seems that one peculiar unit, namely Bukovina's Treasure Holiday Village****, managed

to achieve the impossible by obtaining the four-star rating due to its exceptional features expressed in attracting and serving the needs of tourists. It is worth mentioning that in addition to its “idyllic location”, near the woods, a gazebo and an indoor grill, it also has its own heliport (Bukovina’s Treasure, 2022).

Already recognised either as the largest holiday village both in number of rooms and bed-places (Arsenal Park Resort**** in Hunedoara) or as the highest star rating ever achieved on a holiday village (Bukovina’s Treasure**** in Suceava), the two establishments also stand out through their *experience in operation*. As the report of the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism shows, both accommodation units are *the oldest* in function, as 1991 was declared the year of their first registration. Furthermore, in 2009 (Arsenal Park) and in 2010 (Bukovina’s Treasure), the two structures have received a new authorisation document that entitled them to work as tourist accommodation units. The upcoming years, especially 2011 and 2014, were responsible for a significant increase in number of units, providing half of the licensed infrastructure represented by holiday villages that continue to function up until the present day in Tulcea, Mureș, Brașov, Arad, and Cluj (Table 2). Finally, Suceava county draws attention one more time due to *the newest* holiday village in Romania: Mărțișorul Cacica**, inaugurated in the spring of 2021, during the pandemic period, a few meters away from Cacica Salt Mine (Mărțișorul Cacica Holiday Village, 2022).

Environmental analysis: Geographic location and tourism potential of Romanian holiday villages

Although Romania fulfills both natural and cultural requirements for the functioning of several units in each county of the nine existing geographical-historical regions, solely *nine counties* (i.e., Arad, Brașov, Cluj, Harghita, Hunedoara, Mureș, Suceava, Tulcea, Vâlcea), included in *five regions* (i.e., Crișana, Transylvania, Bukovina, Dobruja, Oltenia also known as Lesser Wallachia), host this kind of tourist establishments (Figure 1), as previously mentioned. Their number could be seen as an *indicator of the high tourism potential value* of Transylvania (6), Bukovina (2) and Dobruja (2) that are considered top destinations in Romania in terms of tourist preferences.

As Zotic, Puiu and Alexandru (2012) stated before, the Carpathian Mountains, the Danube Delta, and the Black Sea Coast gather almost all holiday villages in Romania. To be more specific, this situation is represented as follows (Table 3):

- 83.33% of the Romanian holiday villages (ten units) are situated in the Carpathian Mountains:
 - 33.33% in the Eastern Carpathians (Boroș, Integro, Mărțișorul Cacica, Bucovina [Bukovina’s Treasure]);
 - 16.66% between the Eastern and the Southern Carpathians (Equitation Centre and Traveland);
 - 8.33% in the Southern Carpathians (Jderi Brothers);
 - 25% in the Apuseni Mountains (Tauț, Ic Ponor-Padiș and Arsenal Park Resort);
- 16.66% holiday villages (two units) are located in the Danube Delta: Eden and Water’s Arrow – the former being closer to the Black Sea Coast than the latter, but not quite on the shoreline.

Table 3: Environmental features of holiday villages in Romania

Holiday Village	Topography	Climate	Water	Vegetation
TAUȚ** (Arad)	Cigher Hills, Zarand Mountains	intermediate bioclimate (neutral-sedative and tonic-stimulant)	Cigher River; Tauț Reservoir (artificial lake)	deciduous forests and silvosteppe (forest-steppe)
CENTRUL DE ECHITAȚIE [Equitation Centre]** (Brașov)	Postăvaru Mountains, Piatra Craiului Mountains, Bucegi Mountains, Piatra Mare Mountains	mild mountain climate (tonic-stimulant)	Ruia Reservoir (artificial lake)	Stejerișul Mare [Great Oak Tree] botanical reserve; coniferous forests and subalpine meadows
TRAVELAND*** (Brașov)				
IC PONOR-PADIȘ** (Cluj)	Vlădeasa Mountains	mountain tonic-stimulant bioclimate	Răchițele Waterfall	Apuseni Nature Park
BOROȘ** (Harghita)	Ciuc Mountains	mountain tonic-stimulant bioclimate	Trotușului River Source; Frumoasa Dam (artificial lake)	mixed forests
ARSENAL PARK RESORT*** (Hunedoara)	Orăștiei corridor/ couloir in between Metaliferi Mountains, Șureanu Mountains and Poiana Ruscă Mountains	submontane depressions neutral-sedative bioclimate	near Mureș Valley	deciduous forests
INTEGRO** (Mureș)	Călimani Mountains and Gurghiu Mountains	mountain tonic-stimulant bioclimate	Mureș Valley; Ilișoara Waterfall	Călimani National Park; Superior Mureș Gorge Nature Park
MĂRȚIȘORUL CACICA** (Suceava)	the foothills of Obcina Mare; Solca-Cacica Depression	hills and submontane depressions neutral-sedative bioclimate	Cacica underground salt lake	mixed coniferous/ deciduous forests
BUCOVINA**** (Suceava)	the foothills of Obcina Mare; Rădăuți Depression		Sucevița Creek	
EDEN*** (Tulcea)	Babadag Plateau	plateau exciting demanding bioclimate	Golovița Lake; Danube Delta; Black Sea	Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve
SĂGEATA APEI [Water's Arrow]** (Tulcea)	Tulcei Hills	hills neutral-sedative bioclimate	Sfântul Gheorghe [St. George] channel	
FRAȚII JDERI [Martens/Jderi Brothers]*** (Vâlcea)	Lotru Mountains	mountain climate (tonic-stimulant)	Lotrului Valley; Gura Lotrului Dam and Reservoir	Cozia National Park; coniferous forests

Source: authors, 2022

Thus, the evidence confirms the theory and, as shown above, all holiday villages are located in *geographical areas rich in natural tourist attractions* whether they are morphologic (mountains, hills, depressions, plateaus, gorges and caves) or hydrographic ones (rivers, lakes, reservoirs, waterfalls, etc.). Furthermore, all of them could be considered suitable for spending time in nature and enjoying the benefits of the associated bioclimates, either tonic or neutral, as Ayala (1991) pointed out. In addition to this, some establishments have access to natural protected areas (biosphere reserves, national or nature parks), whose abundant vegetation – that Zotic, Puiu and Alexandru (2012) referred to as extremely important – makes them even more attractive to visitors for eco-friendly outdoor activities.

The *human-made tourist resources* make no exception to the rule of representation, ensuring a well-defined heritage worth visiting in every location where a holiday village is situated, known for:

- Tauț (Arad County) – Tauț medieval fort with defensive field fortification, dating from the 13th-15th centuries;
- Poiana Brașov (Brașov County) – Temple of the Idols (Church of the Pagans), the wooden Church of St. John the Baptist;
- Răchițele, Mărgău (Cluj County) – an old wooden church dating from the 18th century;
- Valea Boroș, Lunca de Jos (Harghita County) – traditional houses;
- Orăștie (Hunedoara County) – Orăștie Citadel (dating from the 14th-15th centuries), first mentioned in the 16th century hosting both the Reformed Church built in the 13th century, and the Evangelical Church of St. Nicholas built in the 18th century; an Orthodox Church dating from the 18th century, and the Orthodox Cathedral; a Franciscan Monastery; a Synagogue and a Lutheran Church, both from the 19th century; the Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilisation, a museum with history and ethnographic sections;
- Salard, Lunca Bradului (Mureș County) – local customs and traditions;
- Cacica (Suceava County) – Cacica Salt Mine, the Roman Catholic Church built in 1904, proclaimed by Pope John Paul II as a minor basilica in 2000; the Greek-Catholic Church built in 1865; the Orthodox Church of Saint John the New built between 1892 and 1896;
- Sucevița (Suceava County) – Sucevița Monastery built in 1583; the museum of the monastery; an ethnographic museum, customs and traditions; arts and crafts; traditional local events (“Sucevița Culture Days”, “Tourism Fair”, “Forest Fruit Festival”, “Toaca Festival”, “Housekeepers’ Ball” and “Winter Customs Festival”);
- Gura Portiței, Jurilovca (Tulcea County) – the ruins of a Greek-Roman fortress called Argamum (7th centuries BC - 6th AD); the traditional houses of the Russian-Lipovian community with white and blue facades and reed roofs; the Lipovian bathroom – a traditional construction built separately from the dwelling; the traditions and the folk costume of the Lipovians; a local event celebrating the Fish Day;
- Nufăru (Tulcea County) – Proslavite Citadel/Prislav Medieval Fortress (“Little Preslav” in Slavonic – the capital of Kievan Rus for three years in 968 – which stands as the antithesis of “Great” Preslav – the capital of the First Bulgarian Land during the 9th-10th centuries); The Orthodox Church of St. Dumitru built in 1880;
- Păscoaia, Brezoi (Vâlcea County) – in Brezoi and surroundings: a Roman tower built in 101 BC; a necropolis with inscription tombs in boxes; old churches built in the 16th and 18th centuries.

However, it should be clearly stated that the absence of holiday villages from the other four regions (i.e., Maramureș, Moldavia, Banat and Muntenia) is not related to a low tourism potential of these tourist destinations. On the contrary, they do have important tourist

attractions – from protected natural areas to cultural and religious points of interest, some of them historical monuments or even UNESCO World Heritage Sites – but lacking this kind of accommodation establishments a series of limitations emerge. On the one hand, tourists are deprived of getting to experience the natural and human built environment in such a manner that also allows them to observe the territorial identity of the area. On the other hand, the absence of holiday villages could affect tourism development and circulation if visitors interested in spending their time and money in this category of establishments simply ignore the tourism supply of more than 30 counties whose accommodation infrastructure does not include this type of units.

Last in order of mentioning but not of importance, the geographic analysis of the holiday villages should have emphasised one more major feature of the environment: the *farness from urban centres*. According to researchers such as Dönmez & Aciksoz (2010), Çorbacı (2019) and many others, this type of accommodation should be encountered in rural areas where tourists could spend their vacation closer to nature. Even so, one quarter of the Romanian holiday villages show a contradiction between expectation and reality. Some establishments obey this principle to a certain extent, but not completely and they are located in a seaside resort (Gura Portiței, Tulcea) or in a ski and winter sports resort (Poiana Brașov, Brașov). Other units break this rule to a greater extent by being situated within a municipality (Orăștie, Hunedoara) or by belonging to a city (Păscoaia locality in Brezoi City, Vâlcea) from a territorial-administrative point of view.

Identity and image of holiday villages in Romania. Tourist motivation factors

Considering the situation analysis of both natural landscape and built environment, followed by the interactions between the two elements, we can easily state that each county which has at least one holiday village is characterised by a *geographical homogeneity* in the way that Fialová et al. (2010) and Titisari (2021) present it. Thus, one important aspect of the territorial identity has been addressed by Romania as a destination that meets not only the minimum prerequisites for organising a properly fitted holiday village but excels in tourist attractions.

The second aspect of the concept, since the territorial identity is twofold, according to the profile literature, deals with *similarities in behaviour*. Although Panzera (2022) places this approach on a par with the geographical homogeneity, is quite hard to determine the identity by means of a similarity in behaviour, as the primary sources of information related to accommodation units lack this type of details. However, what Hall and du Gay (1996) define as *identity*, more precisely, the process of making decisions in agreement with our beliefs which eventually establish who we become, mirrors the philosophy of some holiday villages. The best example is available on the official website of Jderi Brothers. So, the name of the holiday village itself – which was inspired by the homonymous novel written by Mihail Sadoveanu¹ – suggests the idea of a community of people who share the same values: honesty, sense of honour, courage, fighting spirit, camaraderie, and patriotism (Jderi Brothers, 2022). Thus, as the two authors emphasised, a state of becoming rather than a state of being is involved in the whole process of understanding identity. On the other hand, other establishments mention the classical *tourist needs and motivations*, which could stand as similarity in behaviour, that include:

- resting purposes (Tauț, Boroș, Bukovina’s Treasure and Eden, both of them recommending themselves as “a true oasis of peace”);
- relaxation and recreation (Tauț, Arsenal Park, Integro, Mărțișorul Cacica);

¹ Romanian novelist, short story writer, journalist, essayist, translator, poet, civil servant, activist, politician.

- treatment purposes (saline aerosols, spa, saltwater) – Mărțișorul Cacica;
- pilgrimage (Mărțișorul Cacica, Bukovina’s Treasure);
- traditional culture and folk art interests (Equitation Center – during winter, Borș);
- fun and adventure (Tauț, Arsenal Park, Jderi Brothers);
- ski and winter sports passionate (Traveland);
- sports (Integro);
- horse lovers (Equitation Centre);
- fishing enthusiasts (Water’s Arrow);
- mountain enthusiasts (Ic Ponor Padiș);
- nature-loving people (Water’s Arrow, Jderi Brothers).

The previous categories of motivators are also related to the *representation and image of the holiday villages* and, as Clarke (2005) highlighted, they play a crucial role in tourism promotion; whether through a mental picture that promoters try to generate based on an iconic tourist attraction, scenery, units (Figure 2) and along with it, the thought of how the destination looks, or through elements of local culture that tourists might experience during their stay.



Figure 2: Collage of the holiday villages in Romania

Source: Authors’ collection based on websites for the respective holiday villages, 2022

In the first case, nature and *landscape* references are widely used in subjective descriptions, rich in suggestive language such as the “unforgettable stays in a fairy tale landscape” (at the Equitation Centre) or “an idyllic place, a true oasis of peace and greenery, near the forest [...] in a magical place” (at Bukovina’s Treasure). Other examples include the “picturesque area of the Apuseni Mountains” (at Ic Ponor Padiș), “special mountain landscape” (within Integro Holiday

Village), “special natural setting” (at Mărțișorul Cacica), “natural beauty of the Delta” (in Eden), “perfect nature” (at Jderi Brothers).

The second case stands for those tourists who, according to Peterson (2005), seek *authenticity*. For them, the opportunity of witnessing traditional local customs (possible during winter in Equitation Centre, in Brașov), visiting museums (within Boroș Holiday Village in Harghita or nearby Bukovina’s Treasure, in Suceava) and monasteries (in Suceava County) or experiencing the rural lifestyle either by staying in an accommodation unit with a rustic decor (i.e. old traditional furniture within the little houses of Boroș Holiday Village) or by trying the local cuisine (in Tulcea and Vâlcea) becomes the perfect way to discover the territorial identity.

Although local culture, as part of this territorial identity, also becomes essential for the attraction of tourists, as Jäntti, Tiensuu and Rusko (2013) infer, most of the holiday villages in Romania do not mention this aspect at all (six units), while others only deal tangentially with this matter (four units).

What they do specify, however, are the *target groups* they want to attract and, sometimes, the *programmes* they are willing to organise and host. Some holiday villages propose:

- family retreats and vacations (Tauț, Traveland, Arsenal Park, Mărțișorul Cacica);
- outdoor activities for groups (Arsenal Park, Integro, Mărțișorul Cacica);
- team building for companies (Arsenal Park, Integro, Mărțișorul Cacica, Jderi Brothers);
- youth and children camps (Tauț, Ic Ponor Padiș, Integro, Mărțișorul Cacica, Jderi Brothers) or senior camps (Ic Ponor Padiș);
- special conditions of accommodation (e.g., an establishment for both horses and riders at Equitation Centre).

Others, instead, are more general and issue an invitation for “all those who want peace, clean air, crystal clear water, a horizon open to the limits of everyone’s dreams” (Eden Holiday Village) or “for those who are looking for an intimate, relaxed setting and close to the origins” (Jderi Brothers Holiday Village).

Tourism services and facilities provided by Romanian holiday villages

Understandably, the *tourism services* provided by these establishments match the profile of the target groups who already come with certain needs and preferences. In accordance with the law – Appendix 1.5. Minimum Criteria regarding the star classification of holiday villages (National Tourism Authority, 2013) – these units provide tourists with accommodation, food services and a wide range of additional tourism services and activities (leisure, sports, cultural, etc.) depending on their specifics.

Regarding the structural and the functional properties of the *accommodation* – seen both as an asset and as a tourism service – the situation of Romanian holiday villages could be described as heterogeneous rather than having a uniform structure. Despite the fact that the law clearly states that this kind of establishment comprises either villas or bungalows, the observable evidence shows that apartments as well as chalets are just as widely distributed as villas are (Table 4).

Table 4: Accommodation assets and services within Romanian holiday villages

Holiday village	Lodging configuration and services
AR - TAUȚ** (Tauț Holiday Village, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 apartments – for 6 people with private kitchens and bathrooms with shower, toilet, sink; • 24 cabins/chalets – 3 single beds in each cabin and a small bathroom with toilet and sink; • camping site / ground space for tents – with access to shower block.
BV - CENTRUL DE ECHITAȚIE [Equitation Centre] ** (Poiana Brașov Equit. Centre, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 camping houses inside a tourist resting-point, equipped with rustic furniture, microwave oven, refrigerator, terrace, balcony.
BV - TRAVELAND*** (Traveland Poiana Brașov, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apartments (2 duplex one-bedroom; upper floor economy, ground floor, 2 two-bedroom; 2 three-bedroom; 2 four-bedroom maisonette) equipped with kitchenette, refrigerator; private bathrooms with hairdryer and toiletries; balcony and terrace.
CJ - IC PONOR-PADIȘ** (Ic Ponor Padiș Holiday Village, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motel: 1 single room, 3 double rooms, 4 apartments with 2 double rooms with kitchenette. • Villa: 1 single room, 4 double rooms, 2 bathrooms. • 6 houses, with 1 room for 2 people and bathroom on the ground floor; 3 people in the attic room.
HR - BOROȘ** (Seklertravel Travel Agency, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 little houses (twin room, double room, single room, triple room, 4-bed room, 5-bed room, 6 bed-room, 8-bed room) with refrigerator, TV; bathroom.
HD - ARSENAL PARK RESORT*** (Arsenal Park, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officer's rooms (57 standard double rooms); • Major's Apartment (duplex villas – matrimonial bed and a sofa bed); • Colonel's Apartment (duplex villas – matrimonial bed and 2 twin beds); • General's Villa (two matrimonial beds)
MS - INTEGRO** (Integro Holiday Village, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 chalets
SV - MĂRȚIȘORUL CACICA** (Mărțișorul Cacica Holiday Village, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 villas (6 triple rooms) with private bathrooms, living room, fully equipped kitchenette; balcony.
SV - BUCOVINA [Bukovina's Treasure] **** (Bukovina's Treasure, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 bungalows (4 people); • a chalet (4 rooms for 8 people), equipped with mini kitchen, bathroom, terrace.
TL - EDEN*** (Gura Portiței, 2018; EXIMTUR, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dolphin Villa (14 double rooms); • Shell Villa (6 rooms); • Dranov Villa / Holbina Villa (island area) – 1 double room; • Fishing House (coastal area) – 1 double room; • Island Villas (68 double rooms); • Wooden houses (on the beach) – 40 rooms with 2 beds air conditioning, mini fridge, bathroom, terrace.
TL - SĂGEATA APEI [Water's Arrow] ** (Boioglu, 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 bungalows (2 or 3 beds), eco-friendly.
VL - FRAȚII JDERI [Martens/Jderi Brothers] *** (Jderi Brothers, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cottage/chalet (7 double rooms for groups of friends); • 7 camping houses (18 double rooms for families).

Source: authors, 2022

Thus, the accommodation types of structures, inside Romanian holiday villages, in order of popularity, are represented by:

- small wooden houses, camping houses in most of the cases (except for Boroș in Harghita, where they are more traditional dwellings rather than camping houses), which can be found in five holiday villages, either separately or integrated in tourist resting points like inside the Equitation Centre from Brașov;
- villas, usually fully equipped, of different capacities and specifics in line with the theme of the four holiday villages where they can be rented (e.g., General's Villa in Hunedoara or Dolphin Villa and Shell Villa in Tulcea, which happens to host the highest number of structures – more than 70 units);
- chalets, also known as cottages or cabins, available in four holiday villages, including either a double room or a three single beds one (i.e. in Tauț from Arad);
- apartments, that resulted to be more convenient for rent, for other four holiday villages, than any other type of structure; some were designed as duplex villas (in Hunedoara County), while others are incorporated in a distinctive accommodation typology, more precisely in a motel (in Cluj County);
- bungalows, solely retrieved in two holiday villages, despite their harmonious adaptation to the environment and possibilities of using eco-friendly materials for their construction.

On the subject of *catering*, which is considered to be the second most important component of basic tourism services after accommodation, nine out of twelve holiday villages mention the presence of restaurants, bars and terraces. Thus, except for Arsenal Park, which makes no reference to food services, and for Traveland, where only self-catering is available, all other establishments mention either “delicious food dishes” (Integro) that guests can try there or at least one specialised structure, as follows:

- terraces: within Ic Ponor Padiș Holiday Village (CJ), where full board is also an option depending on the requested accommodation conditions;
- restaurant: near Mărțișorul Cacica Holiday Village (SV) and a 200-seat unit with full board (if required) in Boroș Holiday Village (HR);
- restaurant and terrace: Tăuț Holiday Village (AR), serving simple food dishes within its 60-seat restaurant, Water's Arrow Holiday Village (TL) whose terrace is known for fish specialities;
- restaurant and bar: Bukovina's Treasure Holiday Village (SV), Eden Holiday Village (TL) serving typical local cuisine;
- restaurant, buffet and day bar: Equitation Centre Holiday Village (BV), preparing both traditional and international food dishes;
- restaurant, bar and terrace (60 seats): Jderi Brothers Holiday Village (VL), where food is prepared from fresh and natural ingredients, based on traditional recipes handed down from generation to generation.

On this account, attributable to four of the analysed units, not only Dobruja but also Transylvania and Oltenia (Lesser Wallachia) turn into suitable destinations for culinary tourism practitioners and for those who plan to spend their vacations inside a holiday village.

Whatever the situation, in addition to comfortable rooms and tasty meals, tourists seek memorable experiences that involve leisure, recreation, sports, arts and cultural activities. They expect to enjoy these activities within the chosen destination and accommodation unit. Consequently, more amenities, a complex *entertainment infrastructure and related facilities*

should be accessible within a holiday village that is a former weapons and ammunition space, which was transformed into a park dedicated to adventure and recreation, compared to the case of a holiday villages where eleven small peasant houses were rebuilt (after being previously demolished and transported to destination) based on old photos. Therefore, while the former holiday village (Arsenal Park) nowadays hosts the largest range of options in terms of outdoor activities (an Adventure Park and an Aqua Park, ziplines, archery tag, climbing on artificial board, power-fan jumps, airsoft, treasure hunt, bicycle rental, minigolf, Activity Park or playground, Fitness Park, multifunctional sports field, military training and a Military Museum) and meeting possibilities, either inside the existing conference room or within the outdoor amphitheatre; the latter establishment (Boroș Holiday Village) exhibits thirteen little houses decorated with old traditional furniture, out of which one stands as an ethnographic museum and makes available to tourists horse rides, hiking, trips, a tourist guide, a dancing barn, sauna, wooden wash tub, garden and barbeque facilities.

Taking into consideration the central theme which revolves around the object of interest of the Equitation Centre Holiday Village, horse riding courses, qualified instructors, horse equipment rental, leisure rides on horseback, carriage rides and even sleigh rides were therefore foreseeable. Furthermore, a stable with a capacity of 26 horses and a horse-riding arena (70x50 m) complete the series of specific facilities.

The general ones, also include barbeque facilities (one third of the examined establishments mention them), bicycle rental service (available in another third of the total units), a multifunctional sports field (half of the accommodation structures have one or at least a football field or tennis and volleyball court) and a playground for children, usually equipped with slides and swings, found in two thirds of the cases, just as often as free parking services, Wi-Fi and sometimes TV cable are indicated among other benefits for those who opt for Romanian holiday villages.

Another example, whose services were totally influenced by the features of the natural environment and by the hydrographic tourist resources, is represented by the situation of Tulcea County, more precisely by Eden Holiday Village that provides boat trips in the Danube Delta, rental of boats with frames, motorboats, hydrobikes, fishing and birdwatching possibilities, as well as transport on Golovița Lake with fast boats. Similar activities can be also done at Water's Arrow, whose peculiarity consists in live cooking demonstrations within the fishing specific terrace. Returning to Eden's offer, where anyone can enjoy a "a real fish on their plate, freshly captured from the waters of the Danube River" as the catching description presents it, two more important facilities are mentioned as well: a swimming pool and a conference room (80-100 seats) whose existence is meant to attract both leisure and business guests.

Eventually, Jderi Brothers took the concept of holiday village to a whole new dimension ever since they started the project, back in 1999. After exposing their annual historical summary of their accomplishments inside the establishment, the owners uncover information about their philosophy (i.e., in nature, through the body, for the mind) that aims to restore the fundamental connection between man and nature, by finding naturalness and simplicity, or, in other words, a state of balance. For this purpose, the holiday village uses surroundings as well as built facilities such as an outdoor "temple" for seating or campfire, two swimming pools, a dojo and ping pong tables, their own special designed Japanese garden, pontoons and hammocks and, when necessary, their conference room (50 seats) in order to materialise the most elaborate tourist program concern consisting of the following triple proposal (Jderi Brothers, 2022):

- physical or outdoor activities (campfire, games and competitions with team trials, refreshing sessions, energetic gymnastics and stretching, with elements of Yoga and Chi Gong, trampoline jumps, ziplines, archery, climbing towers and ice baths; meditation sessions and the exercise of silence, breathing exercises with elements from Yoga and Karate; running, trekking, mountaineering, mountain biking, off-road touring, skiing, kayaking, rafting, photo hunting);
- educational, socialisation and imagination activities (seminars about nutrition, healthy living, seminars on reason, understanding and exigency, Ma-Ai Seminar – about proper measure and distance in relation to others and to the environment, Roku No Kokoro seminar – about mind like water, about movement and active meditation as forms of mental relaxation, Mizu No Kokoro seminar – about the mind as the moon, seminar about their philosophy – The Mechanical Way; motivational and inspirational documentary sessions; discussion sessions on attitude to stress and career; drawing sessions – the map of life; chat sessions, jokes and stories; caricature workshops; team improvisation workshops – theatre skit);
- intensive programmes (mental relaxation, reducing stress, change of attitude, improving communication, improving mental tonus, improving physical condition, increasing energy and vital capacity, detoxifying body and mind, forming healthy habits, learning self-defence techniques, learning survival techniques, and a super adventure programme in zero comfort conditions for daredevils).

On a smaller scale, Integro Holiday Village features a synthesis of the previous accommodation unit by also displaying a conference room and campfire opportunities, hiking in the mountains, climbing walls and archery, as well as having both trampoline and hammocks for different preferences. Besides, the entertainment infrastructure of the unit is also endowed with ziplines, swings, high ropes which are added to paintball and human foosball possibilities inside the unit.

Irrespective how many, additional services are never too much and sometimes they do make the difference in performance and comfort. This is why some holiday villages also offer free board games or gaming room (four units), luggage storage (three units) and laundry services (two units), safe (two units), wake up calls (one unit), specially designated areas for fire and smoking (one unit), video supervision (one unit), first aid point (one unit), etc. It might be possible that more establishments than those which were quantified really provide these types of services or even more of them, by constantly adapting to their guests needs. In the same vein, some holiday villages (i.e., Ic Ponor Padiș, Arsenal Park, Eden) already meet the demands of tourists who travel with their pets and declare themselves as pet-friendly structures.

Architectural analysis and authenticity of Romanian holiday villages

Like Dovey (2010) and Erarslan (2018) congruently remarked, local cultural identity is being successfully preserved by *building styles and architecture*. Thus, the more traditional a dwelling or authentic an accommodation unit is, better the connection with the rural heritage, and thus, becomes even more important for tourism. There are several aspects that should be taken into consideration when analysing the construction of an establishment, in general and, a holiday village, in particular: from integration into the surrounding landscape to materials, methods and techniques and, of course, the overall result which sometimes, in the eyes of tourists, aesthetics prevails over functionality.

In order to gauge whether a holiday village is more or less *representative for the territorial identity* of the county or of the geographical-historical region that hosts the examined structure, we combined the most important indicators of authenticity found in the specialised literature. Thus, we came up with an empirical measurement system where each of the eight criteria were either invested one point (+1) for affirmative statements and half a point (+0.5) for partially positive ones or subtracted one point (-1) each time a negative answer was involved. Thus, we were able to establish five levels of authenticity (minimum from - 8 to - 4 points; low from 3 to 0; medium from + 1 to + 3; high from + 4 to + 6; maximum from + 7 to + 8). On this scale, we managed to determine in which establishments tourists are more likely to enjoy an authentic experience, both natural and cultural, linked to the rural heritage and lifestyle (Table 5).

Table 5: Architectural features of Romanian holiday villages

Holiday village	Local traditional construction materials	Traditional building techniques	Adapted to the surrounding landscape	Traditional dwellings / houses	Neovernacular buildings	Modern in terms of comfort	Preserve local architectural traditions	Link to local/regional traditional heritage	Authenticity
HR - BORȘ**	+1	+1	+1	+0.5	+1	+0.5	+1	+1	MAX (+7)
VL - FRAȚII JDERI [Martens/Jderi Brothers]***	+1	+0.5	+1	-1	+0.5	+0.5	+0.5	+0.5	HIGH (+3.5)
BV - CENTRUL DE ECHITAȚIE [Equitation Centre]**	EXT.+0.5; INT.-1	EXT.+0.5; INT.-1	+1	-1	+1	+1	+1	+1	MED. (+3)
SV - BUCOVINA [Bukovina's Treasure]*** *	+0.5	EXT.+0.5; INT.-1	+1	-1	+0.5	+1	+0.5	+0.5	MED. (+2.5)
TL - EDEN***	+0.5	EXT.+0.5; INT.-1	+1	-1	+0.5	+0.5	+0.5	+0.5	MED. (+2)
MS - INTEGRO**	EXT.+0.5; INT.-1	EXT.+0.5; INT.-1	+1	-1	-1	+1	+0.5	+0.5	LOW (0)
CJ - IC PONOR-PADIȘ**	+0.5	-1	+0.5	-1	-1	+0.5	+0.5	+0.5	LOW (-0.5)
BV - TRAVELAND* **	-1	-1	+1	-1	-1	+1	+0.5	+0.5	LOW (-1)
TL - SĂGEATA APEI [Water's Arrow]**	+0.5	-1	+1	-1	-1	+1	-1	+0.5	LOW (-1)
AR - TAU]**	-1	-1	+1	-1	-1	+1	-1	-1	MIN (-4)
HD - ARSENAL PARK RESORT***	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	+1	-1	-1	MIN (-6)
SV - MĂRȚIȘORUL CACICA**	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	+1	-1	-1	MIN (-6)

EXT = exterior; INT = interior.

Source: authors, 2022

As shown in the table above, none of the holiday villages exhibit *traditional dwellings* despite the fact that they are excellent promoters of the folk culture in rural areas, as Günçe, Ertürk & Ertürk (2008) pointed out. However, Boroș Holiday Village was not only inspired by the traditional model but also started with the purchase of a plot of land, on which only a small house and an abandoned farmhouse were initially built, and then reconstructed eleven small peasant houses (which were condemned to ruin) based on old photos. From this point of view, we could label them as vernacular buildings. Furthermore, the same unit seems to be the only one that also employed the traditional building techniques, more precisely, the original method of humification both inside and outside.

Judging by their facade, other five holiday villages (Equitation Centre, Integro, Bukovina's Treasure, Eden and Jderi Brothers) might have kept the *traditional building techniques* and might have used *local traditional construction materials*, but as long as they do not make any reference to this issue, we can only assume it.

The same presumption, regarding the provenance of materials, implies the situation of Ic Ponor Padiș and Water's Arrow, whose location in the Apuseni Mountains, in the first case, and Danube Delta, in the second case, might have provided them with all the necessary wood for the erection of the former and reed for the roofs of the latter.

Even so, except for Jderi Brothers, whose interior design is oriented towards a rustic style, and for Boroș, where old rustic furniture adorns the little houses, all other structures have nothing to do with folk culture, art and lifestyle inside their walls. In fact, all the analysed establishments are quite *modern in terms of interior design and comfort*. Maybe one or two of them still have some rooms which seem to be a little old-fashioned or lack high quality facilities, but this could be the result of the camp profile that they promote, where outdoor activities are more important than accommodation services and room amenities. Given the overall vernacular appearance, yet completed by contemporary materials, some establishments (e.g., Equitation Centre) could be described as "*neo-vernacular buildings*" in the way that Zhao and Greenop (2019) put it.

Apart from maintaining local architectural style, *well-fitting structures into the environment* are also a must. Thus, in addition to materials (mainly wood or logs and decorative rocks or river stone), chromatics also ensures a harmonious integration into the surrounding landscape. Since most of the Romanian holiday villages are located in the mountain area, neutral colours and different shades of brown, usually dark brown, prevail (7 out of 12 units wear this colour). Even so, other shades are also popular, including light brown (Traveland) and reddish brown (Bukovina's Treasure).

The situation of the accommodation units situated on the Romanian coastal line is quite interesting. On the one hand, the configuration and aesthetics of Water's Arrow resemble small mountain huts or refuges, probably because of the eco-friendly material that are made of. On the other hand, Eden Holiday Village combines the specific of Lipovan traditional houses which happen to coincide with the Mediterranean white and blue colour pallet.

Finally, to some extent, almost all of the researched holiday villages provide a *link to local or regional heritage*. Although not connected to the rural one, both Arsenal Park and Mărțișorul Cacica are anchored in the reality on the ground since both of them are located in places of tradition: a military one, in the former case, and salt exploitation, in the latter case. Except for local occupational fields, we could also take into account the local natural heritage which served as an inspiration for the name of some units (e.g., Ic Ponor Padis). In Tulcea, for instance, local toponymy (e.g., Dranov), avifauna (e.g., Egret) and marine life (e.g., Dolphin, Shell) helped

differentiate between several villas hosted by Eden Holiday Village. Another establishment that used examples of the regional fauna which populates most of the Carpathian Mountains and woods is Equitation Centre. Not only that each villa has a specific animal (e.g., Deer, Bear, Wild Boar, Badger, Wolf, Fox, Black Goat, Squirrel, etc.) but is also decorated with at least one taxidermised specimen and other trophies reminding its name. However, the Equitation Centre enables a stronger connection to the local identity, which is beyond the denomination of the units; it ensures a particular link to the rural heritage by means of the local customs which are specially held for guests during winter. Otherwise, the tentative of preserving local architecture itself might be considered also successful up to a certain point.

Finally, once again, Boroș Holiday Village receives an additional point for promoting and emphasising folk art and traditional values, managing to recreate a complex rural universe for those who appreciate authenticity. For this reason, and all the other mentioned above one, this accommodation structure obtained the highest score, being probably the best example of (rural) tourism product which is also in full accordance with the territorial identity of the County and of the region where it is situated.

Undoubtedly, the other four units in top 5, which proved high and medium *levels of authenticity*, are examples of good practice, as well, and, as this study showed, they all have at least one feature, facility or activity that can make them attractive enough for different tourist groups, needs and preferences, but, one should keep in mind that the focus of this final part of the research was the relatedness with the territorial identity rather than their uniqueness.

CONCLUSIONS

Holiday villages in Romania are the least represented category of all existing accommodation types. Counting solely twelve establishments with an average size of 64.08 bed-places/unit, with more than half of them rated two stars, most of the examined structures have approximately one decade of tradition in functioning. The nine counties which host these holiday villages, predominantly located in the Carpathian Mountains, proved to be attractive enough in terms of tourist resources, both natural and human-made, thus ensuring the geographical homogeneity which, along with the similarities in behaviour, are equally relevant for the territorial identity. On this line, tourists' motivations such as relaxation and recreation, rest, fun and adventure are being promoted in a quite complex manner where not only targeted groups (families, groups) and specific activities (retreats, camps, team buildings) are mentioned but also tourism services and available facilities are presented. The final analysis of the configuration, architectural style and authenticity showed the prevalence of camping houses, villas and chalets, mainly modern in terms of comfort and still well integrated into the landscape. Although traditional building techniques and traditional dwellings are not so popular among the Romanian holiday villages, local traditional materials, geographical and cultural references manage to provide a connection to rural heritage and thus, ensure medium-high levels of authenticity for almost half of the researched accommodation units.

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