

PRE-REQUISITES OF THE RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ROMANIA

Anca Gabriela TURTUREANU, Lecturer, Phd.
“DANUBIUS”University of Galati

Abstract:

The concept of rural tourism has become important round the globe at present. It is thought that rural tourism can revitalise the conventional concepts and views on tourism, and bring in a new dimension in the sustainable development of tourism. It has been realised that society based tourism can play a fundamental role in poverty alleviation in countries like Romania

In a sense the village landscape, wildlife, community and cultural life, natural heritage are key assets that attract visitors -- and visitor revenue. Tourism is about welcoming visitors to attractive and stimulating places where they would like to spend their leisure time. The countryside, market towns and villages have much to offer the visitors, and are major factors in generating trips from within the country and from over.

Key words: rural tourism, natural heritage, sustainable development

JEL Classification: Q51, Q26

Then, we add the lack of promotion activities, abroad, of touring potential destinations in Romanian rural environment. A pension owner from an isolated mountain area will never have access, on its own, to a specialized fair from Viena or any other city in the world. And last but not the least, the know-how is missing, that knowledge of offering tourists and adventure, an experience that gets through a good bed and tasty copious meal.

Tourism is a key factor determinant for general economic progress, increasing the domestic gross product, counter balancing the foreign payments and improving the standard of living. Rural communities offer presently an image striking by its contradictory elements and high mobility structures. They describe a system; where there are with preponderance private properties and often stand as scene for “parallel economies”. Romanian rural communities have the chance of possessing a considerable heritage, proved to be useful viewed from the touring development perspective.

Within this context, there have been started researches for an efficient capitalization of the rural tourism, within rural communities within Romania, highlighting the prospect of integrated development of the localities from Dorna area, Suceava County, region possessing a remarkable touring potential yet insufficient exploited.

There are premises that in the closes future, the rural tourism, especially the agrarian tourism, to contribute to the enlargement of the round trip offer, to help in redistribution of the touring flows, to superiorly exploit resources and anchor the young population within these areas. They all may contribute to a great extend to global growth of the Romanian tourism, implying human communities reunited in associative forms, action groups, for solving issues as: roads and communication networks, water supply, sewages, or environment protection.

Over the years, within the majority of countries have been practised –more or less organized – the tourists’ accommodation in villages. The novelty is represented by the dimension reached by expanding the touring phenomenon within rural space. The expansion is explained on one hand by developing rural areas, and on the other hand by diversification the forms of practising mass form.

Within local economy, the rural tourism is defined as a capitalization of the rural touring spaces by exploiting natural resources, of Romanian cultural and historical values, of agrarian mark products (famous), illustrative for regional identity, ethnographic and cultural; which shall meet clients demands in point of receiving, cuisine, leisure and divertissement and other services.

Rural tourism, seen as whole, includes large range of accommodation, activities, events, fests sports and leisure means, all developing under a typical rural environment. It is a concept containing the touring activity conducted by rural local population and is based on a strong relation with natural and human environment.

Agro-tourism comes as a complementary solution, capitalizing the accommodation surplus existent in peasant's house holds, prepared and specially arranged for guests, consisting of a series of goods and services offered by peasants to clients consumption, which, for a certain period of time come in this rural environment for relaxation, for rest or leisure, therapeutic cures, transaction or business, or possible for hobby, initiating in the art of traditional crafts, for studies or researches, as well as for a numerous any other specific activities.

The farm remains a very powerful symbol for urban inhabitants, pointed by the farmer's house, the house of the who knows nature's secrets, the best fishing spots within the area, picking up highly appreciated mushrooms; is the place where domestic animals are bred, is exactly that world with which the urban inhabitant had lost contact with, is the place where he can eat fresh fruits, is the place where generations succeed, representing in the same time, another way of living.

The village occupies a special place in urban image, signifying human dimension, specific local animation, evokes the mansion house, the pub, the school, the church, places that have marked human lives over the centuries. Here we can found craftsman, artisans, merchants, small enterprisers, local actors who make live easier within the rural environment. It also represents the vernacular of the most beautiful holidays, of the most extraordinary wedding, baptism or winter traditions.

The farm, the rural village and space, together or separately, constitute the rural tourism charm by attractiveness. This type of tourism must be seen as an activity which ensured the urban population the most adequate therapy against stress conditions, determined by quotidian life tumult. Ts strongly influenced by psychological factors addressed by excellence to nature lovers, those who know how to use it

for health and pleasure without negatively affect it.

Internationally, the rural tourism gradually gained field. On the context of numerous issues within rural and agrarian space, the European rural tourism gained greater and greater importance. Rural European space needs new viable perspectives and alternatives, to prevent degrading social positions of rural population.

Rural and agrarian tourism knew a different evolution in each and every country. Greater qualitative differences are especially in point of degree of endowment and services. Each country has its strong points and own potential, allowing the progress of rural environment. Within Central and West area, the most attractive and well developed area, representative from the rural tourism point of view, is Alps area. Austria is considered to be the ideal rural tourism country.

The international experiences must be carefully selected and adapted to Romanian conditions. Specialized providers of different rural services for different clients' categories and segments from Occident ought to influence, and within a united Europe, Romania begins appearing more and more attractive and sought rural touring destination.

Ethnographical origin resources, occupy a distinctive role within rural traditional objectives, firstly by their own specific being well known the fact that each ethnic group posses its personal spirituality and heritage, as a result of its evolution in time and population spread over the space. From this point of view, people outside the area or belonging to other ethnic group shall assimilate this absolute unique and original heritage.

A feature of the ethnographic resources is the permanent blend of edifices and points of attractiveness, with specific manifestations expressed within an adequate environment. A symbiosis of matter with spirit arises.

The destiny of the ethnographic heritage reveals today situations apparently paradoxical; its minimum share being encountered in countries strongly industrialized and urbanized, while, the richest resources lay within countries under developing process. The explanation is that the genuine popular culture is the appanage of rural live, with strongly preserved traditions enriched by the experience of its own creators.

Among ancestral attractive events of great importance are: occupations and crafts, traditional costumes, games and popular songs; traditional holidays; architecture and peasant's technical devices, human dwellings. Occupations and crafts reveal a large topologic diversity at the regional level. The manner in which rural population earn its living, differs from a relief type to another, from a climacteric region to another. Their attractiveness lays in practise, in tools, in modifications of the natural landscape, in the final result of the human activities. We name here: croppers, animal breeding, wood exploitation and processing, hunting and fishing, apiculture, gold seekers, smithery, pottery, fellmongering, spun, weaving and lime production etc.

Customs are defined to be creative manifestations of rural spirituality, where different events from parish and individual life are given symbolic statue and oracular practice. They are associated to season cyclicity, family or individual events. Traditional clothing, popular dance and singing, vary very much from one area to another. Romania has true treasures in this respect, represented by clothing, popular songs and dances. We underline the absolute originality of Romanian folklore, its great variety and exceptional preserving until present. Popular costumes from Nasaud, Oas, Bucovina, Oltenia, Muntenia or Banat are unique milestones for Romanian peasant spirituality.

Popular instruments as – pan flute, flute, taragot, tambal, etc represent Romanian specificity and constitute attraction points. The traditional architecture and devices confirm the genius of the Romanian anonymous artist, whose love for beauty and practical perspicacity materialized in sui generis construction and production means. Popular architecture reveals certain regional particularities: gates sculpted with floral, solar or spiral motifs from Maramures, wood churches from Maramures, Salaj or Apuseni mountains. Their uniqueness is given by the manner in which they are built as well as the material used.

Human dwellings, seen as whole, are the quintessence of the above mentioned elements, a community of edifices and spirituality. The rural lodging appears to be an individualized whole, whose inhabitants creativity confer a specificity degree. Human dwellings become attraction points, due to

recreational values, clearly particularized or by attributes that bring: ancient time, structure, emplacement within territory, etc.

Capitalization of the Romanian village value and its “geographic personality” strongly influence the revitalization of local activities, target to be reached by:

- reactivate crafts and develop a wide range of services, able to ensure occupational balance and settle job vacancies;
- stimulating alternative or parallel activities bringing additional incomes (rural tourism and agrarian tourism);
- promoting and stimulating local economies, processing food and non-food products;
- Organization of the production and processing structures by frameworks pattern guidelines;
- organization the association forms within a diverse range: family micro-production, family micro-production associations, professional partnerships etc;
- setting local institutional structures of “public - private” partnerships;
- promoted legislation must cover rural space actual problems, including special protection.

These are the main directions hinted for capitalization of rural potential:

- fortification of peasants' households and the entire agrarian politics
- stimulating the non agrarian complementary activities, especially by creating new economic units, especially agro productive and services by capitalization of the touring and agrarian potential;
- selecting several localities specific for Romanian ethnographic areas in order to finance in stages certain complex improvements for rural tourism;
- elaborating studies and projects for local improvement, especially as project for practising sports, leisure and cultural divertissement, touring programs, in order to offer tourists a large range of occupations and attractions.

Capitalization of Romanian village resources can be done by various fairs, fests, contests, meant to complete village favourable image. Although the main capitalization method remains the rural /agrarian tourism – contributing to the introduction within domestic and foreign round trip circuits of various natural conditions and capitalization of the traditional or contemporaneous cultural treasure, of the entire cultural- historical potential within rural space.

This vast activity is based on three interdependent elements:

- attraction towards natural beauty, ethnography, charming events specific to countryside living;
- accommodation and food, which whether they do not match hotel standards must be of quality and offered with hospitality;
- transport, access roads to rural areas, are vital for ensuring a continuous tourists flow.

An eloquent example for Romania is Dornelor depression area, rightly named “Bucovina’s Pearl”, famous for its beauty offered in time, for its high quality products displayed on market, (milk and melted cheese “La Dorna”, “Dorna” mineral water), for rich pastures that determined the ancient tradition of animal breeding for rich mineral water resources, greatly used, it is imposed a better management of the touring and rural tourism capacity by encouraging all villages within the area.

Dorn area has a surface of 222,194 square km, representing 0, 63% out of Oriental Carpathians and 0,093% from the country surface. Within these limits there are 10 parishes with 49 villages and two urban centres represented by Brosteni and Vatra Dornei town; localities belonging to Suceava County.

Dornelor area has a variety of attractions facilitating tourism progress: the surrounding mountains where we can do tracking, we can admire rivers and their rocky savage channels (Cheile Zugrenilor on Bistrita), resinous woods with their highly ozonated air, the rich woodcraft asset and the diverse potential represented by architectural monuments, historical and traditional objectives.

This kind of potential combined with technical – material base allowed practising in the area of different types of tourism, as: mountain tourism, woodcraft tourism, sportive tourism (practising ski, eagle air sport, river-rafting), spa and rural tourism.

Touring activities, with their large scale of services: accommodation; serving, culinary recipes, treatments within spa resorts, leisure and divertissement actions, bring and important contribution to the social economic progress of Dornelor depression. Therefore, besides its recreational and cultural role over visitors, tourism creates new working places, restricting the migration process and commuting to other areas. The broadest and most visible impact remains in the economic field.

Within Dornelor area it has been detected an increase of living standard among population involved in rural tourism. Having to comply with several norms imposed by the international organization of tourism, the inhabitants had to improve the accommodation substructure and equipments, even more, to increase the accommodation area on long term basis. Besides income and increase of living standard, tourism encourages the development of traditional activities (craftsmanship, handicraft).

Although Dornelor area disposes of one of the richest potential, the touring circulation is preponderant domestic, the percentage of foreign tourists being small (aprox. 2%). This is explained by the material base, partially competitive.

In order to increase the number of tourists, especially foreign ones, able to bring higher incomes to the population, it is needed an improvement of the material base and intense advertising, which lately begin to be done by the following promotion methods: fliers, illustrated touring guides, web pages, television etc.

Vatra Dornei resort has many opportunities for investments, which, should they achieve, will rapidly develop this areas from the economic point of view. It is recommended to: have executed consolidation works of the Spa Casino and its reintegration

within touring circuit; construction of the agrarian/food market and revamping the afferent area; building up parking areas, rehabilitate city's thermo network and homologation the ski and sledge slopes, highlighting the leisure area Dornelor and Runc; Dorna riverbed improvement, by building up a barrage with modern technology and providing the lake with boats and hydro bicycles; building up a factory for processing forest fruits, construction a furniture factory.

If the above mentioned investments are to come true, Dornelor depression will gain many tourists, and possibly to be famous worldwide as touring area. But for the moment, Dornelor area is progressing slow but surely. Dornelor depression does not have favourable conditions for "big crops" (cereals, technical plants, food etc.), but they have propitious conditions to develop zootechny, being the most favourable area for cattle breeding (especially for milk) and ovine flocks. Among agrarian cultures, emblematic for this specific area is the potato.

Secondary mountain meadows are made by hay culture and natural pastures, spread over large surfaces, representing qualitative provenders. Their existence, stimulated from ancient times the pastoral economy, which represented an important humanization factor down the valley, of maintaining the connection with population from Transilvania and Moldova.

Out of 222194 ha, from Dornelor territorial fund, the major share is held by natural pastures, respectively 28894 ha, 22681 ha natural hays, the arable category holding only 2349 ha. Population spread over habitats (50.730 inhabitants) – 34,8% in urban environment and 65,2% in rural space – comparatively with the country average –urban 54,7% and 45,3% rural, testifying that the economic progress is less developed in this part of the country.

Presently, the active population within Dornelor area is 22.453 inhabitants, representing 44, 26% from population, out of which 10.594 are employed, indicating 47, and 18% from the active population. The number of the persons working in agriculture is 11.859 and indicate 52, 18% from the active population. A review over the density of animal species from Dornelor area, which participates to the

formation of this indicator (which is 50, 90 UVM/100 ha agrarian field) show the animal load on ha. Is sub optimum (optimum is an average of 1UVM/ha).

Within rural space we can discuss about a regional development pattern, but local patterns, where the territorial image of the investigate area is marked by the specificity of the agrarian structures, generating own utilization ways and space utilization as well as the natural and social capital. The multiplication of the economic structures and especially the apparition and encouraging the specific structures of rural tourism, induce not only a development of the occupational field, but also reinsert in the rural universe other terms of the economic paradigm. Effects appear on the cultural and communicational field, tourism being a dynamic element which can bring closer tradition and modernism.

A study made in this respect shows that within rural space from Dornelor area, the factors favourizing progress are: large display of natural resources (especially field mineral resources, forest vegetation, agrarian surfaces with productive qualities allowing the development of zootechny, valuable elements of the natural environment); human potential (chip and plenty labour force, youths resources ensuring the regeneration of the population, partially trained in agrarian and non-agrarian operations); forest potential; reservations and nature monuments; special landscape and patrimonial values (historical, cultural, architectural and ethnographical); local experience in animal breeding, handicraft, crafts and agrarian tourism.

There are several factors, unfavourable the progress of rural tourism in the area: massive and continuous depopulation; reduced diversity of economic activities; non-performant agriculture; decreased incomes of the population; roads precarious situation – most of the communal roads are not modernized and over 61% from the rural population does not have access to main railroads and railway network; insufficient and inadequate water supply; teaching system is slightly diverse, school buildings offer inadequate conditions and lack specialized equipment; degradation of forest, mainly by an uncontrolled wood cutting.

Selective bibliography:

1. Bran, F., Condea, M., Cimpoieru, I., - *Organisation, improvement durable development of geographic environment*, Universităţii Publishing House, Bucharest, 2006;
2. Chiriţă, V., - *Dornelor depression – physical and geographic study*, Universităţii Publishing House, Suceava, 2003
3. Matei, E., - *Rural and eco-tourism*, Credis Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005
4. Popa, C., - *North of Moldavia. Touring guide*, Vremea Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005
5. Turtureanu, A., G., Ioan, A., C., - *Actual issues of services and tourism*, Zigotto Publishing House, Galati, 2005;