

THE IMPORTANCE OF RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

Even though rural tourism has been developing since decades in European countries, in Romania rural tourism is a recent activity that is improving its operating mechanism as it happens among practitioners of this type of tourism.

In addition to agriculture, rural tourism is an alternative for the local development because it exploits very well the local natural resources, cultural heritage, traditions and customs of the village.

Rural tourism involves a return to nature and origins of tourists but also a way of durable developing of the local community.

Key words rural tourism, agrotourism, village heritage, rural community

INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism in Romania has a picturesque natural environment and a special cultural heritage. As a result we can say that the factors that influence the development of rural tourism are present all over the country.

The basis of rural tourism practice is the rural settlement that still retains ancient customs and traditions and also a variety of folk elements, ethnographic artefacts that can be well exploited if they are harmoniously combined with a strong strategy in promoting them.

Rural tourism is addressed primarily to urban people living in a stressful environment and also to people with middle-income.

Rural tourism and agrotourism as its manifestation is not practiced in Romania constantly throughout all period of the year or in holidays, but especially near major Christian holidays of the year, when the desire of returning to tradition and the family is stronger.

Attraction of tourists in rural tourism activities is determined by the village community which means the involving in protecting the environment and using local resources regardless of their type. Leisure does not have to mean only relaxation and board but direct contact with rural community life.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A simple definition states that rural tourism is practiced in rural areas.

Its main features relates the contact with nature and the natural environment, the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage and a long term durable developing of the local community.

The most important product in the practice of rural tourism and agrotourism is the village which is full of charm and spectacular.

In order to become a tourist village, Romanian has to fulfill the following minimum requirements, of which we mention:

- accessibility by various means of transport
- presence of the utilities: water supply, sewerage, electricity
- ways of communication
- existence of comfort in households
- existence of commercial, health, cultural, and sport facilities
- practicing specific activities: long walks, excursions, hiking, climbing routes

The existence of tourist villages requires some advantages:

- service staff is minimal, sometimes reduced to owners accommodation, which creates intimacy in owner-client relationship (tourist)
- a choice of full board or half board terms
- relatively small investment

Many villages in Romania although they have a special cultural heritage, face some problems which are not characteristic only to certain villages in certain areas or geographical areas, but unfortunately are found nationwide.

The main negative situations faced by the Romanian village are:

- aged population
- lack of jobs
- low cash incomes
- young people are migrating to urban areas or across borders
- infrastructure, regardless of its type, is weak in some parts or is missing especially in the mountains
- lands are not collected in large farms but are more grinded

Inside all obstacles Romanian village is capable of becoming a tourist village, the main influencing factor is determined by man since the Romanian peasant is hospitable and always happy for receiving guests. Also, application of appropriate strategies of the local authorities will determine the elimination of rural deprivation.

By stimulating the development of rural tourism and rural agrotourism will be felt positive effects especially on rural development, on

the one hand, and of its inhabitants, on the other. These benefits will have an impact on agriculture, transport, food, and various services.

The social development of rural tourism as an alternative to agriculture (in tourism as a complementary activity), may cause young people to stay in rural areas because we speak of a diversification of employment, but also an increase of money incomes which ultimately contribute to higher levels of personal and family life.

Employment in rural tourism requires qualified personnel, which helps to educate young people to get the job they want.

On the economic plan the existence of jobs in rural tourism requires local government revenue, then the revenue can head in form of various investments for the rural community.

Practicing rural tourism and especially agrotourism offers a reason for keeping alive the traditions, customs and crafts.

International tourism and agrorural practice in Romania offers direct knowledge of the Romanian countryside, the rural inhabitants hospitality and not least the traditional Romanian cuisine.

Compared with other forms of tourism, rural tourism and agrotourism can be practiced during the entire course of a year, which implies a permanent income. But there is a discrepancy between rural tourism offer and the demand for rural tourism.

Rural tourism and agrotourism is not only spending holidays in the countryside but also a good source of stress therapy because it is addressed to dynamic people and those who love nature.

Rural tourism can play a positive role in rural community development only as far as tourism products offer remains unchanged for long term.

In its entirety, rural tourism offers a conservation of the rural area and the rural lifestyle of its inhabitants.

CONCLUSION

Rural tourism has an important role in the existence of the Romanian village because it offers several advantages, among which we mention: rural tourism can be a way for Romanian rural community development, rural tourism is a complementary activity to agriculture, the economical development in the Romanian village, rural tourism is a source of income for villagers, etc..

It is necessary for rural tourism development strategies developed to take into account nature conservation and local community, and creating diversified jobs.

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