

THE EFFECTS OF RURAL TOURISM ON LOCAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE

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Abstract

The rural tourism is an alternative to the traditional classical tourism, which takes place in resorts and touristic centers and to the touristic “standard” offer – the industrial type.

It is the type of tourism practiced at the countryside, which capitalizes on local touristic resources (natural, cultural and economic type) together with the touristic facilities and equipment, including guesthouses, country cottages and farms.

The rural tourism accommodates the touristic activity organized and managed by the local population and has a strong bond to the environment, natural resources and human capital.

Key words: rural tourism, urban tourism, agro tourism, economy, financing

INTRODUCTION

The rural tourism tries to make rural population aware of the beneficial effects such as the income increase and diversification, the creation of the new jobs, etc. Furthermore, on the long run, it tries to identify solutions regarding the sustainable development of the area and to get the local and central authorities involved in putting into practice the identified solutions.

The touristic consumption takes place at the countryside and it emphasizes the major role of the quality of the country cottages and the farms' check-in services, the experience and the discovery of the environment, cultural heritage and human capital, together with the originality of touristic products.

In the rural tourism, the touristic offer is authentic, original, diverse and personalized. It is organized and managed by the farmers and becomes an economic activity complementary to the farming one.

It gives the opportunity to population with a low income to rest and spend the free time in the picturesque area of the countryside, with cultural –educative values and the specific hospitality.

This type of tourism is not compatible with the mass tourism, because it avoids the agglomeration created by the seaside, spas, skiing

resorts and it is carried out elusively with a wide dissemination of the offer in terms of location, involving low investments in the general infrastructure and touristic facilities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The rural tourism has a major contribution to the economic life of the village through:

- the possibility to establish a development policy of the economic life on the long run, synchronized with policies of different sectors like agriculture, infrastructure, transportation and environmental protection;
- the possibility of becoming an incubator for new businesses and jobs, leading to local and regional development;
- the enhancement of the traditional local activities, especially handicraft, which determines the development of trade and creates new jobs;
- the increase in the income of the countryside locals, generated through the capitalization of local resources, the touristic potential (for recreation, trips, sports), bio agro-food products served or sold to the tourists;
- the dynamic factor for the increase process of life quality at the country side.

The implications of rural tourism in the socio-political life of the country side are:

- the increase of the stability, by reducing the population exodus from the rural areas to cities;
- the occupational diversification of the rural population especially for the young people;
- the amelioration of the rural population age and sex range, in accordance with the new occupations/activities;
- the conservation of the existing social-cultural models (local traditions and specific architecture);
- the locals with limited income can benefit from the farm and touristic resources from the countryside at convenient prices;
- the delivery of alternative holidays for the tourists, which contributes to the recognition and appreciation of the traditional rural life;
- the cultural-instructive role of the rural tourism for the young tourist population and other segments (like foreigners);
- the quality growth of the life for the local population, the increase of their training and knowledge degree through direct contact with the tourists coming from areas with different social-economic and spiritual-cultural specific.

- building a favorable external image of Romania, through direct contact of the foreign tourists with ethno-culture, natural ambience and the hospitality of the Romanian countryside.

A good example is the program "OPERATION VILLAGES ROUMANIES", which involved the completion of pilot programs in Romania (in villages from Bucovina, Alba, Maramureş, Braşov, Sibiu), during the period 1992-1997 for: regional tourism development, supporting the private sector in the development of the activities involved in various alternative forms of tourism, setting up local touristic associations, touristic information and promotion, training and preparation of persons involved in the provision of touristic services as well as those in the field of promotion, etc.

THE PARALLEL BETWEEN THE CHARACTERISTICS OF URBAN TOURISM AND RURAL TOURISM

URBAN TOURISM	RURAL TOURISM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low share of unbuilt areas • concentration of population over 10,000 inhabitants • high population density • surroundings filled with buildings • numerous indoor activities • dense infrastructure • important institutions and buildings • enterprises of national importance • absence of agricultural and forest activities • autonomous touristic activities • home close to the workplace • modest seasonal influence • many visitors • limited relationship with visitors • professional management • cosmopolitan atmosphere • modern buildings • progressive development attitude • arousing general interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high share of unbuilt areas • concentration of population under 10,000 inhabitants • low population density • "natural" surroundings • numerous outdoor activities • reduced infrastructure • small buildings of local importance • enterprises of local importance • agricultural, forest and bucolic activities • touristic activities intended to finance other activities • home away from work • intense seasonal influence • few visitors • personal relationships with the visitors • amateur management • local atmosphere • many traditional buildings • conservation attitude • arousing interest for certain categories of persons

CONCLUSIONS

Romania has good development possibilities for the rural tourism, due to its unexplored touristic potential. The practice of the rural tourism is possible and necessary at this stage, because it will enhance the income, the level of civilization of the Romanian countryside and the locals through their hospitality can change the image of Romania worldwide.

Promoting and developing the rural tourism should not overlook its negative impact on the environment such as the disappearance of some fauna and flora species, protected areas and farming land along with the increase of the urbanization level.

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