

Business Administration

THE CONTRIBUTION OF RURAL TOURISM TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL AREAS

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Abstract: *There are some elements related to the concept of rural tourism which has nowadays become very important around the world. The rural tourism can revitalize the conventional concepts and views on tourism, and bring in a new dimension to the sustainable development of tourism. It has been realized that tourism can play a major role in many countries economies, especially in developing ones, where it can substantially contribute to the increase of the national income. In this respect, mention should be made that Romania has a lot of resources to develop this tourism branch: villages with well conserved traditions, folklore, wildlife, natural heritage. All these natural elements put in value together with investments in infrastructure have determined an increasing demand for the Romanian rural destinations.*

Keywords: *sustainable development, rural tourism, sustainability*

JEL Classification: *Q56 - Environment and Development; Environment and Trade; Sustainability; Environmental*

1 Introduction

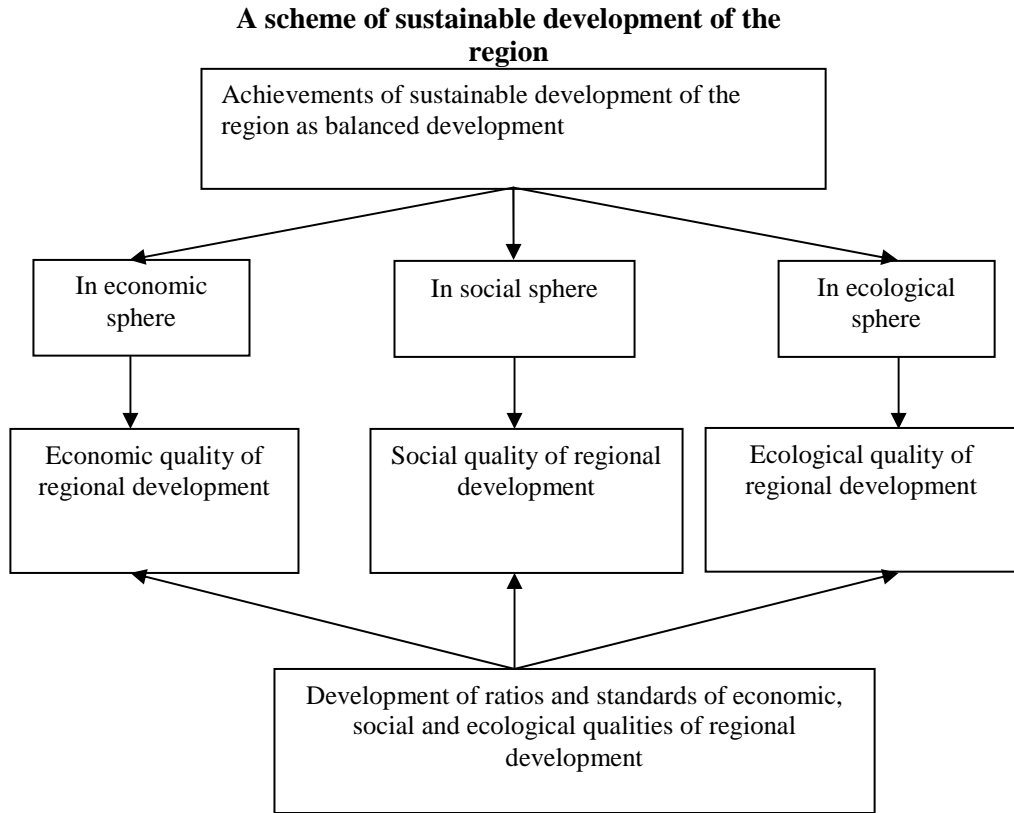
The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defined sustainable tourism development as “that which meets the needs of present tourist and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential for ecological process, biological diversity and life supporting system”.

The economic quality of a regional development is ability of the region due to its own resources to produce such a gross income, which can provide high levels of consumption and accumulation in the region for a long time. The social quality of a regional development is ability of the region due its own demographic potential and social infrastructure to provide stable population in the region and to maintain high standards of life quality in the region during a long period of time. The ecological quality of a regional development is ability of the region to maintain its natural-resource potential and high qualities of environment during a long period of time. A sustainable development of the region is its development with high qualities of a regional development maintained for a long period of time (tens years). Selection of the main parameters - indices and calculation of criteria and limitations of sustainable development is the major phase in creation of the model of sustainable development of the region (Fig.1).

Thus tourism has to be human and adapted to the needs of the tourist, respond to the needs of the local communities, be socio-economic and culturally well planned and environmentally sound. The tourism must offer products that are operated in harmony with the local environment, community attitudes and culture so that they become permanent beneficiaries and not the victims of tourism. The basic cultural identity of these local people should not be adversely affected. Sustainability also ensures economically sustainable-development process in the efficient management of resources and such management to ensure that the resource supports the future as well as the present generation.

Thus sustainable tourism aims to:

- Improve the quality of life of people.
- Provide good experience to the tourists
- Maintain the quality of environment that is essential for both tourists and the local community.



Sursa: [P. Y. Baklanov, 2007, “Model of SD”]

Figure 1. A scheme of sustainable development of the region

2. Emerging dimensions

Tourism will expand greatly in future mainly due to the revolution that is taking place on both the demand and supply side. The changing population structure, improvement in living standard, more disposable income, fewer working hours and long leisure time, better educated people, ageing population and more curious youth in developing the countries, all will fuel the tourism industry growth.

To tap the immense opportunities, coordinated activities of all agencies involved in the development are required. A carefully planned and properly implemented development will definitely benefit the community economically and improve the quality of life in the villages. The success of such development depends upon the people’s participation at grass root level for the development of tourist

facilities and for creating a tourist friendly atmosphere. Development of rural tourism is fast and trade in hotels and restaurants is growing rapidly. Increase in the share of earnings through rural tourism will no doubt; provide an attractive means of livelihood to the poor rural community. It increases the purchasing power at all levels of community and strengthens the rural economy. Development of infrastructure facilities such as rail, electricity, water, health and sanitation will definitely improve the quality of life.

As it is said above, rural areas represent the home of a quarter of the European population and more than 80 % of the European territory (Cork Declaration, 1996).

Rural tourism takes an important place at the European level and the European Community is doing a lot to develop it. Many publications were done about the issues of tourism in Europe. Even the WTO commission for Europe organized various conferences about rural tourism in Europe⁹ to present the trends and evolutions of rural tourism in western and Eastern Europe, and to establish a document on the European way to organize and develop rural tourism.

The WTO commission for Europe points out that rural tourism could be used as a tool for rural development since it could “deliver additional sources of income to rural communities”¹⁰, such as transport, services or health. It also could break the isolation of some communities and give cultural exchange opportunities. Rural tourism could also contribute to the preservation and improvement of environment since it depends on its attractiveness. This commission drew the economic and social costs that could create the development of rural tourism: increase demand for public services, increase in the prices of land and traditional buildings and even of goods; what would prevent local people from buying it. These statements show that, at the European level, authorities want to use tourism for developing rural areas but are also conscious of the negative effects to which this development could bring.

As rural development is a priority at the European level, EU (European Union) has adopted measures that support it. Rural tourism being considered as part of rural development, it can be funded through its instruments in the areas of information, training, marketing, integration of the tourist activity in the area. The European funds granted for rural development are:

- European Regional Development Fund to assist infrastructure development, promotional activities and training;
- European Social Fund to promote training;

- European Agriculture Guarantee and Guidance Fund to promote agricultural adjustment and diversification.

As explains the European Commission on its website 11, LEADER is one of the four initiatives financed by EU structural funds. Its role is to make rural actors aware of the long-term potential of their region. It encourages integrated strategies and innovative projects with the purpose of a high - quality and sustainable development. It gives a large place to partnerships and networks to exchange experiences. LEADER + is the third generation of LEADER programme. LEADER I in 1991 was a new approach of rural development policy territorially based, integrated and participative. LEADER II in 1994 put the emphasis on the innovative aspects of projects. LEADER + aims also, for the period 2000-2006, at the implementation of integrated development programmes for local rural areas, drawn and implemented by LAGs (local action groups) that represent the partnership between the private and public sectors and ensure the local adaptability of the LEADER + programme.

The priority themes of LEADER + are:

- making the best use of natural and cultural resources,
- improving quality of life,
- adding value to local products,
- the use of new know-how and new technologies.

Member States have also an important role to play through the principle of subsidiary, since they are responsible for the implementation of the LEADER initiative. They have to settle national and regional programmes and plans. They also have to evaluate each project funded by LEADER + making a mid-term evaluation by the end of 2003 and another one in 2006.

LEADER is considered by Jenkins et al. (1997) as “one of the most significant strategies for rural development”. It is regarded as a ‘bottom-up’, an endogenous approach to problems of rural development.

The LEADER programme has been of significant use for rural tourism projects. Indeed, even if Kearney remarked in 1992 that “European tourism has long suffered from the benign neglect of governments which have still to recognize its economic importance in modern economies”, an article from Info LEADER magazine explains that “tourism seems to offer a natural development path for rural areas in Europe, particularly in the most disadvantaged of them” since “in 71 of the 217 LEADER 1 areas, it is the dominant activity in the business plans of the local action groups”.

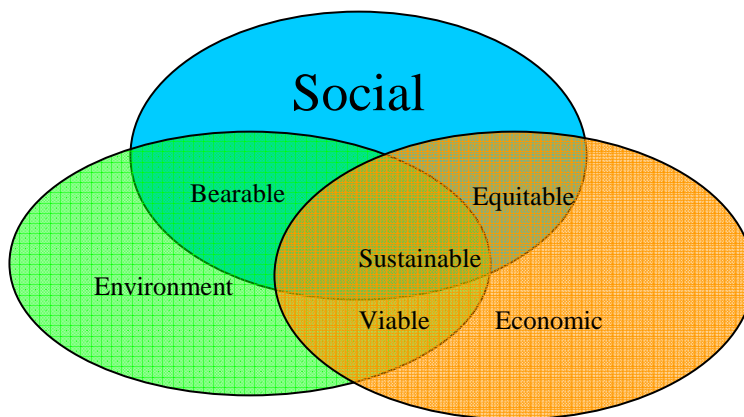
Indeed, about one third of LEADER I initiative was already turned towards tourism. This observation is reinforced by Airey (1983) that noticed that regional development was the most frequent justification for tourism policies. However, this statement shows how slow tourism development has been, especially in the rural areas of southern Europe.

The concept of sustainability means that mankind must live within the capacity of the environment that supports. Sustainable development has been defined briefly as “that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

The definition brings out certain important aspects of sustainable tourism:

- Conservation and enhancement of resources for the future generation;
- Protection of biological diversity;
- Equity within and between generations;
- Integration of environmental, social and economic considerations.

The concept of sustainable development is all about conservation and stewardship of resources for the future. The support for ecologically sustainable development emerging strongly in the tourism sector, as it is the logical way of balancing environmental concerns with growth and development of the industry. Environmental problems facing the world today are of such magnitude that urgent actions have to be taken at the highest levels to counter this fatal degradation. But it is not just enough for government organizations to work towards sustainable development. Every individual, every neighborhood, and every community has to contribute in every way possible to get close to the goal.



Sursa: [UNESCO, 2001]

Figure 2: Scheme of sustainable development: at the confluence of three preoccupations

Many tourism professionals have already identified Romania as the country with the highest potential in Europe regarding the development of rural tourism as a major source of income, both for investors, as for the budget of the country. Nevertheless, and in spite of the fact that more than 18 years have passed from the December Revolution, rural tourism in Romania is still at its beginnings. And it doesn't seem to have an easy way, as Romanian authorities don't yet fully acknowledge the importance and the potential of this type of tourism. They still support major investments in classic mass tourism. But more and more entrepreneurial-spirited people begin to see the benefits and the potential of practicing rural tourism. First steps in this field have started several years ago, shyly, in some traditional places of the country (Prahova Valley, Braşov neighbourhood), and later in other areas. The present-day offer extends from types of accommodation to location.

But certain things able to add value to Romanian rural tourism are missing. First of all, the infrastructure (especially roads) to facilitate the access to the places most wanted by those tourists who want something different, not just sun and a patch of sand near other thousands of persons. An isolated mountain area guesthouse owner will never be able to access by himself a professional event in Vienna or in any other city of the world. And last but not least, the know-how, the science to offer tourists an experience that goes beyond good accommodation and rich meals.

Tourism represents a major factor of general economic progress; it contributes to increasing the Gross Domestic Product, to equilibrating the external balance of payments and to improving life quality.

The main reason for which visitors choose rural destinations is the desire of enjoying the quality of rural, but also human landscape. Maintaining the environmental quality represents an essential condition for that area to be attractive.

The offer of transportation means and other services should take into account the needs of the visitors and of local people, but also environmental policies. It is necessary to endorse the increase in the number of visitors who use public transportation means to get to their destination by establishing attractive itineraries and offering quality services and promotion.

An essential role is played by some technical town endowments that increase the degree of comfort and hygiene, without leading to aggressive urbanization of rural areas. Satisfying these requirements becomes a priority condition for increasing and maintaining a constant tourist circuit that can insure repayment and profit accumulation. Another important factor is transport

development and modernization, especially through the qualitative and quantitative increase in transportation means and telecommunication.

Lack of information:

Rural tourism-an activity which in the last years enjoyed strong development- is confronted with problems due to the fact that pension owners are from different activity sectors and don't have the necessary training to face the exigencies in current tourism. On the world tourist market and especially on the European one there is a phenomenon of strong segmentation of consumer demand. Perfecting promotion methods is essential even if now there are more diffuse and smaller tourist activities in the rural area. Capitalization of all present tourist resources creates the conditions for real broad products with a special way of presenting and selling which will attract the tourist.

Human resources:

Due to the recent changes in the Romanian economy, the role of human resources became extremely important. The current economic conditions and the unprecedented dynamic of change especially in the services sector led to the acute need of training and retraining force labor in this field.

- Lack of rural tourism laws: It is necessary to elaborate new norms of classification for the tourist pensions so that we can be aligned to the European standards;
- Stimulating small entrepreneurs in creating and maintaining the facilities (transportation means, pensions, gardens, forests, alleys, parks and others) through programs and governmental facilitation is another aspect that must be considered in drafting a development strategy of this kind of tourism and implicitly, of national export strategy.

A decisive factor in developing rural tourism is the lack of facilities such as: no taxation or reducing to half the taxes for pensions with a capacity of maximum 10 places for 5 years after they began their activity for pensions owners who have the possibility and want to develop ECO agricultural farms, in accord with the European standards and to sign them in the program

Limited access to the European funds due to the lack of information in some regions of the country and no organisms that offer services for potential investors who may create and implement projects (such as: mountain bike routes, nature trips, riding, fishing) that will develop tourism in that area and will offer more amusement to the tourist, stops the development of tourist packages that could be successfully sold on foreign market.

The existent tourist potential must be capitalized at maximum and the support to any innovative projects in the field can be successfully applied in Romania.

Promotion-an essential factor in rural tourism development

The creation of a tourist information office in Bucharest, especially meant for the foreign tourists is a necessary measure. The promotion methods must be designed according to the demands of the foreign tourist who is attracted by nature, by rural and eco tourism. Currently, an increasing demand for active holidays, for novelty, is being recorded. These sorts of tourist packages must be promoted on the foreign market.

Low quality of services and tourist information in many of the rural tourist areas is a factor which decisively affects the development of this type of tourism. The low professional standard of tourism personnel due to the absence of information in practicing and promoting rural tourism is the main cause of bad services from some areas, and this is because the pension owners from the rural area are from other activity sectors and don't have the necessary training to face the exigencies in current tourism.

ANTREC carries out in partnership with THR training courses for "Pension Administrator" and "Worker in rural tourism". Qualification in "Pension Administrator" trade is a necessary condition for obtaining the homologation and classification certificate. This conditioning was adopted by National Authority in Tourism at the request of ANTREC. The reason for this request was the lack of good services in the agro-tourism pensions where the owners were not acting in a professional manner. ANTREC also contributed to increasing the professional qualifications of those who practice rural tourism by practical training courses for its members in order to make them aware of European standards.

Qualification of human resources in this sector is a priority in the conditions in which the number of foreign tourists is increasing. To meet requests and exigencies of quality tourism, to make tourists come back, to attract new market segments, new sources of financing must be identified for regular such courses, and this because most of those who work in this sector are not professionally qualified for working in it.

The exigencies of good quality modern tourism reject unqualified personnel and the obsolete or arbitrary norms of the service provider. Because Romanian tourism must be aligned to European legislation and the quality of the services must

increase, it is normal to consider the human factor, which is decisive in insuring the quality of the services in tourism field.

Tourism development will open new perspectives for unemployed people and for reducing the seasonal character of jobs, through the job offers from tourism industry and through the opportunities given to the services performers by the increasing number of visitors. Tourism can become one of the key factors in the process of re-launching the economy, taking into account the fact that Romania has a huge tourist potential, adequate to the varied types of tourism at national and regional level. The only way to face competition in the tourist market is the continuous improvement of quality.

In 2004 the following trends manifested in the Romanian tourism development:

Tourism with foreigners had a positive evolution, 6,600 thousand entering in Romania, 18% more compared to 2003. Most of the visitors are coming from Europe (95.5%), EU total share being of 58.3%. Hungary, with 2,603 thousand persons was on the first place as no. of visitors (39.4%) followed by Moldavia with 1,212 thousand (18.45%), Bulgaria with 375 thousand, Germany with 296 thousand, Italy with 230 thousand, Serbia and Montenegro with 220 thousand, Turkey with 195 thousand, Poland with 132 thousand, France with 93 thousand, Austria with 90 thousand. 1,354 thousand foreign tourists were accommodated in hotels, 23% more than last year. The number of foreign tourists who benefited from hotel services represent only 20.5% of the total people who entered in Romania, the rest of approximately 80% didn't use these services or used services that are not statistically tracked, such as relatives, friends.

Tourism with Romanian tourists also increased, and through the tourist agencies were attracted in touring activities 1,649 thousand persons, 15.9% more than last year. Of them 1,429.2 thousand persons participated in domestic tourism and 215.7 thousand persons in foreign tourism activities, which means that from the total of 6,972 thousand Romanians who traveled abroad in 2004, only 3.1% used the services of tourist agencies.

The number of Romanians who benefited from hotel services increased by 8.3% while spending the night increased with only 0.6% for this category of tourists. This shows the fact that Romanian tourists are oriented towards shorter vacations in the country and have an increased interest in the vacations abroad, with negative impact on the payment balance.

As a consequence of the increase of the tourist circulating, especially with foreigners, the usage of hotel capacities was superior to 2003, an increase of 3,7% for spending the night. From the total number of 18,500 thousand times just spending the night registered in 2004, 5,554 (30%) were in balneal places, 4,917 thousand (25.2%) in the capital and regional capitals, 4,337 thousand (23.4%) at the seaside, 2,060 thousand (11.1%) in the mountains 1,502 thousand (8.1%) in other places and tourist circuits, 128 thousand (0.6%) in the Danube Delta.

The economic and social context of Romania corroborated with the trends from the international tourism markets allow us to anticipate for 2005 an increasing dynamic of tourism in our country. An increase of 15% of foreigners visits are estimated, with favorable consequences over the increase with approximately 5% in the usage of hotels capacities.

Today's rural communities provide a stunning image by their contradictory dimensions and very mobile structure. They describe a system in which private property predominates and they often show "parallel economies".

Romanian rural communities represent a significant asset which proves itself useful from the perspective of touristic development.

In this context, research on effective use of rural tourism potential has been begun, at the level of Romanian rural communities, underlining the possibilities of integrated urban development in Dorna District, Suceava County, a region with a remarkable potential, but still underexploited.

It is very likely that in the near future, rural tourism and especially agricultural tourism will contribute to increasing the touristic offer, redistributing touristic rush, a superior revaluation of the resources and to attaching young people to their native areas. These activities can largely contribute to globally developing the Romanian villages, thus human communities will unite in associative forms, action groups, to solve problems like roads and communications networks, water supplying and sewerage, or environment protection.

Tourist hosting in villages has been practiced for a long time in most countries, in a more or less organized manner. But the present-day extension of this phenomenon is something new and it can be explained, on the one hand, by the relaunch of rural areas development, and on the other, by the variety of forms recently taken by mass tourism.

Inside local economy, rural tourism can be defined as a form of revaluation of rural spaces through exploiting natural assets, cultural and historic values and

traditions, agricultural products and by consecrated brand products of regional, ethnographic and cultural identity that could meet consumers' needs of welcoming, food, leisure activities, entertainment and various services.

Largely speaking, rural tourism includes a large variety of guest housing ways, activities, events, festivities, sports and entertainment, and all happen in a typically rural environment. It is a concept which covers touristic activity organized and led by rural local people and which generates from a tight contact with the natural and human environment.

Agricultural tourism can be defined as an additional activity, based on the excess of housing space available in rural homes, especially prepared for guests; it is made of a whole of goods and services provided by rural homes for the benefit of those persons who search rural environment for temporary relaxing, rest and leisure, or therapeutic cures, or business, or hobbies, to initiate in traditional peasants' crafts, for studies and research, as well as many other specific activities.

The farm is still a powerful symbol for urban dwellers. It is the farmer's home – that person who knows the nature's secrets, the best fishing or mushroom-gathering places around. It is the place where domestic animals are bred, with whom urban people lost contact; it is the place where fresh fruit can be eaten, the place where generations succeed, representing at the same time a specific place and lifestyle.

The village means something special for urban people: human dimension, local village life, town hall, local pub, school, the church, places that have been marking people's lives for centuries. Here live craftsmen, marketers, small investors, local actors who make village life easier. It also represents the cradle of the most beautiful feasts, wedding and christening customs, or those specific to wintertime.

The farm, the rural village and space, taken together or separately, represent the charm of rural tourism through attractiveness. Rural tourism must be understood as a form of activity that provides urban dwellers the most adequate conditions of therapy against stress, created by the uproar of everyday life. This form of tourism is strongly influenced by psychological factors and mainly addresses nature lovers, those who know how to use it for the benefit of their own health and mental comfort, without destroying it.

Globally, agricultural tourism has been imposing itself more and more. Considering the numerous problems in rural space and agriculture, European rural tourism has acquired major importance. European rural spaces need new

perspectives and viable alternatives, lest the social position of rural population degraded.

Rural tourism and agricultural tourism have developed differently in various countries. There are big qualitative differences particularly about equipment and services. Each country has its own strong points and potential that allows the development of rural spaces.

In Western and Central Europe, the most attractive and best-developed area, the Alps zone is representative from the point of view of rural tourism and agricultural tourism. Austria is considered the country for rural tourism. International experiences must be carefully selected and adapted to Romanian conditions. Western specialized rural tourism service providers are going to show their influence, and in a united Europe, Romania is about to become a more and more attractive and looked-for touristical destination. Ethnographic assets have a distinct role among rural resources, as each community owns a spiritual and material patrimony, as a result of its evolution and the geographical spreading of its people. That's why foreign people will assimilate this patrimony, as it appears as unique and original.

Usually, ethnographic assets are characterized by a permanent combination of attractive objectives and specific events. There is nowadays a paradox concerning ethnographic patrimony, as its lowest value can be found in most urbanized and industrialized countries, and its highest value in developing countries. Because genuine pop culture can be found but inside rural life, where traditions are preserved and enriched by the experience of its own creators.

Several major attractive rural events: trades and crafts; peasant clothes, dances and songs; traditional feasts; peasant architecture and technical equipment; human communities. Trades and crafts show a great regional diversity. The way rural people make their lives differ from a climatic type to another. They are so attractive because the way they are used is different, as well as the tools that are used, or the final result of human activities. Such trades and crafts are: plants' cultures, farm animals breeding, wood working, hunting and fishing, bee-breeding, gold and iron working, pottery, furrier's trade, spinning, weaving, etc.

Traditions are creative forms of rural spirituality, which consider various events in the community life as symbol status and oracle's practice. They are associated to the natural cycles of seasons, family or individual events.

Peasant clothes, songs and dances are very different from an area to another and from a nation to another. In Romania there are genuine treasures as far as these

are concerned, represented by clothes, peasant songs and dances. We wish to underline the absolute originality of Romanian folklore, its great variety and its exceptional preservation up to our times. Peasant clothes from Nasaud, Oas, Bucovina, Oltenia, Muntenia or Banat are unique landmarks for Romanian peasants' spirituality. Peasant musical instruments – the Panpipe, the shepherd's flute, the dulcimer, etc. have also their own specificity.

Architecture and traditional equipment confirm the genius of the anonymous artist, whose love for beauty and practical insight materialized in special buildings and production means. Peasant architecture has certain regional features: gates sculpted with solar or floral motives, or spiral-shaped in Maramures, Maramures, Salaj or Apuseni Mountains wood churches. The ways they are built, as well as the materials that were used, confer uniqueness. Traditional equipment: water mills, whirlpools, are in their turn very complex and varied.

Human communities are the essence of the above-mentioned elements, a communion of buildings and spirituality. The rural village is a self-sufficient whole, defined by its dwellers' creativity. Human habitats are attractive due to their values: age, structure, space placing etc.

The revaluation of the originality of the Romanian village and its geographical personality impacts the transformation of local activity, an objective reached on the following conditions:

- crafts are reactivated and services are developed - they should ensure a stable work market;
- alternative activities are stimulated or those that bring additional income (rural tourism, agricultural tourism);
- local economy is promoted and stimulated (processing food and non-food products);
- the organization of production structures and their processing through pattern guides;
- the organization of association forms: family micro-production farms, family associations, professional associations, etc;
- a local institutional structure is created and of "public - private" partnership type;
- legislation comprises the real problems of the rural space, including social protection.

The main targets that must be aimed to fully reevaluate the rural potential are:

- the reconstruction of rural homes and of the whole agricultural policy;

- the stimulation of complementary non agricultural activities, especially through the creation of new economic units and through the turning to good account of the touristic and agricultural potential;
- the selection of certain towns and villages specific to Romanian ethnographic areas in order to gradually finance some projects of complex planning for rural tourism;
- research for local fitting up of rural space, especially as a project for practicing sports, cultural entertainment, touristic programs, in order to offer tourists as many attractions and activities as possible.

The revaluation of the assets of the Romanian villages can be done through various fairs, festivals, contests, meant to ameliorate the positive image of the village. Nevertheless, the most important way to turn to good account these assets is rural tourism - as it contributes to introducing certain natural conditions into the domestic and world touristic circuit and to revaluating traditional or modern culture of the rural space.

This large activity is based on three interdependent elements:

- the attraction towards natural beauty, ethnography, events happening in rural life;
- meals and accommodation that, even if they don't meet hotels' standards, must be qualitative and offered with hospitality;
- transports to rural environment are vital to provide a constant rush of tourists.

A cradle of old civilization, where history blends with legend, Bucovina is known for its famous painted monasteries - UNESCO patrimony: Moldovita, Sucevita, Voronet, Humor. As to the architectonic and historical aspects, the monasteries of Putna and Dragomirna are not of less importance.

This entire architectonic jewel is completed by an extraordinary natural surrounding. The Rarau Mountain, the valley of Sucevita and of Moldova with its tributary stream, Moldovita, the pass of Golden Bistrita river, the centenary old forests from Slatioara are only a few highlights of this area.

The popular architecture is really unique. The verandas, doors and window - frames, wells and gates are real wooden embroideries. In addition to this we can mention outside decorations as well, with geometrical or floral motives, stylised and coloured, found mostly in the villages along the Golden Bistrita valley, like Ciocanesti. The homespun, the embroideries, the decoration of Easter eggs with geometrical miniatures, the manufacturing of traditional costumes, are also

important part of Bucovine's unquestionable treasury. Guests are welcomed heartily in Bucovina, with a glass of wine or of traditional home-made "tzuica" (plum brandy), and the local gastronomy is a real adventure with temptations: the traditional "mamaliga" (polenta) with cheese, the smoked trout and cheese, and the "sarmale" (meat rolls in cabbage leaves) are all local specialties waiting to be tasted by visitors. The hosts are welcoming and eager to show you their day to day life and their traditions.

A good example for Romania is The Dorna District, known as "The Bucovina Gem", well-known for the natural assets it has been providing, for its quality products, ("La Dorna" milk and processed cheese, the "Dorna" mineral water), for its generous pastures which made possible the secularly tradition of animal-breeding, for its rich sources of mineral water. A better reevaluation of the touristic potential of this area and a greater involvement of the local villages are necessary.

The Dorna District has a surface of 222,194 square km, that is 0,63% of the surface of the Oriental Carpathians and 0,093% of the surface of the country. Within this area, there are 10 counties with 49 villages and two towns: Brosteni and Vatra Dornei (Suceava county).

The Dorna District provides numerous assets which facilitate the development of local tourism: the mountains around with a lot of touristic itineraries, the rivers that, while crossing the mountains, form beautiful gorges (the Zugreni gorge on the Bistrita river), the resinous forests that spread fresh air, a lot of game as well as many monuments, historic objectives, and last but not least genuine traditions.

Such a potential, as well as the technical and material basis, have allowed several types of tourism types in the area, such as: mountain tourism, hunting, sportive tourism (ski, river-rafting), therapeutic tourism and rural tourism.

Touristic activities such as accommodation, serving, special food, medical cures, leisure and entertainment, etc. are a key to the social and economic development of the Dorna District. Thus, tourism, along with its cultural and recreative impact on tourists, creates new jobs, limiting people's migration to different zones. But economic impact is the most powerful.

In The Dorna District one can notice the growth of the living standard of those dwellers who practice rural tourism. As they had to meet certain rules imposed by the Worldwide Tourism Organization, people in the area had to ameliorate infrastructure and accommodation; moreover, they had to extend the

accommodation space in order to be able to practice tourism in the long term. Together with greater incomes and a higher living standard, tourism encourages the development of traditional peasant activities.

Although the Dorna District enjoys high potential, touristic population is mainly domestic, foreign tourists counting only about. 2%. This can be explained by the lack of an adequate material basis.

For a bigger number of foreign tourists, who would bring greater income to local people, the material basis needs to be ameliorated and intensely promoted, something that recently showed up, through various methods: flyers, illustrated touristic guides, web pages, TV etc.

Vatra Dornei spa is an area enjoying many investment opportunities that would lead to a faster economic growth. Thus, we recommend:

- the consolidation and the arrangement of the Spa Casino and its rendering to the touristic circuit;
- the building of the market and the planning of the neighbourhoods;
- a parking system;
- the improvement of the heating system of the spa;
- the arrangement and the ratifying of the ski and sledge tracks;
- the turning to good account of the Lunca Dornelor and Runc leisure areas;
- transforming the Dorna river into a touristic objective by building a modern water storage dam and equipping the lake with boats and water bikes;
- building a berry-processing plant;
- building a wood plant.

If these investments are made, the Dorna District will have more tourists and maybe it will get worldwide recognition. For the moment, it just follows its slow but sure evolution.

The Dorna District doesn't allow cereal and technical crops, forage crops etc., in exchange here one can get the basis for the development of the zootechnic field; it is the best area to breed bovines (especially the ones for milk) and sheep. Among agricultural crops, potatoes are representative.

Secondary mountain lawns are composed of natural hayfields and pastures, occupying extended surfaces and being at the same time good food for cattle. It has

made possible ancestral pastoral economy, that represented a major factor of unification between local people and those in Transylvania and Moldavia.

The landed stock of the Dorna District sums 222194 ha; the major part is natural pastures (28894 ha), natural hayfields (22681 ha), and arable land represents only 2349 ha. The population of the area sums 50.730, of whom 34,8% live in the urban environment and 65,2% in the rural environment. In comparison to the national average (54,7% urban and 45,3% rural), this confirms the generally low economic level development.

Nowadays, the active population of the Dorna District sums 22.453 persons, (44,26% of the total population), of which 10.594 persons are employed (47,18% of the active population). 11.859 persons work in agriculture (52,18% of the active population). A survey of the denseness of the animal species of the Dorna District, that takes part to the creation of this marker by summing (50,90 UVM/100 ha arable land) shows that animal loading /ha. is sub-optimum (the optimum is, on the average, 1UVM/ha).

In the rural space one cannot speak about a regional development pattern but only about local patterns, where the territorial image of the investigated area is marked by the specificity of the agricultural structures which generate their own manners to deal with space, and with natural and social capital. The multiplication of the economic structures and especially the emergence and the encouragement of the specific structures of rural tourism lead to a bigger employment rate and reinserted the rural universe into different terms in the economic paradigm. This has cultural and communicational effects, as tourism is a dynamic element that can bring tradition closer to modernity.

Research shows that inside the rural space of the Dorna District, the factors favoring development are: various natural assets (mainly mineral resources of the subsoil, forest vegetation, productive agricultural land allowing the development of zootechnics, valuable elements of the natural environment); the human potential (the generous and cheap workforce, the youth, partially instructed in various agricultural and non-agricultural activities); the forest potential; natural parks; special landscape and cultural values (historic, cultural, architectural and ethnographic); local experience in animal breeding, crafts, trades and rural tourism. The unfavourable factors to the development of the rural space are: the higher emigration; the stagnation of economic activities; the low-result agriculture; people's low incomes; the low-quality roads – most of the communal roads are not modernized and over 61% of the rural population has no direct access to the main roads and the railway network; the water supply is insufficient and inadequate; the education network is not diversified, schools run into inadequate buildings and are hardly equipped with

specific instruments; the degradation of the forests, mainly due to an uncontrolled deforestation.

Conclusions

Tourism industry may become one of the major segments of the Romanian economy. It generates employment and helps infrastructure development. Romania has a lot of resources to develop this economic branch, and especially the rural tourism: villages with well preserved traditions, folklore, wildlife, natural heritage. The rural tourism has specific resources of Vatra Dornei area from Bucovina county, namely:

- the village, as natural entity, playing an important role in Bucovina's image as touristic destination
- the natural attractions as mountains, forests, mineral waters, large low polluted areas
- the traditional workmanship, customs, folklore and the ecological products

All these elements may constitute a solid support for developing the rural tourism in this county, obviously accompanied by economic measures to encourage improvement of the road infrastructure, renovation of the old houses, churches and monasteries, building of new accommodation capacities with modern utilities, implementing of facilities for time-spending and various out-door activities like skiing, trekking, cycling, rafting, swimming.

Adding a good promotion, both within and outside the country, of this region by the help of the local and national organizations, as a safe, healthy and beautiful Romanian destination, the authors consider that the rural tourism may substantially contribute to the economic development of this Romanian region, and Bucovina and Vatra Dornei area may therefore become one of the pearls of the European rural tourism destination, internationally recognized.

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