

The Rural Tourism and the Rural Development

Mirela MAZILU¹

¹ University of Craiova, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Craiova, ROMANIA

E-mail: mirelamazilu2004@yahoo.com

Keywords: *mix, agrotourism product, destination, rural tourism, sustainable tourism*

ABSTRACT

Agrotourism is a component of the rural tourism, with implications in the revaluation of the local resources and in the increase of the lifestyle of the people, in the social and economic development of the rural locality and of the community, in the protection and the preservation of the natural and built environment, in the context of an economic activity on ecological principles. Between rural tourism and agrotourism there is a close relation from the whole to the part, agrotourism being one of the components of rural tourism. Agrotourism, however, being practised mainly in the areas with diversified agricultural vocation, in the relatively isolated and isolated areas, which impose the provision of all the necessary stuff to live through own forces or where there is a specialty, creates monopoly positions regarding the production of some appreciated and sought food products (orchard and viticulture areas, shepard villages, the delta and other fishing areas). The nature experience does not represent the only feature that differentiates ecotourism from other similar forms of tourism. That is why it cannot be considered a simple form of rural tourism or an easy way of agrotourism, where the activity is often reduced to the observance and the participation in the agricultural activities or the caring for animals. Nature, a non-exhausted source of entertainment, remains a permanent and cheap attraction or handy for more participants in the tourist act. Ecotourism involves the visit of the natural areas for an educational purpose, as well as the implementation of solutions with a minimum impact on the ecosystem, for the development of the local community. The mass tourism is the one responsible for the most visible and most profound negative influences on the destination tourist areas, these being the majority of the cases of negative impacts. The alternative tourism tries to avoid the traditional destinations with a mass character, focusing on the responsible and ethical attitude of the consumers taking part in the newest forms of tourism. The sustainable tourism represents the development of all the forms of tourism, through a tourist management and marketing which complies with the natural, social and economic integrity of the environment, in such a way that the exploitation of the natural and cultural resources should be done in the interest of the future generations. The sustainable tourism should comply with the following principles: the minimization of the impacts of the tourist activities on the natural environment for obtaining the ecological sustainability; the minimisation of the negative impacts of the tourist activity on the local communities and its members for obtaining the social sustainability; the minimisation of the negative impacts of the tourist activity on the culture, traditions and local community customs for obtaining the cultural sustainability. The guarantee of success of such a tourism means: the stimulation of the private initiative in tourism and the creation of a support frame for the local tourism; the revaluation of the tourist potential of the county through the development, diversification and the promotion of the tourist offer; the sustainable development of tourism through: the rational use of the tourist resources and the promotion of the preservation and protection methods of the environment under the national legal stipulations on the environment; the maximisation of the tourist potential through the integration of tourism in other sectors of the regional industry; the offer of assistance for the local institutions and the operators to achieve and change the resources according to the community demands.

1. INTRODUCTION

The nature experience does not represent the only feature that differentiates ecotourism from other similar forms of tourism. That is why it cannot be considered a simple form of rural tourism or an easy

way of agrotourism, where the activity is often reduced to the observance and the participation in the agricultural activities or the caring for animals. Nature, an inexhaustible source of entertainment, remains a permanent and cheap attraction or handy for more participants in the tourist act. Ecotourism involves the

visit of the natural areas for an educational purpose, as well as the implementation of solutions with a minimum impact on the ecosystem, for the development of the local community.

The mass tourism is the one responsible for the most visible and most profound negative influences on the destination tourist areas, these being the majority of the cases of negative impacts.

The alternative tourism tries to avoid the traditional destinations with a mass character, focusing on the responsible and ethical attitude of the consumers taking part in the newest forms of tourism.

The sustainable tourism represents the development of all the forms of tourism, through a tourist management and marketing which complies with the natural, social and economic integrity of the environment, in such a way that the exploitation of the natural and cultural resources should be done in the interest of the future generations.

The sustainable tourism should comply with the following principles:

- the minimization of the impacts of the tourist activities on the natural environment for obtaining the ecological sustainability;

- the minimisation of the negative impacts of the tourist activity on the local communities and its members for obtaining the social sustainability;

- the minimisation of the negative impacts of the tourist activity on the culture, traditions and local community customs for obtaining the cultural sustainability.

The guarantee of success of such a tourism means:

- the stimulation of the private initiative in tourism and the creation of a support frame for the local tourism;

- the revaluation of the tourist potential of the county through the development, diversification and the promotion of the tourist offer;

- the sustainable development of tourism through: the rational use of the tourist resources and the promotion of the preservation and protection methods of the environment under the national legal stipulations on the environment;

- the maximisation of the tourist potential through the integration of tourism in other sectors of the regional industry;

- the offer of assistance for the local institutions and the operators to achieve and change the resources according to the community demands;

- the development of the tourist industry through direct investments in the creation and the elaboration of general and tourist infrastructure objectives;

- the revival of tourism through efficient local initiatives;

- the stimulation of the local initiatives in tourism by creating common interests;

- the maximization of economic benefits for the local population as a consequence of tourism development in order to obtain the economic sustainability;

- the tourism development by increasing the tourist services quality, in order to attract more visitors;

- the development of the tourist potential insufficiently exploited;

- the improvement of the environment conditions from the tourist areas;

- the improvement of the image of tourist areas;

- the development and the modernisation of the transport infrastructure;

- the revaluation of the natural, architectural and cultural heritage through specific actions;

- the promotion of tourism through leisure activities and sport.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

Agrotourism presents some features which differentiate it from the traditional, standard tourism:

- the tourist consumption unfolds in the rural environment, where essential are the following: the quality of the hostel and the welcoming services of the farmers, the knowledge of the natural, human and cultural environment, as well as the originality of the tourist products;

- the tourist offer is authentic, differentiated, multiple in its diversity, organised and lead by the farmers, that is by village people;

- it is a complementary economic activity of the agricultural exploitation and not an alternative or a substitution of this activity;

- it offers the population with low incomes the possibility to rest and relax, to spend the free time on holidays or weekends in the picturesque landscape of the rural environment, with cultural and educational values and with the specific hospitality;

- it does not need very large investments for tourist infrastructure and super-structure or for other endowments;

- it avoids the large tourist agglomerations from the seaside or from the spas or mountain resorts;

- it is a form of tourism where the offer is diversified by a great dissemination of the space as well. Thus, apparently, it does not bring too many prejudices to the natural and built environment, but one must take into account the certain "*ecological threshold*" and the "*physical threshold*". In order for this feature to subscribe completely to the concept of ecotourism, one must take into account the "*accommodation capacity*" of the village and of the surroundings, especially under the conditions of a holiday during the summer months (endowments, fittings, services, relation with the local population);

- it is not compatible with the mass tourism.

Agrotourism must become a component of ecotourism, so the ten principles for the sustainable development of tourism may apply in this case as well. One should consider the following amendments as well:

- the reduction of the over-consumption and of the waste of tourist resources;

- the maintenance of the natural, cultural and social diversity of the rural space;

- the integration of agrotourism in the national, regional and especially local development planning and strategy (the development of the offer, the promotion and the organisation, as well as the development of the general and technical and buildings infrastructure); hence the conclusion that through the agrotourist marketing the integration of the agrotourist activities in the development of the rural space is influenced;

- the support of the local economies in the social and economic development of the community, but also in the protection of nature and values;

- the involvement of the local communities in the tourist sector, through the support of the initiative groups, for the development and the promotion of the local tourist offer, for the protection of the environment and of the cultural assets, hence the role of the local organisations, of the tourist services providers, in our case, The Village Association for Rural Tourism;

- the consultancy of experts and of the public in the development of agrotourism and of the local economy,

- the sustainable development of agrotourism must be supported by the professional training, qualification, perfection, the training of the trainers from the local population, the civic training, the adequate sociological training;

- the research and the monitoring of the tourism activity and of the environment protection and preservation actions, as well as the tourist resources.

Culture is indirectly included in the agrotourist products mix, due to the knowledge possibilities that this product offers (general knowledge of geography, history, folklore, traditions and customs with which the tourists come into contact, the exchange of information on the local products and food, the crafts and the installations that can be admired on site); agrotourism may constitute as a cultural act as well.

For example, the farmers from Germany, Austria and Switzerland have opened their barn doors and invite tourists to stay overnight for only 10 Euro. The Romanians from Chiojdu offer housing, meals and relaxation in the hay for 100 RON per day, as a form of practising the anti stress therapy or as a bio fashion, the hay winning many tourists...

The hay and sauna therapy are included in the price of the accommodation at the agrotourist hostel - 100 RON per night, and includes the accommodation, three meals and an appetiser of cool plum brandy from

Chiojdu, patented at OSIM, offered on the house. Melania Chiş is another hostel owner who has introduced the relaxation in the hay in the tourist offer.

"*It is our creation*", says the host, who has imagined a separate room, with traditional towels, mattress, pillows and bags, stuffed with hay made from the second mowing.

The children love to try sleeping in that room. It is a method to relax and entertain offered for free, as it is the coffee and the jam that we offer tourists", the owner adds. The most pleased customers are the ecologist ones.

3. GEO-TOURISM AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE MOUNTAIN ECOTOURISM

Following a European study on geo-tourism performed in Thailand by Titiyawadee Punmanee, from the University of Leicester, on the concept of geo-tourism, study which was presented at the University of Leicester on June 26, 2009.

Geo-tourism has as purpose the setting of another type of tourism, focused on the support of the natural environment, of the cultural heritage, of the elements of geology specific to a certain destination. This type of tourism focuses on the support, the preservation and the optimisation of the relations between all the parties involved in the tourist act, the governmental agencies, the non-governmental agencies, the tourists, the travel agencies and the local communities.

Many times geo-tourism has been confused with ecotourism, due to its similar features. Ecotourism refers especially to the activities organised in the middle of nature, like hiking trips, watching animals, plants etc., but may include the cultural activities, having an educational component as well, teaching the respect for nature and the culture of the area.

It is a well-known fact that Ecotourism brings benefits to the local community as well, by engaging and involving the local population in the organisation of tourist activities, by using the local products and foods.

Geo-tourism must be understood as a new direction, in which the local public administration and the local communities must get involved, in order to understand how a prosperous tourism may exist in the areas which it represents. We hope that this new type of tourism leads to the preservation and protection of the geographical heritage, to the creation of a balanced tourism, which could correspond to the countries whose economies are based on tourism.

Four years ago, Romania signed an agreement with National Geographic for the adoption of a geo-tourism strategy, and, since then, important steps have been taken regarding the promotion of the natural reserves owned by Romania: the caves, the canyons, the areas with fossils, the rift areas, geological formations, the old mines, but also regarding the education of the

local people, for the preservation of the uniqueness of the places.

National geographic defines geo-tourism as *"tourism that supports and increases the geographical feature of a location - the environment, the culture, the aesthetic, the heritage and the welfare of the local people from the areas"*.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The classic mass tourism is focused on the leisure activities chapter. It is meant for the mass, having as main motivation the escape from the daily routine, the search for the opposite of work etc., and it has been used as a means for propaganda during the cold war in order to support the superiority of capitalism. A typical mass product. But, as we assist to the customising of the production, we notice the radical change of this type of tourism. Normally, nobody gives up the consumption society, or the holidays abroad. The production process of the mass tourism has changed and a new type has appeared, characterised mainly by:

- a higher price, by the switch to the *"pacific"* and *"all inclusive"* type of services;
- the great majority is heading towards the seaside holidays, combined with the short trips, which represent the majority of the departures, together with the holidays (sometimes circuit type) for visiting anthropogenic destinations: capitals, historic places, sports, destinations ranging from the cultural attraction to even sexual interests. Examples: Amsterdam, Paris, Olympics etc;
- the profound specialisation of the tourist products according to the type of *"feeling"* offered. The modern technology, especially the information technology, allows more programs to unfold on the same capacities, sometimes totally different (adventure, family tourism, sports etc.) by differently combining the utilities and the timetables, for the clients of the same hotel;
- social products offered through diverse social systems for the less favoured categories: retired people, unemployed people, young people etc.;
- the extremely discreet delimitation - practically impossible to emphasise, except for the on site visit - between the clientele from the developed states and the rest of the world. At the same time, *"the run"* of the rich clientele towards exclusive areas and the filling of the void left by the mass tourism: cruises, special locations, reserved time intervals etc.;
- a special diversification of the tourist products towards the *"niche"* areas for the small groups of potential tourists, but well localised and identified, the holiday hardly differing from hobbies: motorcycles, bicycles, hiking, diving, fishing, building, festivals etc., the range is very wide. Of course, these *"niches"* have

small values, but they enter the category of mass tourism, being meant for relaxation and the practice of leisure activities.

We must mention, also, that a modification of the buyers conduct has occurred, these having more experience now and being more exigent, corresponding to the new way of life (families, couples without children with two salaries etc.), the number of third age persons has increased etc., but also we may notice a reduction of the high incomes of the great majority of the population. Implicitly, the forms of tourism (sports travels, spas and health care, cultural tourism, theme parks, cruises, religious pilgrimages) know a rapid rhythm of development. An interesting case is that of the cruises industry, which only between 1980 and 2009 knew an increase rate of 7.9%. This has changed the holiday customs: the hotel travels together with the tourist competing with the offer on-shore. The ecological and economic implications of the cruises are more and more debated.

The mass tourism is not conditioned only of its "cost" in the lifestyle, cost which increases and it is well taken care of through intervention means, but also subjected to a notable impact given by the climate changes, which impose restrictions in the development of a new destination of this kind, for a more saturated population, after many years of more and more sophisticated holidays.

Unfortunately, the damage done by the bad image of the gypsies shall not be erased for a long period of time. The aggressive begging, the thefts could have been rapidly fought by presenting, on the expenses of the Romanian state, on the foreign television channels, the gypsy palaces built with the money obtained by the public mercy, and by applying the western principles to a minority incapable to understand them at that time. Moreover, regarding the palaces built *"through honest labour, from the selling of iron ...(!?)"*, the thorough checking not only of the manner in which they have obtained the iron, but also the complicity of those who accepted to collect and reevaluate it would have been very important. In parallel the situations of legality, normality should have been clearly marked not to condemn the whole people but only those individuals whose deeds have negative consequences on the whole people. The amplitude of the phenomenon has all the features of a mass-media event, very efficient, as anyone can empirically observe.

Of course, the economic value of tourism cannot be placed under discussion, maybe, as we have shown, only its overbidding. But tourism makes a distribution of knowledge about a region, a community, increasing the quality of the tourism experience. Postma considers that the current mentality focused on consumption must be stopped and many values should be taken into consideration in order to allow the quantification of tourism and leisure - fully integrated

in the today's society. He defines "appropriate tourism" or "*the quality of tourism*" as tourism that tries to consider the needs and the values of the main actors, for instance the tourist, the industry and the community

and which should care for a just measurement of the interests in a fair and democratic way.

For the exemplification of those three directions he uses the following model:

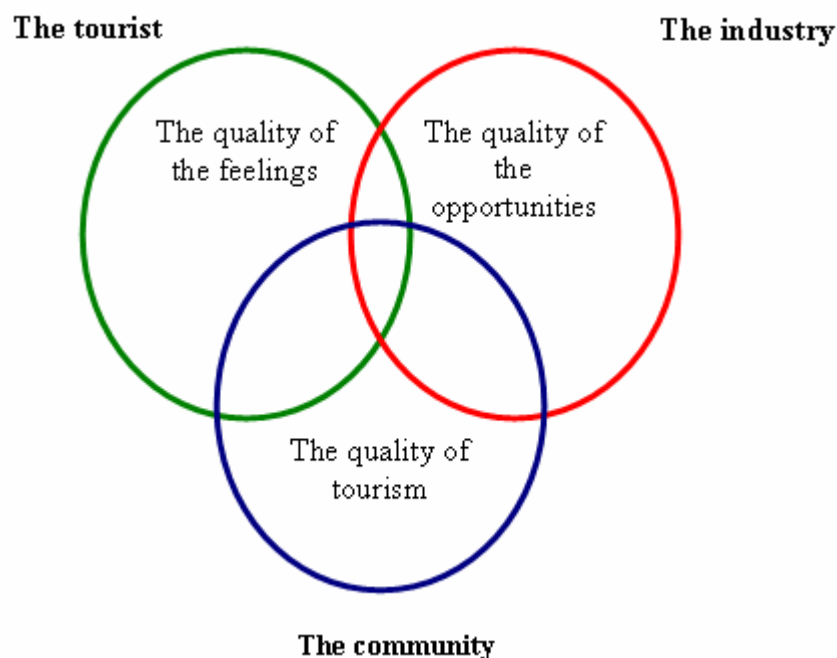


Fig. 1. The value of tourism (the adaptation of the author after Postma A., ATLAS Conference, Association for Tourism and Leisure Education) from June 2003 had as theme the "Quality of Life". In this part of the article we support our discussion on the following articles as well: Postuma, A. – *Quality of Life: competing value perspective in leisure and tourism* and Marciszewska, A. – *Leisure time use of the Internet and the Quality of Life*.

5. CONCLUSION

The nature of the occidental society is changing. In the post-industrial era the western society knows demographic, technological, social and political changes.

O'Sullivan & Sprangler in Experience Marketing justify the passing of the western society from the economic rewards to the psychological ones. In a world of abundance the need of the tourist becomes a priority.

The consumption, in their opinion, shall stop increasing the standard of life, but it shall increase the quality of life. They divide the providers in "*makers*" - services providers who create feelings as the main elements of their services (leisure, travels, hospitality and entertainment) and "*enhancers*" - providers who use feelings to increase them (experience, the tourists' satisfaction).

They underline the importance of the fact that a "*feeling*" offered to the host community must be counter-balanced by the costs for maintaining the conditions of the continuity of the human society in the future, and includes: the client, the provider, other participants in that experience, the interaction with the experience as such ... The quality of tourism is one of the important elements connected to the wider concept of tourist destination. The theory which shall develop

around this concept shall be based on the practice of the new type of tourism, the tourism of "*feelings*".

It is obvious that these values are limited to the society of the rich countries, but also the destinations from the rest of the world must know them in order to answer the exigencies of the tourists coming from these countries, accustomed to the new manner of perceiving the services.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A tourist product that is well created, based on researches, may influence the development of the less-favoured area through: the attraction of a flow of foreign tourists in the area; the modernisation and the extension of the infrastructure: accommodation, food, transport, so that it does not affect the existing natural environment; the creation of new work places and the development of the local human resources through the training of the employees; the preservation of the continuity of traditions, customs and spiritual values from the area.

The tourist product created has been achieved based on the foreign tourists' preferences, expressed in the research, which should ensure the tourist flow in the areas promoted by the respective product and a high degree of tourist satisfaction. The quality and the competitiveness of the tourist products contribute to

the development and the maintenance of a sustainable tourism.

Among the proposals, we will mention the following:

- the information and the awareness of the travel agencies and of the tour-operators regarding the importance of creating competitive tourist products to determine the creation of a sustainable tourism in the areas;

- the involvement of the state by awarding some facilities to the travel agencies that promote such Romanian tourist products in the less-favoured areas from an economic point of view;

- the employment by the tour-operators and the travel agencies of the specialised personnel that should have higher education in the field.

REFERENCES

- [1] **Baker, S., Bradley, P., Huyton, J.** (2002), *The Principles of the Operations at the Hotel Reception*, ALL Beck Publishing House, Bucharest.
- [2] **Bavoux, J., Bavoux, D.** (1998), *Géographie humaines des littoraux maritimes*, A, Collin.
- [3] **Ionică, M.**, (2000), *The Economy of services*, Uranus Publishing House, Bucharest.
- [4] **Lupu, N.**, (2003), *The Hotel - Economy and management*, the 4th edition, All Beck Publishing House, Bucharest.
- [5] **Mazilu Mirela** (2004), *Ecotourism and Tourist Arrangements*, Scrisul Românesc Publishing House, Craiova.
- [6] **Mazilu Mirela** (2007), *Tourist Geography*, Didactical and Pedagogical Publishing House, Bucharest.
- [7] **Mazilu Mirela** (2007), *Le tourisme roumain dans le contexte du tourisme europeen*, Universitaria Publishing House, Craiova.
- [8] **Mazilu Mirela Marinescu, R.** (2008), *The Globalisation Impact on the Romanian Tourism*, article defended and published on the site of the IASK Conference (International Association for the Scientific Knowledge)-Advances in Tourism Research, Portugal, 26-28 May, <http://www.iask-web.org/at08/programme.html> and www.iask-web-org/publications.html
- [9] **Mazilu Mirela, Marinescu, R.** (2008), *Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas – Case Study of the Iron Gates Natural Park*, Rural Futures Conference, organized by University of Plymouth and School of Geography, 2-4 April, Plymouth, the Great Britain, ISBN: 978-1-84102-185-0, p.1-7.
- [10] **Mazilu Mirela Marinescu, R.** (2008), *Perceiving Romania as a Sustainable Tourism Destination*, published in the vol. Proceedings Book of the 4th World Conference for Graduate Research in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure, organised by Anatolia Journal: An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research, 22nd – 27th April, Antalya, Turkey, ISBN 978-975-96260-4-4, pg. 320-330.
- [11] **Minciu, R.** (2000), *The Economy of Tourism*, Uranus Publishing House, Bucharest.
- [12] **Mitroi, M.** (2000), *The Predictions of the World Organization of Tourism 2000-2010*, Tribuna Economică Magazine, Bucharest, no. 27.
- [13] **Niță, I., Niță, C.** (2000), *The Tourism Market of Romania*, Ecran Magazin Publishing House, Braşov.
- [14] **Snak, O.** (2000), *Services and Quality Management*, Romanian Academy of Management, Bucharest.
- [15] **Stăncioiu, A. F., Mazilu, Mirela Căescu, Șt. C., Constantinescu, M.** (2006), *Considerations regarding the strategic thinking in the marketing of the regional identity*, article published in „Economica” magazine, year XIV no.4 (December) (56)/2006, ASEM, Chişinău, ISSN 1810-9136.
- [16] **Stăncioiu, A. F., Arsene, O., Teodorescu, N., Mazilu Mirela** (2008), *The SWOT Analysis of the tourist destination – conceptual aspects – methodology*. Case Study: Northern Oltenia or Oltenia at the bottom of the Mountain- published in the vol. The International conference Competitiveness and stability in Knowledge – Based Economy, 30-31 May, Craiova, ISBN 978-606-510-162-3, pg. 600-607, Universitaria Publishing House, Craiova.
- [17] **Stănciulescu, G.** (2004), *The Sustainable Tourism Management in the Urban Centres*, The Economic Publishing House, Bucharest.
- [18] **Vellas, F.** (1998), *Tourism – Tendencies and Predictions*, Walforth Publishing House, Bucharest.
- [19] *** (2006-2010), The National Institute of Statistics - 2006-2010.