THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF STAFF TRENING IN THE SUSTINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM – IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND MEDIATION IN FOREING LANGUAGES

ROLUL ŞI IMPORTANȚA INSTRUIRII PERSONALULUI ÎN DEZVOLTAREA DURABILĂ A TURISMULUI RURAL – STRATEGII DE ÎMBUNĂTĂȚIRE A COMPETENȚELOR DE COMUNICARE ŞI MEDIERE ÎN LIMBI STRĂINE

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Abstract: *Tourism is an activity that has experienced a steady growth over time. In recent years, rural tourism has been an important part of tourist preferences. A concern today is related to the sustainable development of rural tourism, which seeks to protect natural, social and cultural resources, and to meet the needs of tourists and local population. In order to implement this type of tourism, an important role comes from the labor directly involved, therefore, this training can be considered a priority. In view of an international promotion, we take into consideration the development of linguistic competences in different foreign languages as a basic condition in this research field. The present work wants to put accent on some possible improvement strategies of communication and mediation within these activities.*

Keywords: *sustainable development, rural tourism, labor, training.*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of sustainable development is timely, highlighting its relationship with the environmentalists and the responsibilities of present generations to come. The development is considered sustainable if it meets the company's current needs without jeopardizing the future.

The main issue concerning this type of development is the opposition between the needs of population growth and the limitations of the planet's resources, as well as the permanent environmental degradation.

The application of this concept can be realized in the majority of the economic activities, including tourism.

Tourism is an activity based on the environment, so integrity is required.

Over time the worldwide number of tourists increases. The pressure on land, coastal areas, water and air is increasing, resulting in negative effects on the environment and human health. This increase in the number of tourists has also increased road, air and rail traffic, as well as intensive uncontrolled development of infrastructures and tourism activities.

Sustainable tourism development requires meeting the needs of present tourists, protecting the environment, and tourism resources for the future. Thus, according to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) "sustainable tourism develops the idea of meeting the needs of present tourists and the tourist industry while protecting the environment and the opportunities for the future. It has to meet all the economic, social, aesthetic, etc needs of the "actors" in tourism, while maintaining cultural and environmental integrity, biological diversity and all life supporting systems."[1]

Rural tourism is a form of tourism that takes place in rural areas and in which the sustainable development concept can be easier implemented. We consider the knowledge related to this type of development and tourism to be essential to success.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Several principles regarding sustainable development of rural tourism have formed, namely: the environment is the primary support for tourism; it must be the heritage for future generations; to achieve benefits for the environment, local communities and tourists by practicing tourism activities; to establish a long-term environment-tourism relationship; to keep the place's characteristics; to find a balance between the needs of

1 **** WTO, WTTC, The Earth Council-Agenda 21 for the Travel an Tourism Industry: Towards Environmentally Sustainable Development, 1995*

participants (tourists, their hosts and the destination); the principles to be obeyed by all those involved in tourism activities and their accountability[1].

The benefits of sustainable development of rural tourism can be economic, social and environmental. Among these we mention the increase of the operating and recovery of the tourism resources, without affecting them, the increase of the number of jobs, the development and conservation of crafts, the public's access to tourism, the extension of life expectancy, the increase of people's health, the avoidance of environmental degradation and the reduction in fallow land theft.

In order to undertake the tourism activity, in addition to tourism resources, one needs financial resources, technical basis and labor force. All over the country there are sufficient and varied tourism resources, both natural and anthropic, able to support rural tourism. Tourism accommodation, catering, treatment, recreation, transport, etc are part of the technical and material basis.

In the case of rural tourism, the establishments with accommodation function are: pensions, motels, camping sites, holiday camps, artistic creation camps, camps with environmental activities, holiday villages.

Agro-tourism is a form of rural tourism which capitalizes peasant household surplus accommodation and provides services related to meals, participation in festivals and traditional events, introduction to agricultural practices, knowledge of the surroundings, history, and folk art.

All units in rural areas, in order to become functional are classified either with stars or with flowers (daisies).

Tourism causes some aspects of the workforce, as follows it has a potential to increase the use of higher employment in the industry, it offers a wide range of specific trades, a large number of job openings for young people and women, it also has seasonal jobs, the unemployment rate drops in areas with high levels of it, by generating new jobs; it has a capacity to stimulate the creation of new jobs in different regions, through investments in infrastructure and in most cases, it provides employment in small and medium enterprises.

Due to the prevailing presence of human work, the labor force in tourism field presents a number of characteristics, namely: low-technicality, high

[1] *Sava Cipriana, Turismul în contextual dezvoltării regionale durabile, Ed. Eurostampa, Timişoara, 2010,p.33*

mobility, it runs out of time related to the normal working hours, the working day schedule and its discontinuity, generates physical and mental fatigue and shows psychological constraints.

Product quality is related, as can be seen from the above mentioned, to the quality of the workers' performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The large majority of staff comes in direct contact with the tourist clientage, therefore, they must have self-control, cheerfulness, patience, adequate behavior, and to possess pleasant physical attributes and speak foreign languages.

Staff training for rural tourism, as for all forms of tourism plays an important role for the decision makers in this field. A first step is the awareness of the importance of future workers with potential tourists. The job positions that you find in this type of tourism are diverse: manager, pension administrator, receptionist, maid, cook, waiter, bartender, warehouseman, maintenance worker, security guard.

Training can be performed on different stages and levels: high school, school of arts and crafts, through post-secondary vocational school, university.

Tourism development cannot be conceived without the communicative dimension. Either rural or urban tourism activities acquire visibility and promotion through a dynamic system of communication. Learning foreign languages is of utmost importance for every day European citizens, especially on the job market.

Plurilingual and multicultural areas, as Banat is, for example, possess a rich linguistic existence which cannot be disregarded: German, Hungarian, Bulgarian or Serbian are languages still spoken in the rural environment. As Radenkovic, Lussier, Penz and Zarate (2004: 27) highlighted "nowadays it is generally accepted that language, thought and culture are inseparable". Researchers also argue that our vision of the world and our means of thinking emerge from our contacts with others and "shape our cultural representations". The latter are visible from an early age (the family context) and are reinforced and continuously reshaped at school.

The Romanian educational system should be aware that specific training devices for personnel working in the tourism industry have become both a

priority and a long term objective. Tolerance and cultural awareness would definitely improve the personnel-tourist relationship. Psycho-sociologists argue that the positive cultural representations lead to xenophile attitudes which are generally expressed by a behavior and practice of openness to the Other, while negative representations characterize another type of behavior that is usually displayed through xenophobic rejection and refusal of the Other.

Developing communication and mediation skills is a complex phenomenon which starts at an early age and suffer gradual transformations depending on the learner's cultural background and life and work experiences. Concerning tourism activities and training staff in this field, one may envisage the following situations: some occupants of positions in tourism have been trained during high school classes or their undergraduate courses (the Romanian teaching system includes languages as compulsory subjects starting with primary school - university curricula also provide courses specialized in teaching languages for specific purposes, tourism being included too); employees without specific skills in foreign languages should be offered the possibility of attending language courses with specific content accordingly to their job description; employees who may borrow features of the above categories.

However, besides languages of the national minorities, English must be a common landmark for the entire staff working in rural tourism. Basic notions and communication skills should be mastered by every employee. Accordingly to Grimshaw (2010: 265) "English is the keeper to many professions [...] it is clear that certain brands of English dominate the marketplace".

CONCLUSIONS

Sustainable development of tourism in the rural area is a need, which preserves unspoiled the environment, traditions, customs and crafts in the area concerned. Increases in the employment of the population, income and level of training will be seen.

The effects of professional behavior are felt on service quality, customer perception regarding their quality. Therefore, training of personnel in this field is essential.

Language learning courses should be designed for specific personnel working in the tourism industry. Moreover, informal environment is also a powerful source of learning and practicing a language. Romania's position in the European and international circuit must be supported by some efficient work practices which include communication and mediation skills in foreign languages.

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