ECONOMIC REVIVAL OF THE RURAL AREA THROUGH TOURISM

RELANSAREA ECONOMICĂ A SPAŢIULUI RURAL PRIN TURISM

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Abstract. *Romania's entry on the european coordonates imposes a continue economical development. The achievement of this target implies the use of the existing methods and the capitalization of all opportunities at best parameters. In this way, optimizing the economical results which appeared as a result of the practice of a bio agriculture (the attainment of natural products in enviroments untouched by the destructive effects of pollution) and also the profesionalistic capitalization of the turistic potential, in all its forms, will lead to a certain economical efficiency.*
Turistic services extent and diversify according to the socio-economical changes and their favourable area of development. The the appearance of the „rural tourism" and „agrotourism" terms enriches the whole notion of „tourism" by diversifying it's forms of expression.

Key words : *sustainable development, agriculture, agrotourism, economic revival, rural area, tourism*

Tourism has become one of the most important economic activities in the world because people express more and more their intention to spend holidays in nature, in a rural area, to discover the traditional world of the villages, to improve its cultural knowledge (cultural / monastic / religious tourism) etc. This intention proved to be a good start to the economic revival of the rural area because: it's required accommodation with reduced comfort, additional sources of income for rural population, revival of the folk traditions, desire to perpetuate traditional skills, improving the living standard in areas equipped as a material base of tourism, decongest overcrowded tourist areas, capitalizing the rich rural potential.

Thus, we are more and more concerned by the sustainable development, defined as development that "meets the needs of the present without harming the ability of future generations". Sustainable development concerns are the complex result of matters that is the subject of all mankind:

environmental degradation, uncontrolled expansion of urbanization, poverty etc.

This notion has two problems: how economic growth can be achieved without negative consequences for the life of the planet and environment. They must be resolved so as not to affect the lives of future generations, so tha appeared the need to regulate this notion. Thus arosde the concept of "sustainable development", which is to be approached from three perspectives: temporal dimension, equity, environment.

Temporal perspective imposes some development limitations, caused mainly by environmental elements. The emphasis is on resource depletion, the irreversible degradation processes etc.

The notion of equity refers to the interest for future generations, without sacrificing the current generation. Based on this, economic development must be achieved without degrading the environment and deplete its resources.

The environment is the most fragile and independent of human power. Therefore, the conditions for sustainable development are based on the capacity to protect the environment and its resources.

Starting from those five factors which have an influence on development (population, environment, food, industrial development and pollution), the strategy of sustanaible development must find a way to optimize the report resources-need.

The concept of sustainable development is based on the idea that nature is the only source of living resources and should therefore be protected for both present and future. Never before, a civilization destroyed so much its living environment, no were threatened with destruction, like now, entire oceans, plants and animal species, and the ozone was never so strongly affected as in present, nor the pollution has been so threatening before.

When considering all these, mostly is the fault of powerful industrialization. This view is considered by experts to be a mistake: noty must be made liable for the environmental disaster we are in, but the man, because of its greed, carelessness, ignorance, negligence, indifferenceand because he has not selected, nor correctly applied the discoveries of science and technics, and did not react in order to lead to the development and protection of nature and not to its degradation.

Humans are required to show good judgment and sense of responsibility when they act, to take account of natural laws and to ensure ecological balance. Of all the actions which led to environmental destruction, pollution has the greatest impact on nature and on man.

Pollution of air, water, soil turned the friendly and generous nature into an increasingly hostile and dangerous one.

The most dangerous form of pollution is probably the one caused by practicing an intensive agricultere and industrialization. This is because pollution in agriculture means primarily affecting the soil and it can not be applied to virtually any treatment process, as the soil can be practically depolluted only by the slow action of natural factors. Then, agriculture includes, unlike industry, very large areas, making the consequences more serious. Agriculture pollution reaches man directly, through food, and he can not defend as the action takes place directly on the human body. It seems a paradox that as he develops and proudly assumes epochal discoveries, man becomes more and more destructive or self-destructive. Therefore, the problems of development and economic growth can not now be separated from the environmental problems.

Propel of ecological problem in terms of global concern in recent decades has resulted in unprecedented mobilization of public opinion in this matter. Its sensitivity demonstrated that the humanity was already aware of the negative impact of development on their lives and especially on the near future. Because of these concerns was imposed the concept of sustainable development, which was recommended by the UN General Assembly Resolution 42/187 as a guiding principle of national strategies in economic development and environmental protection.

In subsequent years there were two world conferences on the topic of economic development in terms of protecting the environment. The first conference was held in Stockholm in 1992, and the second in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Both conferences had a strong echo in public opinion, favorable opinions regarding environmental protection appeared, which ultimately resulted in the emergence of "parties of the Greens" which support development in terms of protecting the environment, including wildlife and flora, and in the last decade, in developed countries have been established administrative structures specialized in environmental protection. Simultaneously, public opinion forced the establishment of governmental institutions, tracking those responsible how they perform their duties, overseeing the development of this activity. Developed countries of Western Europe have adopted some conventions seeking to improve simultaneously in some sensitive activity fields. Thus, it was adopted the 'Framework - Convention - framework regarding climate change, which wants to reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and also to improve the quality of the atmosphere above Europe and also the "Framework - Convention regarding biodiversity" aimed to protect life on the European area, ensuring an ecological balance and maintaining it in order to save the natural potential

for the benefit of both current European civilization and also for the benefit of the future. Another document that was adopted is "Agenda 21" which includes an extensive program of actions that must be applied for the conservation and environmental exploition in the perspective of the XXI century. A final document adopted was "Declaration of Principles on management, environmental conservation and sustainable exploitation of all types of forests".

Europe plans a series of actions designed to improve the ecological balance, to impose the concept of sustainable development on the continent, actiones to which care to join other countries in Central and Eastern Europe:

- for environmental protection in cities and improvement of the living conditions of humans, who are the first to bear the consequences of air pollution and noise, it is envisaged that public transport in Europe must become predominant especially over long distances. It is considered its organization, in order to fully ensure the growing needs in this area and its performance for the end of the twentieth century. In short distances, there is extensive and frequent bicycle advertising, which is considered the most environmentally friendly and efficient transportation. Along with advertising, European Union provides conditions for practicing this form of transport, arranging streets bike lanes, dedicated space for their parking, rest facilities in areas of climbing, etc. Entire European system made commun efforts to adapt the traffic to non-motorized means and public transport intense practice. First was prohibited to motorized traffic means in vulnerable areas of ecological (parks, reservations, mountains, resorts and other recreation facilities). Those who still use vehicles are required to pay substantial fees as compensation for environmental damage by practicing this action.

- regarding this issue, for people who want to adapt to this way of life, were made considerable efforts and propaganda starting with the inauguration of a highway for bikes, in 1994, on the distance Zurich - Vienna. A second stretch of highway, following the previous, is to be completed soon, from Vienna to Budapest. Following the events and appropriating them, Bulgaria has expressed a desire to connect to such a European network that is aimed to be built.

- big cities interest for the improvement of green spaces, parks, gardens, lakes, reservations has increased in order to provide to residents areas of tranquility, relaxation and rest.

- industrial areas are supervised, investments made to prevent pollution being quite expensive. There are pursued both aspects regarding air pollution and water, legislation being particularly severe and effective.

- the interest in green tourism, rural tourism and agro-tourism increased, urban residents showing tendencies to spend time in nature. This interest in nature triggered the notion of "sustainable tourism" which aims to preserve the environment, development of tourism without jeopardizing the touristic areas.

Among strategies to modernize the agricultural structure, agro-tourism occupies leading places in Austria, Switzerland, France, Germany, and Spain. European rural area is located at the center of the European Union, which is considered a major force throughout the continental areas, its development being benefical for the whole union. This environment is even more in the attention of specialists, as the powerful campaign for environmental protection showed the unbreakable link between them, achieving harmony and balance for rural environment, meaning also an adequate protection of the environment. Currently, rural areas are considered the most important reserve of human life and culture.

Opportunity to become active partners with the European Union can be found, among others, in the material and human potential of rural area, in large untapped reserves that are located in the Romanian countryside. Earlier this new millennium, this space presents serious drawbacks to the urban environment, with discrepancies in the living standard of inhabitants of the two areas. A chance for rural development is the expansion of organized tourism, which is the most efficient way of capitalizing material and human resources.

First, it ensures jobs and obtaining reasonable income for rural population which is currently in a difficult situation financially due to the rebound recorded in the economic activity.

Then, it can allow the revival of complementary activities that can expand in proportion to agro-tourism development, becoming sources of income for other categories of active population: guides, instructors, small artisans, merchants.

Agro-tourism provides the possibility of a higher surplus from the farms, which often degrades through disuse. This is especially important because natural foods are made without pesticides, so have the best quality. Taking into account the fact that Romania's western floristic composition of grasslands has great value, the only one from the country which competes with Obcinile Bucovina (Wah), food taste very good, being well appreciated abroad, which increases product quality and thus increase the demands for such products.

The ethnic composition of Banat formed from Swabians, Serbs, Hungarians, Czechs, Bulgarians, has allowed the development of a culture of food and customs specific to their home areas.

Agro-tourism constitutes a beneficial practice for local people wishing to spend their holidays in areas other than daily, but to whom modest incomes do not allow expensive itineraries; prices in agro-tourism are more accessible than in traditional tourism, promoting the development of a mass tourism. Mutations among consumers of agro-touristic products are determined by former mass tourism (union tourism) re-orientation to the more accessibil rural tourism

The development of this activity would allow the knowledge of the western area of the country, in this way agro-tourism becaming an invisible ambassador, facilitating the investor's entrance on the tourism industry: integrated tourism, interethnic tourism, or in other areas of economy.

Extremely diverse rural landscape, mostly well preserved, village life with significant traditional components, agricultural and forestry potential of Romania, specific rural architecture are factors that promote rural tourism. Rural tourism, unlike other forms of tourism should be "diffuse", indistinguishable in terms of habitat components, and to rely on natural, folklore, architectural and gastronomical heritage, specific to agro-touristic areas.

At this time, although there are some positive signs to expand agro-tourism, however, there are several factors which block the rural tourism to extend at the capacity offered by the landscape and traditional culture, such as infrastructure (roads, railways, rapid and safe banking, postal and telephone services), or poor housing conditions offered by most households, unacceptable even for modest tourists, insufficient instruction of householders (minimum knowledge in tourism, lack of modern languages) and safety and personal security of tourists.

Agro-tourism, with its specific national food consumption in households wherethe food was produced, has the function of economic boosting of the capacity of the farm. For foreign tourists, agro-tourism constitutes a form of "internal" export of food products. The fact that most food consumed in tourism activity come from own production determines, on the one hand, the profitability of the tourism and a price below to that of the organized tourism. Calculations of specialized tourist services show that the price of agro-touristic lunch is always 40-50% lower than a breakfast served in a restaurant in tourist hotels network. The explanation for this price difference is simple. The price of agricultural product consumed in household agrotourist has no profit margin, VAT, excise, transportation, storage, storage, etc. Meat, eggs, cheese, milk, butter go directly to consumers' table. Also, tourist services (accommodation, services, etc) are not subject to additional, indirect expenditures, commissions etc. which

make agro-products price to be incomparably lower. In such conditions, agro-touristic policies should protect rural tourism benefits for the purposes of exemption from taxes, reducing the overall tax burden that would lead to price equalization and loss of traditional customers (modest-income city dwellers, foreigners eager to learn traditions of rural area or people returning to their native lands reliving pleasant moments in their lives - childhood, children from urban area etc.).

Evolution of services in developed countries has a strong rising and steadily past. The so-called invisible activity conqueres more ground, the share of services in the total national economy in some countries exceeds more than 2/3 and is growing.

Analyzing the evolution of global dimensions of the tertiary sector, there is continuous and constant movement of labor to industries in these activities, leading to its permanent development. So, economists examine the level of development of a country according to the share in the services to GDP. Only in weak or poorly developed economies and in developing and underdeveloped countries the share of services in GDP is lower. Need to increase the provision of services agro complementary tourism and ethnic tourism promotion can increase share of services in GDP. The need to increase the agro-touristic services, complementary to tourism and the promotion of interethnic agro-tourism may lead to the increase of the share of services in the GDP.

Of all activities that complete the service sector, tourism has a great number, which increases as population increases leisure. There is opinion that a country is more developed as it pays more attention to the individuals composing it, to their well-being and spiritual growth, thereby reducing working time (on the labor productivity growth) became an electoral slogan of companies and leisure, an indicator reflecting rising of living standards of a population. In developing countries, this sector development is also necessary.

Thus, development of the tertiary sector is required to counter the phenomena of underdevelopment, arises primarily the problem of survival and completion on the problem of malnutrition and the minimum needs of life, food service, providing jobs and income for subsistence. In this context, tourism has grown diversified and included both space and time around the world. This development was favored by its beneficial effects because it is a very profitable activity, accounting for some regions or even countries an important source of income. Highlighting natural, social and especially the cultural features of a region, through a constant and sustained activity, tourism can contribute to its development and modernization, representing a highly attractive alternative to exploit existing resources. Thus the share of

tourism in the last decade increased from 28.3% to 31.3% with a special and particular emphasis on domestic tourism, where the average annual revenue growth is 7.4%. Tourism has registered increasing numbers both worldwide and by region. Every country, with an adequate policy, is trying to increase its turnover in tourism, this reaching for some countries as an important source of revenue for the balance of payments.

Agro-touristic and inter-ethnic areal activities lead to a balance of mass tourism and therefore to an increase of the share of services.

The international tourism shows a steady increase both of the number of tourists and also of the revenue from tourism activity. Although growth rates proved lower, they are constantly proving diversification and further development of this economic sector.

By region, the largest tourism activity is registered in Europe, followed by North America and Asia. Inter-ethnic Euro-agro-torurism leads to an increase of the share of tourism services worldwide.

In Europe, it appears that most of the tourists are also from the continent, so they prefer to travel to other bordering or close countries. Thus, during 1985-1991, the average annual growth of tourism in Europe was of 12.09% in Belgium and 10.92% in Spain. Average annual growth of American tourists visiting Europe is 8.49%.

As for the number of foreign visitors from EU countries, the largest share is held by German tourists whose numbers rose from 203,000 in 1994 to 380,000 in 2003 with a share that continues to increase. We observe an increase in tourists from Europe, like those from Hungary and Moldova and a decrease in tourists coming to Romania from Russian Federation, which in 1994 was 43,000 and in 2003 of 85,000.

Also, we can see that most tourists come from Europe, which means that they are limited to spend holidays in Romania as this is a close country or country of origin.

With the development of tourism and its explosive expansion was highlighted its diversification, depending on the desires of tourists, landscape features, complexity of services.

There are two generic categories of tourism: sun-tourism (motivated by natural factors), called "sunlust" and acknowledge tourism called "wunderlust".

In the tourism knowledge, there are several characteristic types, namely: business tourism, scientific and cultural tourism, medical tourism, recovery tourism, opening or transit tourism, TIR type tourism, rural tourism, agro-tourism, inter – ethnic tourism.

A massive release of this complex branch of tourism that took place

two decades ago is the rural tourism. Special attention to political and administrative factors for this area (rural), which aims to be both protected and modernized, has emerged as a real possibility of development this activity of rural tourism. On the other hand, the urban population tends to spend time in nature, quietly, away from all the term urban means, including pollution, is a guarantee for the possibility of developing the activities in the countryside. In this way appeared different forms of tourism activities: rural tourism, rural and green tourism and agro-inter-ethnic tourism. It can often be traced a identification of these terms, among which is true there are many common points, overlaps, but certainly there are also some differences which customize terms and activities.

Thus, the most common confusion is between rural tourism and green tourism. On closer analysis, it can be distinguished that green tourism involves itineraries in nature, the geographical area being the most important in the tourist decision. For example, a trip to Niagara Falls, climbing a mountain etc; unlike this one, the rural tourism requires a tourism activity in a rural area. It is true that often the area belongs to an exceptional natural environment, which fulfills and completes tourists' feelings. However, at least theoretically, it is possible to carry out such activities without the natural criteria (for example visiting a farm with educational purposes, for preschool).

Analyzing the evolution of the phenomenon, any approach must answer a series of problems such as: if agro-tourism could provide enough jobs, income and capital flows to contribute to sustainable rural development, if all rural areas can be adjusted; if there are certain risks by developing to the countryside and what distinguish rural tourism from other forms of tourism. Today, more and more are those who look agro-tourism as an important element of local/regional development strategy starting from the economic benefits that it generates: the creation of national income, balance of payments contribution rates, labor market development, use local availability of labor, development of certain rural areas, etc.

Beyond the positive effects it generates, it must be remembered that rural tourism is more than an economic activity; in essence is an interaction of masses of people who require a wide range of services, facilities and inputs that are transformed into opportunities and challenges for the host economic agents. Radu Rey appreciate that "agro-tourism is not only a factor of economic balance many factors which engages a multitude of adjacent and reproducible resources but it also becomes a cultural-educational ambassador, a constant tool, and not a very expensive one – of social progress", paraphrasing briefly, here fits the notion of ethnic agro-tourism. The notion of ethnic agro-tourism is understood as a continuous

message of peace and understanding among ethnic groups, nations and peoples.

Versatility of tourism in general and agro-tourism in particular, does not allow it to be described as an" industry in a technical sense because this sector doesn't have a single characteristic production or well defined operational parameters. Its economic dimension can not be known without the aid of exogenous / endogenous factors of economic, social, cultural and environmental nature. So, we are dealing with a large, varied and complex character of the tourism phenomenon that requires careful consideration. Of tourism issues that stand by the negative impact we remind:

- the threat for the environment, tourist traffic density in some cases may be an environmental and social problem for countryside;;

- the socio-cultural threat, disrupting the natural world destabilizes the small socio-cultural universe of the rural community;

- the planning, local control, public participation and possible partnerships issues.

Ad hoc individual responses given to agro-touristic problems are not a policy for this sector; such responses can only provide short term solutions for long-term problems.

The success of agro-tourism depends largely on the capacity of the region to be a suitable host for rural tourism, of the ability to plan and implement development projects of all exchanges that are brought by this form of tourism for the region, generally and for farms, in particular, on providing a framework for competition between different agro-touristic units of ethnic representation in etnogeografice going to a European spirit of cooperation and interethnic understanding.

Economics is concerned with achieving optimum use of limited resources, many of them rare or unique. This principle works in an individual case aimed at psychological benefits from a trip or a business that is proposing the tax collection purpose - providing substantial goods and services to tourists, or even if the host community sees tourism in terms of economic gain and prosperity of the area they represent.

Viewed through the prism of its content and the correlation with the overall national economy, tourism acts as a stimulator factor of the global economic system. Carrying out the touristic travel implies a request and a specific consumption of goods and services, resulting in a rise in their production area. However, tourism demand results in an adaptation of the offer which determines a development of the material and technical basis of this sector and, indirectly, the boost of production in construction and equipment industries for accommodation and food, modernization of roads,

development of transport, facilities for recreation.

By tourism development is obtained, therefore, a significant production increase. However, tourism contribution to GDP varies significantly among countries according to development and economic structure of each country.

Tourism is not only creator of GDP, but has an important contribution to the value added. Given its specific - service activity, manpower, intelligence and creativity consumption - tourism takes part in creating added value in a high proportion of branches close in terms of development level.

Tourism has also an important training effect, stimulating production in other areas, as a result of its character of synthesis and interference branch. Studies showed that the activities of certain branches are largely determined by the needs of tourism.

In connection with development and modernization of the economy of a country, tourism is manifested as a means of diversifying its structure. Thus, the need to adapt to the requirements of tourists favors, on the one hand, the emergence of specific sectors (activities): entertainment industry, cable transport, travel agencies, handycraft production and, on the other hand, gives some new dimensions to the existing industries: agriculture, food industry, construction, transport, cultural services.

Tourism is also a way for a superior valorification of all categories of resources and, particularly, of the natural ones - other than the traditional - and / or smaller ones. Elements such as beauty of landscape, healing qualities of mineral or thermal water, climatic conditions, cultural events - art, monuments of art, historical artifacts, folk tradition, find the best return, in some cases even only through tourism .

Natural consequence of these effects, tourism is able to cause mutations in territorial development, from this angle, it is considered as a lever to redress imbalances between regions seen at national or global scale, "a solution for prosperity of the disadvantaged areas, a cure for areas that lack industrialization."

Economic effects of tourism also take other forms, of which it must be mentioned its contribution to ensuring a balanced cash movement, performed both on account of domestic or international tourism.

Tourism has become one of the major socio-economic sectors. It has registered a steady expansion over time, with an annual growth rate of about 4-5 percent during the last half of the 20th century. Putting together the domestic and the international tourism is now understood as constituting the most complete global industry. International tourism is one of the main components of international economic activities.

According to World Tourism Organization (WTO) the number of tourists worldwide will double in 2010 compared to 1990. Their main tourist destination is Europe, which is recorded with the lowest growth rate.

Tourism doesn't represent only an increase in tourists' number. It showed that it turns into a diverse and complex economic activity. Although mass tourism is still the predominant form of tourism, other activities related to culture, environment, business, education, health, religion, etc have come out. These forms of tourism reflect, among other, preferences for environmental quality and more energetic forms of recreation and participation. Skiing, hiking, biking, etc ; are more pleasant attractions than ever, satisfying the need to be closer to nature, exploring and learning. These new activities are also a great responsibility to environmental degradation because the practitioners of these activities are often dispersed in areas without adequate infrastructure or without capacity to manage tourism activities.

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