STUDY ON DEVELOPMENT AND TRENDS OF ECOTOURISM IN ROMANIA

STUDIU PRIVIND EVOLUŢIA ŞI TENDINŢELE ECOTURISMULUI ÎN ROMÂNIA

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Abstract: *Ecoturism is a form of tourism with low environmental impact, based on its assessment and where they make a conscious effort to reinvest a portion of income for conservation appropiate to rely on. I tis a form of sustainable tourism and to ensure local people benefit ecotourism is still a fairly narrow segment of the tourism market, although Romania has a great heritage ecotourism potential than recovery. Ecotourism in Romania face many problems such as poor cooperation at local level, promote modest nationally and internationally, offers limited and poorly diversified, specific infrastructure is poor ecotourism in the protected areas.*

Key words*: ecoturism, sustainable development*

INTROUCTION

One of the first definitions of ecotourism found in the literature is dated in 1988:"Ecotourism is a form of tourism with low environmental impact, based on itsassessment and where is made a conscious effort to reinvest an adequate part of revenues for conservation on which is based. It is a form of sustainable tourism and provides benefits to local people. "

An official definition taken in legislation in Romania, which is quite similar to theabove is: Ecotourism is a form of tourism on which the main objective is the observation and awareness of the value of nature and local traditions and mustmeet the following conditions:

a) to contribute to conservation and nature protection;

b) to use local human resources;

c) to have educational character, respect for nature - awareness of tourists and local communities;

d) have an insignificant negative impact on the natural and socio - cultural environment

MATERIALS AND METHODS. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Definitions list could go on, because each organization or author tried to imposehis own variant. Although some details vary, most definitions of ecotourism reflectsa distinctive form of tourism that meets four basic criteria.

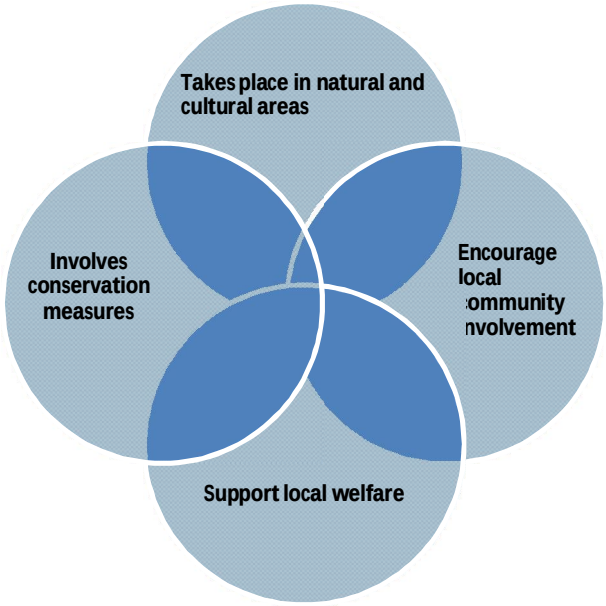


Fig. 1 Basic criteria of ecotourism

Source: P. Nistoreanu (coord.), *Ecoturism şi turism rural*, Editura ASE, Bucureşti, 2003

Ecotourism contributes actively to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage,including local communities in planning, development and operation and contribute to their welfare, involving a full explanation and interesting for visitors, the naturaland cultural resources, intended mainly

for individual visitors and groups of organized in small dimensions.

The role of local communities in ecotourism development is that they makeavailable tourism facilities in protected areas, provides the opportunity to knownew cultures, to carry out various activities in nature (hiking, mountain climbing,observing creatures in their natural habitat, etc.).

There are many features associated with the idea of ecotourism, including: sustainability, responsibility, protection, conservation, environmental friendlinessand not to the least "green", a buzzword for this new industry. Hence a lot of confusion between ecotourism and terms like sustainable tourism, responsible tourism, alternative tourism, green tourism, geotourism.

Ecotourism destination can be defined as a geographical area, bounded, whichprovides, promotes and coordinates a sum of products and tourism services andarrange to develop and promote a consistent image of the area. Ecotourismdestination given in terms of a tourist or a common representative body of localadministrative authorities and partnership organizations, with clearly definedresponsibilities in this area.

An ecotourism destination can also meet the following conditions:

- Aware and inform tourists about the area's natural values;
- Practical measures of conservation;
- Projected through proper marketing;
- Real support of business of tourism for local communities;

Specialized studies conducted by UMT have identified the main megatendenciesto be recorded in tourism and will continue to increase on the perspective of years2020. Among the most significant aspects are mentioned:

- Increasing number of tourists concerned about environmental issues;
- Increasing demand for new destinations;
- Tend to increase the number of holidays of shorter duration;
- Increasing number of older people of thirs age, who are more active and willing totravel;
- Tourists become more experienced and sophisticated, expect quality attractions,facilities and services as tariffs and quality of their trips. Also, OMT believes thatecotourism, along with cultural and adventure tourism will have the most spectacular growth in the 21st century.

Romania currently has 12 national parks with a total area of 306,989

ha, 14 parkswith an area of 772,128 ha Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve (576,216 ha), withtotal area of 1,655,333 hectares of parks, which is 6, 43% of the country's land area.

Table 1

The biosphere reserves situation, national and natural parks

Nr. crt.	**Name**	**Surface (hectars)**
1.	Biosphere reserves	580.000
2.	National parks	315.857
3.	Natural parks	737.428

Source: National strategy of ecotourism development in Romania

Romania owns about 800 scientific reserves, natural monuments and nature reserves which the total area has not yet been determined but is estimated at about 169,000 hectares.

To support tourism activities were established visitor centers with minimumamenities to present specific and special flora and fauna objectives, salesbrochures, maps and souvenirs, micro-catering facilities and toilets.

Table 2

Visitor centers and information points in national and natural parks

Nr. crt.	**Category**	**Visitor centers**	**Info points**
1.	Biosphere reserve	3	0
2.	National parks	3	12
3.	Natural parks	8	19

Source: National strategy of ecotourism development in Romania

Distribution of national parks, and biosphere reserves on bioregion,

in Romania arepresented in Figure:

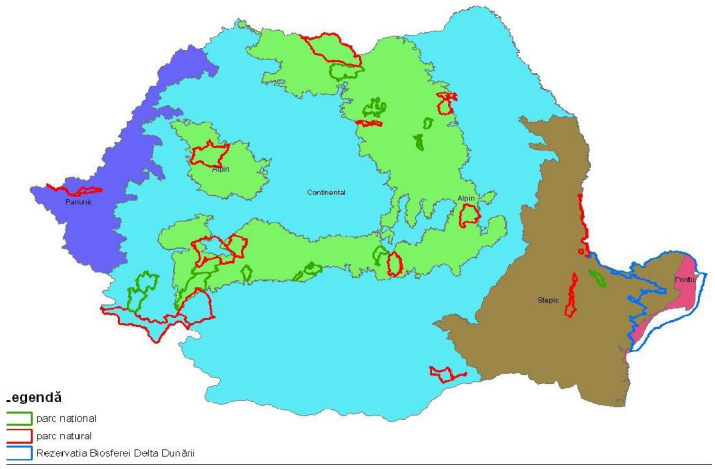


Fig. 2 National parks, and biosphere reserves on bioregion, in Romania
Sursa: Strategia nationala de dezvoltare a ecoturismului in Romania

Romania still retains the natural environment untouched by human presence,copies of flora and fauna that in other countries have disappeared or can not bevisited, only in captivity. The weak development in some areas of traditional forms of tourism, was as an important premise for the development of ecotourism, whichwould require our country as an important destination for this form of tourism.

One of the competitive advantages enjoyed by our country in comparison withestablished tourist destinations, is the preservation of this pristine natural environment and human activities. Thus, in the nature reserves are not few the species of plants and animals declared endemic or monuments.

All these trends indicate not only an increase in demand for ecotourism, and its transformation from a niche market in the main segment. If the originalecotourism addressed to experienced tourists, with high levels of income and education, its clientele now extends to include a wide range of income, educationand travel experience. These trends can be added and others with general or specific action affecting the country as a whole or its tourism ecotourism.

CONCLUSIONS

The weak development in some areas of traditional forms of tourism, was as an important premise for the development of ecotourism, which would require our country as an important destination for this form of tourism.

Ecotourism is a version of sustainable tourism in natural areas, including elementsof both rural and cultural tourism. Besides subscribing to the principles of sustainable tourism, ecotourism has specific principles: contribute actively to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, including local communities in planning, development and operation and contribute to their welfare, involving a full explanation and interesting for visitors, regarding natural and cultural resources,intended mainly for individual visitors and small dimensions organized groups .

Latest statistics show that ecotourism is a niche market that is rapidly developing,the increase being 4.3% per year.

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