THE RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN TIMIS-TORONTAL MICROREGION

STRATEGIA DE DEZVOLTARE A TURISMULUI RURAL IN MICROREGIUNEA TIMIS - TORONTAL

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Abstract: *The tourism can be the economic development basis of our country. The general strategy can derive from the Romanian Government, but the strategy adopted by each local community is the key of a fast and efficient tourism development. It is necessary for the managers to cooperate with the local communities and with the economic and non-economic factors in the area, but also with stakeholders from central and county level. The tourist microregions development involves: maximum effort, intelligence, knowledge of current legislation, of European and governmental financing arrangements, ways to attract capital / investors etc. It depends only on the managers of local communities to understand the tourism sustainable development importance in their area of influence. The idea that Romanian tourism has to develop through tourist microregions is not new, but such a strategy doesn't still exist at national level.*

Key words: *microregion, strategy, actions, Timis, rural tourism*

INTRODUCTION

The history of "intercommunity development associations", by 215/2001 Law amendment as a microregional associations, have noted in Timis County the appearance of the first microregion, Timis-Torontal Association. Being attracted by the funds from the European Leader + Programme, a handful of enthusiast people have created first the framework, main working tool as well as a microregional strategy. The territory of Local Action Group "Timis-Torontal" is situated in Western side

of Romania, in Southern side of Timis County and in north-western side of Caras-Severin County, being bounded on the south and south-western part of the border with Republic of Serbia; it is a microregion organized around Deta city, being a small administrative, economic and cultural center, a micro-regional importance for localities in close proximity.

The microregion is composed of three small towns Deta, Gătaia and Ciacova situated in Timis County and fifteen villages: Birda, Banloc, Denta, Giera, Ghilad, Jamu Mare, Jebel, Liebling, Livezile, Pădureni, Moraviţa, Voiteg (Timiş), Berzovia, Forotic, Măureni (Caraş-Severin)

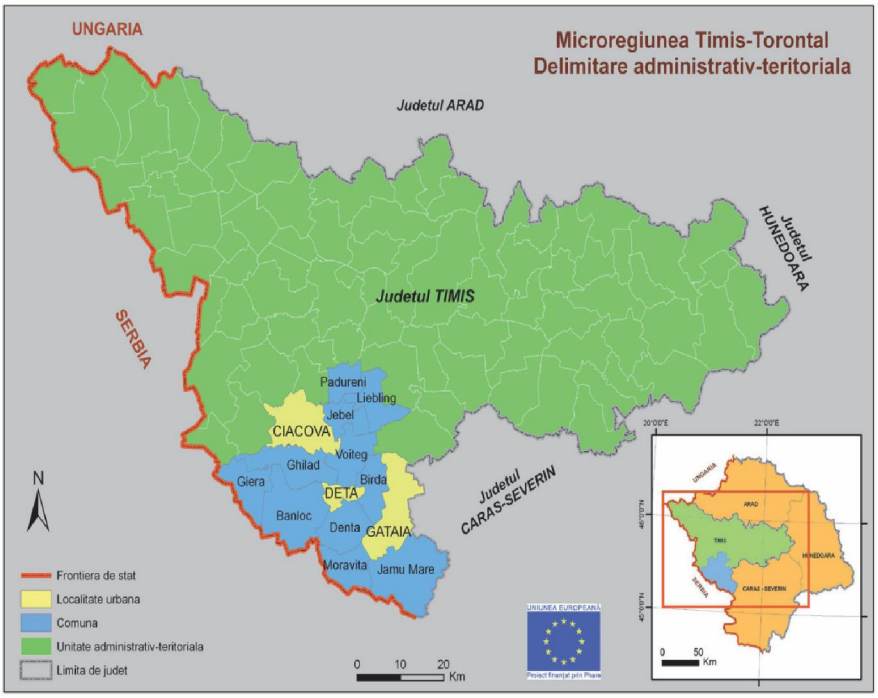


Fig. 1. Delimitation of Timis-Torontal microregion

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The authors of this paper have completed two phases. In the first phase, it has been required a theoretical and bibliographical documentation concerning microregions in Romania with the example of Timis-Torontal microregion, definition of rural tourism development and looking for strategies that can be applied to our microregion. It has been defined the issue and formulation of the main hypotheses in order to constitute an explanatory and convincing model, inducing the importance and activity of the researched subject. The final phase has been drawn up and completed by the collected information. The drafting of this paper was made in laboratory, based on the notes from the ground, the existing material and consulted bibliography.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The development and promotion of rural tourism in this microregion using local resources can be an alternative to balanced economic and social development by the cooperation between localities.

The main tourist attractions are represented by castles, museums, churches including: Banloc Castle, "Sf. Iosif" Monastery from Partos, Ciacova Castle, Poor Monastery from Gătaia, Mociuni Manor and "Sf. Gheorghe" Monastery attested in Birda. Of total of 333 historical monuments contained in the records of the Ministry Culture and Religious Affairs in Timis County, in Timis-Torontal Microregion, 29 monuments can be found.

The potential of rural tourism and agrotourism is very high. The traditional character of villages is in danger due to the chaotic real estate development, on economic development background. Additionally, the traditions and customs specific for ethno-folkloric area present a risk of degradation. So, the traditional folkloric heritage conservation is essential for the future of agrotourism and rural tourism, in order to exploit tourist attractions.

Unfortunately, traditional occupations practiced in the microregion (wheelwright, well-sinker, farrier, combed wool, shepherd, tailor, shoemaker) are no longer practiced at present, small craftsmen are endangered. In this regard, it is necessary to develop approaches for

the revival of oldest trade, which could help to increase the tourist potential. It would also constitute a way of economic development by supporting local artisan cooperatives.

Main activities to encourage local investments for rural tourism development should take into account the following aspects: conducting awareness campaigns on the possibility of practicing agrotourism and the advantages it presents; conducting awareness campaigns on the the possibility of accessing European funds for investments in agrotourism and rural tourism; granting facilities to encourage the practice of agrotourism and rural tourism. Regarding the actual measures of rural tourism development, the basis activities should include: developing a network of agrotourist units; developing tourist services based on the exploitation of traditional village style from Banat; promoting agrotourism and rural tourism in this part of the county.

In order to achieve a rural tourism development strategy, we took into consideration the next steps, presented in Figure 2 and developed in detail in the following lines:

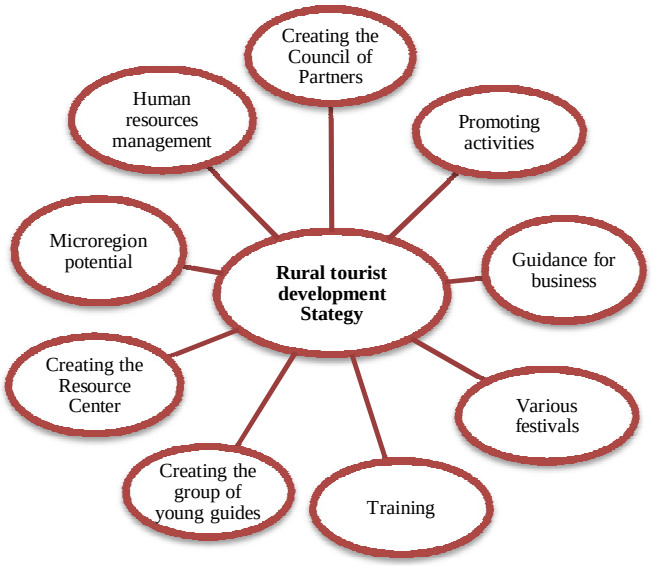


Fig. 2 . Rural tourist development Strategy

Step 1: Creating the Council Partners which should include officials of partner organizations in different monthly meetings. They will assess, approve and take measures necessary to implement correctly this strategy.

Step 2: "Human resources management" is the step where we focus on detailed job description for each person involved in the project, developed with the participation of all stakeholders; it will be organized a selection process of specialists required for certain activities also comprising procedures specific to selection (interviews, portfolios, experience).

Step 3: "Analysis of Timis-Torontal microregion potential" is achieved in order to identify rural tourist potential of localities and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the microregion.

By crossing the step four: "Creating a Resource Center to develop and promote rural tourism"; it will establish a Resource Centre to ensure long term tourism development in this microregion. They will have an info-point (information point) for tourists, office and conference room. The role of Center: Assistance and advisory for companies and entrepreneurs in tourism; Information; Training for workers or people who intend to start a business; Promoting microregion.

Step 5: "Creating the group of young volunteer guides" consists in a selection of 10 young people from microregion localities, which will form a local tourist guides who will agree on a program to identify rural tourist routes in this micro.

Step 6: "Training" will be addressed to managers working in agrotourism and in related services as well as persons intending to start a business in order to provide an efficient management and a better quality services. Themes: business organization types in agrotourism and rural tourism; management elements; financial sources for rural tourism and agrotourism; practical application – visiting agrotourist providers.

Step 7: "Festivals" will propose rural tourism and agrotourism encouragement by festivals: gastronomy, dances and popular

songs, traditional products exposition. Festivals will be annually held, attract more tourists in the area and can be organized by its own funds.

Step 8: "Guidelines for rural tourism and agrotourism business". This will include information for potential investors on: Legal advisory about starting a business in tourism and local regulations to implement a business.

Step 9: "Promoting activities" refers to: press releases for all projects implementation phases, press conferences, presentations for project promotion to radio and local television; seminar for project promotion in the local community; drafting and printing of project leaflet, banners and posters, for the main project activities, project website.

Within Timis –Torontal microregion, municipalities and local councils are part of towns and villages Association in Romania, including the Bulgarian Union branch in Banat, German Forum Branch, various community associations which aim, primarily, rural - community development, women and child protection ,disadvantaged people, environmental issues and infrastructure for environmental protection, promoting and supporting youth, developing a proper environment for inter-ethnic communication.

In the last years, in Timis-Torontal microregion, several projects have been developed in partnership, in collaboration and with funding from various national and international structures. A successful collaboration is undertaken with Rural Assistance Center in Timisoara, promoter of local promoters and an important factor in supporting Local Action Groups (LAGs).

CONCLUSIONS

The main benefit of implementing these strategies could be expressed by the fact that, through rural tourism activity, they promote not only the accommodation units, but also household products, food for home, as well as different artisanal products, a wide tourist services range whose volume, variety and quality depend on local conditions and, largely, on ability and local imagination .

Some perspectives on rural tourism development in Timis-Torontal microregion:

- Arranging special facilities for tourist activities (eg., fauna observation points, paths, walkways, resting points, etc..)
- stimulating development of planning and management plans for the areas with tourist potential
- developing rural recreational and accommodation structures
- promoting specific brands
- promoting specific village products: folklore, gastronomy, rural life style.

Although it is a recent reality, rural tourism possesses clear signs that it isn't a phenomenon of temporary or short-term growth. Besides the general causes acting on the phenomenon of economic growth, for rural tourism it is remarkable a long term progressive accumulation of the advanced motivations, irreversible, often disguised and protected by the perishability specific to tourist receipts for conventional type.

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