DEVELOPING AGROTURISM IN ROMANIA A CHALLENGE OF THE UE INTEGRATION

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Abstract: Romania met a period of expansion of tourism within 80’s, following after that the decline of 90’s and what remained after is still seeing now, also. As follows, we will try to present some of my opinions, under the form of what I call “concrete solutions” in the view of leaving the crisis with which the tourism and agricultural tourism or Romania are confronting with, after the adhesion to European Union. These opinions have not to be considered as imperative, but seen through other eyes, maybe more clear and more near the Romanian reality. If truly, they prove of being of quality, and then they will have to be put into practice and competitive advantages have to be achieved.

INTRODUCTION

One may say that Romania attracted and will always attract the tourists. Why? Because it has something to offer and because it can satisfy some of tourists’ motivations of carrying out tourism: attracting landscapes, historical-cultural vestiges, culinary diversity and quality, amusement possibilities (hunting, fishing, winter sports, agricultural tourism, rural tourism, green tourism, etc.).

Romania met a period of expansion of tourism within 80’s, following after that the decline of 90’s and what remained after is still seeing now, also. As follows, we will try to present some of my opinions, under the form of what I call “concrete solutions” in the view of leaving the crisis with which the tourism and agricultural tourism or Romania are confronting with, after the adhesion to European Union. These opinions have not to be considered as imperative, but seen through other eyes, maybe more clear and more near the Romanian reality. If truly, they prove of being of quality, and then they will have to be put into practice and competitive advantages have to be achieved.

The relationship between the rural tourism – green agricultural tourism
As it is known, the tourism, more than any other field of human activity, is being within a strong dependency with the nature, respectively the environment. We cannot speak about the tourist’s activities and attractions, without taking into consideration the tourists’ patrimony of the area taken into discussion or analysis. Moreover, on accomplishing the tourists’ products, “the raw material” will have the form of:

- the relief,
- the waters (rivers, lakes, seas, etc.),
- the monuments of the nature or of art and architecture,
- the sun,
• the snow,
• the sand,
• the mineral waters.

Considered from another point of view, all those presented represent the object, as well as the field of activity and developing of the self tourist’s activity. It is logically therefore, that the tourist’s potential cannot be an integrant part of the environment. In these conditions, any degradation of a part or another of the natural frame has repercussions over the tourist’s activity from that are, leading to gradual reducing or disappearance of tourists’ circulation and attraction.

The natural consequence of the claimed exigencies of tourism is materialized in the wish of keeping the environment not altered. The relationship of tourism-environment is one irrevocable and not destructible and as result, practicing the ecotourism can assure the capitalization and proper using of tourist’s resources.

In these conditions, the development of a tourist’s area is accomplished concomitantly with maintaining the ecological integrity of this. As result, we consider logical a rational exploitation of resources, thus keeping the balance between the satisfactions offered to tourists, the possibilities of developing the tourists’ areas synchronous with maintaining the tourist’s resources, more of them being expansible sooner or later.

A company developed assumes services – therefore a tourist’s circulation – but especially an ecological balance. It’s not accidental that for the time being performance standards and stimulants standards for identifying, protecting and selling of lasting tourism’s destinations are searched. The creditable initiatives materialized within model Blue Flag and Green Flag International (GFI) are known. Their objectives are mainly on working in association with the organizations form tourism’s industry in the view of bringing improvements to the environment. The tourist’s products considering the ecological point of view, the organizers and the hosts are thus checked.

The ecotourism activities are more and more numerous, the products being more and more appropriate to tourist’s aspirations, and the ecotourism’s phenomenon is already devoted. Increasing its activity area considers a new strategy that might have the following components¹:

• a strategy of evaluating the tourist’s requirement and of determining the target markets;
• a temporarily plan of adjusting the different tourism activities at the types of tourists, their ecological impact and economical benefits;
• substantiation of a formula of evaluating the protecting capacities of the tourism;
• a plan for a system of access keys and forms of transport adequate to the different ecological conditions within certain areas;
• a plan of establishing the infrastructure and the services, their access and high season points of views;
• a plan on long term in the view of placing the informing and education centers, corroborative with local education programs to the protected areas periphery.

This strategy of the ecotourism has to be integrated with the other education strategies, local, regional and national preservation of the environment, with the general strategy of economical-social development of the region.

As concerns the rural and agricultural tourism, the statistics demonstrate that tourism within the rural area have made year by year more and more adepts. The explanation of this evolution might be found in: influencing the ecological ideas, the wish of evading from classical tourism structures, searching a better report on quality/price.

The existence of an important national world tourism flow, which directions more precisely to the rural areas is observed. The destinations less known or uncommon – perceived as exotic destinations – are becoming more attractive for the tourists with experience on developed countries. The European continent represents the tourism region with the most powerful integration, both of the offer and of the requirement. The tourist’s circulation in Europe is dominated by 5 high issuing countries: Germany, England, France, Holland and Italy, and the new issuing poles of tourist’s flows are Spain, Japan, Korea and China.

Within its assembly, the rural tourism, which includes the agricultural tourism, reveals a wide area of means of accommodation, events, festivities, sports, other distractions and activities of pleasant spending of free time, all developed within a rural typical environment. A definition more precisely of the term of rural tourism, unanimously accepted and unitary used is confronting with different specific problems to one or other of the receiving areas of the tourists, respectively performing of tourist’s services.

It becomes necessary of clarifying in this moment what it is understood by the “rural-agricultural environment/space”. Within a good part of Europe (Belgium, France, Germany, Luxemburg, Holland), this term indicates the areas where these are distinguishing of those urban, of hillside or mountain. In Italy, the term indicates those areas which are neither urban or hillside and as result, it includes the mountain regions. In Ireland and England, the analyzed term is practically synonym with the notion of “region from the country”, this being totally differentiated of that urban. Spain, Portugal and Greece have the tendency of assimilating the term of rural environment with those areas where the agricultural production is carried out. We observe that – at least on the European continent – the term of rural environment has different meanings. This thing creates certain both difficulties of interstates comparative analysis and also a limitation on assembly appreciating over the activities developed within this sector.

There are voices that, besides the considerations of geographical nature appreciate that unsuitability to reality of “rural tourism” definition is determined by other reasons, also. For instance, it is known that the tourist’s product represents essentially the measure of tourism activity concerned as economical activity within a certain dimension, volume, structure or quality; by its destinations the tourism product can be established by a message addressed to potential consumers (tourists), which by their option – materialized in the presence at the moment of carrying out the component services, creating tourism flows, respectively the tourism consumption. But there are specialists that consider that a trip with a harness pull by animals or a picnic or other activity developed during a day within a far away part of the province, could not be considered “rural tourism”.

Bernard Lane in the paper: „What is rural Tourism?“ (1994) asks the question where the features that differentiate the rural tourism of the other types of tourism. In accordance to manifesting forms and of world’s practice, these features of the rural tourism might be:
- approaching to the nature;
- absence of mass (of humans);
- quietness;
- environment “not mechanized”;
- personal contacts (in opposition to the irrationalism and anonymity of the urban);
- the sensation of continuity and stability, of living a live and lasting history;
- the immediate contact with local authorities, with preoccupations and activity specific to the area;
- closely knowledge of business that are made on local plan;
- the possibility of taking images related to identity of community’s individuals;
- the chance of integration into community during the trip.

Within the acceptation of World’s Organization of Tourism and of many European organizations or tourism, the rural tourism is “a form of the tourism that includes ant tourist’s activity organized and lead within the rural space by the local people, capitalizing the local tourist’s resources (natural, cultural-historical, human), as well as endowments, tourist’s structures, including the pensions and agricultural farms”. This definition, although not explaining, has at its base a series of specific features that characterize the activities of rural tourism. Among these, we enumerate:

- localization in rural areas (the existence in rural localities);
- building the tourist’s product into functional manner, based upon the features of rural world (opened space, contact with nature, tradition, organizing and traditional practices);
- rural feature on scale (as considering the buildings and arrangements, usually on small scale – thus maintaining the rural infrastructure);
- the traditional character (easy and organic increasing related to local families – considering the maintaining of rural functionality and maintaining the manner of rural life);
- the diversity or presenting forms depending on: rural and economical environments; historian and placement (keeping the specific cultural identity).

One of the requirements of lasting practicing of rural tourism consists in these conditions, on preserving the essential elements of the rural. In these conditions, defining the rural tourism take into consideration a series of elements as the dimensions\(^2\):

- psychological (based upon human need of enjoying rest and relaxing);
- social (generated by the contact with rural world);
- geographical (related by the relief’s configuration, which favors or limits the development of activities of tourism);
- urban (the manner of spatial organizing, the measure of settlements, the level of endowments and that of the infrastructure).

We have to admit that between one rural area and other, differences exist; moreover, depending of the natural environment, of the social-economical existing environment, we observe variations from one region to other, and more visible, from one country to other, respectively, from one continent to another. Although, the real rural areas are characterized, generally, by: \textit{reduced densities of the population, a variable number of farms} (usually, spread – with high distances between them), \textit{important agricultural or forestry areas}. This diversity of resources, with different assortments, leads to different forms of expressing, of activities on rural tourism and are to be found under the name of: \textit{agricultural tourism, green tourism} or \textit{ecotourism} (makes reference to ecotourism’s activities that are performed within the rural environment/area).

\textit{The agricultural tourism} represents a relatively concept of recent date, which makes reference to different forms of tourism being on immediate connection to agricultural activities and/or with buildings having specific destinations, functions within agriculture. This specific form of rural tourism is based upon the assurance – within the country farm, of the accommodation services, meals, amusement and others complementary to these. This form of

rural tourism is practiced by small owners from rural regions, usually as secondary activity; the developed activity in the own farm/run remaining the main occupation and source of income.

The specification that in two of the European countries with old stages of activity, on the field of rural tourism – is about France and England – they try to accomplish a distinction between “agricultural tourism” and “the tourism at farm”, in the view of simple emphasizing and from the start on using the traditional houses as accommodation places for tourists. Renting of farms as guesthouses, health houses, mountain shooting box, etc is considered as not being agricultural tourism, due to the loss of a part from the agricultural load/function, they not being occupied by real/active peasants. In most of cases, the hosts/amphitryons put at tourists’ disposal an overweight habitable area, of that deallocated and arranged or built especially for this kind of activities.

In spite of these considerations, it is obvious that both forms make part of rural tourism sphere. Adjacent practicing by peasants for the tourism leads to accomplishing a superior development of village areas, both by the contribution brought by the incomings from accommodation, especially by capitalization of local agricultural products, by including them within the tourist’s consumption. It is well of explaining that a part of the incomings achieved by tourism activities are used in the view of investments and modernization, in this way the tourist’s activity is contributing immediate to the development and supporting the peasant’s farm and of self area.

The term of green tourism was beginning to be used on the territory of European Community. The need of introducing this term initially consisted on the wish of designing, within unanimously accepted form, the activities being outside the dedicated area: winter sports (white tourism), holidays to the sea (blue tourism), urban tourism (lights tourism). The green color was chosen just for synchronizing the rural area. The green tourism was defined as a tourist’s activity practiced within areas of country, but within areas less populated, within areas of hillsides, which did not have especial destination as concerns practicing the winter sports.

For time being, it is estimated that green tourism is quartered in rural communities, which are found in the area or closely to certain national parks, natural parks, reservations of the biosphere, natural reservations. Appreciating that tourist’s activity is favored towards husbandry, of mining exploitations or building rocks, forestry or cultivation of agricultural plants, activities that might bring important prejudices to natural spaces with especial value, which have to be preserved and maintained.

**CONCLUSIONS**

For this actual situation of agricultural tourism of Romania, we need a serious programming of what we wish to do, especially of seriously thinking of what we wish to achieve. It is important to think these things on long term, and from this reason the appropriate solutions would be: developing and increasing the quality of human factor, which works in agricultural tourism, accomplishing certain market studies in the view of seeing to whom we address, increasing the level of services performed to the tourists and applying accurate marketing politics.

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