Ecotourism as a viable alternative for economic development of Romanian rural communities

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Abstract
Perspective the use of space tourism in rural area, but not only in this area, must be based on the concept of ecological space based on the principle of equity, then an area needs to be provided in-house and in conditions of sustainable development. Sustainable human development can not be conceived outside the human settlements development of a viable economy and a diversified social life in a healthy environment, ensured respect cultural heritage - historical society. Numerous researches have shown that ecotourism can be a viable alternative for economic development of Romanian rural communities.

This research aims to study ecotourism in the context of sustainable development of rural Romanian areas and conditions to protect its natural resources. This category of natural resources now put the following problems: exploitation beyond the regeneration, especially in soils and forests, pollution of the environment that minimizes the potential for regeneration.

Having as main source of information national and international literature and data provided by the National Institute of Statistics of Romania, was created a pretty thorough fundamental research in specific field. The main research method was used were: bibliographical study, literature review and synthesis, collection and processing of statistical data, etc.

Environmental protection has been considered as a basic problem in tourism since the beginning of this activity in our country. Ecological attitude towards natural resources exploitation involves giving unlimited and irrational generalization about the importance of scientific concept of biosphere preservation of natural resources for future generations.

In the spirit of these principles requires development of ecological strategies of development (eco-development), capable of providing a healthy and rational use of resources specific to a particular ecosystem, to meet basic human needs. Protected areas are, in part, and highly attractive tourist destinations such as Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, National Parks and other natural reserves, except, of course, scientific reserves (strictly protected). Protection and conservation of rural tourism potential is emerging as a separate issue, which requires collaboration of specialists in various fields.

Starting from the concept that “sustainable development of viable and sustainable ecological development that is considered to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” tourism, especially ecotourism, as an economic activity, it is this scientific approach and should cooperate with other industries and economic activities to ensure environmental quality, resource base and its survival. More so, it becomes necessary co-participation, to this end, the central and local authorities, local communities, along with tourism providers and related services.

Keywords: ecotourism, rural development, rural communities.
INTRODUCTION
Currently, it is looking like balancing nature - tourism and culture. It also seeks to establish a harmony between development and conservation. More and more experts concluded that mass tourism development and conservation of local resources, especially natural ones, but not only, are basically incompatible. New forms of tourism, the so-called "green tourism" are more heavily promoted and their development seems to be fully consistent with the sustainable development.

When referring to the countryside, it is widely accepted that the development of agro-tourism (rural tourism) and eco-tourism (ecological tourism) is preferred classic tourism.

Given that we accept the idea that sustainable rural development cannot be based only on agriculture, rural and ecotourism can become non-agricultural activities complementary agricultural activities in family farms, are primarily sources of income for these.

The European Union encourages, supports and finances the development and agro tourism activities as additional related activities and farms, especially those of subsistence and family. Much of the Romanian rural area is natural or cultural vocation - condition for agro-tourism and ecotourism. Based on the outstanding natural qualities of the countryside, Romania’s rural strategy should support active rural development as a factor of economic growth to mitigate the causes of poverty and a gradual shift towards economically and socially acceptable standard in rural areas.

Multi-annual program development destinations and tourism products forms of Romania provides that priority: infrastructure development of tourist resorts of national and local, tourist destinations in southern Black Sea coast, cultural routes, domestic routes for cycling, and implementation strategies tourist destinations and various forms of tourism: beach, spa tourism, ecotourism. This program has been approved for continuation of investment in the priority forms of tourism development under the National Tourism Development Master Plan 2007 - 2026, the resulting priority forms of tourism country brand development, health tourism strategy, the ecotourism strategy etc.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
The term "ecotourism" appeared in countries with highly developed tourism industry. Known by many names: "green tourism", "gentle tourism" or "ecological tourism", ecotourism has developed as a result of consumers' desire to spend their holidays in a clean environment, without being altered by modern interventions contemporary society.

Ecotourism is actually the most valuable manifestation of sustainable tourism. Over time, due to the increasing interest in environmental issues, ecotourism has been granted increasing importance leading to a relationship as in Figure 1 (Bran, 2000).

Sustainable development must take into account, on the one hand, the way the finish and, on the other hand, the interests of the home and visitors from a particular region tourism resources and how they are critical in ecotourism activities.

Ensure proper development and management of ecotourism is based on several principles of planning, namely:

- applying strict measures to protect flora, fauna, ecosystems and where appropriate, archaeological sites, historical and local culture;
- optimal accommodation capacity rules may be allowed so that travel arrangements are not excessive and an extremely crowded with tourists;
- creation of tourist eco-friendly accommodation equipment using construction methods, style and local materials, using energy efficient devices and conveniently eliminating waste, the accommodation has a density of lightweight construction (deck) to treat individual wastewater using biological means compact and solid waste composting is the maximum to be loaded on the
Ecotourism as a viable alternative for economic development of Romanian rural communities

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This builds a reception and information center for tourists, where the local environmental protection techniques, background information, useful services and so on;

- produce and disseminate a code of conduct for tourists and visitors about ecotourism and the provisions included in the code (which should take tourists);
- providing well prepared guides, informing tourists precisely to raise awareness about biodiversity and environmental resources and to build commitment to the environment;
- learning the local people to participate in tourism development in order to travel out of jobs and income, to organize visits to the village, where nearby to educate tourists to respect local culture and traditions, local economic activities.

The concept of ecotourism was defined in 1991 at the international seminar on ecotourism, organized by Canada (CEAC), when it concluded that “Ecotourism is a travel experience that highlights the nature, contributing to the conservation of ecosystems and at the same while respecting the integrity of host communities”. Thus, ecotourism involves practicing his conduct both tourism activities and their related economic ones, in a nice, clean, with scenic views, relaxing and unaltered. The practice of ecotourism requires the protection zones and tourism resources, which are designed to study, admire nature, recreation and physical and mental recovery.

Another definition of the same concept: ecotourism is “tourism in areas least modified by man, and must contribute directly to the protection of nature and the good condition of the local population” (Sylvie Blagny, 1992). Track the definition is closer to the idea of practicing ecotourism in rural areas and Romanian rural communities.

In the narrower sense, ecotourism is based on the observation of nature, distinct tourism products offering specific forms of cultural tourism, scientific research, as practiced in countries with remarkable biodiversity, holding nature reserves, national parks and local communities who customs and traditions have been preserved unaltered.

Ecotourism requires leadership, organization and tourism development in order not to disturb or destroy the natural balance, natural tourism resources environment and cultural-historical values or technical-economic and achieve their sustainable exploitation.

Ecotourism, as most experts and organizers of tourism is a means (tool) to save the natural habitats (with their creatures) and historical and cultural degradation and destruction threatened by intensive tourism, mass tourism or sale, therefore ecotourism was associated national parks and nature reserves, where found, along with the function to protect and preserve and protect that investment, but also to support the development of traditional rural economy and maintain social, cultural and historical traditions of the communities local.

The ecotourism is regarded as dual aspect space namely a quantitative, as “the capacity of the land” that can be natural or artificial and qualitatively, through work or tourist value of land, natural or created. Both sides are part of the overall policy approach to sustainable tourism development. Such tourism policy aims to ensure a functioning ecological, economic, social and culture based on a rational and efficient use of resources.

Eco-tourism development aimed at four areas:
- sustainable exploitation of tourism resources and the natural and built environment, reducing pressure on the areas most heavily exploited by introducing circuit other tourism areas (economic direction);
- protection and conservation of tourism resources and ecosystems that circumscribe their reduction and disposal, recycling, reduction and removal aside forest (green direction);
- protection and economic and socio-cultural development of the communities in that area or near its traditional economic development and increased employment; harnessing cultural-historical elements expressing cultural identity and develop a spirit of tolerance (social direction);
- sources of funding for environmental protection, natural habitats and build local communities and the economy (financial resources).

It is noted that these objectives by their contents, are circumscribed to two concepts: the best possible use of resources and the protection and sustainable socio-economic and cultural development of local communities. Thus, ecotourism must: optimal and sustainable exploi-
tation of resources and the environment, economic and social benefits of the resident population; compatibility between the local population and the tourism and interest in sustainable development, broadening the spectrum of traditional economic activities and creating opportunities for recovery optimal tourism resources and the introduction of new targets into the economic and tourism areas.

Applying ecotourism as a model of sustainable tourism development especially in protected areas, but in others a fragile environment and its principles, has a dual purpose: on the one hand, the integral and sustainable development of natural and cultural resources, with improving the quality of life in local communities and on the other hand, to satisfy tourists motivations and requirements consistent with environmental conservation and resources for future generations. There are opinions that say even that rural tourism, with its component agro-tourism, scientific and professional tourism will require forms of ecological tourism (ecotourism). It should be noted, in this regard, ecotourism contribution to rural development if local people participate in the conduct of it being also a means of protecting the environment, economic and cultural-historical traditions of rural, local.

In Romania, tourism activity on ecological principles must be based on Romanian legislation and other regulations or directives in the field of EU countries or global organizations which support these efforts and that will harmonize perspective. They thus adopted a series of laws, some organic, concerning environmental protection, urban and regional planning, as well as laws on town planning documentation, the system of protected areas and natural monuments of human settlements and cultural heritage, issuing environmental permits for urban and regional planning, environmental and social impact studies, environmental balance etc.

Romania has been part of many organizations and global and European conventions and signed a number of documents that stipulate the protection of nature, human habitats, tourism development on ecological principles, and as a signatory, the recommendations and directives of those institutions and especially the EU.

In fact, adopt and Romanian legislation to that of the EU was a prerequisite for economic and social integration of Romania into its structures.

In Romania there are only few protected areas introduced in the tourist circuit (ecotourism). It is the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, National Park Retezat, Rodna National Park, but only the first two have their own governments and economic recovery programs, including tourism. In the future, will become tourist destinations (for ecotourism) Ceahlau National Park and the National Park Piatra Craiului. Cultural heritage of national importance in the tourist circuit is included in most, capitalization depends on the state of preservation of monuments, restoration and fitting for the visitors, so many of the cultural values can not be viewed or displayed publicly.

In Romania, though, are legislative conditions for the development of ecotourism - strictly speaking - the recovery of protected areas and tourism in general, which must be conducted on ecological principles in the context of sustainable economic development in general and tourism activities in particular.

Ecotourism activity, in addition to anchoring and the durability is in step with economic integration and development generates structures necessary to support the transition. This is because the actual content of ecotourism, fall modernization, sustainable urban-rural development, the use of non-conventional forms of energy and clean technologies, leading to protecting and improving the environment.

In the sense of a growing number of specialists, academics and practitioners of the field, it outlines some common goals and ecotourism economy, namely:

- industry of any kind and once again the tourism resources must not degrade, but to be developed in such a way as to protect the environment;
- economic activities should provide long-term benefits for resource communities and industry in the form of resource conservation or scientific benefits, social, cultural or economic;
- the need to provide direct experiences involving the participation and education of tourists;
- involving environmental education to all categories of "actors" local communities and non-governmental organizations, businesses and tourists, before, during and after consumption of tourism services;
- encouraging the unanimous recognition of the intrinsic value of resources;
• recognition that resources are still limited, and the need to accept a management-oriented substitutes for this;

• promoting the idea of association and collaboration between several “actors” (partnership), which may be governmental and non-governmental organizations, businesses, scientists and locals;

• the need to support and promote moral and ethical responsibility and attitude directed towards preserving and protecting the natural and cultural environment by all agencies of all concerns and guidelines.

Today tourism in rural areas (as agro-tourism and ecotourism) is increasingly appreciated and requested by people who live and work in increasingly stressful conditions inherent in modern civilization. Being declared as a product that eradicates stress, rural tourism and ecotourism is still a possibility of returning to nature, from all that is pure, unadulterated and pure; a return to origins, always pleasant.

Ecotourism facilities include overall very diversified accommodations (from campsites, cottages, villas, hotels, motels, holiday villages), eating establishments (restaurants area-specific modern, fast food), recreation facilities and sport (various sports facilities, natural ski slopes, swimming, horseback riding, etc.), specific to each site, depending on the type of existing tourism resources. In our country, the rural landscape is significant for the development of ecotourism, with a very low population levels, a potentially remarkable flora and fauna and several traditional villages in the hosting guests.

Also, our country will significantly contribute to the development of ecological network Nature 2000 including in rural areas, the only EU member state which includes five of the 11 existing biogeographical regions in Europe. The five types of regions - alpine, continental, pannonian, pontic and steppe (the latter two only Romanian) - places Romania among the most important countries in the program. On the other hand, Romania has large populations, viable and well preserved threatened species in Europe, and over half of the European population of wolves and bears, or almost half of the European population of laughter. Some of the most important ecological sites are situated in Apuseni and in Balta Brailei, Bucegi, Buila – Vanturarita, Bicaz, Hasmas, Cerna, Ciucas, Comana, Cozia, Delta Dunarii, Fagaras Mountains, Macin Mountains, Maramures, Rodna Mountains, Northern Dobrogea Plateau, Portile de Fier, Putna - Vrancea, Semenic, Caras etc.

Minimum targets and a minimal set of measures, applied in a point or in a region already operating rural tourism activities will lead to the production of consumer satisfaction and increase the living standards of practitioners. It is known from the experience of countries like Austria, France, Switzerland, Portugal, Germany and so on, the fact that rural tourism contributes to economic recovery in rural areas, developing local initiatives and tourism promoter “green” compliance with environmental rigors.

It should also be noted that, rural tourism / ecotourism activities - with few exceptions - are usually conducted during periods of “low season” agricultural, giving service providers:

• additional revenue resulting from tourism activity;

• recovery of household items at output directly to tourists;

• making the most of all the resources of the area;

• banishment boredom and monotony;

• use of surplus accommodation, food products and labor.

The set shows once again that through tourism activities carried out in the countryside - as travel service providers - place worth less busy time periods, it attracts less productive activity categories available for field work and higher energy use across local communities.

CONCLUSION

Romanian rural areas offer, in its diversity, beauty, quiet, comfort for the entire population. He has a great wealth of flora and fauna and preserve the most important part of our cultural heritage. At the same time, the rural areas is the source of food of the majority of the population. Forests, mineral resources, raw materials and energy recycling industry, have their origins in rural areas.

The conclusion in this context is clear, namely that all generations to enjoy the countryside, with its unparalleled elements for human health and comfort - water, air, forests, landscape and especially the people of that area - should remain in the care and attention to human society as a
whole and each individual within the meaning of permanent preservation and protection.

**Tourism activity** is among the phenomena that have been imposed in the contemporary era and in rural areas, forming a characteristic of our century. Industrialized society has negative effects on its members, it manifesting itself in the form of biological aggression (pollution, lack of exercise, frequent illness etc.) and the order of the nervous (mental stress, social life and professional constraints and many others).

Being the attention of all, sustainable tourism development means dealing with the fact that research to improve the quality of life there is an inherent constant limits to the human population and activity of our planet can withstand.

This theory gives rise to some opportunities and challenges for the tourism industry:

- tourism activity, properly managed, can be a powerful force in terms of environmental conservation and cultural heritage;
- when it takes the form of ecotourism, sustainable tourism can become a cult for tourists;
- tourism demand is proportional to the environmental quality of the tourist destination;
- population increase tourism destination areas;
- often tourism is considered rural activity that protects more than other resource-intensive industries such as mining, construction etc.

We believe that while the way to go in developing a sustainable strategy in the field of ecotourism is difficult, long and with many obstacles still worth trying to find the way to meet both people's needs and those of environmental protection and hence the rural that is so fragile. Only a thorough, given the offer, demand, competition, market trends, lets say if an area has really ecotourism potential to justify investment in the sector and the development of ecotourism development projects.

Although "not famous for anything," market niches such as "targeting the elderly" in low season: weekends elevated very popular, such as museums, music festivals and concerts, holidays with adventures, ecotourism and the beachfront provides opportunities for creating jobs in hotels, “half board” and restaurants as well as activities such as boating, fishing and bird watching and maintaining infrastructure such as the construction of boats and tourism centers. Leisure activities (tourism similar except that not overnight) include parks, playgrounds, the paint-ball ing, go-cart, fishing, golf courses, parks, villages, gardens, trails, cycling, horse riding, airfields, sports aquatic activity centers and restaurants.

In factory farming activities can be diversified to include in programs for recreational and tourist programs gathered hay for livestock, milking cows, cooking traditional products etc. This creates new opportunities and new sources of income for farmers, and fulfilling the conditions of sustainable rural development by reducing agricultural employment, increasing farm diversification, rural repopulation, developing services classes etc.

These elements can lead to a series of beneficial changes in the Romanian village agricultural through developing trade with agricultural products for urban consumption, creating small networks of food distribution, organic farming and ecological awareness, stimulate new forms of tourism such as ecotourism. Many of these issues have been integrated into the concepts of "multifunctional agriculture".

Picturesque rural settlements located in an unpolluted environment, preserving traditions and a rich history, outside political functions - administrative, social, economic and cultural equity, meet seasonal or throughout the year and welcome function or hosting tourists to spend an indefinite stay. Villages, especially those in the mountains, began to exert a more powerful attraction for city dwellers, whose numbers were growing and that nostalgia for the homeland could be the first impetus to visit them.

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Ecotourism as a viable alternative for economic development of Romanian rural communities