

ROMANIAN COUNTRYSIDE - SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

This paper is focused on presenting the particularities of the Romanian rural space from a touristic point of view with its advantages for the tourists and as reason for supporting the development of sustainable tourism. The specificity of natural capital is amplified by spectacular landscapes, varied configuration of land relief, favourable climatic conditions (reduced frequency of negative phenomena, absence of excessive temperatures), therapeutic value and abundance of natural factors (mineral waters and thermal-mineral waters, curative mud, topoclimate and microclimate, etc.), flora and fauna, etc. The natural capital, for which the Romanian rural area represents a „geographic personality”, must be doubled in time by the tourist vocation. Romania holds an immense treasure of archaeological remains, historical, architectural and art monuments, as well as a priceless patrimony which attests the evolution and continuity of work and life on these lands, the development of the culture and arts of the Romanian people. This entire cultural-historical fund represents a significant part of the potential tourist offer (the so-called potential secondary offer) and a component of the tourist image of Romania on the international market.

INTRODUCTION

„The Romanian environment built by man is as important as the physical-geographical environment, in terms of its tourist capitalization, being emphasized from this point of view by the great variety of elements resulting from activities of organization and arrangement of space, of people’s creativity throughout time, as well as demographic evolution” (Călina et al., 2017).

Tourism as an industry is dependent on the natural resources and cultural heritage of a society, which can manage to sale these (processed or raw) as an integral part of its “products”, and at the same time share these resources with other users, including local communities (Butler, 1980).

The tourism industry has adopted the concept of sustainability, creating the notion of sustainable tourism, which promotes the idea of “satisfying the needs of the current tourists and the tourism industry while in the meantime protecting the environment and opportunities for the future (Hunter, 1997).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The completed research includes the entire territory of Romania, which is located in the Northern hemisphere, at the intersection of parallel 45° North latitude and meridian of 25° East longitude, and in Europe in the central south-east part, at approximately equal distances towards the extremities of the European continent, between the meridians of 20°15'44" and 29°14'24" and the parallels of 43°35'07" and 48°15'08", occupying a surface of 238 391 km², and an additional 23 700 km² through the platform of the Black Sea (Călina et al., 2017).

In order to know *the particularities of the Romanian rural space*, the following research methods have been analysed (Călina et al., 2010):

- analysis of primary and secondary resources – the main method, hence revealing aspects like: touristic environment, touristic resources;
- descriptive analysis – as a means to describe, present all the elements noticed;
- comparative analysis, as a means of explaining the connections established between the elements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. *Natural capital of tourist development*

Romania possesses great forest diversity and is one of the few European countries where virgin woods can still be found, about 250000 ha, present for the most part in the mountain area. Many of these woods play important roles in the environment and as recreational areas, but at the same time represent an important economic value. Protected areas represent about 7% of the Romanian territory, and their total surface is of 1652403 hectares. In Romania, three main categories of protected areas can be found: Danube; Delta Biosphere Reservation; 13 National Parks; 13 Natural Reservations (Master Plan for National Tourism Development in Romania, 2007).

From a touristic point of view, *the fauna* has significance more through its hunting and aesthetic value. The fauna of huge interest (bear, boar, deer, capercaillie, etc.) is concentrated in the mountains, but also in the forests of hills and plains (buck), the ponds, the Danube Delta representing a very favourable habitat for birds. The lakes, the ponds, the rivers and especially the Danube Delta and the Black Sea have a rich and various ichthyologic fauna. In particular, the main resources of the Danube Delta may be emphasised: fish fauna, reed and woods, especially soft woods (Cândea & Simon, 2006).

The climate in Romania is under the influence of masses of humid air from Atlantic, masses of continental dry air, coming from the east of the continent, but also Mediterranean air coming from south. Therefore, the climate is continental-moderate with local nuances influenced by relief forms and successions of seasons.

All these increase the attractions of the landscape, at the same time diversifying natural factors of cure and treatment, practiced sports, activities of local inhabitants and traditional foods. Furthermore, the boscages (permanent rural dwellings in mountain areas comprising cluster of farms, dispersed on large land areas) are well known in Apuseni Mountains, grouped by criteria of kinship or property on new grass lands taken from woods. The boscages are the conclusive expression of the assault of population over mountains, and for agritourism, regardless of the region where they are, play the roles of possible outposts, under the aspect of infrastructure. By adaptation and functional multiplication, many of the farms of such habitats may become accommodation units for summer and winter camping tourism (Erchedi, 2012).

Synthetically, tourist natural resources are represented by: relief and hydrology (grades and forms of relief; geological phenomena, natural landscape, bizarre forms of relief, geological structures, nature monuments); climate (temperature of air and water, precipitations, thickness and duration of snow layer, shining duration of sun); hydrography (phreatic waters and mineral waters, rivers and lakes, the Danube; the Black Sea); vegetation (storied forests, specific flora, nature monuments, scientific reservations); fauna (hunting fund, fish fund, protected faunistic species, scientific reservations, natural reservations, natural parks). A considerable part of the objectives included in the fund of protected natural areas represent the main attraction of ecotourism trips. This natural capital, for which the Romanian rural area represents a „geographic personality”, must be doubled in time by the tourist vocation.

2. *Cultural capital – history of tourist development*

Cultural-historical resources are an anthropic component represented by remains of the civilisations that followed on the Romanian territory since immemorial times, arts monuments and objects, laic or religious, museums and museum collections, etc. Among the components of representative anthropic tourist resources are the following:

- *archaeological remains* related to the genesis of Romanian people and its paternity in these places. In the same manner of favouring elements, archaeological and architectural sites are comprised; there are no later discoveries, dazzling through their beauty or full of significance, but a series of remains have been discovered which attest an old history, visibly modest and sporadically assumed due to its lack of knowledge. As archaeological objectives which may be constituted against the background of an archaeological museum are the Dacian fortresses in Orastie Mountains, preserved to a small extent, represent valuable archaeologically, historically, but also touristically. Many of the rural fortresses have become royal or feudal fortresses, largely spread in the south of Transylvania. Among the most important from the point of view of the role played, worth remembering are Rasnov Fortress, built on a rock, Calnic Fortress, the fortress of Agnita, Cisnadioara Fortress built on a hill above the village, Slimnic Foretress, the Fortress from Rupea, Vurpar Fortress from Alba County, Garbova Fortress. In Brasov County there are rural fortresses at Cristian, Halchiu, Prejmer, Harman and Homorod. Significantly for Sibiu County is Tilisca Fortress, built on a rock peak, the fortress from Orlat, situated on a hill, rural fortresses from Biertan, Atel, Cisnadie, Cata and Mosna, Sura Mica. Other fortresses, much more modest, are at Rosia, Rasinari, Jina, Poiana, Marpod, Dabarca, Racovita, Hamba, the fortress from Miercurea Sibiuului, by their strategic position, close or around the highest point, always being built in belvedere points (Bălteanu et al., 2008);
- *historical, architectural and arts monuments* with unique value, some of worldwide notoriety, such as churches and monasteries with exterior mural painting from Bucovina; wood churches from Maramures; monuments in the Moldavian style from Central Moldova; monuments in the brancovenesc style and the complexes of feudal art from Oltenia and Muntenia; monuments of the new-Romanian (neoclassical) architecture; historical monuments in main towns – old county seats of Romanian Countries or medieval towns;
- *village dwellings with fortified churches* (which are on the UNESCO list): Calnic commune – Alba county, Biertan and Valea Viilor commune in Sibiu county, Saschiz in Mures county, Bunesti commune, Viscri village and Prejmer commune in Brasov county and Darjiu commune in Harghita county;
- *museums and memorial houses*, many of them of international interest.

Regarding the Romanian villages, their role on *human dwellings* can be assessed, as they appear as a unitary whole, well individualized, to which the creativity of its inhabitants confers a smaller or higher degree of specificity. For this reason, human habitats become object of tourist attraction due to recreational values, clearly individualized or by their attributes: age, structure, situation in territory, architecture.

3. *Capital of tourist resources of ethnographic nature*

The touristic destiny of the ethnographic patrimony reveals today situations apparently paradoxical; its minimum share is located in the most industrialized and urbanized countries, while the richest resources are found in the developing countries. This can be explained as veritable popular culture is the appanage of continuous and vigorous rural life, with traditions preserved and improved by the experience of the

creators. Or rather the town and the urban life have modified the conditions and diverted man away from the ancestral practices that created folklore.

Fortunately, in this field, Romania has priceless and well-preserved resources. Among attractive ethnographic elements, the following present major importance: architecture and traditional popular technique (Maramures, North of Moldova, Sibiu, North of Oltenia, Campulung, Bran, etc.); popular artistic creation – trade, handicraft, ceramics, popular clothes, literary, musical and choreographic folklore (Oas, Maramures, North of Moldova, Marginimea Sibiului, Sălaj, Bistrita-Nasaud, etc.); traditional popular manifestations (fairs, festival, etc); ethnographic museums, etc. these elements are concentrated in the main ethnographic areas of the country: Maramures, Bistrita-Nasaud, Oas, Bucovina, Marginimea Sibiului, Oltenia de sub Munte (Oltenia under the Mountain), Tara Hategului (Country of Hateg), etc.

CONCLUSIONS

The natural and human tourist potential, is a rich, varied and impressive treasure, which encompasses the most beautiful, picturesque and attractive tourist resources (Călina et al., 2017). The lent effort to arrange the territory to satisfy urgent, material and spiritual needs in the rural community have become, after repeated failures and successes, a potential of sustainable tourism the presents the following specific characteristics: uninterrupted dynamics and evolution, ethnographic synthesis of agrarian landscapes, existence of territorial units which reciprocally inter-condition and subordinate, the complexity of culture independent of conventional limits between the lands within the village limits and the acres of the settlements between the historical villages, counties and provinces where the Romanian territory is involved. The various configuration of the territory, as well as the multi-millennial history of Romanian people have determined in the Romanian rural area a touristic potential of a great complexity and a special touristic value.

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