

THE ROLE OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC REGENERATION OF COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

International tourism is perhaps the only domain that under the economic crisis circumstances still records economic growth, and Romania has a major potential, but poorly capitalized, which exploited at optimum parameters, can be a solution for socio-economic revival of local communities.

Key words: *Cultural tourism; Economic development; Festivals; Local communities; Public-private partnership.*

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INTRODUCTION

International tourism is perhaps the only domain that under the economic crisis circumstances still records economic growth, and Romania has a major potential, but poorly capitalized, which exploited at optimum parameters, can be a solution for socio-economic revival of local communities. Lately the tendency of development of tourism industry has manifested more and more significant by returning to the nature and authentic cultural values.

Tourism is considered a way of superior exploitation of all resources of a region, a lever for attenuation of interregional imbalances, a solution of prosperity for disadvantaged areas, a remedy for de-industrialized localities. (Minciu, 2004)

Taking into account the multitude of existent definitions, it can be said that the tourism is an active component of socio-economic contemporary life, that profoundly marks the regions favoured by the natural and antropical potential, by attraction exerted upon people, in the context of increasing the standard of living and attenuation of harmful influences of modern industrial environment (Muntele, Iașu, 2003).

Tourism industry still has wide areas for implementation of principles of sustainable development compliant to World Tourism Organization technical guidance. This promotes a model of tourism which "meets the needs of touristic regions and in the same time protects and expands the future opportunities".

CULTURAL TOURISM

WTO considers that cultural tourism together with eco-tourism and adventure travel will have the most spectacular evolution in 21st century.

Richards (2009) states that "Culture and tourism were two of the major growth industries of the 20th century, and towards the end of the century the combination of these two sectors into 'cultural tourism' had become one of the most desirable development options for countries and regions around the world."

Analyzing the motivational structure of urban travel, the cultural tourism has an important share. It is estimated that cultural tourism accounts for around 40% of all European tourism.

Tourists are trying more and more to find true experiences, meet and get to know other people and other cultures.

Tourism policies will need to adapt to these trends and develop a quality offer promoting local cultures and traditions and paying attention to sustainable aspects: preservation of the heritage, of the landscape, of the local culture (ec.europa.eu).

Cultural tourism covers all aspects of travel where visitors can learn about another area's history and way of life. Thus, cultural factors in the context of tourism include the entertainment, food, drink, hospitality, architecture, and manufactured and hand-crafted products of a destination, and all other characteristics of a destination's way of life (McIntosh and Goeldner, 1990).

The diversity of aspects that give a meaning to cultural life finds reflection in the multitude of cultural tourism forms: (Minciu, 2004, pp 86):

- Visiting the vestiges, castles, religious edifice, parks;

- Visiting museums;
- Participating on cultural events: shows, concerts, festivals, traditional holidays, exhibitions, fairs;
- Industrial and technical tourism located by specialists between cultural and business tourism: dams, viaducts, tunnels, architectural ensembles, the know-how of social life.

Today, cultural tourism represents a modern type of holiday, in full expansion. Cultural tourism is one of the main facets in a country's tourism industry. World Tourism Organization (1985) defines cultural tourism as the movements of persons for essentially cultural motivations such as study tours, performing arts and cultural tours; travel to festivals and other related events.

Through its content and characteristics, cultural tourism has a multitude of advantages (Minciu, 2004, pp 87):

- Seasonal freedom;
- Large attendance including all categories of tourists;
- The possibility of development in any area ensuring a good use of resources.

Cultural tourism is considered to be a catalyst for change, designed for stimulating economy through tourists which are generating social and economical benefits. Cultural tourism brings pride to local communities and at the same time creates cultural bondage and understanding between host and guest communities. (Sudipta, Sarat, Babu, 2010)

In many countries, and in Europe and beyond, culture has been used as a catalyst in revitalizing the social-economical environment, and its implemented programs have had different degrees of success. Creative industries have played an important part in this process, although regeneration approaches have varied considerably.

Cultural policy adopted in urban revitalization policies can help increase the number of tourists and develop the cultural tourism in local communities. Some authors have demonstrated that cultural planning has adopted a definition about cultural resources of the following content overview (Bianchini, Parkinson, 1994):

- Activities and institutions of art and media;
- Youth culture, ethnic minorities and other communities;
- Legacy, including archaeology, architecture, gastronomy, rites;
- Local and external perception of the city through the use of songs, literature and myths;
- The natural and the built environment;
- The diversity and quality of free time,

facilities and recreational activities, herbal therapies, cooking, beverages;

- Repertoire of local products and craft, manufacturing and services.

The development of cultural tourism is stimulated by people's curiosity, the need to use spare time and it is made through the increase of civilization. The use of events to foster communities' spirit can be observed since ancient Greece. Today, similarly cultural events (exhibitions, competitions, carnivals, festivals, concerts) are used to build strong community ties and often were financed from programmes of socio-economic urban regeneration.

Culture also plays an important role in active tourism, which requires participation in physical activities held in natural areas, ensures a superior quality of the activities, ecological and social compatibility and has a low negative impact. This combines sports, culture and adventure in an original product. For over 150 years, tourists have sought to spend their holidays practicing outdoor activities in unique natural areas. A variety of customers are looking for adventure, new experiences, personal satisfaction and unique experiences.

In an increasingly dynamic world, active tourism comes to complete and combine their holidays to tourists eager for knowledge, including adventure, sports, ecotourism, complemented with cultural components, history, art, crafts, architecture and folklore. Basic principles of active tourism are: high quality of activities, ecological and social compatibility and low negative impact.

Cultural tourism has greatly diversified in recent years, under pressure from the public demand, increasingly curious and the involvement of the local communities who wish to obtain benefits from the cultural activities they finance. Under globalization the development potential of cultural tourism is huge, the demand of which is stable, solid, timeless.

IMPLICATION OF THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

For the development of cultural tourism it is highly needed public private partnerships. Local authorities are much more entrepreneurial and skillful in recognizing their heritage and generates revenue with these by taking into consideration not only the costs but also the depreciation of investments in the short term, medium and long. (Osborn and Gabler, 1992) Other authors (Kotler, Haider and Rein) develop themes related to the ability of local communities to be designated receptive where competitive forces invigorates the formation of local partnerships with innovative approaches focused on attracting investments, business opportunities, tourists and residents in charge of long-term.

The role of local authorities is to ensure the sustainable development of communities through

programs of economic, social and cultural. (<http://alinahaller.projectsbc.ro>).

Ignoring the event stakeholders and imposition of arbitrary criteria designed away from the real world is as dangerous as it is the exacerbation of its role. The optimum formula is a compromise between the effort and the benefits that should be left to the market rules.

Competitiveness and competition remain operating elements that generate solutions for profitability and employment. A complex equation of stakeholders should include business, Government, universities, scientific research, civil society, learning environment.

The European Commission understands Public Private Partnership as a cooperation between the public and private sectors involving the creation of a mixed capital entities which meets public contracts or concessions.

Private contribution to Public Private Partnership consists - in addition to the capital contribution or other goods-in active participation in the operation of contracts held by the public-private entity and the management of the public-private entity. This is the most difficult element of the harmonized. While private partners are oriented towards obtaining profit and competition, public partners reach performance through a package of legislative provisions on the basis of are organized and operate. The convergence of interests will only be able to bring together the two types of partners.

In tourism this convergence can be detected, but the work programmes for implementation must be different. A possible mutual interference may adversely affect the efforts to create a harmonious system development.

The concept of "culture at command" is aimed for improving the quality of life of communities through cultural and sporting activities, concerning for supporting excellence, competitive type tourism and creative industries and leisure. Urban festivals need to be used by local authorities as the central component of an extensive social and economic regeneration of poor areas. These kinds of events have the potential of generating tourism, attracting tourists, but in the same extent the inhabitants of the surrounding areas. A very important role of festivals and events that (however they usually produce a timely concentration in the high season in majority) they act against seasonality, since a vast amount of festivals and events are organized in the low season (János Csapó, 2012).

For example, in Italy, in Rasuga city, have been used traditionally themed-grape festivals, pizza, fish, pancakes, to encourage the participation and involvement of the locals which included companies from the public and private sector, local authorities, residents and tourists, Known as White Nights or as in Britain – Nights of Light. (Jiwa, Coca Stefaniak, 2009).

Traditional customs is one of the key elements that bring an added value in the ecotourism product.

Keeping them in a form as close to the ancestral increases the chances of success for such destinations. Most of protected areas are situated close by to rural areas. For the implementation of this action are needed the selection of certain habits (related to winter holidays, agriculture etc.) or of certain crafts with tradition in that area, as well as support of handicrafts and communities to continue the tradition and bonding them to tourism.

One way that these traditional items can be backed up is creating a grant program through which it can be supported and the intangible assets of the communities worth put. Desired results should aim at the establishment of centre's for recovery of traditional habits (sets of folklore dances, choir, Orchestra of popular music, Carol singers and traditional crafts- processing of wool, wood, stone, leather, painting eggs, pottery etc.) promoting traditional activities.

According to the local flavor and the natural can harness the results of handicrafts and a host of other natural products: herbal teas, syrups, jam, tinctures, honey and other products derived from. This creates the prerogatives for a return to the unit area and offers a complete tourist experience.

Cooperation between local stakeholders is the key to success for an efficient tourist activity. Each of them can specialize in a particular direction (leisure, transport, accommodation and food etc.) but only together they can offer a competitive and complete tourism package. In these circumstances it is necessary an integrated approach both the tourism offer and the manner of its organization in order to realize diversified tourism programs, which have polarized the main resources available in the community.

Tourism product within the community could be integrated into a unitary concept through:

- Development of a slogan and logo in the community unit, elements that will be used for all promotional activities at the destination.
- Development of "eco tourism cards," through which it will provide the possibility of multiple entries in the Park but discounts for access to other tourist attractions located in the area adjacent to the Park (museums, fortresses etc..) and discounts on accommodation, food services, transport or leisure;
- Creating innovative tourist products at the community level. These will be achieved through close cooperation between the factors involved (the administrations of protected areas, tour operators owners of hostels, local community etc.) and within these products will be used all opportunities offered by tourist community- hiking and nature activities

(rafting, canoeing, horseback riding, rock climbing, observing animals, bike rides, skiing) equerry, sightseeing, cultural participation in agricultural activities and craft of the local households, participation in local events.

Thus, we obtain the individualization of communities of interest by providing product characteristic; ensuring that the products and services offered are made locally, as well as widening the spectrum of activities which will generate increased satisfaction of tourists and number of days spent by them in the community.

The construction of the local authorities of some eco-museums is also an important point in the development of cultural tourism. Eco-museum is a relatively new concept, started in the 1970s due to the need to preserve "in situ" elements of the rural world endangered under the pressure of urbanization and technological progress. While classical museum gathers objects that expose them to the visitors, eco-museum relies on conservation of cultural phenomena and processes of local communities.

In the context of such structures are encouraged and assessed items representative of the community and their respective territories: aspects of

everyday life, landscapes, architecture, intangible cultural heritage, the occupations of the inhabitants, way of life, oral testimonies.

CONCLUSIONS

Local development is determined by how responsible actors are involved and cooperate for the benefit of all. Competitiveness and a higher standard of living depend on the ability of the people, the public authorities and the business community to put the territorial cultural advantages.

Community development, through the promotion and development of cultural tourism has an impact on the appearance of new jobs, positive promoting, increasing the standard of living for inhabitants, strengthening cooperation between public and private authorities promoting mental health and overall health. Cultural tourism generates increasing community spirit and pride, self-esteem, identity encourages local leadership in order to meet educational goals, coming and transfer abroad of cultural and recreational resources of the farming community.

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