

Agrotourism in Romania - Sustainable Development Method for the Rural Environment

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Abstract

Agrotourism is more and more seen as one of the main ways for developing the rural area through different mechanisms. It provides the attraction to the economic and social circuit of different geographical areas that are not well equipped for industrial development, but that can offer many possibilities for people to get in touch with a specific pattern of life.

Agrotourism relate in fact the need and desire for leisure time with small business sector, both from tourism and agriculture. It sets up new coordinates that integrate people and nature for a mutual benefit, valuing the geographical characteristics of different areas.

Key words: agrotourism, rural environment, organizational culture, leadership

J.E.L. classification: M10, M30, A12, O11

1. Introduction

This concept is located especially in the hill and mountain areas, but it has recently expanded to all types of relief, including plains, seaside zones a.s.o. The agrotourism allows the local community to take advantage of their natural resources as land, forest, landscape, rives, mountains a.s.o. and to assure a certain standard of living for the population.

The concern for preserving the cultural heritage in different parts of the world encourage the locals to maintain and even to develop some traditional activities that could have perish without any support and preoccupation.

Agrotourism support the cultural development of the local areas, representing an engine for educating both the locals, but also the tourists with regard to the history, traditions and different other element of the local folklore.

2. Developing a specific organizational culture within the agrotourism business

In order to get the expected performances the agrotourism business must be able to develop a specific organizational culture, that is going to integrate the characteristics of local community with the opening for large diversity of cultures that are brought by its stakeholders and, especially, by its market.

We refer particularly to the tourists who are more and more eager to explore this form of tourism and they want to deeply immerse in the local culture. At the same time, they bring their rich cultural luggage, contributing to the increasing of multicultural mix in a place that, till few years ago, was pretty much homogenous.

The organizational culture of the agrotourism business is determined by a series of endogenous and exogenous factors to the firm, which have a bearing on the organizational characteristics (Jarábková, 2010, pp. 532 -539).

The business management has the authority to make decisions that effectively affect any of the company's employees. This gives it the power to significantly influence managerial culture and organizational culture of the firm (Năstase, Gligor – Cimpoiu, 2013, pp. 191-201).

The impact is even greater if he is the owner or founder of the agrotourism business. Leadership and culture are strongly connected. Everybody needs the other. The creator of an agrotourism company develops alongside a series of work processes and products, a culture of work that reflects its image, its belief in what must happen in the firm to survive and enjoy its results.

Starting from the original idea, the founder of the agrotourism company brings in other people who share his vision. As time passes, the group grows, an organizational learning takes place and cultural elements based on the entrepreneur's vision appear and fix themselves. He is the creator and, at the same time, he is conditioned by the characteristics of the culture of the organization he has set up.

Leaders are true models for those in the firm and those who come in contact with it in one form or another. A special role for the founder and his descendants is the need to create an institutionalized goal (which is subsequently materialized in objectives) and to give a specific meaning to the agrotourism activities of those who lead them, with all the resources they have.

In this sense, it is advisable for leaders to have a great empathy with their supporters, to be able to understand and to understand them. The important source of the persuasion capacity of the leader, his power, is his own cultural base; the system of beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors in which he believes strongly and decisively marks his actions (Nastase, Valimareanu, 2016, pp. 108 – 113).

Human nature is the one that determines people's desire to structure their lives, to have a familiar framework in which to move, so that they can successfully adapt their behavior to the requirements of the environment.

When they are familiar with a certain context, they enjoy greater intellectual and emotional stability, they do not have to be constantly tense, waiting for unpredictable, unknown elements to dictate a behavior other than the usual one.

That's why they feel comfortable in certain structures, with some people around them, whom I know and who are not likely to present unusual situations requiring them an extra consumption of resources.

For this reason, the entrepreneurs and the managers from agrotourism businesses should be able to invest formally and informally in training their workforce and besides the specific activities for running the company, the staff should be able to develop to a fast pace some intercultural competencies, highly required by their interaction with the tourists coming from different parts of the country or of the world, from country sides or from urban areas, with high or low income a.s.o.

Even if the environment has a number of unpleasant features, you know them, you know how to avoid them or have developed some specific defence mechanisms. Uncertainty, fear, arises when there may be unknown elements when you think you will have to change a series of things without knowing their magnitude and duration.

It is obvious that many people prefer stability and do not feel at ease when they come out of a certain routine. These patterns of behavior, developed over time and regarded as generally accepted norms by the constituents of a collectivity, are, in fact, the traditions the group has formed and perpetuates and represent in fact for local community a central point for attracting tourists in agribusiness field (Morag, 2004; pp. 3-16).

History and tradition are a powerful factor in shaping organizational culture. Group members recall and evoke a series of past events that deliver symbolic messages to both them and newcomers, by using ceremonies and rituals.

3. Leading the workforce for success

From the very beginning, the hired employee in the agrotourism business gets acquainted with the company's demands through recruitment, selection and employment. They become even clearer during the integration period and as the new employee begins to work and interpret correctly a series of processes, phenomena from the firm and from its specific surroundings. The impetus to meet the company's expectations is a strong one that has its roots in childhood when the child is

told by the parents what they expect from him and what behavior he must adopt in order not to get in a conflict or to be rewarded.

Organizational culture is an important framework for agrotourism companies that conveys to the employee what is accepted and what is not in the organization. The behavior of bosses, colleagues, are substantial milestones against which a new employee reports both his own expectations and ideas, and the attitudes that he formally declared that should be followed.

If between formal and informal elements there are large differences, then the perception of the employee will be a conflict, which will most likely result in a predominant adaptation to the informal structure and the manifestation of a consequent behavior with negative results over the company (Ryglová, 2007, pp. 421-431).

The characteristics of the workforce are to differentiate the labor force in certain categories, depending on a number of criteria such as age, gender, race, physical capacities, etc. and can have a powerful impact on the interaction with the stakeholders, but especially with the customers.

The more and more free movement of the labor force will lead to an increasing interaction of different categories of people. People with different social situations, training, culture, language will bring to the organization a wide range of perceptions that reflect their characteristics. If they are properly managed, these differences can mean an important source of opportunities for the firm. But there is also the danger of tensions and even open conflicts; so the role of managers is to focus their energy on achieving the mission and objectives of the firm and to keep the conflict within certain limits that may prove beneficial to it (Drucker, 1993).

Employees with different needs, different expectations, will create a series of pressures in the organization, which must be correlated, harmonized and guided in constructive ways for the agrotourism organization. Of course that we refer especially to larger organizations, but such phenomena could occur even in the family businesses.

It is necessary in this context for managers to develop a series of skills in the management of a multicultural environment that will allow them to build an environment conducive to the manifestation of cultural diversity and the achievement of the synergy effect (Wilson, 2001).

Being able to lead in a multicultural environment requires you to recognize the ways in which this diversity enriches the content and nature of the relationships in the firm, its results. Building a strong organizational culture does not mean giving up individual cultural elements, but it asks for recognition of the core values of the firm, as shown by the company's vision and mission. Consequently, what is required is a harmonization of values, beliefs, individual symbols with those promoted by the leaders of agrotourism organization.

Managers who want and manage to maintain a diversity of cultural approaches also create the environment that offers the expected satisfaction of employees by offering the opportunity to manifest their cultural identity and succeed to integrate it and to value it in the multicultural environment offered by a high interaction with a wide range of stakeholders.

4. Research methodology

The research methodology used in this paper was focused on the statistical analysis of information on the evolution of certain indicators relevant for the analysis of entrepreneurship in all Romanian regions. These statistical indicators refer to tourist accommodation establishments with tourist accommodation functions, the types of structures being analysed and tourist villas (Table 1), tourist pensions (Table 2) and agro-touristic pensions (Table 3), for a representative period of 7 years, 2011-2017.

Table no. 1. Synoptic table of indicators in the regions analysed - Tourist villas

Type of accommodation structure	Development regions	Year 2011	Year 2012	Year 2013	Year 2014	Year 2015	Year 2016	Year 2017
Tourist villas	NORTH-WEST region	57	61	49	47	52	48	42
	CENTRAL region	67	88	112	116	138	137	142
	NORTH-EST region	27	27	27	30	37	39	48
	SOUTH -EST region	257	298	296	297	270	264	246
	SOUTH-MUNTENIA region	49	51	56	59	61	58	76
	BUCHAREST - ILFOV region	4	5	6	5	9	11	13
	SOUTH-WEST OLTENIA region	50	52	38	36	35	34	42
	VEST region	37	39	37	34	41	44	50

Source: Processing of statistical information and publications of the National Institute of Statistics

Table no. 2. Synoptic table of indicators in the regions analysed - Tourist pensions

Type of accommodation structure	Development regions	Year 2011	Year 2012	Year 2013	Year 2014	Year 2015	Year 2016	Year 2017
Tourist pensions	NORTH-WEST region	111	138	146	137	157	172	200
	CENTRAL region	351	429	476	484	613	597	620
	NORTH-EST region	157	187	195	193	218	215	222
	SOUTH -EST region	36	41	50	51	59	59	56
	SOUTH-MUNTENIA region	125	126	146	149	171	171	194
	BUCHAREST - ILFOV region	14	14	14	13	13	11	18
	SOUTH-WEST OLTENIA region	87	110	104	108	102	106	131
	VEST region	169	202	204	188	194	199	225

Source: Processing of statistical information and publications of the National Institute of Statistics

Table 3. Synoptic table of indicators in the regions analysed - Agro-touristic pensions

Type of accommodation structure	Development regions	Year 2011	Year 2012	Year 2013	Year 2014	Year 2015	Year 2016	Year 2017
Agro-touristic pensions	NORTH-WEST region	206	252	231	226	246	284	443
	CENTRAL region	424	594	611	663	813	823	984
	NORTH-EST region	223	265	283	288	321	352	451
	SOUTH -EST region	71	89	86	88	81	88	95
	SOUTH-MUNTENIA region	125	147	166	174	203	210	246
	BUCHAREST - ILFOV region	2	2	3	2	1	1	1
	SOUTH-WEST OLTENIA region	74	108	103	108	105	120	150
	VEST region	85	112	115	116	148	150	186

Source: Processing of statistical information and publications of the National Institute of Statistics

5. Results and discussion

From these data we can see first of all that year-on-year, the number of tourist pensions and, in particular, of agro-tourist boarding houses, is growing. Also starting from the same analysis, we can identify the regions of the country, such as the North-East Region, the North-West Region and the Central Region, with the most developed potential, where there are the most favorable factors of economic and social development and the necessity maintaining tourism and agritourism among the strategic priorities of these regions.

It can be noticed that in all 6 regions of the country (North-East Region, North-West Region, Central Region, South Muntenia Region, South-West Region Oltenia and West Region) the number of agrotourist pensions doubled in 2017, compared to year 2011.

For all these regions that have been identified as most favorable to agrotourism development In Romania, strategic objectives have to be pursued such as:

- development of the technical infrastructure
- diversification of economic activities in rural areas
- granting financial incentives (loans, financial aids) to rural households that start their activity in agritourism
- developing human potential through vocational training adapted to agrotourism needs
- efficient use of natural resources and creation of conditions specific to rural tourism
- developing a rural economy to maintain traditional local products on the market
- preservation / preservation of heritage sites - monasteries, archaeological sites, fortified churches, etc.
- the promotion of the rural activities of the agro-tourist farms and of the rural lifestyle
- involvement and support of local authorities

6. Conclusions

All information points out that agrotourism has good potential for growth, but it needs specific programs and actions in order to have a sustainable development and to substantially contribute to the well-being of local communities, but also to act as a pillar for tourism, agriculture, transport and other important fields of national economy, providing a high added value.

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