

Ways to Capitalize on the Tourist Potential of Region 2 South-East

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Abstract

This article presents a study on the development of tourism activities in Region 2 South East, especially in protected areas from the perspective of the national strategy for ecotourism development and with interferences of cultural tourism well supported by ethnic and cultural diversity, both in Dobrogea and in areas mountains located at the edge of the Carpathian arc. The fundamental arguments of this approach are provided by the large number of protected areas existing in the coastal area and the delta, as well as in Vrancea and Buzău counties where the maintenance of cultural traditions offers the possibility of a better capitalization of local resources. The main actors in these areas are also active factors in identifying the main lines of tourism development in the current particularly complex conditions,

Key words: ecotourism, protected areas, region, strategy and sustainable development

J.E.L. classification: L83, M10, Z32

1. Introduction

In Romania, ecotourism activities are more and more practiced in almost all regions of the country. If we look at this option in terms of generating a new philosophy of tourism development, we find that the main promoters are non-governmental organizations and travel agencies that are increasingly obliged to respond to the challenge of the international situation on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Theoretical background

"Ecotourism is a form of tourism developed in natural areas, whose purpose is to know and appreciate the local nature and culture, which involves conservation measures and ensures an active involvement, generating benefits for the local population." (Nistoreanu, 2003)

Open spaces, tourist routes in reservation areas along with existing cultural heritage, are the most appropriate solutions to ensure decent social distancing and offer the consumer of tourist services the opportunity to better understand the environment and cultural traditions in the tourist location of their choice. for the group they represent, the visiting family or institution. Thus, tourism in nature reserves or in their adjacent areas contains educational features, minimizing the negative impact on the natural and socio-cultural environment. Through its activities, it supports the protection of natural areas, by generating benefits for the local communities they belong to, providing new jobs and sources of income for the population of these localities.

Starting from the multiple interconnections of tourism with the branches and sectors of the economy, with the tendencies at national and regional level, the development can be projected as having term of reference these evolutions. "Regarding ecotourism - an integral part of sustainable tourism - its perspectives must be thought in correlation with the world and national economy in domestic and international tourism." (Hornoiu, 2009)

3. Research methodology

The research methodology used is the documentary one, of studying the relevant articles for the topic of in-depth research, published in various specialized publications. To achieve the proposed objectives I will use content analysis, through which I will analyze secondary sources of information, such as reports and research conducted in the field of rural tourism.

At the same time, this method will allow me to highlight many theoretical and practical aspects regarding the development of rural tourism in Romania, especially in Region 2 SE. By collecting and centralizing bibliographic sources on rural tourism, we provided the necessary information support for this complex analysis.

4. Results

Relevant in supporting the research are the natural resources, representing the physical support of the tourist activities and the ways of their capitalization.

4.1 Natural resources

The ecotourism resource in Region 2 South-East is represented by the most diverse forms of mountains, plains, major hydrographic networks, coastal areas and one of the most beautiful delta systems (Danube Delta). This is a consequence of the physical and geographical conditions in the region where we have present three of the five biogeographical regions of Romania, namely: continental, alpine and Pontic.

A consequence of this structure is the positioning of the 105 nature reserve areas, of an unprecedented diversity, with a concentration in the mountain area: Buzau and Vrancea, where we have 53 protected areas, with examples in Table no. 1 and the Pontic area: Constanta and Tulcea where we find another 52 protected areas, where the ones from Table no. 2.

Table no. 1 Protected areas in the mountain area (Buzău and Vrancea)

The name of the protected area	Location	Area (ha)
The hill with the Chernivtsi Bats	Cernatesti	10.59
The Muddy Volcanoes from PăceleleMici	Berka	10.20
The Muddy Volcanoes from Păcelele Mari	Scortoasa	15.20
The Living Fire from Andreiașu de Jos	Andreiașu de Jos	12.00
Lepșa-Zboinea Forest	Lepșa	210.70
Putna Waterfall	Lepșa	10.00

Source: Wikipedia, 2020

Table no. 2 Protected areas in the Pontic area (Constanța and Tulcea)

The name of the protected area	Location	Area (ha)
Hagieni Forest	Albești	431.63
The Key Geological Massif	Cheia	387.95
Lake Techirghiol	Techirghiol	1229.98
Corbu-Nunta-Istria	Corbu, Istria	1610.00
Letea Forest	C.A.Rosetti	2825.00
DealulBujorului Natural Reserve	Babadag	5.80

Source: Wikipedia, 2020

Along with the natural setting, this space also benefits from an ethnographic and folkloric potential of great authenticity. This natural dowry, complemented by the cultural dowry represented by architectural values, historical and art monuments, traditional crafts, folk customs, define the ecotourism potential of the region.

There is a complex approach to tourism activity in protected areas regulated by Government Emergency Ordinance no. 57/2007, regarding the regime of protected areas. Two of these areas, namely: areas with full protection and buffer zones, allow the development of ecotourism activities, without construction and investment, an absolutely mandatory constraint for the preservation of the natural environment. The third area, considered as an area of sustainable development of human activities, allows investments to be made in compliance with the principle of sustainable development of tourism within the communities where these activities take place. Local authorities, in collaboration with the national institutions responsible for the management of these areas, will promote actions aimed at respecting the correlation between biodiversity conservation,

4.2. Ways of capitalization

An important role in the infrastructure for visiting national parks is played by the information centers in those localities or adjacent ones, some of them being achieved through measure 313, within the National Rural Development Program 2007-2013, or through partnerships such as public-private-civil society, where NGOs have a major role. Within these information centers there are also exhibition spaces, conference rooms where cultural events complementary to festivals, local holidays can be organized, which attract visitors and offer them the possibility to diversify the tourist options in the area.

There are a number of 17 information centers set up in Region 2 South-East, through the National Rural Development Program, worth 2.3 million euros. In order to support the activities in tourism, within measures 6.2 and 6.4, including on ITI, we have in Constanta and Tulcea 49 protections, worth 9.3 million euros and 43 projects on ITI, worth 8.3 million euro. The agropensions are those that represent the fundamental support for the realization of the tourist activities, the other activities represented by the leisure and their related services, are presented in the following table:

Table no. 3. Measure19.2 - Agropensions

County	Number of agro-pensions	The value of investments
Tulcea	20	781,550 euros
Constanta	4	538,899 euros
Buzau	3	269,106 euros

Source: AFIR.info

The presence in these natural parks of homologated tourist routes, mostly administered by the County Councils, offers the possibility for tourists to recreate in the middle of nature in special conditions.

Currently, ecotourism programs are concentrated in the Danube Delta biosphere reserve (boat rides, boats, canoes, flora and fauna observation) and in the Macin Mountains National Park (horseback riding and hiking, with tourist guide inside the reservation). The natural and anthropic tourist potential of the Danube Delta gives it a unique character in Europe and even in the world, both ecologically and in terms of habitat in the deltaic environment, through a special variety and originality of landscape, morphohydrology and fauna. (Nistoreanu., 2003)

The forms of tourism practiced in the Danube Delta are:

- knowledge tourism;
- rest and recreation tourism;
- rural tourism;
- scientific tourism;
- balneary tourism;
- tourism for practicing sports.

Given the outstanding natural resources in Region 2 Southeast, ecotourism takes place in nature and offers tourists a direct and personal experience, and contributes to a better understanding of the need to protect nature, appreciation and the joy of discovering it.

The ecotourism product highlights the natural and cultural environment in which it takes place and is constantly qualitatively correlated with the best practices of tourism and planning in terms of sustainable development.

The protection of natural areas is an objective of ecotourism in the conditions of development and management strategy at the level of natural parks. Ecotourism contributes to the preservation of local culture and traditions and must ensure a reduction of the negative impact on the local community visited.

Table no. 4. The place and importance of ecotourism development strategy

Trends	Motivations	Development strategy
Increasing leisure and demand for travel in natural spaces	Protecting and conserving the natural and cultural heritage	Master plan for the development of national tourism
Increasing population mobility	Increasing the tourist experience	National strategy for sustainable development
Socio-demographic changes	Benefits to protected area administrators and the local community	Tourism development strategies at local level
Improving the image of protected areas	Ecotourism has become a very dynamic form of niche tourism.	Strategies for the development of tourism in naturally protected areas

Source: OMT (2007), Master Plan for the Development of National Tourism 2007 – 2026

5. Conclusions

The current evolution of tourism in the area of protected areas is the result of a strategy established following studies and recommendations made by local public authorities and requests made by tourists as well as conclusions from other stakeholders, institutional partners in each county of Region 2 Southeast . Within this strategy we consider the creation of new tourist products and the diversification of the tourist offer based on natural resources, incompletely capitalized so far.

Given the peculiarities of tourism in addition to tourist circuits in protected areas, it is necessary to include historical cultural circuits. Many of the events on the agendas of local public authorities could be a basis for media coverage of convergent programs to visit natural parks, in connection with historical and cultural monuments.

This change can be easily promoted in the area of the Romanian coast, very rich in archaeological remains from Mangalia to Tulcea, in almost all localities near the Black Sea. Inclusion in these strategies of medium and short term priorities leading to the development of tourism management and marketing activities such as promoting tourism objectives on a unique website in the region, with the support of institutions interested in activating the economic environment, in the current conditions of elimination of environmental and health risks in the development of ecotourism as a source of new business.

In local communities where there are such natural resources, it is important to attract private investors, ensure access to funding for projects for tourism development, with the support of management organizations, accredited and specialized in structuring important project portfolios.

The reorientation of the traditional tourist towards open spaces and tourism in nature, obliges us to change the argument of local communities in the development of specific tourism infrastructure and tourist leisure services, in order to make public investments in leisure infrastructure development, making appropriate arrangements for sports in nature, both in the mountainous area and in the coastal area.

„Tourism, from an economic, socio-cultural and ecological point of view, is sustainable. In this way the economic, socio-cultural and ecological impact is not permanent, nor irreversible”(Morris, 2013)

The aim of sustainable tourism is mainly to have as little impact on the local environment and culture as possible with an improvement in living conditions in local communities, as a result of increased incomes and job creation, and the conservation of ecosystems. Through the dynamism of this sector, tourism has a very large contribution to sustainable development, with implications for economic growth in regions and tourist destinations.

For these reasons we can see three essential aspects of the relationship between tourism and sustainable development:

- Interaction: the nature of tourism, as a component of the service industry, involves a direct and indirect interaction between tourists, host communities and the local environment;
- Awareness: through tourism activities, tourists become aware of environmental issues and cultural differences, paying more attention to sustainability;
- Motivation: most tourist activities are based on the desire of tourists to visit regions with an intact, attractive natural environment and to get in touch with local communities. (Patrichi, 2012)

Starting from the profile of the tourist in natural areas and the four dimensions: travel motivation, preferred activities, accommodation and information sources, we find that a consistent involvement of local authorities and civil society partners is needed to attract investment in the realization of tourist and leisure objectives of a high quality level, which would offer the possibility of a pleasant holiday.

Two of them:

- travel motivations - nature (flora, fauna, relief)
- favorite activities - observation and understanding of nature (visiting national parks, observing wildlife), cultural-historical activities (wikipedia, 2020),

represent the main factors in choosing the tourist destination, in the current conditions of changing the orientation of tourism development towards open spaces.

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