

International
Journal for

Responsible
Tourism

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 1/2014

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
for
RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

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ISSN 2285 – 7958

ISSN-L 2248 – 7958

Edited by ARTE Publishing House

The content of the present journal was developed with the scientific support of Amphitheatre Foundation, Bucharest, Romania.

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
for
RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

SPRING 2014

VOLUME 3

ISSUE 1

BUCHAREST 2014

Statement of Purpose

The *International Journal of Responsible Tourism (IJRT)* is a publication that aims to offer, through scientific papers, a better understanding of the responsible tourism within the tourism promoter environments, to explain the consequences of applying these principles for the Romanian society and for the entire world and open a communication platform for successful international concepts and practices.

IJRT will include scientific papers submitted to the International Forum for Responsible Tourism program that have passed the peer-review stage and have been debated in the forum, considered to be important documents for understanding and developing responsible tourism.

IJRT intends to become a reference journal in the field, being the first initiative of this kind in Romania, and will be published exclusively online and quarterly by the Amphitheatre Foundation. The Journal will include applicable notes on the meaning of responsible tourism and methods of increasing the touristic potential by preserving cultural and social identity, the natural and anthropic environment, elements to be integrated in responsible tourism, along with an adequate education in the field.

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL for RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

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ECO – FRIENDLY PRACTICES IN THE LODGING INDUSTRY: THE CASE OF AYVALIK CUNDA ORTUNÇ HOTEL, TURKEY

Ph.D. Associate Prof. Ayhan Gökdeniz ¹

Ph.D. Associate Prof. Barış Erdem ²

Ph.D. Associate Prof. Hüseyin Çeken ³

Abstract

The changing profoundly affect the tourism sector as in all areas. In this context, the new trends in tourism sector have been observed on the eve of 21st century. The depletion of natural resources of tourism, increase of population and the environmental problems bring about a number of changes in tourist profile and their request. So, one of the new changes in world tourism is the increase in demand for environmentally sensitive tourism.

In the face of the current environmental problems, tourism sector has encountered the new trends. One of these new trends in tourism is eco hotels. It can be said that eco hotels are of the two main contributions. The first one is to meet the expectations of a conscious group of tourists who are sensitive to the environment. The second one is to serve to the sustainable tourism by using the natural resources more efficiently. Thus, eco hotels become increasingly an important force in allowing the countries in which they do business to be come more competitive in the long term.

In this study, the importance of eco-hotels are discussed. And as a sample, Ortunç Hotel which is established and run in Cunda Island of Ayvalık/Balıkesir was selected. In Ortunç Hotel - an eco-hotel -, the current practises were deeply reviewed.

Keywords: tourism, environment, eco hotels, Ayvalık Cunda Ortunç Hotel.

JEL Classification: M13, Q59

1. Introduction

It's been witnessing that in tourism industry, as well as in each field of economy, new trends have appeared after entering the 21st century. The acceleration of transition from industrial society to information society, rapid changes experienced in technology, communication and transportation fields; bring forward several changes in tourist profile and their demands (Bahar and Kozak, 2012: 120). One of such

¹ Balıkesir University, Ayvalık Vocational School, Ayvalık, Balıkesir, Turkey, e-mail: aygokdeniz@yahoo.com

² Balıkesir University, Faculty of Tourism, Çağış Campus, Balıkesir, Turkey, e-mail: berdem20@yahoo.com

³ Muğla University, The School of Tourism and Hotel Management, Kötekli Campus, Muğla, Turkey, e-mail: huseyin_cken2001@yahoo.com

new trends in the world tourism is the growing interest to environmental sensitive approaches. For example, in a research conducted in 2010 by an international travel agency called Carlson Wagonlit Travel, “more environmental policies determined for travel and tourism industries” and “increase in awareness of the tourists on environmental protection” were detected as two important environmental tendencies (Koetting and Widener, 2008 adapted from Güneş, 2011: 46).

Today, a series of factor is in question in such growing interest to environmental sensitive approaches. First of all, an important part of today's travellers are living in industrialized metropolitans. Problems such as noise, environmental pollution, traffic and crowded population in big cities increases the longing of people for nature. Pöschl points out that urbanization is the most important reason for today's tourism. As the urbanization increases and average size of the residential area gets bigger, some factors raise the demand of people to move away from such environment although for a temporary time. Paul Risch mentions this point very well (Toskay, 1983: 131):

“...A man who had been in Ruhr region once, knows what it means to live in such a stone dessert. Even the smoke, vapour, dust and fog symbolizing the Ruhr region is not considered, it is understood that the people living here feels the necessity to go to pure nature at least once a year, much more if possible...”

And Joachim Podamer describes the point as follows (Toskay, 1983: 132):

“...In this world, which we have created and threatens us to be our enemy, we are no longer like at our home. Because our souls and sense organs were created for another world, and they are not able to adapt themselves to this environment any more...”

Since establishments intend to make production continuously, consumption of natural resources and environmental pollution are among the most important problems they encountered. In another words, establishments must find more economic ways to use raw materials which are rare and getting more expensive, and solutions to dynamize the production (Mutlu, 2008: 297). From the perspective of tourism, it is observed that the natural resources of a region provides a comparative superiority for that tourism region. As result of using these resources in an effective and efficient way and thus their developing in a long time without extinction, brings a comparative superiority to that tourism region. When compared to other sectors, protection and sustainability of natural and environmental resources which are the reason of tourism, is a required pre-condition for tourism competition (Bahar and Kozak, 2012: 47).

Although it is foreseen that tourism industry will keep on growing very rapidly in the future, it is concerned that this growing shall cause some problems. For example, population growth and overcrowd in popular destinations may create annoying environments. In this context, it is asserted that the most important limiter for the spreading of tourism in the future shall be the precautions to avoid from excessive tourist population (Erdoğan, 1995: 175). Likewise, Toskay (1983) suggests that

when tourists flow in certain places in certain periods of the year, this overburdens the capacity of those places. According to the author, failing to use rationally and not protecting very rare holiday places which are suitable for resting causes to lose natural beauties at touristic regions and leads those fields to become out of use in an impossible way to be utilized any more in terms of tourism.

In the face of such experienced environmental problems, tourism sector is in search of new quests in recent years. Today, the growing increase in trends for environmental friendly practices caused new concepts to appear in tourism. One of such new trends in tourism is the eco hotels. The popularity of 'eco hotels'; which protect ecological balance in accordance with sustainable tourism, attach importance to recycling, act in accordance with a systematic that comprises organic products from feeding to hygiene; is increasing day by day. These establishments which are expressed as 'environmental friendly hotels' appeal to a conscious population who feel uncomfortable with rapid urbanization and environmental pollution, and strictly abide the requirements for healthy life. Eco hotels, which promise a lifestyle with mother nature to persons who are fed up with chaos, noise, pollution and artificialness of the city, have environmental friendly practices from the food they serve up to materials they use (sheet, towel, shampoo, organic vegetable and fruit).

Eco hotels have also changed the sense of recreation all around the world. In hotels which appeal to mass tourism, holiday makers who are restricted behind concrete walls and artificial flowers always keep an eye on the clocks. In big hotels; breakfast, lunch and dinner hours, five tea and similar times are being followed. In other words, a holiday according to time is planned once again.

The tourism sector, which is one of the most energy consuming industries, concentrate on topics such as energy saving, protection of natural resources and environmental management. Therefore, it becomes possible for the tourism establishments to offer products which are suitable to everchanging preference and expectations of customers and respectful to environment, and create a good image in the eyes of customers (Seyhan ve Yılmaz, 2010). In recent years, the legal efforts to protect consumer rights particularly in developed countries and social sensitivity created thereupon have made the customer become the focus of business. In tourism sector which is based on human factor and much more sensitive to consumer satisfaction, this situation is much more specific and dominant (Gökdeniz and Çetin, 2006).

Nowadays, the establishments realize that they will not be able to exist without being sensitive to environmental problems, regardless of their sectors. And in that direction, establishments have to include the environmental aspect of all their activities into their business strategies and long term plans. Because now environmental sensitivity provides competitive superiority in all kinds of markets (Atay and Dilek, 2013: 204). Likewise, Güneş (2011) states that the tendency for

environmental friendly practices is not only a particular concern to tourism, but also to all industries in the world. Particularly, the establishments in all the industries which play a role in environmental problems such as climate changing and global warming are seeking solutions about reducing such negative effects. The problems such as pollution of the seas, melting glaciers and ozone depletion are tried to be minimized by the studies of international environmental friendly organizations, non governmental organizations and scientists. In this context, the “environmental sensitive” concept gradually began to gain importance by the effects of individuals and organizations that behave in a sensitive way for the environment (Güneş, 2011: 46 adapted from Erdem and Tetik, 2013: 23).

Studies with “Sustainable tourism” approach in accommodation facilities were first emerged in late 1970s and early 1980s when sustainability was generally started to be considered by being associated with social effects of tourism establishments and environmental changes and visitor behaviours. In those years, the importance of positive contribution of the establishments to their environments without a certain policy and the necessity of environmental practices were pointed out. Establishments in accommodation sector were focused on visitor management in scope of environmental activities, and leading principles were formed on topics such as developing solutions on pollution, starting practices for eco-tourism and minimization of energy and waste. In hotel management, environmental practice samples and sense of nature tourism were spread to whole sector being accommodation and destination lands in the first place. When 1990s arrived, certification programs based on ecological event which were executed as granting different prize/etiquette to hotels, travel agencies and/or tourism associations gained wide currency under different names (Kahraman and Türkay, 2006: 124 adapted from Seyhan and Yılmaz, 2010).

In this study, eco hotels which are one of the new recent trends in hotel industry were mentioned for discussion. The study consists of two parts. In the first part; definition, importance and basic characteristics of eco hotels were included. In the second part, green practices of Cunda Ortunç Hotel which is active in Ayvalık county of Balıkesir city of Turkey were reviewed. The study finishes by suggestions which are offered for hotel managers and entrepreneurs intending to make investments in hotel management field.

2. The Concept of Eco Hotels and The Main Features of Eco Hotels

Since our environment is a very precious asset; all the individuals, governments and enterprises should give efforts to protect it. It may be said that it is the same task with protecting the world as well. And one of the factors that will contribute for that task is the eco- hotels. Hotels use large amounts of water, energy, chemicals, supplies and disposable items. They also generate lots of waste in form of wastewater and solid waste. The prevention of polluting the

environment with this waste is of great importance to stakeholders as well as employees of the hotel and of course the tourists, who are becoming more concerned for the preservation of the environment. Eco-hotel or environmental suitable hotel has to follow the basic principles of good housekeeping - based on maximizing benefits and minimizing costs (Persic et al., 2005: 447).

Eco hotels (also called as green hotels) are an example of sustainable hotels. They are environmentally friendly accommodation facilities which follow the principles of sustainability and apply ecologically sound practices into their operations for the purpose of protecting the Earth. They aim to be more environmental friendly through different methods of minimizing the negative impacts on the environment. These methods include such as efficient use of water, energy and materials, recycling and reduction of solid waste (Romppanen, 2010: 27).

Eco hotels are usually small with less than 10 rooms. This ensures that there are no crowds and makes it an exclusive place to enjoy a holiday at a relaxed pace. There is no night-life and therefore guest go to bed early and rise early in the morning to the song of birds. It has a very positive impact on health of stressed urban souls leading a sedentary lifestyle (Eco-Lodges for Green Minded Travelers, 2011: 39 adapted Erdem and Tetik, 2013: 27).

An eco hotel must usually meet the following criteria (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eco_hotel):

- Dependence on the natural environment
- Ecological sustainability
- Proven contribution to conservation
- Provision of environmental training programs
- Incorporation of cultural considerations
- Provision of an economic return to the local community

Eco hotels are tried to be ran by being certificated by a committee in which independent green auditors in the region or country come together. In classification of green friendly ecological hotels in the world, a serious and comparable star giving system was developed by an organization called "Eco Hotels of the World". According to this system, hotels are granted stars from one to five in five categories (Energy, Water, Waste, Ecological Activities and Environmental Protection) according to practices they are performing. For each category, the average of granted stars are taken and number of green stars for the hotel which shows the hotel's sensitivity to green and environment is identified. The hotels, which intend to make application to get green star, are asked to implement the following criteria at first (Kızılırmak, 2011: 4):

- Adherence to natural environment in executing hotel activities,
- Providing the ecological sustainability,

- Proving the contributions provided for environmental protection,
- Availability of natural education programs,
- Cooperations made in cultural fields and
- Providing transformation to local people in economical way.

It is possible to list the features of ecological hotels as follows (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eco_hotel):

- Attention is paid for detergents used in housekeeping and laundry departments of the hotel for not to include toxins.
- Generally, 100% organic linen sheets, towels and curtains are used in such hotels.
- Smoking is not allowed at any point of eco hotels.
- Using of renewable energy resources (such as wind and sun) are encouraged.
- Attention is paid for food and beverages to be organic, and reduction of water use is aimed.
- Using of recyclable materials in hotel rooms and lobby is aimed.
- Guests are told that bed sheets and towels should not be replaced if not necessary (guests accomodating in the hotel are informed about that). Thus, less water consumption is tried to be provided.
- Using of effective energy and energy saving illumination units is encouraged.
- Transportation is promoted to be made by green vehicles and public service vehicles.
- Serving of organic and local vegetables and fruits is provided.
- The establishment uses disposable dishes at any point of food service.
- Application of fresh air exchange programs are provided to be done at any point of the hotel.
- The water used in kitchen, bathrooms and laundry are recycled and aimed to be utilized in garden irrigation.
- Daily newspapers used for guests are provided to be re-used.

In scope of said features of eco hotels, practices of various eco hotels around the world can be summarized as follows (Dünyanın En İyi “Eko-Şık” Otelleri, 2008; Turizmde Eko Otel Rüzgârı, 2010):

Couran Cove Island Resort: This hotel, which is one of the biggest resorts of Australia in touch with nature, expresses itself as “a resort peculiar to Australia and an environmental sensitive one”. One of the most important precautions this hotel has taken against environmental pollution is to create sustainable energy resources by utilizing new technologies. In the hotel, various sustainable energy resources are used from solar energy to gas generator.

Tauana Hotel: This hotel, which is located in northwest of Brazil, consists of nine bungalows which are utmost compatible with tropical nature. The hotel was

built from sustainable wood which are used in construction of Indian houses. In the hotel where noise pollution is minimized, no television music system is included in any way. In the hotel which is illuminated by minimal lighting system, there is no pool as well due to corrosive characteristic of chlorine. The guests are offered to ride bicycles around the exotic vicinity as eco-activity. All the meals in hotel's menu are prepared from organic fruits and vegetables that are grown in hotel's garden.

Dalya Life: This hotel, which is located in Göcek town of Fethiye County of Muğla City, has only 8 rooms and established on 15 thousand square meter area. The hotel field is surrounded by Sweetgum trees which are raised only between Marmaris and Kaş region. The secretion of this tree is a raw material that is indispensable for cosmetic industry. The Egyptian Queen Cleopatra had used sweetgum oil as philter and perfume. In some periods, this oil releases a very adorable scent around. The hotel has an ecological field and guests have the opportunity to pick up the products which are grown in this hotel field.

MyLand Nature: This hotel, which is established in Çıralı Village of Ulupınar location in Antalya, has a vision that projects a natural and organic life. The concept of 13 roomed facility also reflects the natural and organic life. The facility, in which wooden and natural stone combinations are used; yoga, meditation and artistic activities become prominent. And in food and beverage activities, organic food is used completely. After the process which stipulates application and follow up for this field, the hotel had obtained its license and began to grow fruit trees. Such products are seasonally presented to customers as fruit juice, jam and marmelade.

Strattons Hotel: This facility, which is one of the leading environmental friendly hotels in England, has many awards in eco-hotel fields. In the hotel organization structure, a special "green management team" has been established. All hotel employees are trained in parallel to environmental sensitivity. In the hotel, electricity and water consumption is daily measured and thus energy loss is minimized. In times when electronic appliances such as television, coffee machine etc. are not used, care is taken for them to be closed. Accessories used in bath such as shampoo, hair cream, shower gel are offered in refillable pumping bottles instead of miniature plastic bottles. In the hotel, where development of local economy is contributed, only local products are used.

Hotel management practises for protecting the environment and sustainable tourism which are called green hotel management, both help to provide energy saving for accomodation facilities and reduce waste which are left in nature. Green hotel management is considered as a practise importance of which increase in the sector. Competition pressure, manners of consumer and non-profit organizations on that topic, policies of the

states for environmental protection are among the reasons to turn towards green hotel management. The Green Hotels Association (1993), which was established in order to provide environmental conscious to establishments in international aspects, expresses its aim as “provide water and energy saving in the hotels located in all destinations we like to visit, reduce the amount of waste, gathering such establishments in order to protect such destinations and create policies for that”. Patricia Griffin, the Chariman of Green Hotels Association, gives recommendation to consumers and tells them tha they can contribute green hotel management as follows: “We need your help to protect our environment for next generations”. For example, during your stay in hotels, you can tell hotel management that your bed sheets and towels are not needed to be replaced everyday. When you leave your room, please do not forget to switch off TV and lights. If you are not using small shampoo bottles, let them stay in the room and use the shampoos that you have brought with. Since Green Hotel management sense is not a practise to be done only by the establishment, it is very important to raise the awareness of consumers for green voyage as well (Atay and Dilek, 2013: 209 - 2010).

3. The Scope, Aim and Limitations of the Research

The Scope of the study is limited with deep review of the green hotel management activities of an ecological accomodation facility. The aim of the study is to review design and structure of the sample accomodation facility, efforts to provide water saving in this establishment, reduction and recycling of wastes, efforts for energy efficiency and saving, protection of natural areas, green activities in purchasing, environmental training of the hotel customers and employees and green hotel management activities of the accomodation facility; and show benefits, advantages and disadvantages which may be obtained by such activities and present a sample about how the practices can be.

As the environmental problems come to the fore, many establishments are engaged in environmental sensitive activities or prepare themselves for those. But since no other hotel having the exact same characteristics with Cunda Ortunç Hotel is present in the region, comparable analysis could not be performed. Details of the investment cost, detailed prices of travel agency, individual rooms and the purchased materials were kept confidential.

3.1. The Methodology of the Research

In this study, qualitative research methods were used. The reason why qualitative research method was used is that it is sensitive to natural environment, can attribute a participating role to the researcher, can make integrated approach and is sensitive in the research design (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2000: 21 adapted Seyhan and Yılmaz, 2010: 58).

Interview was preferred as the data collecting method and two interviews were made by the hotelkeepers (on 15 July and 01 August 2013). Three different question types were asked in the interviews and answers were recorded by a recording device.

3.2. Ayvalik Cunda Ortunç Hotel Sample

Cunda Ortunç Hotel has been active in the region for approximately 30 years. During such period, it has had no organic connections with any travel agency on sales-marketing. Bookings are made via booking.com, tripadvisor, expedia or their own web pages. It is open both in summer and winter. It has got its own company in Istanbul making professional sales and marketing. No children between 0 and 12 age and no pets are allowed in the hotel. The hotel image is focused on ‘quiet, peaceful recreational hotel’ concept. There are 4 different room groups. The lowest room price is 250 TL while the highest is 900 TL. The rooms are grouped as ‘superior, de lux, suit and junior suit’ In 2010, the hotel was completely renovated and transformed to eco hotel format.

It has an ala carte restaurant with two different kitchens. The hotel is generally run in room and breakfast form. Average guest overnight staying is 3.5 nights. Foreign tourists visiting the facility is mostly from Germany and Northern Europe countries (Sweden, Norway and Finland). And domestic tourists mostly come from Istanbul, Bursa, Ankara and Izmir.

Since the frequency of guest visiting is high, we can say that they have a quite high rate in ‘guest loyalty’. In the rooms, special sheets and slippers (with the names of the guests on them) are used. Guests are called by their names. It has foreign guests visiting continuously for 20 years and domestic guests for 15 years. Among the overnight staying periods, it has some guests who stay about 1.5 months. Great importance is attached to guests’ special dates (marriage, birthday etc.), and special celebration parties are definitely organized for the guests on such days.

Table 1: The Daily Activities of Ortunç Hotel

In-Hotel Activities	Out of Hotel Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- SPA, health cures,- Table tennis, billiards- Individual guidance services- Library, reading books- Chess, backgammon, bridge, bezique- Tv, Cd, Dvd etc games- Billiards and internet cafe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mountain bikes- Healthy walking tours- Pedalo and surfing- Sailboats- Fishing sessions- Tennis, beach activities- Endemic plant tours

Source: Cunda Ortunç Hotel Advertisement Brochure

3.2.1. Practices for Eco Hotel Management in Ortunç Hotel

All rooms have heat sensor. If there is no guest in the room, heat is fixed to 18 degrees; if there is a guest, to 24 degrees. When the balcony room opens, the air conditioner in the room automatically stops. Information sets about green hotel management which are prepared for guests are available in all the rooms. For example, not to replace bed sheets if not necessary. Disposable shampoos and soaps used in bathrooms are made of 100% recyclable materials. All cleaning products such as detergents and so on are selected among environmental friendly products. For all the rooms (before guest uses), allergy test is implemented. Eco-friendly mountain bikes are given to the guests for their use, and this service is provided for free. An electrically propelled automobile is assigned in order to be used for airport transfers to pick up the guests. A booklet was prepared about endemic plants in Ayvalık Natural Park, and seminars are given for the guests who are interested in this topic.

Ortunç family has been doing hotel management for two generations. The hotel is administrated by Mr. Onur, who is graduated from İzmir French College and France Paris Tourism Management Faculty afterwards. And the father administers the 170 decaire farm at Dikili Salihleraltı site where the food for the hotel is provided. 80% of hotel's food need (vegetables and fruit) are provided from this farm. The other 20% part is provided from suppliers with certificates. In the hotel; home made jams, organic products, fruits and vegetables grown in natural environment are used, especially in breakfast buffet. Plastic bottles are not used at any point of the hotel. Fruits and vegetables are sterilized via hygiene rooms. Kitchen heat, which is 40 degrees, is reduced below 25 degrees by air conditioners. The electricity of the hotel is received from eco-friendly Sanko. The gas used in hotel's kitchen is provided from İpragaz. All those companies have certificates related with green hotel management. The garbage taken from every department of the hotel (particularly from kitchen) are separated and reused. For example, waste food are given to municipality's animal shelters.

All the hotel requirements are provided from the neighbourhood tradesmen, thus contributing to neighbourhood economy. Again, 90% of the hotel staff is provided from the tourism schools in the neighbourhood. Due to 30 years hotel management background and being open both in summer and winter, the hotel provided personnel stabilization. Certificated training programs are applied on personal periodically (sales and marketing, customer satisfaction, behaviour and communication techniques, eco-hotel management etc.). Employee replacement rate is nearly zero. Ortunç Hotel has the 'Green Key' certificate granted from Environmental Foundation of

Turkey (Turçev). Now, they state that they would like to get the 'Green Globe' certificate as a target. Moreover, they have private beaches with blue flag. Hotel management attaches importance to social projects. Half of the budget obtained from the sales of olive oils produced in the farm are transferred to educational projects in the vicinity. Bays within the hotel area are cleaned constantly, and weekly and monthly sea water analyses are performed regularly.

Other practices for eco hotel management in Ortunc Hotel can be listed as follows:

- It has biological treatment and garbage separation systems. Through biological separation, 10 thousand water is recycled annually and this water is mostly used for garden irrigation.

- In general places, 'disabled toilette' is available for disabled guests. In order to prevent heat loss, velvet curtain is available on the main door from lobby to beach, and double door practice was started to prevent heat loss at the hotel entrance.

- On the beach, there is a continuous life guard and no animal is allowed to enter the beach and swim.

- There are permanent first aid cabinets and water proof emergency bags available on the beach.

- In the hotel, 'occupational safety specialist' and 'occupational health specialist' are available.

- The damage given to nature is measured continuously, and the staff is continuously trained for that.

- Hot water in the hotel is provided by solar energy panels.

- Led lighting is used in every room and general locations.

- Reservoirs in the toilettes of hotel rooms and general locations are adjusted to water consumption below 4 liters. In all the hotel locations, heat insulated 'comfort glass' is used.

- And the batteries used in hotel rooms and public toilettes are adjusted as pressurized and sensor-fitted.

- Hotel building is completely clothed with heat insulated products. Floor heating system is used in the rooms. This system is different from core heating. It is a more homogeneous system which keeps the room longer at a certain temperature.

- The establishment has the 'Greening Hotels' certificate.

- In the hotel, a project team was created in order to make projects on social responsibility, heat end energy efficiency, tourism and sustainable energy topics or prepare projects with such topics in order to apply to various institutions (Development Agency, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Professional Turkish Employment Organization, European Union etc.).

- In the hotel, energy powerplant was established by the financil support obtained from Southern Marmara Development Agency. With this powerplant, 100

kw daily production can be made and this rate corresponds to 20% of the energy consumed by the hotel. The other energy requirement is provided from solar panels. The average daily energy consumption of the hotel reaches 24 thousand Megawatts. Thanks to this energy powerplant, 15 thousand cm³ average daily reduction was provided in the carbon monoxide gas emitted to the atmosphere by the hotel.

- The establishment has Environmental Management System 14001 and ISO 9001, 10.022 and 22.000 certificates.
- Solid fuel boiler is preferred in heating and as fuel boiler, pine nut shells are used which are brought from Kozak Tableland.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

In recent years, three basic factor is considered that determine the hotel design at construction stage. These are market's structure, cultural make up and environmental factors. Hotel developers need not only to examine the voyage market, but also develop plans suitable for common cultural elements, local architecture and natural environment. One of those plans is environmental impact report. This report includes a study which analyses the long and short term impacts of the hotel development on local environment and society.

While eco hotel investments significantly serve the sustainable tourism mentality by enabling environmental protection - the main factor of tourism-, they also help reduction of operating costs in the long term and reach the aimed profitability level. In the frame of changing tourist expectations, eco-hotels had created an important demand by providing customer loyalty with green hotel image.

On the other hand, eco-hotel investments may have some difficulties and costs in the beginning. For example, "high investment requirement to make such an investment", "difficulties in motivating the employees" and "not leaning of the management towards this topic" may be listed in such difficulties. However, the advantages of such an investment in long term should not be avoided. The experiences of eco-hotels in different parts of the world shows that eco hotel investments create an important competitive superiority in the long term. The creation of special "green management team" in the hotel organization structure of Strattons hotel in England is a good example for that. This example is significant in order to see to which extents the environmental sensitive approaches of hotels had reached today.

In becoming widespread of eco-hotel practices, the leadership role of hotelkeepers and hotel managers are important. Hotelkeepers and/or managers should share the need for such a change with all relevant stakeholders. The local

people, employees and tourists; who are to be effected from eco hotel investments, should be informed effectively. For this topic, holding some information meetings and taking the opinions of all stakeholders may be useful.

In the context of this study, suggestions to be offered to hotelkeepers and managers may be as follows:

- Effective using of water in hotels should be provided. For that, some technological investments may be utilized as well as making adjustments for the used water discharge may be useful.
- In order to make energy saving, particularly the using of renewable energy resources (wind and solar energy) should be encouraged. If this is not possible, energy saving and long life bulb using should be started throughout the hotel (rooms, general fields, pool, bars etc.)
- Separation and recycling of wastes in the hotels should be implemented (oils used in th kitchen, tin plates used in restaurants; materials used at front desk such as paper, ink etc., bulbs and batteries used in general fields).
- Training and conscious raising activities should be included in order to create environmental awareness for the guests in hotel and employees.
- Guests should be informed of all activities related with green hotel management and told about its importance in ecosystem.

Cunda Ortunç Hotel, which has significant achievements for green hotel management in Ayvalik vicinity, has an important place both for its location and customer profile it appeals to. The hotel's efforts and future environmental projects in this field should be encouraged and supported by the local and public authorities. Cunda Ortunç Hotel, which makes important contributions for brand image of the vicinity in this sense and creates a perception as "environmental friendly hotel", have also an considerable significance on the region's tourism in terms of sales and marketing.

As result, in ecological tourism field of Turkey, there is a need for increase in number of accomodation units suitable for natural architecture and travel agencies specialized in their fields. Human beings are increasingly showing interest to nature day by day due to growing environmental concerns. In this context, countries try to create new accomodation units and new service manners in tourism. In product

diversification of tourism, ecological destinations and organic establishments appear as a factor and offered to market with a strong image. Today, eco hotels are the product group which become the demanded ones in the market and using frequency of which increase. Being able to keep the created perception and even increase it, is the most current issue for such hotels.

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MULTICULTURALITY AND TOURIST IDENTITY PROMOTION IN THE ROMANIAN TOURIST RURAL SPACE

Prof. Ph.D Mirela MAZILU ¹

Abstract:

As a subject for analysis and meditation, the village or other forms of organisation have proven, initially, to be a social reality that has fully contributed to the transformation of the geographical environment, enriching the heritage of the national and universal civilisation. As a national, permanent, sedentary and continuous identity element, the Romanian village has always had a complex physiognomy, defined through a well-defined centre, around which the housings and the fixtures of agriculturiers gather, as well as the place outside it, representing the object of labour and the space where the basic productive activities of the population take place. Geo Bogza was saying about Romania in his documentary “villages and towns” that “there was initially a country of villages”, and now we tend, ironically, towards what the author used to write... This statement encourages us to believe that rural tourism and agrotourism have been practised in Romania since ancient times.

The importance of strong regional relations is extended to the use of food or other agricultural products in the rural tourism industry, through aimed substitution policies and the connections with other products obtained from agriculture (farms, factories, shops, museums). Such policies have the possibility to increase the relations between the agricultural communities, the trading sector and the tourism industrial suppliers from the local area, thus consolidating the local economies. (Telfer et al, 1996; Swarbrooke, 1996; ATSIC, 1996)

Keywords: rural tourism, sustainable tourism, tradition, attractiveness, rurality.

JEL Classification: L83, Q56, Q57, Q58

Introduction

The specialty literature has approached the Romanian village either from multiple angles or as belonging to different subjects, from museology, anthropology to statistics,

¹ University of Craiova; Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Department of Geography

management or marketing specific to the rural tourism (Bran, F., Marin, D., Simion, T., Bull, A. Turismul rural. Modelul european, București, Editura Economică, 1997, Bran, F., Istrate I., Perspectiva dezvoltării durabile a turismului românesc, București, Tribuna Economică, nr. 20, 21, 1995, Mitache, St., Manole, V., Bran Fl., Stoian, M., Istrate, I., Agroturism și turism rural, București, Editura Fax-Press, 1996, Nistoreanu. P., Turismul rural - o afacere mică cu perspective mari, București, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1999, Mariana Bucur Sabo, Marketing turistic, Editura Irecson, București, 2006, Mazilu M. Ecoturism și amenajări turistice, Editura Scrisul Românesc, Craiova, 2006, Mazilu M., Turismul rural și dezvoltarea rurală, Journal of Settlements and Spatial Planning, Cluj, no. 1, 2010, Identity and sustainable tourism in rural tourism, Forum geografic, Craiova, 2012).

The continuous development of the rural tourist product is necessary in order to fulfil the changing requirements of the global tourist market. Of course, the modern tourist wants the rural tourism, but with urban facilities: a paradox that has been functioning in Romania for a long time. We have to admit that the most important religious holidays: Christmas, Easter or Pentecost do not have the same impact or the same connotation in the urban environment. The rural hostels are the ones that restore the ancient charm of these holidays, reviving the tradition to fully “live” these holidays.

The rural and rurality have represented the object of study for various sciences, such as economy, geography, sociology, ethnography, agronomy. In this context, the number of studies and definitions aiming at the rural space is important.

The common element of all these works remains the intrinsic value of the Romanian village - object of study, raw material, offer, tourist product, all in the same place or separate elements, which are profitable in view of the revaluation of this special type of tourist product for marketing.

If there was anyone who still believed that globalisation destroys the local specific elements or that it is not compatible with the promotion of local identity, everything taking place in Europe and the world in the last few years strongly contradicts this opinion.

Identity, under its multiple forms, is applied in activities, as resource and marketing instrument (external and internal) to obtain the competitive advantage, as well as in entities (ethnic or geographical) in order to build trust, self-respect or to attract investments or tourists (Stăncioiu Felicia, Mazilu Mirela Elena, 2006) (fig. 1)

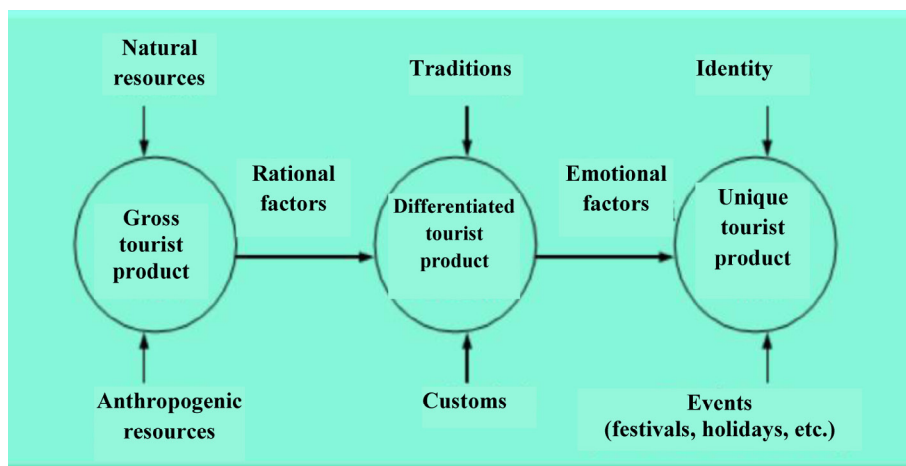


Fig.1 The elements of differentiation/unique for the rural tourist products (source: Mazilu Mirela Elena, Daniela Dumitrescu, 2012, p.8)

In spite of the many confusions occurred because of the expansion of the great corporations and of the “promotion” of values that seemed to create uniformity, time has proven that this universalist phenomenon is only “fuelling” and cultivating more and more multiculturalism and the promotion of identities.

In Romania, where the village is no longer an agricultural one or a primary sector, but also a space of crafts, a tourist space, as well as a tertiary sector, an ecologic space and a context of ethnical and cultural revaluation, there is also this identity plurality. “Plurality is the meaning of globalisation as well, not as economic and social and cultural homogeneity, but as diversity that supports the comparable living standards at a European level. This context requires the identity perspective approach of the rural space, in order to identify and classify the elements structuring the “rural identity”, as well as the relation with the actual social context through which this identity may be shaped” (Salanki Zoltan, 2003).

Literally, the image of the village shapes as a restricted community with a homogenous population with inhabitants among whom there are direct relations (face to face), working mainly in agriculture and preserving the specific cultural traditions (folk traditions).

The shaping of the rural identity is much more complex, implying a pertinent analysis that exceeds these stereotypes and that should be placed within the concrete social context. If the essential identification marks are obvious in the case of ethnical or professional identity of a rural community, these being the language and the occupation, the rural identity cannot be emphasised by relating to one single mark because this constitutes an identity complex that needs, mainly, the identification of components.

Counting on the analysis of the three basic documents (Regional disparities in Romania 1990-1994, RAMBØL, Phare Program – Regional Policies, Bucharest, 1996; Green Paper. The Regional Development Policy in Romania, the Romanian Government and the European Commission, Phare Program, Bucharest, 1997; Green Paper. Rural development in Romania, Project financed by the Phare Programme of European Union, Government of Romania, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Bucharest 1998) treating the economic and social changes occurred in Romania, as well as of the specialty literature on the rural identity and space, it justifies the treatment of the rural identity complex through its following components:

- **occupational identity**
- **cultural identity**
- **local (social) identity.**

Even the European Union was created according to the slogan of a commune cultural genesis, but also of the unity through diversity... Beyond the nations' Europe, a Europe of the regions, especially one of the communities willing to develop and promote themselves appears. The idea of local brand was born from these social phenomena.

“Beyond the first impression, revealing only the cover in the first place, the outer image, the brand may be very useful when it is filled in with content. This is firstly the name, then it becomes a visual image, then it receives real shapes. This is produced in the imagination of the viewer because in reality the process of awareness of an own identity that may be summarised in relevant and attracting words and images occurs backwards, from the inside to the outside. And a good name and image must express uniqueness, authenticity and rarity, it must offer a new experience related to places, products, people and, of course, creativity” (Mazilu, 2008).

For the rural tourism, the elements that can “reflect” this image are the culinary products, the natural products, the traditional art (ceramics, textiles, sculpture, etc.), traditions and customs, holidays, landscapes and natural monuments, etc.

All these may create the identity of a place. And when there is no significant, distinctive local mark, this may be created starting from the real data and, especially, from a creative community.

We must notice the important attachment and involvement of the community which are essential, and the success depends on the availability of the local inhabitants to share their own ideas and vision on development.

In view of the above, the case of Bucium commune from Alba county is relevant, this being one of the localities that has chosen to use a professional branding strategy and, following a community research process, a strategy underlining the originality and the authenticity of the place has been created to attract visitors, so that Bucium is not only a commune in Alba county, but also “Daffodils Land”.

Referring to the culinary identity, creativity is essential in launching and maintaining on the tourist market of the culinary products, representing a major tourist attraction.

The culinary traditions are continuously changing, and many foods cross the Europe's borders without limitations. Our tables have been invaded by globalisation.

The culinary Europe without borders - The countries' borders disappear in Europe. This fact eases not only the people's travels, but also the one of the foods comprising the national cuisines.

As shown by the researches of the culinary trends performed in various countries from Europe, luckily we notice for now the mixture of influences between countries, not a domination of the anglo-saxon model. In the Southern Europe countries, such as Italy or Spain, the market of products coming from the Northern European countries is rapidly developing (for instance, the cereals for breakfast). Instead, in the Northern Europe countries, a large part of the market is overwhelmed by the products from the South (pasta, olive oil or wine).

The exotic restaurants - tastes from the world cuisine, fish and seafood, consumed in a traditional manner in the Mediterranean and Atlantic countries, gain more and more followers in Central Europe. The mixture of culinary traditions also favours the presence of a larger number of exotic restaurants, inviting to discover a new cuisine.

The development of the interest in the exotic products favour the growth of the population's cultural level, urbanisation, the frequent travels or the internationalisation of averages. These offer the possibility for a better mutual knowledge and the appearance of new inspirations in the development of national and regional cuisines (<http://www.bonduelle.ro/un-turn-babel-pe-mesele-europene>). This phenomenon has become common in the rural environment as well!

A global trend is to oppose a new concept to the "fast-food" movement: "slow-food" embraced by a large number of consumers. These are interested in the local quality traditional products coming from clear geographic regions. The product preserves an original manufacturing manner and has a natural content. Without the profitability of industrialised businesses or the risk of losing the product consistency, the local manufacturers seek the room and the acknowledgement on the European internal market. Here success is strongly related to the marketing strategy adopted.

At the moment, Romania has 162 traditional food products (Rural brands and local development, 2008, <http://www.cadranpolitic.ro/?p=2363>), registered marks that shall not be able to be manufactured and marketed under the same name in any other member state of the European Union. Besides the well-known products, such as Pleşcoi sausages, the pies from Dobrogea, the Sibiu salami or the Maramureş brandy, other products less known even by the Romanians are recorded on the list of products. Among these: the cheese from Bobâlna, the plum jam from

Râureni, the cheese from Mănăştur, the brandy from Camarzana, the brandy from Segarcea, the fig marmalade from Şviniţa, etc. All the products have associated the localities names, and all the localities that have such products may consider that they have a starting point for the identity promotion and development. The traditional products, besides the purely commercial aspect with a big or small amplitude, may relaunch tourism as well.

A new Romanian brand travels around the world. The polenta was elevated at the rank of national brand by the famous magazine, National Geographic. A whole world shall learn what delight is hiding in a polenta kettle. The polenta continues to gather us around it during the globalisation and fast-food era.



Photo 1 National Geographic organised in partnership with Boromir and Napolact the “Mămăliga” event at the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant from Bucharest

On April 5, 2013, National Geographic organised in partnership with Boromir and Napolact the “Mămăliga” event at the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant from Bucharest. Thus, the story of the polenta as a national brand was brought to the attention of the approximately 400 guests again who tasted it and relaxed in a typical Romanian atmosphere.

The essence of the many aspects related to the history, the culture and even our philosophy, but also a culinary custom isolated in a rapid way in the current society, the polenta deserves a lot of attention. All these ideas are widely exposed in an article with the same name from the April edition of the National Geographic magazine. (http://economie.hotnews.ro/stiri-media_publicitate-11957680-povestea-mamalgii-brand-national-editia-din-aprilie-national-geographic.htm)

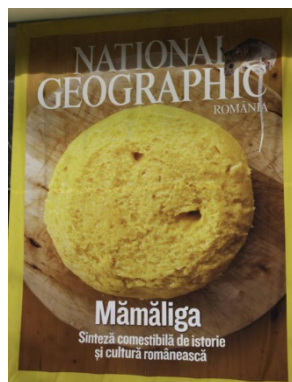


Photo 2. Polenta - Edible synthesis of Romanian history and culture

The traditional products mark a true cultural movement. There also appeared a concept called “the Pleșcoi Revolution”, after the famous sausages, being the Romanian equivalent of the slow-food movement.

The movement followers talk about a true “culinary sovereignty” meaning the protection of the peasant’s interests from a certain area in order to survive on the local market, to live and to work in his locality of origin, selling his products. As is the right of the local population to consume quality products right where they live.

The local gastronomic identity elements from the Mehedinți rural area are: fish prepared in various ways specific to the area, from brine to the fish cake, recipes for the preparation of pancakes from potato dough, of the cabbage with smoked meat, of the ring biscuits, etc.

Identity is applied in activities, as resource and marketing instrument (external and internal) to obtain the competitive advantage, as well as in entities (ethnic or geographical) in order to build trust, self-respect or to attract investments or tourists (Stăncioiu, Mazilu, 2006) (Fig. 1).

Romania’s attraction elements in the field of rural tourism are special. From times immemorial, there has been and still is a strong multi-millennium rural tradition and culture. The folk traditions, as well as the entire richness of the folklore constitute powerful elements in the entire rural environment.

The attractiveness elements are (Kotler, Haider, Rein, 2001): the natural beauty of the landscapes (mountains, lakes, forests, etc.), the famous history and characters, the trading areas, the cultural, recreational and entertaining attractions, the sports arenas, the events and occasions, the buildings, the sculptural monuments and groups, people and other attractions. In fact, this analysis (which the specialty literature calls it “attractiveness audit”) represents the basis for setting the regional marketing objective and the action schedule within the marketing program for the respective region.

When talking about the traditional Romania, whether this is about food or rural art, the promotion of Romanian traditional products may bring considerable benefits to the rural economy, especially in the less favoured or in isolated areas, by increasing the revenues of the agricultural producers and by keeping the rural population in the respective areas.

Unfortunately, the lack of a local strategy in the promotion of traditional products is a generalised status quo. It may be stated that the local people, the peasants, cannot understand the concept of brand and its benefits, but the promotion cannot be supported.

Whatever may be said, there are many villages and communes from Romania with a strong local conscience and pride, determining even identity and behavioural typologies, the regional identity being the only one that lives on over centuries, remaining sustainable. (Fig. 2) This is a solid basis on which the products generated by the community may develop. Here, the administration must get more strongly involved in order to mobilise and raise awareness that local pride may generate prosperity.

The development of the trade with traditional products shall not have, of course, a large national impact, but it shall be huge locally, in villages and communes. Economically, as well as image. Moreover, it may generate another economic growth axis, that of the rural, cultural and ecological tourism.



Fig. 2 Traditional Romania - perception map (source: Celendo Tours & Travels)

The impediments in the way of creating a local brand are the lack of information, the weak community spirit, the lack of knowing how a community can regenerate, the failure to register the local products, the aging of the population or the disappearance of local craftsmen and the loss of tradition. For instance, regarding the apples from Voinești or the carpets from Botiza, these are not registered as controlled origin denomination and there are no plans for the mass production. In Vlădești, Vâlcea,

there are only two artists that create and paint white ceramics. In Sisești, Mehedinți, the famous potter is invited to numerous summer schools to “teach” his gift, which has become a brand: the ceramic of Sisești.

Șvinița commune, located on the lovely Danube Bend is an example of success, of creative community, contradicting the prejudice and the pessimism of those who believe that there cannot be creative rural communities, conscious of their potential and needs in the current conditions of Romania. It removes all the pessimistic predictions, especially that the locality, upon the decision not to be just an ordinary commune, did not have any specific local product to base its promotion. But it had creativity, and the active community spirit generated solutions. It has a specific product as well at the moment: the fig marmalade, which has created an event Festival, attracting tourists in the area all the time. The many ethnicities represent a creativity element.

The diversified special natural elements: The reservation of European importance with ammonites, belemnite, Brachiopoda and tube-shells from the medium Jurassic, tourist attractions: medieval historic monuments, the volcanic neck from Trescovăț, Cioaca Borii, the Șvinița paleontological reservation, water mills, Visitation centres, information points: Orșova and Berzasca, as well as the Information Point and tourist equipment renting point from Dubova. The tourist events from the commune: the Festival of the Danube villages, the Sport Festival, The Minorities Music Festival, the Fig Festival (reaching in 2014 the 14th edition), are tourist attractiveness marks of the Danube bend area.

Șvinița, metaphorically named “the Romanian realm of fig trees”, is famous not only for the fig marmalade, but also for the fig jam and brandy, being very well promoted not only at a national level, but also in the international mass-media.



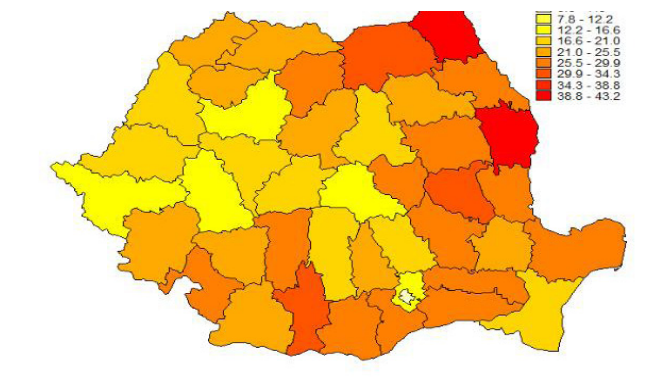
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The marmalade from Şviniţa brand was registered with OSIM last year, subsequently, in 2014, the registration with OSIM of the fig brandy from Şviniţa would be completed.

Şviniţa commune is the only place from the county, the country and Europe where fig trees grow in the people's households like mirabelle plum trees in the Oltenia area. The legend of the figs says that a pasha brought the fig tree in Şviniţa and Ada-Kaleh island around 500 years ago. (<http://www.editie.ro/articole/actualitate/mehedinti/sarbatoare-unica-in-tara-si-in-europa-la-svinita.html#sthash. fftojisi.dpuf>).

Fortunately, the vicious circle of poverty in the villages from Mehedinţi county is already cracked, and the perspectives of the selection of the rural environment as a holiday space are increasing, at least for short periods of time.

Romania has the highest share of population living in the rural areas (45% from the population total) from the EU and, according to the NIS data for 2010, the extreme poverty risk is 4 times higher in rural areas (8.8%) compared to the urban areas (2.2%). Regarding the regional gaps, the regional analysis shows that the regions with the highest shares of persons facing a poverty and social exclusion risk are: North-East, South-West of Oltenia, South-East and South Muntenia (according to mediafax.ro). Romania appears among the first 20 of the poorest regions from Europe, with six affected territories, followed by Bulgaria, with five areas, Hungary and Poland, with four areas. The Romanian Euroregions redden the European poverty map, the Romanian incomes being under half of the EU average. On a European level, the Bulgarians are the only ones that exceed us in the poverty sector. In six of the eight euroregions on the territory of Romania, poverty is so severe that it dominates the European tops on regions, as the data reported by Eurostat, the statistics office of the EU show.



Ratele riscului de sărăcie pe județe (NUTS 3) –

Sursa: Calculele angajaților Băncii Mondiale efectuate pe baza Recensământului Populației și al Locuințelor 2011 și EU-SILC 2011

Fig.3. Poverty map in Romania (source: <http://www.capital.ro/harta-saraciei-in-romania-190643.html>)

No region comes out of poverty only through agriculture, but also through the diversification of occupations, rural tourism being the only alternative and proven successful, in the area of the Bend.

Another multicultural and regional identity model is Eșelnița commune, with over 40 accommodation offers providing another type of tourist offer: Museums: The Ethnography Collection Doina Olimpia and Teodor Grigore - furniture pieces, traditional occupations, traditional costumes, ceramics, icons, photos from the villages Eșelnița, Dubova, Ogradena; the Collection of the priest Sever Negrescu (a parochial museum founded in 1990-1996) - old books, church objects, icons coming from the localities of the gorge: Tisovița, Ogradena, Plavișevița, Mraconia, Dubova, Eșelnița; Monuments: the monument dedicated to the local heroes from both world wars, 1975. The same landscape, still unaltered by the mass tourism, comprises the Mraconia valley, with the beautiful monastery with the same name, which, following the construction of the Iron Gates 1 Hydropower plant, was flooded by the waters of the reservoir, named by the local people the “underwater monastery” or “the monastery standing on one leg”...

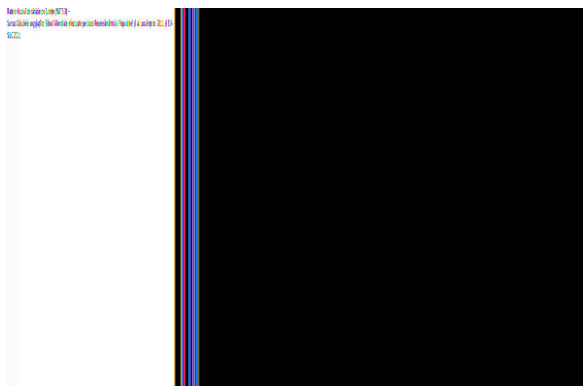


Photo 3. Mraconia Valley and Monastery



Photo 4. Statue of Decebal

The imposing and unique Statue of Decebal, seeming to supervise the tourists' entry in the Small Gorges of the Danube (photo).

The Mraconia Vacation Village, named the Bell Ale Vacation Village, located at 800 metres from the legendary statue of Decebal, is the perfect place where, surrounded by the untouched nature, the wood and stone arts remind of the rural traditional elements of the area.

Dubova with over 26 accommodation offers (see table 1) is an example for the rural tourism in Mehedinți county, in the gorge area of the Danube.

No. of accommodation units	ESELNITA	DUBOVA
HOSTELS	15	3
TOURIST VILLAS	5	5
VACATION HOUSES	11	10
TOURIST COMPLEX	1	-
COTTAGES	4	4
Local households	3	3

Table 1 Accommodation units in Eșelnița and Dubova communes (2014)

The events that attract tourists, either in the first Sunday from May at the “sheep milk measurement” or on September 8 - 9 - the church celebration on the Birth of Saint Mary. The most important celebration of the village, at Eibenthal, village of Dubova commune, is Farsang - on October 16, the church celebration (the equivalent of the Romanian one), and on the second day of Pentecost, on “**Sărbătoarea Maiului**”, there is a women’s ball, paid by them. Each woman is “led under the tree” by her partner. Another kind of tourist attraction is **Ponicova Cave**, the largest in the entire Danube gorge. **Veterani Cave** is another attraction for those that like boat trips (the cave is accessible only on water). Its uniqueness, although of small sizes, lies in the fact that it was inhabited by humans even 400,000 years ago, and from antiquity to the middle ages it was used for military purposes, being the first cave placed on a map in the world. The Tri-Kule fortress, built for military purposes (against the Turkish expansion from the 15th century). The assembly “TABULA TRAIANA” comprises the face of the Dacian ruler Decebal sculpted in the rock, on the Serbian bank of the Danube, over two thousand years ago, monument marking the triumphal march of the Romania troops towards Dacia.

The ones that prefer adventure tourism can benefit from the tourist offers from the area: here, tourists can hike, can take part in ecological activities, have beaches, Paint-ball, can practice archery, even alpinism.

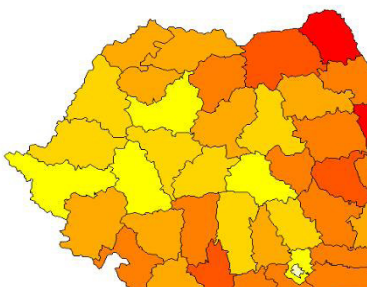


Photo 5. Paintball (Source <http://www.cazaneledunarii.com.ro/galerie-foto/la-paintball.html>)



Photo 6. Dubova beach

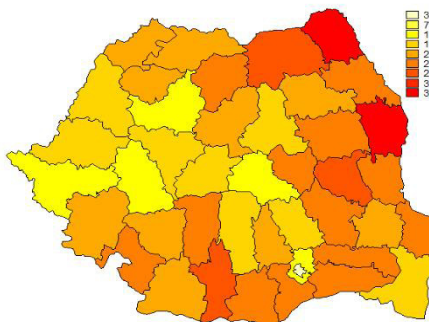


Photo 7. Alpinism in the Bend mountains (<http://www.cazaneledunarii.com.ro/galerie-foto/alpinism.html>)

The common interest to maintain and stimulate health records a spectacular increase. Even if nowadays, in our country, the manner of obtaining food is, luckily, less artificial compared to the strongly industrialised countries, it is also true that the stress factors generated by the poor economy, the hypertrophy and the dysfunction and the pollution of the large cities, increasingly affect the health of the population. The obvious direction of the travel purpose towards recreational, sporting activities is natural and it is included in a strategy to develop the balneal resources of the rural area.

With an excellent location to offer various fun and sophisticated options and activities, the rural areas delight the tourist with pedestrian or cycling routes in the fresh air, adventurous climbing or trips, quiet fishing parties, as well as the satisfactions offered by tasting the traditional beverages and foods. The remarkable features of the Romanian tourist rural area become motivations for tourists attracted by:

- The rural authenticity, quality more and more required by urban tourists, the majority coming from an saturated environment by the audiovisual, dominated by strongly industrialised products, boring neighbourhoods, impersonal collective relations, the tourist increasingly appreciating the authenticity, the naturalness of the country life, the warmth of the small rural communities. The rural authenticity ranks the second, in the tourists' preferences, after the quality of the scenery, in the choice for the rural destination.

- The silence and the psychological balance are more and more required by numerous tourists, not surprising at all, because of the level of stress, specific to the majority of employees. The mechanisms that are the basis of the travel origin are various and, often, subtle. The idea of finding oneself and escape in nature is almost unanimously sought by the citizen of today, and its materialisation often produces in the rural environment, this being the one that may fulfil all these wishes.
- The promotion of the individualism on the tourist market The aggressive, systematic and persistent promotion of certain rural products, many of them unique, in order to gain a stable segment of consumers, is a common practice at the moment, in order to impose the various products on the consumption market. The Bend may identify, individualise through various products, which are attractive, already selecting and gaining the loyalty of the tourists.
- The human purity in the rural area, the warmth and the hospitality of the Romanian peasant, considered “labels” of normality. Indeed, the rural still preserves the clean and unaltered richness of the Romanian spirit, which has made us famous all over the world, and that, unfortunately, it has almost disappeared, suffocated, despite the ancient desire of the Romanian peasant to be equal to the others, to honour the guests, cannot do that anymore because of the poverty... One of these people of the Mehedinți rural area, whom we praise, is Domnica Trop, from the Mehedinți commune Isverna, the artist that is a source of inspiration for the young generations, who received the title of National Living Treasure awarded by the National Commission for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. (AGERPRES).



Photo 8 Living Treasure UNESCO

Oana Pirvan, another possible brand from Mehedinți, an innovative and a keeper of the folk tradition, is the manager of “Acul și ața” company where a wide range of folk costumes specific for Oltenia are manually manufactured. Any other type of traditional piece from any other area of the country is manufactured upon request here. Soon, selling points with traditional products of the “Acul și ața” company shall be opened in several administrative centres close to Mehedinți

county – Drobeta Turnu Severin, Craiova, Târgu Jiu, Râmnicu Vâlcea, Băile Herculane. Due to the increasing demand for pieces manufactured by Oana in Ponoare, in the future she wants to found similar centres in as many regions from Romanian as possible, but also from Europe. The song albums of Oana Pîrvan, because she is also a folk singer, taught by her idol, Domnica Trop, from Izverna, the Romanian blouses, the belts, the aprons and the vests shall be also found in the shops of the county museums or in the centres specialised in the promotion of folk traditions.

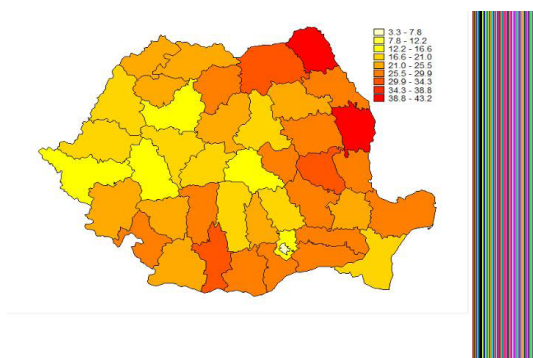


Photo 9. Folk workshop from “Acul și Ața” (source: <http://www.cronicadeseverin.ro/?p=1345>).

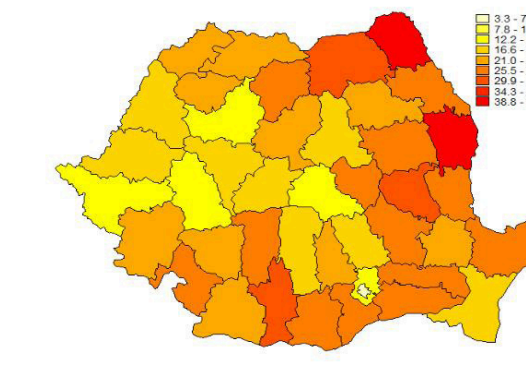


Photo 10. Oana Pârvan and her folk costume workshop (source: <http://www.cronicadeseverin.ro/?p=1345>).

- The return to the origins. By returning to the village, some of the tourists hope to rediscover their “roots”, the lost advantages, the clean memories, the ancient customs they try to pass on, not to burden and deprive the future generations from this “golden ball”...

Despite this diffuse feature and the reduced sizes of the tourist activities, the rural tourism is able to value this opportunity which can be especially beneficial if there is motivation and competence to promote the sale of the offer, respectively receiving the tourists.

Theoretically, there isn't a rural settlement that cannot offer at least one trademark product in order to raise the tourist's interest. The prior condition is that the mark should be authentic, original, and the efforts for its promotion should make its knowledge, acknowledgement and search possible. Applying this aspect to the Romanian village in general, it is obvious that, at the level of the majority of rural settlements, their defining elements are multiple: the landscape quality and the warmth of the inhabitants, the works of folk art and technique, the traditional occupations, the folk costumes, the customs, the gastronomy, the resources of the place form a common body.

The key to success consists of the preservation of this diversity, but also the emphasis of the elements that confer more local specificity and that may become, consequently, trademark products, whose uniqueness can ensure the establishment in the tourist circuit.

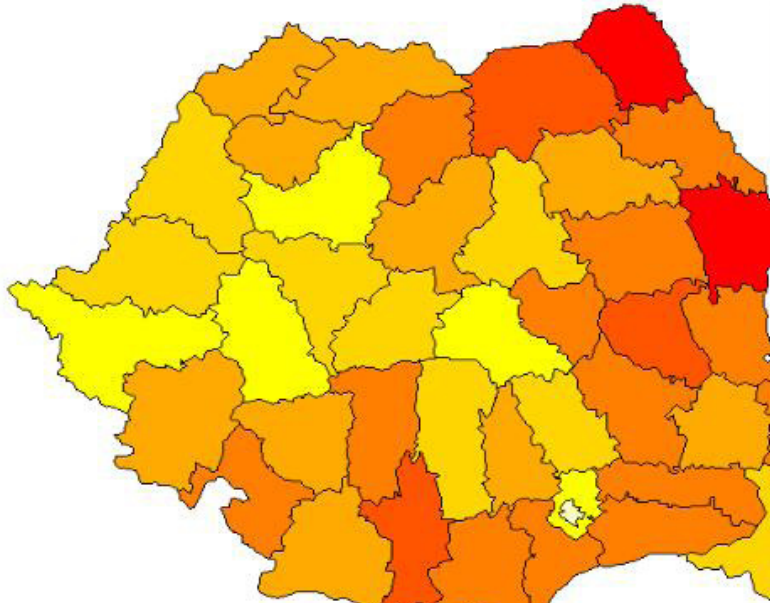
The life quality is considered much more important than the quantity of consumed goods. The constant element between nature, rural, society and economy, is nature, the others existing only through their interaction. From this point of view, only the natural needs are essential and decisive, and the society and, especially, the economy must adapt to these.

The social efficiency of the harmonious regional development and, especially, the rural one is ensured through partnerships and programs, and the economic efficiency through the concentration of resources and co-financing.

The tourism development/the revival of rural areas proposes to solve, besides the essential objective of the activity, the satisfaction of the tourist motivation and the economic problems of the areas related to:

- the depopulation caused by the migration of the rural population towards urban centres, thus ensuring the conditions to practice profitable activities in villages aiming at the improvement of life conditions, the protection and the preservation of the environment as a recreational factor and to revive the creative potential of the individual;
- the creation of conditions to carry out other economic, industrial, agricultural, trading activities in the rural areas.
- the stimulation of the village institutions, the private sector and the associations in the field to intensify the efforts in order to achieve a proper infrastructure according to the level of tourist development.
- The promotion and the preservation of a trademark image (Stăncioiu, Pargaru, Mazilu, 2010) of the tourist services need the existence of a proper ratio between the nature of the offer, the quality of services and the price, ratio that must be protected by the financial abuses and the professional negligence.

- the other hand, the possibilities to register the rural settlements in the tourist circuit are practically unlimited, considering the wide variety of shapes in the rural space. By referring to the Romanian rural space, especially to the Danube Bend rural space, this allows the elaboration of a wide range of tourist products, consistent with the specific resources and territorial localisation. The tourist fitting of the villages along the main traffic axes between the famous tourist regions close to the area, of the altitude villages, as support points for the mountainous tourism, of the ones specialised on certain types of agricultural activities (vineyards, orchards, vegetables, animal breeding, etc.) as points for agrotourism, etc., should be considered.
- The wide range of the offer constitutes a major advantage of Romanian tourism, implicitly of the rural one. Besides the average and high comfort hotels, specific to the tourist cities and resorts, the rural space offers infinity of profitable possibilities: the hotels, the camping and the accommodation in the peasant households may support a wide range of activities, such as the walks, the cultural tourism, the river tourism, fishing, hunting, horse riding, winter sports, cyclotourism, etc.
- Each type of rural settlement offers special possibilities and raises specific problems. Hence, the tourist product offered must be elaborated according to the presence of various components, related to the individualised nature of the settlement. On the Green Tourism association web site, we can find an example of an ideal model of rural development through the Romanian Traditional Tourist Village, which proves the applicability through the development in Romania of the first pilot project “green tourism = green business scheme in cultural tourism”, entitled “Vatra Valahă” vacation village, which has a solid cultural component, based on the secular history and the animal breeding and trading traditions of the Wallachs, besides the bio/ecological component. Attaching also a map, the Wallachs are present nowadays on the entire territory of Europe, but mainly in the area of the Carpathians from Romania, Hungary, Ukraine, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, the Check Republic, (<http://www.turismverde.ro/pagini/Vatra%20Valaha.html>) etc.



The Wallach civilisation presents striking similarities along the Carpathians regarding the ethnography, the folklore or the rural economy and has a common part of the vocabulary, preserving dialectal archaisms as well as mountainous toponyms. The Wallach, through his activity mainly in animal breeding and trading, firstly learned from nature the principles of the human living in perfect harmony with it, life principles applied in the green tourism as well. The Wallach tourist village - Vatra Valahă, is a tourist model gathering around the ancient “fireplace” all these principles and that has proposed to ease the access to authentic Wallach traditional culture of all those who, during their travels, want to know and live the healthy life, the old traditions, the traditional customs and the Wallachs’ hospitality.

We should mention that the “Vatra Valahă” Village Model is registered with OSIM under no. 300018/2008. Moreover, it is subject to copyrights, being published as print ISSN 1844-5640, volume 9, issue 3/2008.

- The objectives of the Wallach village are (<http://www.turismverde.ro/pagini/Vatra%20Valaha.html>):

- the ease of the access to authentic Wallach culture of those who want to know the rural civilisation, the old traditions and the special hospitality;
- the creation of a personal development frame, where people can rediscover the healthy life style, in balance, in harmony with nature of the Wallach shepherd;

- the reduction of the impact on the environment through the use of the ecological materials and technologies;
- the preservation of traditional agricultural landscapes, rich in biodiversity especially for the preservation of rural area vitality from the Carpathian and Sub-Carpathian areas.

Conclusions

Do we have an element/several elements that prompt us a sustainable image, not at all temporary, for the Romanian rural tourism?

Are there the village, the traditions, the gastronomy, the authentic, tourist identity elements for the Romanian village as element of tourist offer? What symbols, values, ideas, feelings, places, emotions, behaviours, culinary products, artistic expressions are by excellence authentic Romanian as well? How many of us acknowledge them as such? These are only several of the many questions to which we look for answers, not desperately, but with the same desire of the person who is in love with tourism, its values, its message over time ... I believe that it is, at the same time, an obligation to reclaim the rights of the authentic Romanian village, as a soul and profession debt, as a well deserved reward brought to the temporary actions in this field. The article tries, based on an own methodology of the tourism geography research (questionnaires, diagnosis, analytic prediction, prognosis, etc.), to underline the role of identity in the promotion of a tourist product: the Romanian village, an important treasure until the present moment, the rural tourism being the one that will reattribute this role!

I strongly believe that rural tourism is the “oxygen tank” of Romanian tourism, the arguments being the attractiveness components themselves of this ancient, spiritual, cultural segment: the rural tourism.

The organisers of the third edition of the International Forum for Responsible Tourism! (<http://www.turismulresponsabil.ro/>), impeccably organised by the Amfiteatru Foundation, have managed the initiative, the continuity of this Forum, depending on the feed-back from the actors interested in the rural tourism, regardless of the side they are on: the private or the state... Viable solutions for the revaluation of the rural tourist potential were identified and diagnosed during the event for the rural tourist potential from Romania, through the promotion of a responsible tourism, a desirable approach of a perspective evolution.

When it shall be understood that the success depends on our common effort and, especially, of the competence and expertise of each of us to develop “what we have” and “to create” other new rural tourist products, to professionally promote them, probably the results shall not delay ... We are all expecting them!

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MODEL OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN FOOD TOURISM

NAALYAN Gendzheva ¹

Abstract:

The paper examines various aspects of the specificity of the postmodern trend in tourism - food tourism. Basic concepts are defined and classification of its various manifestations is proposed. Analyses are made for opportunities of responsible tourism in this area in order to achieve sustainability. In conclusion is proposed a model that creates opportunities for integrating socially responsible practices in the tourism sector through responsible food tourism.

Keywords: Food tourism, culinary tourism, gourmet, gastronomy, corporate social responsibility

JEL Classification: L83, Q56, Q57, Q58

Introduction

The food has always been a major component of the trilogy of the trip: food, accommodation and transport, but its importance has acquired new dimensions in recent years and out of the frame just a biological necessity. One reason for this is the new perception of consumers about nutrition as an indicator of quality of life resulting from this fact striving for a healthy diet and the use of modern -called organic or bio yet also. The emergence of the trend of “slow” food, and the transformation of culinary mastery in art and design also have their no small influence.

Also tourists seek to immerse themselves in the local culture and enrich their impressions of the visited destination by the touch to the specific food and drinks and related traditions and technologies. Undoubtedly, this type of tourism received special impetus after World Gourmet Congress, organized by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in Larnaca in 2000 and the recognition of the Mediterranean diet for Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010. The food has gained the status of national treasure in some countries such as France and Italy, where almost every region differentiated its distinctive product in the so called food and sometimes gourmet tourism.

¹ PhD student, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, e-mail: nnany@yahoo.com

Furthermore, through the Food tourism tourists have the opportunity to show their social responsibility during the trip and contribute to raising the living standards of the local community through conscious consumption of locally produced products, organic and in a environment friendly manner. Although slower, postmodern business strategies of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) enter in the tourism industry in all its manifestations. Faster hotels, but travel agency and restaurant industry also already have their practices. The research community has long registered occurrence of the phenomenon: the tourist LOHAS (Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability), which is not only a way to travel, but overall lifestyle, based on a desire for healthy and fair aimed towards sustainability course of action. In response, the tourism industry also integrate CSR practices into their core business.

As a result of these global processes over time travelers become more educated and more demanding in terms of food. It is now becoming a major indicator of well-traveled and often his main motive. According to the American Association of the tourism industry, more than ever, Americans take gourmet vacations, representing 19% of Americans traveled (UNWTO 2012). A wide popularity have gained already iconic gourmet tours in Italy, France and Spain, whiskey tours in Scotland, culinary cruises and cooking courses. Some countries with well-developed Food tourism are some of the biggest emitive markets such the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Ireland, Thailand, India and others. There are some of the countries recognized this course as an opportunity for the expression of authenticity and differentiation of product and made great efforts to promote their traditional and / or avant-garde cuisine through special marketing strategies (Argentina, Chile , Brazil, Mexico and others.). Gradually etc. Food tourism is becoming one of the most promising trends in the tourism industry.

1. Definitions

In the literature often the term Food tourism is used interchangeably with the terms culinary, gastronomic, food, gourmet and gourmet tourism. Some of the most frequently cited authors Hall & Sharples define it as:

- Journey to gastronomic region, with recreational and / or entertainment, which includes visits to primary and secondary food producers, gastronomic festivals, food fairs, events, farmers markets, cooking shows and demonstrations, tasting quality food products or other tourist activities related to food.

Most often the motivation is the indicator perceived by academics that make tourism to gastronomic tourism. But independently, if it is a primary or secondary motivation for the selection of travel destinations, a tourist should not be excluded from the classification of “culinary tourist”,

according to the WTO, who offers the following more general definition:

- *Gastronomic tourism occurs by tourists and visitors who plan their trips partially or completely in order to taste the local cuisine or perform other activities related to gastronomy. (UNWTO 2012)*

The author's position is that an approach to differentiate the type of Food tourism, considering food as a motivation for the trip, regardless if primary or secondary, does not reflect sufficiently the specific characteristics of this type of tourism. Even food is a motive for the trip, it is much more tourist attraction. Following is proposed the follow definition:

- *Food tourism is tourism which primary or secondary tourist attraction is the food and / or technology for its production or processing.*

While under tourism should be understood: "travel outside the permanent residence for a period of less than one year for holiday, business or others", as the definition published by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) gained wide popularity in recent years. Accordingly, definitions of common terms used synonymously appear as follows:

- *Culinary tourism is tourism which tourist attraction is the cuisine of the visited region/place.*

- *Gastronomic tourism is tourism which tourist attraction is the gastronomy of the visited region/place.*

- *Gourmet tourism is tourism which tourist attraction is the fine cuisine/food of the visited destination.*

And *culinary* is defined as anything related to cooking and cuisine and postmodern understanding defining it as the art of cooking. *Chef* is a person who is engaged in culinary arts and *gourmet* (French: gourmet, gourmet) is a lover and connoisseur of good food and drinks. In this sense, the word can still be met as *gourmand*, which, however, can carry the meaning of a person who loves food in large quantities, glutton. A term *gastronomy* derived from *gastér* (from Greek: stomach) and *nomos* (from Greek: law) and deals in general with the processes of food processing and therefore is often used to refer to restaurant business.

2. Typology of Food Tourism

According offered during the journey food Food tourism can be an authentic local, organic or bio elite kitchen etc. If the proposed typology of Food tourism a major sign of distinction is the type activity associated with food during the trip. These several groups can be distinguished:

- Visits of cookery courses

This is a widespread type of Food tourism. They can be distinguished by main motivation of the trip - to participate in cooking courses to enrich their culinary knowledge. This kind of travel could be differentiated gourmet courses (courses for

elite cuisine, exotic or unique recipes incorporating innovative, rare and/or components of luxury menus) and authentic local cooking classes. Similar courses are now classic tours in some regions of Italy, France and Spain. Also more and more such offers are provided in Asian countries with well developed tourism such as Thailand, India. Cruise companies also offer similar packages (Holland Amerika Line), where star guests are some of the most famous chefs globally.

- Visits to food festivals

A striking example of this type of Food tourism is the visit of the festival “Peglana sausage” from Pirot/Serbia. The product “Peglana sausage” is produced only during this time of the year, selling prices for the festival are about 20 EUR/kg and the entry fee for the festival is about 10 EUR. On the 4th edition of the festival in February 2014 only Bulgarian visitors were about 3,000 people, according to the Bulgarian tour operators.

- Visits to markets/producers of local food products, possibly accompanied by tasting and purchases

Most often these are visits to producers of meat or dairy products, but also recent trend of creating similar by herbal farms and farms of local spices. Visits to the markets themselves are an expression of the desire of tourists to experience authentic local products.

- Organized tours with major tourist attraction: a tasting of local specialties

Similar tours aim to develop one or several culinary themes during the trip for tourists. Major tourist attraction appears specific methods of food preparation, specific products or recipes of local character. Usually, the tours are combined with sales of the products or other goods pertaining to the specifics of the local cuisine.

- Organized tourism additional tourist attraction: a tasting of local specialties

Tourism is a multi-faceted phenomenon and often it occurs more in the combination of various types such as skiing combined with shopping tourism; business tourism, combined with sea - ski or shopping tourism and many other similar examples. By the same token Food tourism can be manifested as a complementary form of tourism to travel which main motivation is other than food / nutrition. In such cases, nutrition is also a motive for the trip, though not major. It should be noted that we have to distinguish between food that a “conventional” person would consume during a “conventional” travel and nutrition “foody” tourist especially in the degree of conscious

consumption. In the first case it is a meal in order to satiety, while in other cases, eating is done to explore.

- Wine tourism

Called also enotourism, this is one of the most common types of Food tourism representing visits to wineries in order tasting and buying wine production. Many researchers distinguish this type of tourism from Food Tourism and believe that wine and other beverages should not be considered as food, but separately. For the purposes of this paper this question will not be discussed in depth, but will assume that food tourism is a synthesis name. So, offers for wine tourism are mass from many destinations, marked by the rush development of the wine making industry. It is expected a boom in this area because of the steadily growing trend for wine consumption, especially in the extremely quickly growing outbound tourists flow from the Chinese market. Typical examples are champagne tours in France, numerous offers for wine tours and itineraries with visits to several different types of wine from Italy, Spain and other leaders in this industry.

Although not defined in a separate group because of similarity to other groups could be mentioned and famous whiskey tours in Scotland, brandy festivals (Trojan) and similar.

-The food tourist

Assuming gastronomy as an integral part of the tourism product, can be considered two main aspects in the motivation of tourists:

- The first category of tourists whose motives do not include the use of the food itself. In this case, the food does not necessarily affect the selection of the destination. However, satisfaction of the food consumed is an important condition for the approval of the whole product.
- The second category is related to those tourists for whom food is a preferred primary or secondary element in the choice of destination. In this case, one can speak of cultural tourism within the specific cultural tourism. For food tourist is considered a tourist for whom food is the main reason for choosing a destination.

Unlike the concept of Food tourism practices has imposed much more extensive use of the term culinary tourist when speaking to consumers of this type of tourism. In the literature are found the names “foodies” or also “Gourmet”, but they significantly retreated against the “culinary tourist”.

Very interesting tourist for the food tourism represents etc. the LOHAS tourist. This name is an acronym deriving from the phrase: Lifestyles of health and sustainability, a social phenomenon of the last decades, recognized by the tourism community as a great consumerist movement. According to the U.S. portal lohas.com, they are consumers of goods and services focused on health, the environment, sustainability and social justice. They are defined by marketers as well informed, interested for new technologies and the spirituality, and become defined as a premium target group. Interested mainly in alternative and environmentally sustainable products that meet safety equipment, standards of ethics and social justice, but at the same time refuse to accept products of the type “green washing”. The movement is estimated at about 41 million people in the U.S., which represents about 19% of the adult population (UNWTO 2012). Of around 20% is estimated the share of Lohas tourists in one of the largest generating European markets - Germany (World Travel Trends Report 2010/2011).

3. A Conceptual Model for CSR in tourism through using short food chains

The best run businesses search actively and imaginatively to find and invent solutions that produce more profits and better social outcomes as different ecological and social improvements as well (Pava 2008). Businesses are expected to actively participate in “ethical dialogues” with stakeholders” in order to make strategic business decisions that will benefit the economy, society and the planet.

Opportunities for integration of social practices are diverse, some of them require really great resources. On the other hand, these processes are determined by the availability of knowledge and understanding of the issues and the existence of social problems, vision in ways of their solution, and additional resources such as time and labor, which can be used to solve ones. Bearing in mind that the same labor has to perform the main tasks in quality, which they are employed for in these companies, it appears to be not a simple task to load them with additional support of social problems whose solution itself is a problem of whole community groups and default difficult for small teams of a company, regardless of its size. Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) often do not have sufficient resources, financial, and sometimes innovative to develop and integrate socially responsible practices. The purpose of this conceptual model is to assist tourism companies looking for ways to express their concern for society and its major social problems, creating a base and conditions for socially responsible action in a specific area of tourism that covers at the same time a large number of tourist companies, namely - Food tourism. Actually, It allows the inclusion of both large and small companies and all types of tourism businesses in the general concept, saving everyone time and resources to create a socially responsible practices. The concept can be used in the hospitality as

well from travel agent and tour operators, but also allows consumers to express their support for the model using the products of the model.

The basis of the concept of this model is a strategic approach to improving the quality of the tourism product through the food while enhancing the health of consumers and enriching a better standard of living for the local population. The main idea behind the concept is to use foods with short chains of supply. Basic ideas that can be derived from theoretical are:

- Food is an important indicator of the quality of tourist services.
 - Food is an important indicator of the authenticity of the tourist destination.
 - Trend by modern tourists is the increased demand for food produced locally.
 - Short supply chains of food is a challenge to the food industry.
 - Quality control of manufactured foods is also a matter of grave concern because of the high degree of difficulty of its implementation.
 - The tourism industry has both its positive and negative impacts on society.
- Striving to become a responsible and sustainable requires time, resources and expertise in different areas can be prohibitive for SMEs.

This model tries to create conditions for solving these problems. The implementation of the model requires the consolidation of business in a tourist area around the idea of using local food production. These actions constitute not only a way to offer new, innovative and quality tourism products in the region, but also they are trying to assist in increasing the standard of living of the local population, thus knowingly and voluntarily integrating social responsibility in core business.

The model is described by the following steps:

1. Establishing a system of short (local) supply chains of food by creating a Food Hubs as a consumer cooperatives or NGOs.
2. Priority use of the products registered by the Food Hub for the compilation of tourism products: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hotel and Restaurant: by using registered by the Food Hub local foods; - Travel agency and tour operators: through the use of hotels and restaurants offering food prepared by local food ingredients from Food Hub members, and by promoting local food as a tourist attraction and the region as authentic destination.
3. Labeling the regional food tourism and measuring the CSR of the Food Tourism Supplier

Tab.1: Model for Corporate Social Responsibility by Food Tourism

- Why building Food hubs?

During the last few years there is a rising concern, in many parts of Europe and abroad, about the effects of the conventional food system, based on large-scale agro-food enterprises operating at European or global level. In the same time the interest by tourists on tourism products based on discover of nature, local culture and traditions grows constantly, shows this type of tourism as an important part of tourism market in the future. Local food is not only in demand at tourism sector, but also in farmer's markets and natural food retailers, also in conventional supermarkets and institutions such as schools and hospitals. "Locally produced" is the new food trend, a growing niche market (Painter 2007). Many consumers are becoming more interested in the place of origin than the way their food is produced. "Eat local" campaigns are being mounted both at the state level and at the consumer level, emphasizing the economic, environmental, social, and health benefits of supporting a local agriculture market (Michacheles 2008). In the same time the short distance of food travel means less damage for the environment through less using of transportation. Additional, farmers can adopt chemical free, organic farming practices or good agriculture practices that may help to minimize damage done to the environment and may benefit the health of the tourists.

Most of the sales of local foods have not been through conventional retail outlets, but through alternative markets. Direct sales from farmer to consumer at farmer's markets, farm stands, or community supported cooperative having the added social benefit of bringing consumer and producer closer together. But mostly food systems are inefficient and many local farmers and producers, especially smaller operations, are challenged by the lack of distribution and processing infrastructure of appropriate scale that would give them wider access to retail, institutional, and commercial foodservice markets, where demand for local and regional foods continues to rise. They are often not able to produce the volume necessary to be competitive in the national wholesale markets (Nakamoto, Halloran, Yanagida&Leung 1989), being constrained by a geographic landscape that can limit the size and type of production.

In response to these problems Local Food Systems are emerging and flourishing, rising on this tide. They are appearing spontaneously, by local initiative, in very varied forms, with no central initiative and no standard pattern (FAAN, 2010). Arising of different type partnerships is present which try to help building a stronger regional food system. Informal networks can be highly effective tools for coordinating the marketing efforts of diverse agricultural producers and nonprofits and cooperatives both can play key roles in value chain development but should recognize their organizational competencies and limitations (Diamond&Barham 2011). Often, those kinds of subjects are called in America Food Hubs. A definition for Food hub is given by the National Food Hub Collaboration as follow:

- *"A regional food hub is a business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand."* (USDA 2012).

By offering a combination of different support services, food hubs make it possible for producers to gain entry into new and additional markets that would be difficult or impossible to access on their own. They complement and add considerable value to the current food systems and are having significant economic, social and environmental impacts within their communities.

Defining Characteristics of a Regional Food Hub

Regional food hubs are defined less by a particular business or legal structure, and more by how their functions and outcomes affect producers and the wider communities they serve. Defining characteristics of a regional food hub include:

ZZ Carries out or coordinates the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of primarily locally/regionally produced

foods from multiple producers to multiple markets.

ZZ Considers producers as valued business partners instead of interchangeable suppliers and is committed to buying from

small to mid-sized local producers whenever possible.

ZZ Works closely with producers, particularly small-scale operations, to ensure they can meet buyer requirements by either

providing technical assistance or findings partners that can provide this technical assistance.

ZZ Uses product differentiation strategies to ensure that producers get a good price for their products.

Examples of

product differentiation strategies include identity preservation (knowing who produced it and where it comes from),

group branding, specialty product attributes (such as heirloom or unusual varieties), and sustainable production

practices (such as certified organic, minimum pesticides, or "naturally" grown or raised).

ZZ Aims to be financially viable while also having positive economic, social, and environmental impacts within their

communities, as demonstrated by carrying out certain production, community, or environmental services and activities.

Types of Services/Activities

Offered by Regional Food Hubs		
Operational Services	Producer Services	Community/ Environmental Services
zz Distribution	zz Actively linking producers	zz Increasing community
zz Aggregation	and buyers	awareness of "buy local" benefits
zz Brokering	zz Transportation, on-farm pick up	zz Distributing to nearby food deserts ⁷
zz Branding and market promotion	zz Production and postharvest handling training	zz Food bank donations
zz Packaging and repacking	zz Business management	zz Youth and community
zz Light processing (trimming,	services and guidance	employment opportunities

Source: USDA, 2012

Aggregated product is typically marketed, branded and distributed under a single or generic brand name; in some cases, individual farms are also identified. Product aggregation may occur through producer- and consumer-led cooperatives, buying clubs, produce auctions, private and non-profit wholesale packers and distributors, and retailers. An aggregator is an entrepreneur or business that amasses product for distribution and marketing.

Consumer cooperatives (co-ops) are also non-mainstream outlet opportunities for farmers to sell locally produced foods year-round if supply allows; co-op members and patrons shop for food and other goods there rain or shine. Co-ops serve as an interesting type of retail outlet to study the local foods market because they are by definition cooperatives of consumers, democratically managed, and what they carry for sale is a reflection of the membership's consumption preferences. For this reason, consumer cooperatives serve as a good place to begin measuring sales of the local food market in non-direct sale venues, as well as understanding the reasons for and barriers to sourcing locally.

The Alliance for the Living Tisza	<i>Good practices</i>
<p>The Alliance for the Living Tisza Association (ALT) was founded in 2006. It aims to improve the living conditions of those living on the watershed of the Tisza, to increase their flood security and environmental safety, to preserve and enrich the ecological values of the river and to provide an adequate quality of life for the people of this region. The Alliance is a network of private persons, non-governmental organizations, municipalities, researchers and farmers. The Alliance has seven Action Groups along the rivers Tisza and Kőrös in Hungary, in the Eastern and Northern regions of the country: Bereg, Bodroγκöz, Kesznyéten Nature Protection Area, Borsodi Mezőség, Nagykörú and environs, Nagy-Sárrét and Kis-Sárrét.</p>	
<p>The work of ALT was assisted by the UNDP-GEF-MEW funded Tisza Biodiversity Project until the autumn of 2008. The Alliance endeavours to implement the sustainable floodplain management system along the river. Its experts have summarized the theory and practical recommendations on floodplain management in a handbook, lobby for the introduction of sustainable river and landscape management practices and rural development, issued a great number of publications. ALT helps small and medium scale farmers to reach markets and to introduce environmentally friendly farming systems.</p>	

Source: FAAN, 2010.

- *Corporate Social responsibility through Food Hubs:*

The main difference of a Food Hub to the conventional local food distributors is the aim of social, environmental and economic benefits. Food hubs are examples of innovative, value chain-based business models that strive to achieve triple bottom line impacts within their communities. They do this by offering a suite of services to producers, buyers, and the wider community:

- an ample supply of local food may reduce a region's vulnerability to supply disruptions and global food safety concerns. (Day-Farnsworth, McCown, Miller and Pfeiffer, 2009)

- Purchasing local food can help preserve local farmland and reduce the distance food travels between farmers and consumers. (Day-Farnsworth&Co, 2009, Michacheles, 2008)

- Local food purchases can support local economies by keeping food money in circulation within communities.

- Local food can also link growers with consumers who are hungry for a connection to farms and farmers.

- Enable of offering of healthy products for the end consumer.

THE MODEL

Step 1 of the Model for CSR in Food Tourism: Building of Regional Food Tourism Hub (RFTH)

Increasingly, tourists are demanding locally grown food and growers are looking for new regional markets. In order to meet the demand for local food by consolidation of companies of the travel and tourism industry together with growers, NGO's and other entities interested on the issue can build a Regional Food Tourism Hub with the mission to develop sustainable regional food tourism. (Step 1 of the current Model for CSR). In order to achieve this mission the main goal of building a RFTH is to ensure the access of tourism companies such hotels and restaurants to growers of local foods. Building links between growers and hotels and restaurants and in addition links between local food tourism providers (hotels and restaurants) with tour operators can provide a significant boost to responsible tourism in the region. On the one hand this will help tourism companies creating responsible products. On the other hand the supply of such products will contribute to a modern image of the region, particularly those having the appearance of low-cost destinations. On the third hand, the increased wealth of the local population will lead to better relationships not only between the communities themselves, but also to the tourists and will in this way add value to the quality of the offered tourist product.

<p>Sample main tasks of the RFTH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To develop a General Sustainable Food Tourism Policy of the Region; - To facilitate the access of tourism companies to producers of local foods; - To develop a framework and guidelines for food tourism suppliers of the region; - To supervise the local food producers regarding hygiene.
<p>Sample additional tasks of the RFTH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aggregation or consolidation of products sourced from multiple growers to generate volumes needed by the tourism entities; - Distribution support; - Marketing and branding of the regional food tourism products.

Tab.2: Sample of main and/or additional tasks of RFTH

Step 2 of the Model for CSR in Food Tourism: Building of Regional Food Tourism Products

- *In hotels and restaurants:*

Once build, the RFTH enable the hotels and the restaurants to easy access to local foods, what is reporting as one of the biggest problems by the industry. In this way, the companies are able to develop new products and in the same time to contribute to the welfare of the local community, so be social responsible by doing their work.

On one hand, tourism companies are finding it difficult to find contacts with many producers of local foods. On the other hand, frequent transportation of these products into the places of processing and consumption are quite expensive and through this hub costs could be shared and reduced. Giving other assistance in operating activities of the distribution and processing of the foods, the hub greatly increases the opportunities for access of the tourism companies to more and better food of local origin. Another big problem for the tourism companies as well for the consumers of local foods representing the hygiene and the control of the production. When they buy directly from the manufacturer, they are not able to check the actual conditions in which it is produced. Regional hub could provide not only methodological assistance in this regard, but also active operational.

- *By tour operators and travel agencies*

Offering a destinations or hotels and restaurants with published CSR, as well including responsible suppliers in the value added chain, means for this type of travel industry also they are responsible. Even the globalization and the communicating technologies facilitated the direct contact between clients and hotels, often it is these companies that have contact with the end customer and might affect the choice of destination or hotel/restaurant. The possibilities for them to integrate socially responsible practices in their core businesses are also facilitated in the increased presence of socially responsible tourism products/destinations. This creates the

opportunity to include responsible tourism suppliers in their packages. By directing customers to these products they further contribute to the development of the whole concept of responsible tourism in the region.

Step 3 of the Model for CSR in Food Tourism: Labeling the regional food tourism and Measuring the CSR of the Food Tourism Supplier

Many researchers reports from comments made by trade buyers that want to buy local fruits and vegetables that are certified for food safety by a third party. Most buyers indicated that they have concerns that not enough regional producers have Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification for food safety and that there needs to be state or governmental support to help them achieve it. The amount these buyers would purchase annually from an aggregator that meets their requirements could be substantial (Slama, Nyquist, and Buchnum, 2010).

The Local Food Hub can play the role of this independent intermediary. In order to achieve quality and to gain the trust of the customers the LFTH can create a policy and different conditions for the producers of local food. So, only growers who fulfill this minimum can sell their production through the LFTH. The next step of the model of CSR relates to approaches for communicating and informing consumers regarding the existing local foods and also food tourism products in order to create opportunities for conscious choice of responsible consumption. Since the main goal of the LFTH is to create conditions for the development of modern, innovative and responsible food tourism, at this stage of the model is proposed the introduction of two types of labeling:

- Trademarks of local food producers

The first one relates to local food producers. Even in one region there could exist a big differences from cultural, ecological, economic and social aspects, though they can have a lot of commonalities. Designation, respectively differentiation of these products can be made through trademark registration. Trade marks can be the symbol of these commonalities, i.e. symbol of an organic, integrated region. The aim of the trade mark is to help farmers, rural accommodation providers, local processors, service providers living in the region to distinguish their products from the conventional products in the markets as well to promise a quality to the consumers. There are more and more people, who think it is important to support local economy by buying local, environmentally friendly, healthy products. Traditional products, the good old flavours, agricultural landraces have a growing market. The trade mark helps the producer and the customer to find each other. The trade mark offers a new marketing opportunity for fresh food (fruits, vegetables, cheese, yoghurt,...); preserved products (sausage, jam, canned fruit etc.); alcoholic drinks (wine, local

brandy,...); handcraft products (wood, leather, reed,...); and a lot of other products from the region.

How does the trade mark system work? (The trade mark system of Living Tisza) *Good practices*

ALT and the trade mark user signs a contract. The user gets the licence for using the trade mark on its products / services for one year. The parties may re-enter into contract at once after expiring. ALT may control the quality of products and services, which bear the trade mark to ensure that the user meets the self-imposed conditions recorded in the contract.

ALT provides the following services for the trade-mark users:

- Marketing, advertisement services for trade mark users financed by the trade mark licence fees.
- Preparing cheap advertisement material (leaflets, stickers, bulletin boards etc.) on demand for trade mark users with a standard design.
- Each trade mark user gets an own subpage on the homepage of the trade mark system (www.savanyusag.hu).
- Opportunities to exhibit and sell products at festivals, exhibitions at the Living Tisza stands.
- Opportunities to sell products in shops, markets in contract with Living Tisza (in 'local product corners').

What criteria must be met?

<i>Mandatory conditions</i>	<i>Voluntary conditions</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The product has definitely local origin.. 2. It corresponds to the standards for the production in effect (local, national and EU regulation). 3. Method of production may be: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Conventional farming switching to environmentally friendly farming or b) Environmentally friendly farming or c) Certified organic farming or d) Landscape Management. 4. Grown in natural soil. 5. Not treated by ionizing / radioactive radiation. 	<p>There could be a number of characteristics that the product or service is not required to fulfill, but may be voluntarily undertaken in the contract. The following advantageous features may be indicated on the product and may help the sale.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. GMO-free 2. Soy-free 3. Free from chemical residues 4. Made from natural raw materials 5. Flavored with honey 6. Added sugar and sweetener-free 7. Preservative-free 8. Free from artificial additives 9. Free of artificial coloring 10. Free from artificial flavouring 11. Hormone and antibiotic free breeding / cultivation 12. Natural growth, yield 13. Natural ripening (no ripening or drying agent) 14. Rich in nutrients 15. Landrace or regional variety 23. local breed 24. Without fertilizer 25. Without chemical pest control 26. Other

Source: FAAN, 2010.

Even if some farmers use the conventional (intensive) methods the food hub should not exclude them from the possibility to membership, but gives them an incentive to change to environmentally friendly methods. The contracting farmers using conventional methods could be obliged to lower their environmental load according to a management plan agreed by an expert of the food hub. In this way the food hub extend his contribution to the sustainable market development and better welfare in the region.

This step offers a great opportunity to link the retail of local products with touristic services and cultural programs (e.g. rural, incentive or eco-tourism). Rural accommodation providers, restaurants, bike rentals, cultural program organizers, bakers, fishermen and other local producers may cooperate and join the trade mark system together. So, the tourists visiting the region can eat and drink local products, the service providers and producers all can benefit. It is easier to access consumers with standard, high-quality design, common organizing, than trying it separately with simple, photocopied leaflets.

- Certification for tourism enterprises

Last but not least, the proposed model should help tourism companies who is looking for responsible strategies, but don't have time and resources to develop own approaches. In this way they can cooperate with the LFTH for to express their concerns for the local community and even be innovative and competitive in this way through conscious use of traditional brand product created by Food Hub members. Furthermore, each company may have its own policy and a desire to integrate these practices to varying degrees. Due to these factors the proposed certification scheme allows for the designation of an integrated social responsibility in varying degrees. Namely :

- Measuring the CSR by Index of LFTH

In the next step of this model provides a tool for evaluation of the integrated CSR activity. The concept of CSR is not limited to the integration of socially responsible practices in the main activity of the business. While important components of this concept are its measurement in order to control and communicate with stakeholders to achieve many additional purposes such as: better awareness and conscious consumption and sales. Measurability of CSR is also a challenge in itself, as many of the criteria and indicators of CSR are difficult to measure, and some are impossible to measure due to their intangible value. Measurement of CSR, however, is a necessary condition for the assessment of its usefulness, efficiency or profitability. Company managers need methods for quantification and evaluation not only to assess the compliance of the actions taken, but also to continuous monitoring.

There are different ways of measuring and monitoring the integrated CSR as different and diverse are its manifestations, depending on the creativity of

managers. One of the most frequently used concepts is the concept of triple bottom line. In traditional business accounting and common usage, the “bottom line” refers to either the “profit” or “loss”, which is usually recorded at the very “bottom line” on a statement of revenue and expenses. The concept of a triple bottom line (abbreviated as TBL or 3BL) adds two more “bottom lines”: social and environmental concerns. The three together are often paraphrased as “Profit, People, Planet”, or referred to as “the three pillars”. Other researchers seek correlations between financial and social performance, third was correlated with competitiveness and fourth develop indices, which express different relationships between socially responsible actions taken and the results obtained.

This model also needs the ability to measure the degree of utilization of local products in the total activity of tourist companies. For this purpose is proposed to introduce an index of local products:

Variant 1 - Index of RFTH, related to the total number of seats in the venue	
Index	Legends
$R_{RFTH1} = \frac{\sum_1^t S_t}{xt}$	<p>R_{RFTH} – Index of RFTH</p> <p>S – turnover of local foods, purchased from the RFTH</p> <p>t – period of indexing in days</p> <p>x – number of seats in the restaurant</p>
Variant 2 – Index of RFTH, related to the total expenditure	
Index	Legends
$R_{RFTH2} = \frac{\sum_1^t S_t}{S_t}$	<p>R_{RFTH} – Index of RFTH</p> <p>S– turnover of local foods, purchased from the RFTH</p> <p>t – period of indexing in days</p> <p>S – total expenditure for the scanning period</p>

Tab.3: Indexes of RFTH

To this end, the article develops two indexes: one measuring CSR practices (using of local foods), related to the total number of sitting places of the restaurant and one measuring the CSR performance related to the total expenditure of the company. The index construction is based on a formative measurement model, reflecting the degree to which companies are over- or under-represented in the described CSR initiative and could be used for rankings, relative to the their size.

The purpose of the referral to the total number of seats or the total expenditure for scanning period is creating opportunities for comparability between different companies in size. Thus, the smaller restaurants could compete with the largest regarding their commitment to the welfare of the local community.

At this stage, the introduction of labeling is designed to distinguish the different companies and products with regard to their use of local foods. Introduction of Local Food Tourism Label (LFTL) can play important role for gaining added value by emphasizing the local origin of products together or not with environmentally sustainable farming methods. For the purpose of this model is proposed to develop a flexible certification scheme, well adapted to the needs of regional tourism companies, inexpensive and easy to administer. Thus, this introduction aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Measurable degree of integrated social responsibility in a company over time;
- Comparability of corporate social performance of different companies regardless of their size;
- Distinguishing tourism products, including the products of RFTH from conventional tourism products;

Last, but not least, it is necessary to disclose this implemented CSR with the stakeholders. Thus, it empowers tourists by allowing them to select from optional product features linked to the label, thereby taking personal responsibility for guaranteeing product quality. For example, this can be achieved with using a category distinguishing similar to common hotel category, but with different label. Instead of stars, there can be used other signs related to food tourism or any local brand or specific product.

Restaurants Index of RFTH	Category of the restaurant
$R_{RFTH} < 0.2$ (20% of used ingredients are local foods)	Third category
$0.2 < R_{RFTH} < 0.4$	Second category
$0.4 < R_{RFTH} < 0.6$	First category

Tab.4: Example for Local food categories of restaurants.

Benefits

There is a list of benefits the tourism industry and the local community can outcome from realizing this concept. First of all they can profit from a new trend – fusion food tourism. Using local food they definitely gain a competitive

advantage in offering a new trend product, interesting for the modern tourist and caring for his health. Second main benefit is the contribution to the local food system, gaining better living conditions and higher living standards for the local community that they are living inside. Just to list some of them more:

- Environmental benefits:

resulting from the application of environmentally friendly production methods in harmony with the local natural resources, including but not limited to organic production; reduce emissions due to the limited transportation of food; more friendly tillage practices in the use of small equipment and more.

- Social benefits:

more and better employment opportunities for local people; promoting the acquisition of new knowledge and skills; promote social contact between people from urban and rural areas, more opportunities for cooperation. In the short term positive impact on the health of consumers through consumption of healthy products (more vitamin composition and nutritional value of this products)

- Economic benefits:

getting a fair price; the introduction of new funds into the local economy, increasing the income of small producers, thus raising their standard of living, construction and maintenance of local markets and shops synergies in appropriate combination with tourism initiatives; preserve and restore the vitality of the area.

Conclusions

Food tourism creates wonderful opportunities for better integration of local communities in the tourism industry. Thus tourism acquire sustainable and socially responsible nature. The correct approach would lead to improved quality of services, while diversifying the tourism portfolio of the destination, and thus will generally reduce the seasonality of the tourist flow towards uniformity annually.

In recent years, the tourism industry, especially in the Eastern European region is constantly looking for new ways to promote a new image, with new competitive advantages through which to escape from the current look of cheap destination for low-cost mass tourism. With the huge potential of the region in the field of food tourism, it offers excellent opportunities for the achievement of this purpose. Global trends of increasing importance of food by promoting destinations are not taken into account and are not applied in practice. Advertising of postmodern destination is unthinkable without highlighting the uniqueness and quality of this crucial component, leading to an urgent need to rethink strategies in this area.

This study is only an early step in describing and measuring the local food tourism market. The main intended outcome of this report is to encourage the tourism industry to contribute the development of a local food system in their

regions by offering a roadmap and insight to those embarking on the business development process, by gaining economic benefits for them self and social benefit for the community. The report is an attempt that analyses opportunities for improving the sustainability and economic viability of food supply chains serving smaller and community-based food and tourism enterprises. It aims to reconnect people and land through local food; increasing access to fresh, healthy and local food with clear, traceable origins.

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The effect of tourism services on the Level of Satisfaction**Applied Study on International Tourists Visiting Libya**Dr. Atiya Thabet Abuharris ¹**Abstract**

The Libyan economy depends heavily on oil revenue, which is volatile and unpredictable. Therefore, it is not sufficient for oil economies to produce and export oil, and to use the oil revenues just to fund domestic development projects and consumption. It has become essential to rise to the challenge of how to achieve sustainable economic development through an appropriate investment of oil revenue.

The revenue generated from oil in the country should be invested to establishing non-oil revenue. The primary aim of economic development plans were based on the diversification of the Libyan economy away from oil. This was due to two reasons: Firstly, the instability of world oil prices; secondly, the lack of formal economic plans to overcome this problem. As a result, Libyan state has introduced tourism as an attractive developmental option to sustain the national economy beside the oil factor.

This paper provides useful empirical data and information that help tourism policy makers in Libya to develop their plans towards exploiting the available opportunities to improve the tourism sector.

Questionnaire was directed at international tourists visiting Libya to examine what image and expectations international tourists have about Libya and to find out the degree of satisfaction with local services and prices level. A total of 282 international tourists were chosen as the survey sample. The Microsoft spreadsheet 'Excel' was used to undertake the analysis.

Finally the paper aims to identify the tourism potential, examine the significance of tourism to the national economy and conclude with some recommendations which may help to improve the performance of the tourism sector in Libya.

¹ School of Managerial and Financial Sciences The Libyan Academy
Tripoli-Libya, E-mail: atiyathabet@gmail.com

Keywords: *Tourism services, Level of satisfaction, prices level, Libya, International tourists.*

JEL Classification: L83, Q56, Q57, Q58

Introduction

The Libyan economy is dominated by hydrocarbon sector which represents about (92 per cent) of GDP. Libya appears to be one of the less diversified oil producing economies in the world. Government revenues and export earnings represent (93 and 95 per cent) respectively. Also private sector investment in non-oil projects remains weak. Non-oil sector particularly tourism may help to sustain the national economy and contribute by more than (2 per cent) in the country's GDP. This might be achieved through devoting sufficient budget as well as effective action policies and plans . As cited by Kelly and Rosemary (2011) , the tourism sector plays a significant role as a financial source and attracts more of international organisation in this field to invest money(Allen and Gareth, 1998).

The population centers and areas of agricultural wealth are located in two coastal areas, stretching between the border with Tunisia and Misratah in the west and between Ajdabiya and the Egyptian border in the east (The National Libyan Board, 2010).

According to the census of population carried out in 1995, the total Libyan population amounted to some 4.4 million people (51 per cent males and 49 per cent females), with some 85 per cent concentrated in the eastern and western costal plains. In addition, there were an estimated 0.4 million non-Libyan nationals resident in the country at that time. The last census of population carried out in 2001, the total Libyan population amounted to some 5,299,943 people. In 2004 the Libyan total population was estimated to reach 5,882,667 people (The National Libyan Board, 2010).

In comparison to the country's land area, Libyan's population is very small, and characterized by a youthful and geographically highly concentrated population. Libya is the fourth largest country on the African continent, the strategic core of Arab Africa, with one of the smallest populations of all African states. In this position Libya links east with west Africa, as well as the middle and southern parts with European countries.

Tourist arrivals to Libya from international tourist markets increased from 27,601 in 1999 to 32,374 in 2003. On the other hand tourist arrivals went down from 27,622 in 2001 to 23,412 in 2002 due to September 11th impacts, which affected international tourist arrivals all over the world. In addition international tourist arrivals witnessed a slight decrease in 2001 compared to 2000, which might be due to the weakening economies of major tourism generating markets. In 2006 tourist arrivals witnessed a high increase compared to previous years and reached 125,400 and due to visa constraints the number of arrivals went down to 35,700 in 2009 (The National Libyan Board, 2010).

Tourism marketing for developing countries including Libya is an important aspect in promoting and selling the tourist products (Edward, 1997). Developing countries usually suffer from a number of problems, the most important of which is the difficulty in marketing the tourism product to the consumer (Allen and Gareth, 1998). This may be due to the lack of expertise and funds allocated for the purpose of marketing, as well as inadequate distribution systems suitable enough for this purpose.

Investment in tourism infrastructure and tourism related services must be addressed as soon as possible as it is a core factor for tourism development. This cannot be achieved unless the provision of physical infrastructure is completed. Developing a new tourism-related product or service, requires intensified efforts at the initial stages in order to gain an adequate proportion of the international tourist market share and then to maintain this position in the medium to long-run. In Libya, where tourism is viewed as an economic alternative for gaining economic growth, the government should make investment as easy as possible for prospective investors. Consequently, this could lead to an increase in the tourism market share and enable Libya to compete more effectively.

Tourism Attractions in Libya

The attractions for any tourism destination can be categorised as: climatic, scenic, cultural or historical and they exercise a gravitational influence on non-residents. The choice of a destination can be influenced by one or any amalgam of attraction (Müller, 1994).

Markets vary in their choices for travelling to, a destination. As a result, the rank of any destination will be in a subordinate of different preferences in these markets (Alejandra and Pabio, 2011).

Libya is the World's newest and most exciting tourist destination. It has a length of coast-line along the Mediterranean Sea which makes it a productive area for sea sports, diving and all kinds of beach activities. There are ancient archaeological cities and monuments from Roman, Phoenician, Greek and Islamic civilisations. There are also historical mosques and churches, as well as museums with their splendid and fine antiquarian possessions (GBT,2012). The major tourist attractions of Libya as a destination are illustrated in Figure 1.

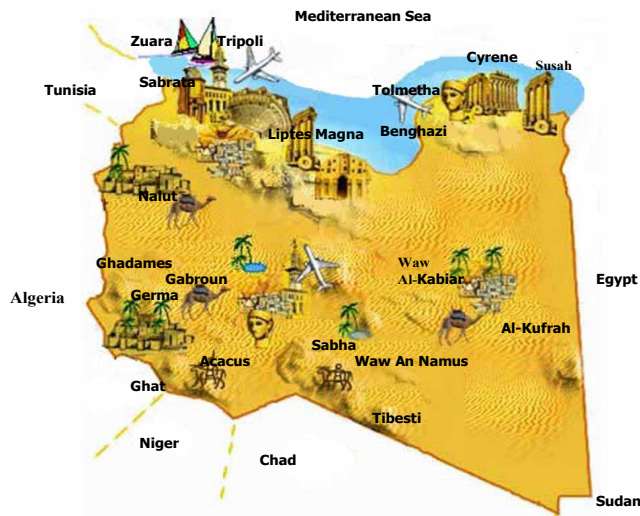


Figure 1: Map of Libya's principle tourist attractions

Source: <http://www.shati-zuara.de/english/Libya/libya.html>

Moreover, there are a variety of natural views along the coast-line, such as sandy beaches, wild palm trees and rocky shores. The beaches extend from Tripoli towards the east about 200 kilometres long characterized by their sandy beaches, which are very popular with local residents (GBT, 2012). The Libyan desert represents over 90 per cent of the land area. There are many attractive areas of the desert, which are of interest to the tourist, such as the extensive wealth of pre-historic art, the agriculture systems and urban fabric of the oases settlement, the desert lakes and the distinct folklore and culture of the oasis towns and the desert. The Libyan desert landscape is a mixture of attractions, which includes spectacular, eroded rock formations, mountains, lakes, oases, stony deserts, wades, areas of volcanic cones and vast sand seas (WTO, 1998).

Age of Tourists visiting Libya

Table 1 presents the age of the respondents. The Table indicates that only 6.8% of the sample was under 25 years. The majority of the respondents were in the 55 – 64 and over 65 age groups that represent 23.5 and 22.8 respectively. The point, which can be drawn, here is that the majority of tourists visiting Libya were senior people.

Table 1. Age of respondents

Age	Frequency
Under 25 years	19
25 – 34	52
35 – 44	36
45 – 54	44
55 – 64	66
65 years or over	64
Total	282

From this it can be understood that there is lack of tourism activities for young people. In addition, sea tourism, which includes varied activities such as water sports, is still completely unexploited due to the severe shortages in accommodation and other tourist facilities. This type of tourism activities may find a tremendous appeal by tourists as well, as it is the most significant source for increasing the number of arrivals.

Purpose of visit

In order to determine the purpose of tourists' visit to Libya, respondents were asked to specify the purpose(s) for their holiday. As can be noted from Table 2, the top three purposes were: Vacation/holiday 65%, visiting historical places 52% and the desert 32%. They were ranked as number one, two and three respectively. At the other end of the table: sunny beaches 1% and value for money 2% were considered the least important purposes for visiting Libya.

Table 2. Purpose of tourists' visits to Libya

Purpose of visit	Number
Vacation/holiday	184
Visiting historical places	147
Desert	89
Culture	50
Business	39
F. Adventure	17
Interesting and friendly people	15
Good weather	12
Appealing local food (Cuisine)	10
Value for money	5
Sunny beaches	3

Number of total valid responses = 282

(Responses exceed 100% due to multiple responses)

As a result, it can be observed that a large number of tourists are attracted by the country's historical and desert attractions. On the other hand, it can be noted that there is a lack of tourism facilities and promotional campaigns for facilities, such as beaches, which was ranked the least important among the other purposes of visiting the country, while in other tourist countries this is considered as a significant tourist attraction for tourists as well as a valuable source for foreign exchange.

Tourists' Length of Stay

Tourists were invited to indicate their length of stay in Libya. A breakdown of the answers received is shown in Figure 2. From the chart, it can be observed that a two weeks stay was the favorite for tourists, since the highest proportion of them (53%) spent this period of time in Libya. Moreover, less than one week period came second where 30 per cent of participants indicated that they stayed this period of time.

From the above information it can be understood that the tourist length of stay is quite short. Therefore, different variety of tourist programs should be organized so the visitors will keep busy with their time and spend more money.

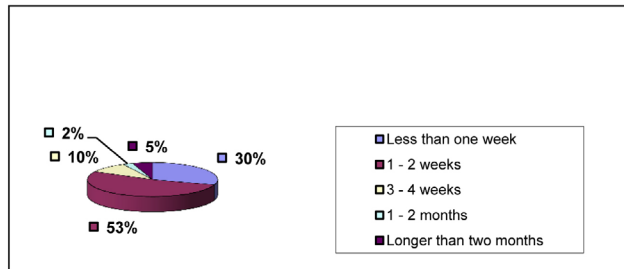


Figure 2. Tourists' length of stay in Libya

To maintain arrivals, more active efforts should be made to prolong the length of each visitor's stay in the country, expend opportunities for visitors to consume, and encourage them to spend more money in the country. Therefore, it is necessary to develop special-interest attractions such as, conventions and conferences, business travels and intensive tours, which may help visitors to stay longer. Also, spending can be encouraged through various aspects, such as tax-free shopping, the provision of proper shopping facilities for incoming tourists, and the development of unique souvenirs and gifts.

Moreover, selling prices for tourists should be carefully considered to be value for money and competitive with other tourist destination in the region which, may encourage actual tourists to spent more time in the country as well as attracting new tourist segmentation markets.

Tourists' Satisfaction with Local Services

Local services play an important role in attracting tourists to visit a tourist destination. When tourists are satisfied with the efficiency and level of services provided they will be motivated to stay longer in the country as their major aim is to seek relaxation. In addition, tourist flows throughout a tourist destination and tourism diversification depends heavily on the competency and the level of services provided (Alejandra et al, 2011).

In order to assess the extent to which tourists were satisfied with local services in Libya, a number of services and facilities should be considered: **airport** and border services (immigration); airport and border services (customs); restaurants; personal security; attitude of local people; hygiene and sanitation; communication services; desert facilities; facilities offered at tourist centres and quality of travelling roads. These services were directed to respondents, who were requested to rate them using a five-point scale ranging from "very satisfied" to "very dissatisfied". Moreover a

separate label “do not know” was added to the scale for those who may not have had the opportunity to experience such services and facilities.

Table 3 shows the answers of the respondents, which were ranked according to the mean value. The higher the mean value, the better the service was considered by the respondents.

Respondents were shown to be more satisfied with the attitude of the local people, and personal security, while they were quite satisfied with the quality of roads and desert facilities. On the other hand, respondents were particularly dissatisfied with hygiene and sanitation, and communication services.

Most of the respondents seemed to be satisfied with local people. They in fact praised Libyan people. From this it can be understood that the Libyan community generally accepts the idea of tourism. In fact, this provides a successful impression for international tourism development. This demonstrates that most local people, particularly those who work in tourism related services, are highly aware of the international tourism development role in the community’s well-being

Regarding the personal security of tourists in Libya, the research findings showed that the majority of respondents felt secure during their stay in Libya. This will prove the fact that Libya is a peaceful place for international tourists and reverse the negative perception and image that been held by some of the world tourism generating markets over the last few years, resulting from their own countries’ media.

Table 3. Tourists' satisfaction with local services in Libya

Elements of perception	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	As expected	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Do not Know	Total	Mean value
Attitude of local people	6	7	34	77	101	47	272	4.2
Personal security	8	6	40	63	104	51	272	4.1
Quality of travelling roads	10	24	63	86	66	23	272	3.7
Desert facilities	9	9	20	30	26	178	272	3.6
Restaurants	31	31	68	62	41	39	272	3.2
Facilities offered at tourist centres	18	23	28	30	26	147	272	3.2
Airport/Border services (Customs)	44	31	47	45	36	69	272	3.0
Airport/Border services (Immigration)	53	37	39	50	34	59	272	2.9
Communication services	56	34	40	32	12	98	272	2.5
Hygiene and sanitation	83	66	56	30	9	28	272	2.2

Number of total valid responses = 272

(The higher the mean value, the more important the reason was considered by the tourist.)

Very dissatisfied = 1; Dissatisfied = 2; As expected = 3; Satisfied = 4; Very satisfied = 5; Do not know = 0.

since it gives accessibility to tourist attractions and facilities. On the other hand, a few of the respondents complained that roads are lack of signposting that are in a European language rather than Arabic.

In addition, respondents were also quite satisfied with desert facilities, regarded as the major attraction of Libya's tourist product that appealed to many of the respondents. A few of the participants and their local tour guides complained about the inadequate or poor toilet facilities at the desert tourist attractions. Moreover, some were unhappy about inadequate and unsuitable accommodation close by the desert tourist attractions.

Regarding restaurants, the findings indicate that the respondents were quite satisfied with the services provided. However, there are a few problems which should be considered. Restaurants should be provided with more skilled personnel in order to improve the speed and the quality of service provided; more control is required on hygiene by being rigid on the applicability of the regulations regarding this issue,

and increasing the number of good quality restaurants in the tourist places, which currently are lacking the ability to cope with the number of arrivals.

Regarding facilities at tourist centres, some respondents appeared to be unhappy with the service offered. It is the fact that there is a lack of tourist information centres in the tourist attractions areas generally, which make it difficult particularly for independent travellers to visit around. In addition, there are inadequate maps and information signposting, especially in the tourist areas.

Regarding airport and border immigration and customs, some of the respondents were not happy with the service at the border in terms of delay and entrance procedures. Moreover, tourist facilities at the airport should be improved. As a result, the people who are working at the airport and border should be provided with some training about the utilisation that will be achieved from tourism to the society. The purpose of this is to improve their attitude towards international tourists and be more friendly, bearing in mind that the first impression about the country is gained from them.

Finally, respondents generally appeared to be dissatisfied with hygiene and sanitation in Libya. It is the fact that in some places in the country, the standard of sanitation needs to be improved not just for visitors but also for residents. This should be fully acknowledged by the Board of Cleaning Environment and other associated authorities. In addition, most of the participants were not happy with communication services, which are generally regarded as a significant factor of tourism development since it facilitates contacts between tourist attractions places, tour organizers and the tourists' home country. Therefore, communication services should be improved.

Tourists' Satisfaction with the Price Levels

The purpose of this section is to assess the degree of satisfaction experienced by tourists with tourist services and facilities in Libya. Participants were asked their views on cost of air flights to Libya; local transportation; accommodation; food and drink; package tours to the destination; general prices of trips and shopping. Again, a five-point scale ranging from "very poor value" to "very good value" was used. In addition a separate column of "do not know" was attached to the scale so as to assess more accurately the opinions of the respondents.

Table 4. shows the answers received from respondents and ranked in order according to the mean value. It is important to note that the higher the mean value, the lower the price of the tourist services and facilities was considered by tourists.

From Table 4. it can be observed that respondents appeared to be satisfied with the prices of food and drink, and local transportation, while they were less satisfied with the prices of accommodation and the general price of trips. In contrast with the price level of the services and facilities shown in the Table, respondents were rather dissatisfied with the price of air flight to Libya and the price for shopping.

Table 4. Tourists' satisfaction with price level in Libya

Elements of perception	Very poor value	Poor value	Satisfactory	Good value	Very good value	Do not Know	Total	Mean value
Food and drink	8	12	42	64	45	84	255	3.7
Local transportation	12	16	35	42	37	113	255	3.5
Accommodation	7	11	30	16	21	170	255	3.4
General price of trip	19	15	41	46	23	111	255	3.3
Air flight to Libya	12	18	36	27	20	142	255	3.2
Shopping	24	17	32	30	27	125	255	3.1

Number of total valid responses =255

The higher the mean value, the more important the reason was considered by the tourist.

Very poor value = 1; Poor value = 2; Satisfactory = 3; Good value = 4; Very good value = 5; Do not know = 0.

The airfare, represents an important factor in the destination selection process. Respondents were not satisfied with airfares to Libya because of the fact that tourists who fly direct to Libyan International Airports have to pay high prices. This is a major reason why several tourists prefer to visit the country via Tunisia and Egypt borders or use other airlines in order to guarantee cheap flight fares. Competition between Libyan and foreign air carriers is the way to achieve competitive airfares to and from Libya.

Regarding shopping prices, which tourists were not satisfied with, this dissatisfaction might be due to the fact that there is little or no control on prices. Traders have complete freedom on making their price decisions, which may result in high prices especially for those who are not familiar with local market prices. Like many tourist destinations, bargaining on price, is considered a critical issue and an undesirable phenomenon among many European tourists.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Tourism development is seen as a way of improving a country's economy and social well-being, but if this development is not handled carefully, problems begin to emerge. Sufficient funding, and establishing an appropriate atmosphere for investors that might boost confidence among them, is required to encourage local and foreign investment to invest in tourism-related services by treating tourism investment legislation as a special and more distinctive case in order to be more attractive. This might take the form of exempting both domestic and international components from tax for a certain period of time in the full investment.

The development of more tourist accommodation such as small and medium-sized hotels, airports, railways, beach resorts, roadside travel-lodges and guest houses to meet the demand of prospective international and domestic tourists at a competitive price and more "value for-money" facilities could lead to sustainable tourism development and fast promotion of the country as a tourist destination. Similar investment policies in the oil sector, which has been very successful, could be adopted for investment for Libya's tourism industry.

Encouraging foreign investment (renowned companies in particular) to invest in tourism-related services, could generate employment for Libyans and bring in the highest technology and experience. Also, encouraging charter flights could help to reduce flight fears, which were considered to be a critical factor by the majority of the sample included in the study.

The development of tourism products should be combined with a sustainable focus, which helps to fit in with the local environment and ensure its preservation. The successful formulation and implementation of a tourism development policy is predicated upon the mobilization of human, capital, physical and other resources. These resources spearhead any tourism policy to ensure the identification of the tourism product, organize its marketing and overall control of the sector and its integration into the national economy. If they are inadequate, tourism plans will not succeed. Overall, careful consideration should be taken of the following elements:

- Investment in tourist infrastructure and tourism related services must be addressed as soon as possible as it is a core factor for tourism development.
- Product diversification to increase tourism income.
- Increasing awareness and knowledge about the tourist product among tourism generating markets.
- The revenue generated from oil in the country should be invested to establishing non-oil revenue.
- Establishing more tourist accommodation such as small and medium-sized hotels, airports, railways, beach resorts, roadside travel-lodges and guest houses.

- Encouraging charter flights could help to reduce flight fears, which were considered to be a critical factor by the majority of the sample included in the study.
- prolong the length of each visitor's stay in the country, expend opportunities for visitors to consume, and encourage them to spend more money in the country .
- prices for tourists should be carefully considered to be value for money and competitive with other tourist destination in the region which, may encourage actual tourists to spent more time in the country as well as attracting new tourist segmentation markets.
- Similar investment policies in the oil sector, which has been very successful, could be adopted for investment for Libya's tourism industry to encourage local and foreign investment this might take the form of exempting both domestic and international components from tax for a certain period of time in the full investment.

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www.turismulresponsabil.ro



TELEPHONE: (004) 021.312.58.40
E-MAIL: office@fundatia-amfiteatru.ro

ISSN 2285 – 7958
ISSN-L 2248 – 7958