

ROMANIAN RURAL TOURISM – TOPIC OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: Our country’s geographical configuration offers ideal conditions for the tourism proper nowadays, as well as for practicing winter sports, with a huge not capitalized potential that may be emphasized in a relatively short period with minimum investments. This work proposes to highlight these areas with a real tourist potential and to carry out a practical model of the project of village transformation into a tourist product by using project management.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, Romania possesses over 3,500 homologated pensions that offer more than 20,000 accommodations, endowed according to European standards [SUSANU, CRISTACHE, 2004]. Regional statistics show that most of the people who choose to invest in strongly developed areas from the viewpoint of agritourism are townspeople who prefer to buy rustic houses, that they either redecorate and add a story, or demolish and build new ones. Unlike seaside tourism that finds more and more difficult customers willing to pay more for a minimum of services, agritourism tries to capitalize the advantages it possesses at the most. Consumers’ tendency to spend traditional holidays in unpolluted area has motivated more and more investors to buy land and rural houses in areas where urban civilization is only found in thermopane glass windows. Bran, Sibiu, Maramures, Bucovina or Danube Delta are some of the areas where real estate investments had mainly one destination: building pensions. For the following years, tourism operators predict a considerable increase of agritourism, due to the fact that most of the European funds resulted after the accession to EU will direct towards this activity. Rural tourism might be practiced all along the year and it might also be developed by facilitating hunting, fishing, travels. The program “Holiday in the countryside” launched by the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Tourism aims at the rural tourism promotion and the attraction of foreign tourists to Romanian rural pensions [SUSANU, 2007].

2. Projection of Romanian rural tourist product

Romanian rural tourist product is a “young” product and is carried out mostly by mime or to put it more exactly, by imitating other performers [VALLEN, VALLEN, 2005]. Due to the need to carry out quality work, repeatable and improvable, it is necessary to organize and lead this activity for the realization of performers’ professionalization, as well as of the products themselves.

The project management can be qualified as a process of planning and administration of tasks and resources, in order to reach targets, and of communication of progress or recorded results. In the light of this fact, a project is necessarily an activity with purpose and finality; to put it otherwise, it has a beginning and an end, it is

planned and controlled, and at the end, it leads to clear conclusions. On another hand, the project being subject to a process of validation and check of feasibility will produce changes in the respective field.

Particularizing, we may say that the Romanian village must fulfill the following exigencies in order to become a tourist product: to clarify its aims, to capitalize its advantages and to remedy deficiencies in order to become a real attraction; to direct its efforts to reach its aims, avoiding the inefficient utilization of resources of any kind; to communicate internally (all the people interested and involved in the village's evolution) and externally (with the environment, but especially with guests – tourists arrived); to plan, monitor and control – through the intermediate of initiative committees, branches of NGOs – human, material and financial resources necessary to end the project; to coordinate the activity in the framework of multidisciplinary teams that include different people, professions, organizations, but with a well definite and unique aim; to have in view permanently an image of the whole evolution in order to reduce risk areas and to work efficiently to details; to estimate what is to be done and what is not, before the execution and to implement an adequate quality standard; to minimize costs through the maximization of work efficiency and resource allocation.

We named “Romanian village” the rural collectivity from a Romanian area with a tourist patrimony, favorable to the carrying out and implementation of neoruralism concept – introduced by the regretted professor Teaci Dumitru – and through the prism of rural tourism activity [GLAVAN, 2003]. In conclusion, this collectivity has the following tasks regarding:

- the correct and clear definition of aims;
- administration of change – from patrimony rural locality to tourist locality;
- choosing the evolution methods;
- removing incertitude and risks;
- carrying out multidisciplinary teams to fulfill the change and the project implementation.

In the community an important part is played by: local and county administration representatives, NGO's representatives, teachers, doctors and veterinary surgeons, priests, school teachers and other specialists of the rural world. For the practical constitution of the changing project of the village we suggest the succession of steps as follows:

1. *Customers/ tourists definition* and the establishment of method to satisfy their demands (needs and wishes).
2. *Carrying out a list of tasks* that correspond to each activity for: basic services – lodging and public nourishment; complementary services - transport, amusement, trade, information etc; coordination, marking and beaconing; security and order etc.
3. *Estimation of necessary resources* and the calculation of minimum budgets for improvement: endowments, modernizations, energy, water, fuel supplies; sewerage; waste cremation etc.
4. *Check of feasibility*
5. *Taking risks into account*
6. *The active management of project*

For the development in good terms of such projects we suggest the pursuit of concordance among tasks, resources and time through the intermediate of a *GANTT diagram*. This will represent the way of carrying out tasks depending on the beginning

date and their duration, as well as the graphical image of the way in which different activities are superposed and correlated. We continue by exemplifying a Gantt diagram (possible/ probable) of a project of implementation and launching of rural tourist products. The project under investigation has a duration of 12 months and proposes to launch a new product in the market (for example: teaching traditional arts – glass painting, carver in wood, knitting and dyeing, etc.). The following big tasks are in the charge of the team that proposes to fulfill this project:

- The research of the market where the tourist product will be launched;
- Analysis of product’s feasibility;
- Tourist product projection;
- Testing the tourist project under the conditions of pilot consumption;
- Stage preliminary to launching (preparing the promotional campaign, preparing and informing potential consumers, remedying some possible desynchronizations noticed in the pilot phase, etc.)
- Receiving the retroactive response/ effect;
- Revision after the feed-back;
- Launching final stage;
- Analysis of the way in which the tourist product develops;
- Conclusions over launching.

The project result must be the fulfillment of tourist product at the level of potential tourists’ expectations/ aspirations, as well as of conditions of practicing tourism in rural communities involved in the project (hosts). Community members become thus producers or performers, and the result of their activities will be tourist products or services. An important part is also played by the itinerant tourism in the village world which, like individual tourism, will be: *organized and spontaneous*. Within the organized one it will take the following shapes:

- **classical**: moving from one sight to another, with classical means of transportation (air, ship, motorboat, car, bus),
- **specific**: the itinerary will be carried out on horseback, donkeys, carts, special tractors, small trains with narrow gauge (mocănița), bicycles, fishing boats etc.

Spontaneous practicers of rural tourism will be able to use any of the mentioned means of transportation depending on the chance and availability. We believe that for the itinerant tourism an important part will be played by an organization or a specialized organizational frame, to facilitate the reservations, their confirmation and the ensuring of services performance according to the received order. By a Centre of Reservations of Rural Tourism in Romania one may ensure [COX, KOELZER, 2004]:

7. the concentration of rural offer at the national level;
8. taking over and validation/ invalidation of demands;
9. alignment of carrying out tariffs in accordance with the level of equipment classification,
10. trading of tourist products,
11. carrying out settlement of accounts among the participants to the process of fulfilling tourist services.
12. directing tourist fluxes towards destinations to correspond to tourists’ wishes and ideals.

The next step in itinerant tourism in rural environment might be made by the achievement of some thematic tourist products that will be proposed to tourists. We may have as names and content the following themes:

1. ***Jewels of Romanian Dance and Song*** (from Moldavia, Oltenia, Banat, Dobruja, etc.), with participation to feasts, evening sitting of village women, competitions and folkloric festivals;
2. ***At Home to Popular Artisans*** (potters, furriers, carvers in wood, etc. or from Dolj, Maramures, Vrancea, Gorj etc.),
3. ***Following the Haiduks*** (combined with haiduks landmarks, inns, popular theatre performances, museums etc.);
4. ***The Way of the Fish*** – piscicultural areas - with basic services and fishing;
5. ***The Road of the Wine*** - trips to vineyards and wineries;
6. ***The Road of the Salt*** – sitting in locations with tradition in salt exploitation, visits to salt mines;
7. ***Festivals of Popular Gastronomy*** (forcemeat rolls of cabbage, pies, wine and garlic sauce, brandy, cheese etc.);
8. ***At Hunting/Fishing in...*** (pools..., mountains..., zone between hills, and hill area, ponds, Danube Delta);
9. ***Following Dracula*** (visiting sites that refer to Vlad Țepeș and overnight stay in rural environment, at night camp fire and songs, story tales around the fire, etc)
10. ***At Home to:*** Mihai Eminescu, George Enescu, Ciprian Porumbescu, Panait Istrati or other personalities – universal symbols;
11. ***The Road of the Witches*** – an esoteric program in the rural environment including visits to fortune tellers, enchantress or witches.

Tourist programs will have expressive names, will present attraction points and original aspects or specific to crossed areas, that will be constituted into major features of a personality, zone, activity, or peculiarities. We consider as attractive the circuits and lines that will include: parks and natural reserves, trips in mountainous areas, climbing, speleological lines, journeys by kayak, canoe, boat, and why not, by raft.

All these are tourist products that enjoy a demand higher and higher in the ecotourism world. Another itinerant tourist product in the rural environment and especially in the hill, sub mountainous and mountainous area could be that for 4 x 4 vehicles or motorcycles for forest roads, with macadam or rugged. This category may include also cycle tourist products.

3. Conclusions

We consider that rural tourism has special implications for performers, as well as for tourists. In this direction, the relevant implications for tourist activity are important. Thus the performer must ensure: a fair relation of quality and classification level/ price level, a note of specific and personality to each tourist product they possess; a quality performance that will be compared to that of others included in the itinerary.

At the same time, the consumer – customer – tourist will enjoy the possibility of knowing different areas, people, habits and traditions; the comparison of hospitality from different areas; receiving their suggestions with responsiveness. For the support and encouragement of rural tourism, organizers and performers will take into account the necessity of carrying out materials for the support and promotion, for example: calendar of manifestations from the village world, guides, maps, monographs, brochures, catalogues. Informative materials will be carried out in English, French, German, and even Japanese; they will compulsorily comprise data about: access ways and means of transportation, historical places, information centers, tourist guides, control points – centers of bookings, restaurants with specific etc.

The conception and development of itinerant tourist programs (organized, semi organized and unorganized) must take into account the journey's cultural, scientific, and technical interest, and least but not last, the necessity of traveling in order to know people and new places. For this, the created tourist products will try to have either a specialized character for a certain segment of tourists, or will have a general character that will raise the interest for specialized products, which, in concordance with the Romanian natural anthropic tourist product, may take various tourist shapes in a very wide range of concretizations.

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