

# Advantages and Difficulties in Optimizing the Management of Rural Tourism

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*Abstract:* In the Republic of Moldova, the majority of tourism resources are concentrated in rural areas. Because of insufficient of accommodation infrastructure and by provision of a reduced spectrum of tourist services, revenues remain in most large urban centres, which considerably limits the development of tourism and other economic activities in rural areas. In this paper, the author identifies the main rural tourism management issues and proposes concrete solutions to solve them.

*Key-Words:* - rural tourism, management, difficulties, infrastructure, benefits, business, seasonality.

## 1 Introduction

Despite its small area, Moldova has a very valuable heritage tourism, which will have an adequate evaluation of which will have beneficial effect upon the revenues, to the economic and social environment. About 80% of our tourist resources of the country are concentrated in rural areas, are exploited superficial and ineffective [1]. Also, due to acute shortage of accommodation, of recreation and leisure centres, most of the proceeds from visiting of the rural touristic objectives are transferred to tour operators and budgets of urban centres. As a result, socio-economic situation of receiving rural areas has not improved and harmful and destructive pressure on the natural environment and human health alarming increase. This problematic situation is caused not only by insufficient and poor quality of transport, accommodation and leisure tourists' infrastructure, but also by inefficient management of tourism businesses in rural areas. However, extensive international experiences in promoting of the rural tourism are demonstrates us about the multiple complex benefits from promoting various tourist activities in this area [2]. Quiet and friendly atmosphere, clean air, ethnic and folk traditions and natural local cuisine associated with proximity to major urban centres in rural areas makes your

favourite tourist destinations for a wide range of local and foreign tourists. Despite sustained efforts by central, regional and local authorities, insistence of local entrepreneurs, rural tourism revenues are reduced and the panacea role, assigned to tourism for disadvantaged rural areas, is well below initial expectations.

## 2 Problem Formulation

### 2.1. The main benefits of rural tourism

Rural tourism is one of many challenged services among the visitors, who enjoy the silence, charm and diversity of natural and agricultural landscapes, the cultural heritage of rural communities. Tourism has many potential benefits for rural areas. The most important positive effects of developing rural tourism are following:

- these activities generate local incomes, employment and growth of welfare;
- rural tourism is a valuable contributor to rural economy;
- tourism can serve as an important source of tax revenues for local jurisdictions;
- developing the auxiliary and alternative activities for rural population;

- promote the usage and sale of local food products;
- develop business skills and can give local crafters; increasing competition;
- creates sense of pride; attracts inward investment;
- incorporating of new technologies;
- contributes to the conservation of environmental and cultural resources;
- permitted rehabilitation of health and work capacity of visitors.

Tourism can offer rural residents business opportunities in activities that cater to the tourist trade. Such locally-operated businesses, which may be seasonal, can provide local residents with valuable opportunities to develop business skills and can give local crafters, farmers, and food processors, among others, outlets to sell their products to local retail establishments.

Because jobs in the tourist industry often do not require advanced training, local residents with few skills can readily work as food servers, retail clerks, and hospitality workers. Moreover, in many places people may already have part-time or seasonal jobs and tourism can help supplement these workers' salaries. For example, many farm laborers and some farmer's only work during part of the year and can use another job at a different time of the year to make more money. Part-time tourism jobs may also provide needed income to a parent who needs time off to care for family members.

## 2.2. Disadvantages and constraints of rural tourism

The relationship between tourism and the environment is particularly close in rural areas, which necessitates sensitive planning and management of both the resource base and tourism activity. Rural areas can be sensitive to change through tourism. The most important direction of the development of ecotourism must be protection of the natural resource and the biodiversity. Natural resources must be used in a sustainable way to create employment and income [3].

Rural tourism ideally should be included as part of an integrated rural development strategy. A sustainable approach to rural tourism should be based on a multi-faceted view of sustainability to achieve balanced development. Consideration of the needs of the community, the viability of the economy and the conservation of the environment should receive appropriate consideration. The benefits of tourism will be most effectively translated at the local level if there are opportunities for local participation and equity. Local people will

be encouraged to take ownership and control of tourism and its management.

### Negative effects and difficulties of rural tourism:

- encourages dependence on industry prone to uncontrollable change;
- creates part-time, seasonal or low-grade employment;
- incurs development costs and public service costs;
- leads to local land and house price inflation;
- creates a feeling of invasion by tourists;
- generates overcrowding and traffic;
- increases crime;
- reduction in local services, e.g. food shops replaced by gift shops;
- import of new cultural ideas – challenges the existing way of life;
- creates need for new developments which may not be in keeping with local area;
- increases pollution (noise, visual, air, water, litter);
- affects local biodiversity [4].

Benefits deriving from tourism development must be balanced against potential negative effects. Jobs in the travel and tourism industry are frequently low-paying and seasonal and often offer limited benefits. In some cases, particularly where tourism strategies are ineffectual, local residents may have to pay for tourism marketing and infrastructure through higher taxes. Tourism can also increase demand for land in rural areas, which may inflate real estate prices, potentially putting the cost of housing beyond the reach of the average local resident. This is the case for some amenity-rich tourism destinations (particularly in the West) experiencing growth in recent years stemming from recreation-based activities [2].

Tourism may directly lead to unsightly sprawl in rural areas by creating a demand for development. Other negative side effects include potentially higher rates of crime and greater demand for local services, such as police and fire protection and sanitation services, which can be expensive to provide. Also, tourism can risk changing the rural "sense of place" for some communities. Increased crowding and traffic congestion may also result with an influx of tourists into an area. Greater demand for local arts and crafts can also potentially lead to a lowering of the quality of these products. Finally, tourism risks degrading natural resources in rural areas unless environmental sustainability efforts are undertaken. Many of these risks, however, can be mitigated if proper planning is employed at the

outset of tourism development. Tourism can be an important force for developing disadvantaged rural areas. In particular, rural communities with few other options for development may perceive that tourism represents a panacea for growth. While tourism can certainly be an important component of a sound development plan, this is not always the case. Local support, however, is usually a necessary component for a successful tourism strategy. That is why tourism strategies must be consistent with local goals and be sensitive to sustaining a community's character and traditions [5].

Business in tourism is an unfavorable zone from an economic point of view, as it is stated, implying some risks and obstacles like: people's distrust in this type of business and orientation through traditional agriculture, absence of a picture of a village as a place for holidays, shabby infrastructure, unkempt esthetical aspect of a lot of zones, with tourist resources, native predispositions to finance the consumption expenditure that don't generate incomes (big houses, cars, apartments) of the commercial business for which there is already an increased competitive environment.

### 3 Problem Solution

According to the author, the main difficulty in optimizing the management of rural tourism is *the wrong approach to tourism phenomenon*. Usually, tourism, especially in rural areas is designed only as all visits, aimed at knowledge of different natural or anthropic tourist attractions in this area. This approach is specific for both local authorities and central authorities, including those responsible for managing the tourist industry (National Tourism Agency). Of course, the promotion of tourist objects and circuits, increasing the flow of visitors is strictly necessary to optimize tourism activity, but we must not stop here. Moreover, this measure will not produce expected results, unless it is accompanied by effective promotion and tourism businesses in rural areas.

Thus, tourism should be designed primarily as a business, as a complex entrepreneurial activity, that is designed for complex and quality service to potential tourists and for delivery travel packages in this area. In this context, the primary objectives (aims) of tourism entrepreneurs, of local government and branches authorities are consists in transforming a large number of visitors in consumers of tourism services, in loyal and profitable customers of tourism enterprises and of tourism auxiliary enterprises (transport, catering and entertainment centers etc), providing a varied and

complex package of tourist services, to ensure profitability and sustainability of tourism and related businesses. Optimization of rural tourism should be oriented mainly towards to increase the efficiency of business travel, the spectrum and quality of offered services, optimizing the relation between quality and price, increase turnover, etc.. Often, no matter the number of visitors, but proceeds from their service. This problem is typical, especially in Moldova, where most visitors from the countryside are the schools and students groups, who forces spend money in rural areas visited, and most revenues are collected by tour operators and transport in urban centers. However, to increase tourism revenues it is necessary the quality and diverse provision of services to increase customer satisfaction, their costs, to return with new customers willing to consume tourist services that are offered in the rural space. Therefore, it is necessary not only bringing of visitors in rural areas, and business and tourism products with all necessary components for adequate provision of tourism services. Tourists must come not only to visit some tourist objectives, but to eat more often and for as long tourist services in this area.

Efficient organization and profitability of rural tourism are limited, to a large extent, on the state of transport infrastructure and accommodation in this space. A lot of valuable touristic objects are avoided by the good and satisfactory roads and to the other missing even driveways. Also, the existing road network built still during the Soviet period is intended to establish the link between urban and industrial centers and often bypasses valuable tourist attractions, such as landscape reserves Țâpova (district Rezina), Cosăuți (district Soroca), Rudi-Arionești (district Dondușeni), Naslavcea (district Ocnița) „La Castel” (district Edineț) and „Grădina Turcească” (Căușeni și Ștefan-Vodă districts ). Also, at the majority of natural tourist attractions are missing of marked paths and trails marking are insufficient [4].

Unlike Romania, Bulgaria and other countries in the region, the accommodation in rural areas is much less developed. In most tourism rural areas lack not only hotels, but even touristic pensions (guesthouse) and camping's. Most of the accommodation objectives is the rest camps for children, not intended for other categories of tourists and do not meet the requirements for accreditation in this field. This is a big problem of local rural tourism, because, as a rule, the majority of tourist most tourist receipts are found in the accommodation area, where there are the catering (food) and entertainment centers. Due to excessive

concentrations of accommodations in urban areas, the majority of tourist revenues not remain in rural areas, where are concentrated the main tourist attractions. The present Real Estate Fund in rural space would allow the accommodation of a large number of tourists. Moreover, due to massive emigration, many houses are in good condition and are uninhabited for many years. However, most of these buildings lack modern sanitary facilities and access routes for cars are difficult or impossible. Also, within the existing pensions, often can be seen the presence of universal of equipment, necessary for the main categories of clients (adolescents, families or corporate groups of young and middle age), as grill, pool, pavilion (summer house), sauna, arrangements for dances and other active leisure. For these categories of customers are designed the most tourist packages. Often are insufficiently or missing the land and facilities for sports, for play children's of different ages, for the elderly or for families who prefer a quiet and passive recreation. Also, the spectrum of offered services for these categories is low, that is why it loses a large number of tourists who have enough free time and income, which is why it loses a large number of tourists who have enough free time and sufficient income, but ignores those tourist areas. This finding is very important in the presence of a competitive environment developed, which already show some major tourist areas such as Orheiul Vechi or Saharna. Also, very important are facilities and tourist circuits for sportive and cognitive leisure in the area adjacent to the touristic pensions, which can provide for such purposes the guide and transport services.

The most common general difficulties of rural tourism management are pronounced seasonality of the tourism phenomenon [6] and their direct dependence of economic and financial situation. Seasonality is conditioned both by the climate regime, as well as the annual and weekly working and resting program of potential tourists. Usually, major tourist flows is registered during annual holidays (usually in the second part of the summer), Easter and Christmas holidays. Due to proximity to urban areas, the rural touristic zones can attract a sufficient number of tourists in the weekend, practically, all year and reduce the negative effects of tourism seasonality. In this very important are the access roads during to the unfavorable climatic periods and, especially, the content of tourist packages and quality of offered tourist services. Also, may be adapted the marketing policy through various attractive packages (by price and diversity of services). Often, the tourists highly appreciate

these additional and original efforts of tourist entrepreneurs. As a result of smaller offer and less competition during to the unfavourable climatic periods, can find competitive advantages and secure revenue, which ensures the profitability and sustainability of travel business. However, facilities for cold period, especially of tourist accommodation, require higher costs, which imposed a more rational organization and use of available buildings.

A serious impediment to the organization and development of rural tourism in Moldova is that many people visiting the touristic objectives during its stay at relatives and at other people close, that is why does not consume, for a fee, various touristic packages and services and do not generate direct income for tourism industry. Also, even with arrival of foreign tourists, many of the local population do not agree to receive money for accommodation, guide, food and drink, not diminish their level of hospitality and dignity to the foreigners and villagers. This is more pronounced during to the major traditional festivals, such as the Village's Day, Christmas, Easter, weddings, etc.. Moreover, population genetic ignored local non-farm activities, crafts or trade are widespread among other ethnic groups inhabiting. Even today, the majority of rural tourism entrepreneurs have not denied the agriculture and tourism see only an auxiliary activity that is significantly subsidized. For these and other reasons, the majority of local rural population there is limited professional skills in promotion and development the tourism business.

Central public authorities often seek to increase the revenues in these budgets and do not provide the necessary management, fiscal and financial support. Meanwhile, the local public authorities do not assured adequate sanitation in inside and near of settlements, the supply of quality drinking water, security of persons who visiting these areas, etc..

Tourism management requires active involvement, not just agencies and tour operators, but to all stakeholders, from the custom offices to regional and local authorities and to tourism and auxiliary enterprises. An important role must return government structures that are authorized to manage tourism field, to regulation of tourist market, to coordination of transport facilities, accommodation, entertainment and recreation centres. With joint efforts to provide a a very popular tourist product in the international tourist market. Also need more active involvement of Regional Development Agencies, because promoting and improving rural tourism is one of the compartments and priorities outlined in their action plans.

## 4 Conclusion

1. Development of tourism activities in rural areas generates some benefits and negative effects on the socio-economic sphere and on environment;

2. The main difficulty in optimizing the management of rural tourism is *the wrong approach to tourism phenomenon*. Tourism should be designed primarily as a business, that is designed for complex and quality service to potential tourists and for delivery travel packages in this area.

3. Efficient organization and profitability of rural tourism are limited, in specially, on the state of transport infrastructure and accommodation in this space;

4. Due to excessive concentrations of accommodations in urban areas, the majority of tourist revenues not remain in rural areas where are concentrated the tourist attractions;

5. The common general difficulties of rural tourism management are pronounced seasonality of the tourism phenomenon and their direct dependence of economic and financial situation.

6. The majority of local rural population there is limited professional skills in promotion and development the tourism business.

7. An important role in optimizing the management of rural tourism must return to the ability government structures and to the Regional Development Agencies.

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