



21st International Economic Conference 2014, IECS 2014, 16-17 May 2014, Sibiu, Romania

Ways of Promoting Cultural Ecotourism for Local Communities in Sibiu Area

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Abstract

Now, Romanian tourism is being confronted with problems of infrastructure and image, and this is a reason we consider that the chance of sustainable development of this area is being represented by promoting niche tourism, namely cultural ecotourism. In an age of globalization, the authentic cultural patrimony is that which makes the difference and represents an opportunity for sustainable development of local communities. The essence of sustainable development is represented by the harmonious integration of economic development, by responsible governing, by ensuring the social cohesion and community man - nature. By the attested value cultural ecotourism can become a touristic product, an original and brand like one that can extend at a regional and national level. The results of the paper can be landmarks for new applications in research and represent the basis of identification at a local level of new economic and financial instruments with good social impact on local communities.

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Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of Scientific Committee of IECS 2014

Keywords: ecotourism; cultural; touristic product; sustainable development;

1. Introduction

The events staged in Sibiu during 2007, the year in which it was the European Capital of Culture, were truly unique. It was the first European Capital of Culture (ECOC) to be hosted in one of the countries that joined the European Union after 2004, and the organizers faced a major challenge in planning the event just as Romania was joining the EU.

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The main objectives of the event were: raising the international profile of Sibiu; long- term cultural development; attracting international visitors; enhancing feelings of pride and self-confidence; growing and expanding the local audience for culture; improving social cohesion and creating an economic downstream; improving cultural and non-cultural infrastructure; developing relationships with other European cities/regions and promoting European cultural co-operation; promoting creativity and innovation.

2. Material and methods

Using the experience with Sibiu - European Capital of Culture and Mărginimea Sibiului – the most romantic ecotourist destination, the main objective of the paper is to unfold a pattern for promoting cultural ecotourism for local communities regarding Sibiu area. The motivation for the choice comes out of the wish to render profitable in a superior manner the huge cultural and ecotouristic potential of the mentioned region.

Cultural tourism is present in bibliography mostly in the last decade as a sign for preoccupations of the specialists in the field and as consequence of the interest manifested by voyage consumers for this type of tourism. We mention in this respect works such as those of Ivanovici Milena, *Cultural Tourism*, Iuta Cape Town South Africa Publ. House, 2008, Smith Melanie, Robinson M, *Cultural Tourism in a Changing World*, British Library, Canada, 2006, Girard L.F. (*Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Local Development* , Italy 2009), Kockel Ullrich (*Culture, Tourism and Development - The Case of Ireland*, Liverpool University Press, 1994), Berriane M., (*Tourism, Culture and Development in the Arab Region. Supporting culture to develop tourism, developing tourism to support culture*, UNESCO, 1999) or magazines such as those published by Daralli Fiorella (*Almatourism - Journal of Tourism, Culture and Territorial Development*, Rimini, Italia) and Endresen K., (*Sustainable Tourism and Cultural Heritage - A Review of Development Assistance and Its Potential to Promote Sustainability*, NWHO, 1999).

Ecotourism represents an updated theme that rise the interest of specialists in the field, reflected in scientific papers, books, treaties that appeared after 2000. With managerial strategies (Butnaru Gina Ionela, *Strategii manageriale pentru asigurarea calității produselor și serviciilor turistice*, Editura Tehnopress, Iași, 2009), to agrotouristic marketing (Alec, I. N., Constantin, M., *Agroturism și marketing agroturistic*, Ceres Publishing House, București, 2006) and ecotourism (Glăvan V., *Turism rural. Agroturism. Turism durabil. Ecoturism*. Ed. Economică, București, 2003, Nistoreanu P., Țigu Gabriela, Popescu Delia, *Ecoturism și turism rural*, A.S.E. Publishing House, București, 2003), to national strategies and standards of ecotouristic certifying (Ministry of Regional Development for Tourism – *Strategia de dezvoltare a ecoturismului, faza I și faza a II - a*, 2010, OMT - *Technical assistance for the elaboration of the ecotourism strategy of Romania (Final report)*, 2005, *Standardul European de Certificare in Ecoturism (The European Ecotourism Labelling Standard) – EETLS*, 2009), there have been tackled different themes but the cultural side was not mentioned or it was registered very briefly. We consider necessary the outlining of such an important aspect because the nature and culture individualizes places and leave the mark, have an impact on local communities. It is through the Guide published in 2012 by the members of the coordinating team for the project that we highlighted the importance of gastronomic culture, the wealthy tradition and popular habits in Sibiu surroundings which distinguishes through an ecotouristic potential as well as the habits, traditions, popular costumes, trades, side by side with multicultural gastronomy (Romanian, German, Hungarian).

3. Results and discussions

Ecotourism is a tourism which directly or indirectly promotes and supports sustainable economic development. The cultural side of Romanian ecotourism can determine on a local plan a good turning into account of the natural and cultural potential, in this way having a contribution to increasing the places for work both in the touristic area and auxiliary sectors of services and managing local resources; it diversifies the local economy mostly of rural adjacent areas where agriculture has few possibilities to develop; it stimulates the rural economy through an additional demand of agricultural products and more financial capital; it contributes to the improvement of local infrastructure; it favours the intercultural understanding and free communication among inhabitants and tourists; the touristic activities diversified, can entail the increase of the interest for environment protection, by convincing the tourism consumers and responsibility factors on the importance of natural protected areas.

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