

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN THE LAND OF BEIUȘ THROUGH RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND TOURIST ANIMATION

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ABSTRACT. – **The Sustainable Development of Tourism in the Land of Beiuș through Recreational Activities and Tourist Animation.** The issue of sustainable development has lately encroached several areas including tourism, due to the strong impact it had on this environment and local culture. By linking the concept of sustainable tourism with recreational and tourist animation we wanted to highlight a new way to change the concept of tourism as a “destructive factor” of the natural environment and highlight an area less known for its elements that targets tourism. What Beiuș Land has to offer to become a sustainable tourism destination is reflected in the outstanding cultural values, crafts still well-preserved, natural resources that can be exploited through hiking, speleology, cycling and, not least, dowry-related people and ancestral traditions. Habitat development strategy targets the idea of meeting the needs of present tourists keeping in mind the protection of the environment and providing opportunities for future sustainable development strategies under the auspice thought of durable development.

Keywords: *sustainable tourism, tourism animation, entertainment, Beiuș Land, cultural values.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The vast tourist phenomenon has been associated over time with various fields, but the current trend of tourism offers a new dimension, that of sustainable development. The idea of sustainable tourism in Romania appeared relatively recently and is most often associated with rural tourism. The latter is defined as a type of tourism that is based on values and promoting the Romanian village without damaging their authenticity, ideal for a sustainable tourism. The land of Beiuș transformation into a sustainable tourist destination can be an opportunity to promote the tourism market, recreational and tourist animation through various forms of ethnographic approach that can shape a recognized local tourist attraction and its values.

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The implementation of sustainable tourism in the area of Beiuș recreational and tourist animation is the optimal solution that can ensure the survival of local traditions and cultural values to future generations so the village identity is not lost. Despite the fact that most times habitat conservation conflicts with the desire of people to enjoy modern elements imposed by society globally, rural development through tourism has proven to be one of the best ways to keep rural identity. The village's cultural heritage is the hearth of our ancestors, and the preservation and promotion of key traditional items, we keep alive the legacy left by past generations.

It can be seen that lately the attention of tourism specialists has a new orientation. From the economic point of view the nature of tourism activities, turned to a new dimension regarding the phenomenon. Recently, tourism takes into account the social side and the impact that it has on both the tourist activity, especially on the local population and the environment. These new approaches are the way to achieve a sustainable development, thus creating a bridge between the concept of sustainable tourism and rural tourism. Awareness of the importance "man" has both in the consumption of tourism products, especially in their promotion specialists today an increased interest towards creating sustainable tourism destinations.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Beiuș Land, one of the 18 "countries" of Romania (Cocean, 2011) is located in the south - eastern part of Bihor County, being crossed, throughout its territory by Crișul Negru River and its tributaries (fig. 1).

The geographical boundaries of the area are not very clear; the land of Beiuș is about 1,900 km² in area and is defined mostly by ethnographical aspects.

The defined space consists of 127 villages grouped into 21 communes (Răbăgani, Pomezue, Roșia, Căbești, Remetea, Pocola, Uileacu de Beiuș, Șoimi, Finiș, Curățele, Budureasa, Drăgănești, Tărcaia, Lazuri de Beiuș, Buntești, Rieni, Pietroasa, Câmpani, Lunca, Cărpinet și Criștioru de Jos) and 4 towns: Beiuș, Ștei, Vașcău and Nucet. Through their characteristics these places have managed to shape one of the most beautiful "countries" Romanians have, fully respecting the concept of "country" as a geographic area that has common values but retain varying dimensions: ethnic homogeneity, economic organization, politics, both social and cultural (Surd,1993). Given the premise of social individualization, this "country" takes into account the ethnic and religious characteristics, where the majority of the population is Romanian and Orthodox and maintains its integrity in relation to neighbors.

Overcoming the mental borders of the "country" Beiuș and the territory as a physical medium of relations between all the components mentioned above, the land of Beiuș is distinguished as a region, bordered on three sides by mountains:

in the northern region Pădurea Craiului mountain group, Bihor and Vlădeasa to the east and the Codru Moma group to the south and south-east which highlights the beautiful interweaving of two major landforms: the Apuseni Mountains and the Criș Plain.



Fig. 1. The geographical location of the land of Beiuș in Romania

The geographical elements that are bordering the land of Beiuș, the mountains and the plains give it a special status: thus taking one of the general characteristics of Romania relief: variety and with a sublime exaggeration we could say and proportionality if we limit ourselves to the lowland and mountainous regions (Berindei *et al.*, 1977). Even if the lowlands of the Land of Beiuș have less representative tourism resources, this is compensated through the complexity and variety of morphological forms of the mountains bordering the region. Be it the outstanding panoramic vistas for tourists or various forms of exokarstic or endokarstic elements, we can see the beauty of the picturesque landscape that gives visitors a variety of attractions capable of boosting cultural tourism, scientific and largely on the recreational part. A special feature is given by the narrow sectors that are formed along the valleys, and the gorges of Crișu Negru River.

The natural landscape is enriched by the groundwater components, rich in mineral waters from Stâna de Vale, Finiş, Cusuiuş, Albeşti, Criştiorul de Sus and the thermal waters of Beiuş and especially the streams - Crişul Negru and its key tributaries, also the two fishing lakes "la Niţu" and "Crăiasa" together contributing to Beiuş's attractiveness. Other important aspects which help establish the land of Beiuş's tourism potential is its biogeographical elements, that shelter a number of natural reserves who protect the heritage left by nature in this region.

Moving on, in the analysis of Beiuş region being a possible tourist attraction we turn our attention to the most representative component to support the development of sustainable destinations namely local culture and tradition.

The Beiuş region is a unique ethnographic area which over the years has shaped its own identity through culture, traditions and crafts sacredly preserved in places. Notice how, in these parts, the wares and authentic folk music form constant elements, some of which are protected for centuries (fig. 2). These can be added to complement the tourist potential of a number of crafts, each more diligent. The famous chests crafted at Budureasa, the lime that burned for years in Izbuc, the stairs of Cresuia famous in Transylvania and Banat and even the red pottery from Lehecenii, prove that the land of Beiuş offers the durability of the people's occupations as real tourism attractions and also a valuable material basis for a future sustainable tourism. A key feature for this land is certainly the best known fair in Beiuş, popularly nicknamed „fair in Binş" where every Thursday peasants come from the villages down to the town to sell or buy something (fig.3).

From the early days, long past, the fair represented the place where goods are exchanged between peasants and today it retains its former character sometimes. And now we see people who bring hand-crafted products: wooden tubs, pitchforks and rakes, some flour sieves stairs and herbs gathered in the village of Poienii de Jos. The anthropogenic potential of the region is closely linked to historical cultural monuments (City Museum of History and Ethnography in Beiuş, the Fortress of Finiş, the museum „La Fluturi" from Chişcău), especially the religious buildings: the wooden churches. There are 29 wooden churches in Beiuş Land, some built as early as the seventeenth century.

Even if only a few of them today maintain the original architecture, the beauty of these holy places is given by several aspects: durability over time, the history of the paintings or unique elements, that define them. For example, the wooden church from Rieni is adorned with crosses of the heroes from the area. Located on a hill, the church dominates the space around her being situated on a hill. Around her lies the eternal world of the cemetery, with numerous crosses made of wood or stone that were painstakingly carved by hand (fig. 4). The wooden churches of Beiuş Land together with ethnographic elements: tradition and crafts are the living proof that in this region, the local community is linked to the ancestral land, and could thus shape the idea of sustainability in the territory.



Fig. 2. Traditional costumes of Beiuș Region



Fig. 3. The 2015 craftsman fair – Beiuș



Fig. 4. The wooden church in Rien

Based on traditional research methods, direct and indirect observation, which refers both to the territory studied and the concepts debated, the present study has the purpose to broadly outline the idea that Beiuş Land can become a sustainable tourism destination based on the concept of quality, continuity and balance between the institutions involved, the environment and local community. This idea is supported by longstanding approach to habitat and actions taken by various organizations aimed at promoting the region. Beiuş Land was addressed often lately. A variety of tourism resources and the location of the region in an area wide opening to the West have made scientific reaserches over time to shape new ideas that will promote the tourism market zone.

Quantifying the number of attractions was performed in several stages, depending on the category they each fall into: nature objectives, wooden churches, elements of ethnography, accommodation and catering. Attention shifted towards several aspects: the state of preservation for these elements, accessibility, attractiveness relative to age, uniqueness, conservation we managed through this method to establish a coefficient of attractiveness for the region of Beiuş.

Considering that tourism development in the area must be sustainable environmentally, profitable economically, especially constant and lawful from an ethnical and social point of view for the local population, one may observe the manner in which, based on a promotion strategy with sustainable goals, the region can become a top destination in Bihor County, Romania and, why not, an international attraction for lovers of art, culture and history.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The statements above basically show some of the reasons underlying the idea that Beiuş Land can become a sustainable tourism destination, that the area has tourism objectives which can be capitalized. In what follows, in summary form we will try to answer a new question, namely: how can become the Land of Beiuş a tourist destination using its tourism resources in a sustainable way, without negative effects on the environment, involving the local community and contributing to economic prosperity?

If we are to start with the definition of sustainable tourism given by the World Tourism Organisation, we notice that this refers to tourism that ensures meeting the needs of present tourists, and the receiving unit without compromising future tourists and more so, protecting and increasing opportunities for the future. Also it aims at maintaining cultural integrity, biological diversity and maintaining a healthy and clean environment. Taking into account the economic factor, the third pillar in sustainable development, one can say that sustainable tourism contributes to the economic welfare of the local society and the development prospects are much more viable.

Over the past few years, every tourist destination in Romania tried to follow international models, and to this end ANTREC (National Association for Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism) issued several objectives aimed at sustainable development of destinations. From these, several promotional strategies and solutions for the transformation of a region emerge, a model that the land of Beiuș can follow through advertising campaigns as a sustainable tourism destination that has recreational and animation activities:

- ▶ identifying tourism resources in rural areas;
- ▶ rational exploitation of tourism resources;
- ▶ the adequate planning of routes and objectives without harming the environment or the smooth development of elements;
- ▶ ensure the safety of protected areas, caves and wildlife parks;
- ▶ renewal of material and technical basis in order to ensure a competitive and ecological tourism;
- ▶ stimulating government institutions in the development of tourism infrastructure;
- ▶ promotion through workshops and craft centers of local values;
- ▶ maintaining a healthy and environmentally friendly lifestyle;
- ▶ preparing local community for the coming tourists and their involvement in recreational programs and animation;
- ▶ promoting local values in schools;
- ▶ the attraction of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), volunteers with the purpose of promoting the region.

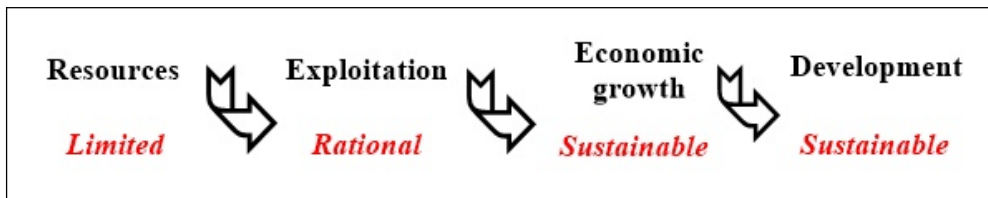


Fig. 5. Sustainable development scheme

These are just some measures that can be taken at regional level on the promotion of the region of Beiuș as a sustainable tourism destination (fig. 5). Certainly, an important role is played by local community interests to preserve and pass on the cultural and natural heritage for future generations. In the interest of promoting a sustainable development in Beiuș Land, a number of tourist information centers currently operate. Their mission is to identify more destinations and possible offers in order to promote the region while also taking

into account the factors imposed by sustainable development: maintaining the natural balance of the environment, strengthening ties between the local community and tourists and, not least, increase the economic capital, so that the number of investors in tourism will grow in the future.

4. CONCLUSIONS

As a final note, one can say that Beiuș Land as a future tourist destination must take into account the environmental problem and keep it within normal parameters and also resolve the local community issues. The current context of sustainable development requires that the region must follow the safest route to continuity, to maintain and transmit the "spiritual" assets to future generations so that they can benefit from the local heritage at least as much as previous generations. Sustainable tourism comes as a loophole to revive tourism in Romania, which, as we know, suffers lately when it comes to international recognition.

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