

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN RURAL AREAS OF EMERGING MARKETS

*Alina-Petronela HALLER¹, PhD Scientific Researcher III,
Romanian Academy Iași Branch-ICES „Gh. Zane”*

Sustainability is a global goal and tourism is a revitalizing sector for the emerging markets economy. The paper work is a theoretical analysis, deductive and inductive, that shows that emerging markets have the opportunity to progress economically and socially through tourism, particularly rural, on condition of maintaining its sustainability.

Key words: *growth, development, tourism, emerging markets, sustainability.*

Sustenabilitatea este un deziderat global, iar turismul un sector revitalizator pentru economia statelor emergente. Lucrarea este o analiză teoretică, deductivă și inductivă, din care rezultă că țările emergente au posibilitatea de a progresa economic și social prin turism, în special rural, cu condiția menținerii sustenabilității acestuia.

Cuvinte-cheie: *creștere, dezvoltare, turism, piețe emergente, sustenabilitate.*

Устойчивое развитие является глобальной целью, а туризм – сектором, который оживляет экономику развивающихся стран. Работа является теоретическим, дедуктивным и индуктивным анализом, который показывает, что развивающиеся страны имеют возможность прогрессировать в экономическом и социальном плане за счет туризма, особенно сельского, при условии сохранения его устойчивости.

Ключевые слова: *рост, развитие, туризм, развивающиеся страны, устойчивость.*

JEL Classification: *O13, O44, Q56.*

Introduction. Emergent economies show a high potential of economic growth. These countries experience an antagonism between desiderata – development of the tertiary sector – and possibilities. The possibilities are sometimes limited not by the lack of resources, but on the contrary, by problematic infrastructure and means of production. Tourism appears to be an important agent of growth if the forms of sustainment and promotion are correctly selected. The focus on the durability of economic and human activities makes sustainable tourism be one of the priority measures of growth for emergent states. The rural environment of these countries is particularly related to the idea of sustainability.

If the 18th and the 19th centuries were mainly agricultural ones, and the 20th century a particularly industrial century, the 21st century is the century of services, of services in the “industry without smoke stacks” [Chen Li-Chan et al., 2013]. Tourism is the third great industry (after petroleum and car industries) that records substantial growth [Furqan A. et al., 2010].

There are countries – tourism brand – whose economy is based on tourism to a very high extent, as they are targeted by any person with the intention and the initiative to travel. Emergent countries, newly entered on the global tourism market, are in the situation of analysing and carefully evaluating their tourism potential, of conceiving attractive tour packages for small prices and highest possible quality. If at a cultural and religious level domestic tourism comes first, if the seaside and the mountains are a big challenge in the competition with established destinations, the rural environment of the emergent states bring to the tourism supply the dimensions of novelty and sustainability.

Without neglecting the other factors of growth and development, the emergent countries find in sustainable tourism the necessary instrument for the revitalization of certain regions, especially rural ones, but everything depends on the capacity to promote destinations and to provide competitive products, especially that the rural environment represent the core of European existence [Charvat K. et al., 2003]. Everything starts from sustainable development, an aspect that results from the restauration and revitalization of traditional inheritance and buildings, acquiring a tourism purpose [Draganic A., 2013].

¹ © Alina-Petronela HALLER, hallalina@yahoo.com

Sustainable rural tourism in emergent countries. Rural tourism is a complex activity, taking place in the natural environment, outside the urban areas, a component of the industrial sector characterized by tourism activities at a small scale, taking place in regions where the basic activities remain agriculture and forestry; this is a “countryside” experience whose purpose is the economic and social development of rural areas, the promotion of local economy, the stimulation of socio-cultural exchanges and of the life style of local communities [Jinku M. K., 2013].

Tourism has an important contribution (10-20%) within the group of activities specific to rural environment, and 23% of the tourists coming from Europe prefer rural environment as holiday destination [Djekic S., Vucic S., 2007]. The importance of rural tourism is to be found in the interaction between agricultural production, traditional items crafting, preservation of local gastronomy and traditions, based on existing resources [Draganic A., 2013].

The emergent states have an economy and a society that lagged behind, compared to the developed ones, but they have a high potential to repair this distance. It is rather difficult to assert that they are able to hold monopoly or quasi-monopoly positions in tourism, but they can still offer very special landscapes and experiences to those who feel like going towards new places and different cultures. The emergent countries will not manage to compete in a very near future with established destinations in the segment of cultural tourism, as it is the case of great European capitals and cities, but there is still the possibility to successfully compete on the market of other forms of tourism, like the rural one.

The great advantage for the emergent states in the field of rural tourism is the very good conservation of the rural. Once again, it is demonstrated that what is otherwise regarded as a big handicap, the underdevelopment of the rural environment, becomes a great advantage if the best utilisation variants are resorted to. In the developed countries, the difference between the urban and the rural is a sensitive one, the agricultural activities being carried out in an almost exclusively mechanized manner, while the villages look like mini-cities. This is not the case of the emergent states. Even if the rural environment of these countries is not part of the 21st century context, it stands out due to its authenticity and novelty.

The socio-economic situation of the emergent states is rather fragile, especially as regards the rural environment, where the existing problems are deeper. Over the time, the lacks in the rural environment have led it to open itself to tourism, especially since this activity became a promising industry [Gartner C. W., 2005].

The acknowledgment of tourism occurred in a context characterized by a diminishing role of the agricultural activity, the population’s aging process, the migration of the young population towards cities, the lack of financial means, medical infrastructure, problematic education infrastructure. These problems were thought to be solved with the help of tourism, as the impact is tri-dimensional: economic, social and environmental, the economic part being the dominant one. In the effort to deepen the economic dissension, the other two dimensions are often ignored.

The rapid industrial development involved an aggressive utilization of natural resources, generating their diminution and an accentuated degradation of the environment. Mass tourism, specific to big cultural cities, also leads to a degradation of environment and to increasing pollution. An alternative to this type of tourism is the rural one, even if there exists a risk of transforming it into mass tourism, especially at weekends and on the occasion of national official holidays, when most of the city inhabitants prefer the rural environment, searching for calm and relaxation.

Everywhere in the world, rural tourism represents an alternative to the development of agricultural and crafting activities [Santos E. et al., 2014]. This form of tourism takes place especially in areas with low density of population, creating the impression of space. Tourism in rural areas is a triangular relation between destinations, tourism industry and inhabitants and visitors [Lane B., 2005].

Tourism involves modifications of physical space and of inter-relations; the relationship between human society and nature have progressively changed under the pressure of the 20th century changes, following the industrialization, the mechanization of agriculture and of forestry, the commercial and communicational dynamism, the demographic rise, the population density and the utilization of bio-technologies [Charvat K. et al., 2003]. The influences in the urban area, globalization as a process that favours standardization and generalization, transform sometimes in a decisive way – as in the case of the developed states – the rural environment and way of life. In the case of the emergent countries, this is not done but partially, not because the population was not receptive to everything that is new, on the contrary. The population of the emergent states is, as far as it seems, keen on everything related to high standard technology, an aspect demonstrated, for instance, in Romania’s case, where the size of the houses, the

number of cars, of household appliances and of other high technology devices that are acquired, compared to the income level, are impressive. Yet, the very expensive cars, the hi-tech appliances, and the oversized dwellings characterize only a small number of persons with very high incomes. The great majority of the population in the emergent countries have a modest standard of life, recording middle and small income levels, especially in the rural environment. Poverty is the main factor that stopped the insertion of modernism in the rural areas of the emergent countries, an aspect that proves to be a positive one as long as these countries hold wide unexploited areas and authentic villages.

Sustainable rural tourism comes to enforce the idea of conservation and aims to motivate the efforts to restore and re-establish the original image of the rural environment, to recall and practice again the customs, traditions and crafts that are specific to each of the regions. All of this becomes necessary when the transformation of the rural environment into an area of relaxation, of entertainment, in other words into an alternative to the urban areas, is wanted.

A modification of the dynamics and partially of the destination of rural space entails a change of the style of life for the rural communities, as new social roles, new relationships, new economic activities, a new rural culture emerge, while a kind of war is waged between the archaic side, which actually attracts the tourists, and the modern side, that the locals aim at.

The emergent states in general have been, by definition, agricultural ones, their comparative and even competitive advantages being found in the rural area. Agriculture and forestry, as main activities in the rural environment, involve the management of natural resources influencing the quality of environment, with an impact upon the ecologic integrity of the zone and on the aspect of the rural [OECD]. Agriculture is a multifunctional field, which is not strictly limited to production of food, but expands to the environment and to ampler socio-economic functions. The quality of the environment became a key-factor for the assessment of life conditions in the rural environment, such as education, health and security. The diversification of economy and the creation of new work places represent a key-problem of the emergent states and especially in the rural environment. The importance of the rural for the emergent states, its conservation and the conservation of related specific activities provide tourism with the image of an impulse-activity. Tourism acquired increased importance as the rural environment transformed from an agricultural into a service-based one, using the advantages offered by landscape and cultural heritage [OECD]. The emergent states went through periods of denial of the rural, especially after the changing of the economic system, but they realized how important the rural is and how wrong the decision to mainly direct themselves towards the urban. In reality, the neglecting of rural environment with all its negative consequences, especially the reduction of agricultural activity, has the great advantage of preserving natural areas. At present, in a period when people try to spend more time in nature in unpolluted areas, the emergent countries realized that the development and promotion of rural tourism, in its sustainable form, is an important factor of social and economic development and growth.

Tourism is regarded as a regenerator of rural environment, and its development requires effort and complex sustainment from the community, local and national authorities. The tourism activity in the rural involves making up policies of effective utilization of farmable soil in order to get ecologic production [Ozdziński J., 2009], administrating the wooded land, preserving architecture and landscape.

Once the process of tourism development in the rural environment is initiated, the education of population becomes necessary, so as to make them understand the obligation to preserve the environment concurrently with developing the tourism supply and adapting behaviours. As they have to get in contact with persons from different regions and countries, the entrepreneurs in the rural area, as well as the locals who are not involved in tourism activities, need to adapt themselves and be flexible, in order to combine, in a balanced way, the necessity to preserve the environment and the offering of an attractive package for tourists, without negatively affecting the way in which traditional activities are carried out. If no effort is made to make people aware of how important this balance is, they could fall in a dangerous trap. Out of the desire to attract as many visitors as possible and to get involved in as many tourism activities as possible, as all of this could bring forth more profit, there is a risk for the locals to give up the rural specific activities (agriculture, animal husbandry, handicraft and cottage industry) and for the environment to be negatively affected (for instance deforestations for buildings, pollution, modification of landscape). The very concept of *sustainable development* is based upon natural resources, upon balanced consumption, without waste, upon demographic structures and, sometimes, upon multi-ethnic richness [Vuković Predrag, Kljajić Nataša, Mijajlović Nada, 2009], so that sustainable rural tourism gets the same characteristics. It is very important for the locals of the rural environment and tourists altogether to make a

distinction between daily activities and activities meant for visitors. The locals should not give up their usual activities, just like tourists should not pretend for everything happening there to be dedicated to them.

The involvement of tourists in activities specific to the rural is a form of active tourism that create for the inhabitants the opportunity to live the authentic way, without having to give up the things that consecrated the place where they lead their lives. At the same time, tourists get involved in activities that they had maybe never practiced before, quite different from usual activities. Tourists, especially the foreigners or the young people, know only from hearsay how agricultural activities and handicrafts, especially traditional and less mechanized or not at all technologized ones, are carried out, and they are extremely delighted when they practice them with the locals, by means of some active tourism activities. Most of the activities that are specific to agritourism involve actions from the sphere of the major agricultural activities and related ones.

Tourism industry in the rural environment is, on the whole, made up of SMEs held by locals, owners of bed-and-breakfasts and chalets, guides and third parties, taking care of the tourists' free time organization [Lo M. et al., 2013]. In the rural environment, the entrepreneurs' attention must take several directions, such as: introducing to the tourists the local environment, activities, culture and traditions; the familiarization of tourists with local gastronomy, usually an ecological or "green" one, based on exclusively natural ingredients; the familiarization of tourists with methods of organic production; the familiarization of tourists with local crafts, with the way to make handicrafts, with the manual, non-standardized production methods that guarantee unicity and, implicitly, value; the organization of cultural events (for instance the *șezători* [small gatherings during which, while dealing with some handiwork, the participants sing or tell stories, riddles, etc.], the evening parties with folk songs, dedicated evening parties – with traditions specific to weddings, baptisms, etc., during which the tourists assist, but at the same time learn how to do some activities – hand-spinning, sewing, knitting, weaving, pottery, etc.) and of sports events (such as horse riding, biking, races, hiking in the woods, etc.); introducing to the tourists the local landscape, by giving them support (information and guidance) in the area (visiting, for instance, the neighbourhoods, monasteries, churches, museums – including the village museum, in case it exists, castles or mansions, places where one can find and admire specific plants or animals); introducing to the tourists the activities that are specific to the rural environment (for instance, agriculture, animal husbandry, fishery, beekeeping, handicrafts, natural building – houses made of adobe, roofs made of reed, etc.); marking the routes and sights.

Ecological elements should be included in the plans of rural tourism under the shape of eco-villages, where anyone who wants can experience healthy life, by means of a gastronomy based on local ecological products and activities in nature [Medojevic J. et al., 2011], in order to maintain the character of sustainability.

Tourism is not a panacea of rural environment and of the economy of emergent countries, but an activity that one should consider as a factor able to augment well-being in a twofold direction: towards the state budget, materialized by the increase of growth rates, and towards the society forced to accept the development process, to contribute to it by adjusting behaviour and enriching knowledge, such as to achieve profitable tourism activities concurrently with the traditional ones, without prejudicing the environment.

In the rural, the tourism opens possibilities to start economic activities, to find sources of further financial sources, to develop cultural, commercial and regional exchanges; it stimulates the participation in local occupations and projects, as well as the enthusiasm for activities that everyone could benefit from [Medojevic J. et al., 2011].

The rural environment has an ideal image, always ready to welcome massive waves of tourists. In reality, the development of tourism often encounters the absence of plans and of an implementation framework, the absence of qualified labour, the manifestation of improper attitudes towards the provision of specific services, the outdated infrastructure, a transportation system that is not organized to a specific tourism purpose, the lack of financial resources necessary to investments, a tourism supply that is not conceived in a really attractive way, the lack of quality standards, the lack of visibility, the lack of an integrated approach incorporating marketing, advertising and promotion. Seasonality is another limitation for the development of rural tourism. The climax periods are vacations and the periods of major Christian holidays, when the desire to go back to traditions and family is even stronger [Cozac E., 2012].

Conclusions: The dominant characteristic of the current period, which will perpetuate itself over

time, is *crisis*. The plurality of crises (financial, economic, moral ones, etc.) feed the people's overexcitement. In order to ease the tension, they go back to nature, to origins, even if for a while, in an environment that their parents or grandparents left, searching for the comfort offered by the urban area, which often takes the shape of an imperfect life style [Gartner C. William, 2005]. In the rural environment, each experience is unique and is exclusively based upon novel experiences, on interaction with the elements specific to some local community [Koster R., Lemelin R., 2009].

Sustainable tourism is, for the rural communities, an activity generating growth and development. In the paper we analyzed how tourism activity influences the local community and the neighbouring ones, leading to the diversification of production in the areas under economic and social decline, where the natural environment is not affected by polluting activities.

Tourism in the rural environment unifies, re-establishes, organizes the territory, which is provided with different perspectives and goals, while no different physical infrastructure needs to be built [Draganic A., 2013], and only the existing one is to be improved.

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Recommended for publication: 16.05.2016