

THE IMPACT OF THE TOURIST ACTIVITIES ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE DANUBE CLUSTER

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Abstract:

At present, the natural environment has a fragile balance mainly due to the development of economic activities. In intensely populated regions, man has radically transformed the natural environment, creating the anthropic areas. This transformation is done at the expense of the natural areas, being more serious and the fact that the change of the environment is done without taking into account the repercussions that may occur. The Danube Cluster is one of the most beautiful regions in Romania, I would even venture to say from Europe, the area where the Carpathians meet the Danube, where traditions are kept alive and where you feel you can be filled with energy even if you do not linger in the area. In the last years the tourist activities in the Danube Cluster have had a major increase, on the one hand due to the increase of the number of visitors and on the other hand by the construction of numerous accommodation and public food units. This transformation is beneficial if we reflect on the increase in the number of accommodation places as the number of tourists is large, but the anthropic impact on the environment is a high one especially if the development of economic activities is not in accordance with the principles of green tourism. I believe that preserving the integrity of the natural environment must take precedence over the development of economic activities if we want to implement a sustainable tourism in the Danube Cluster.

Key words: sustainable tourism, environmental impact, Danube Cluster, natural environment.

JEL Classification: Q53, Q56

Introduction

The research study on the sustainable development of ecotourism in the Danube Cluster is part of a series of works that have a regional character, placing a strong emphasis on the sustainable development of the area in the context in which the analyzed area has a great tourism potential at national level, although, at present, it is under-utilized.

1. Environmental protection and conservation

The analysis of the tourism potential in the tourist area Danube Cluster, through numerous specialized studies, in the update resumed in the study of foundation for the exploitation of the tourism potential in Mehedinţi county, shows that the tourist activity in this region, is permanent throughout the year, ensures many jobs and it is fundamental for the economic development of the area related to the Danube Cluster.

The growth rate of this activity depends on the clarity of the development programs developed and applied by the local authorities, on the clarity of the offer for attracting investments. At the same time, it must be taken into account that the increase of the tourist activity leads to degradation of the natural environment.

The degradation of the environment is a consequence of the human activity, the functioning of the economic objectives. The problem that arises is finding the most appropriate solutions to slow down or stop this phenomenon and to analyze the harmful effects on the environment, and implicitly on the human being.

In the territory of the Danube Cluster, there is a great diversity of activities that involve modifications of the natural environment and all the categories of pollution have been identified: in air, in water and in soil.

1.1. The air pollution

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The air quality is affected by the emission of carbon oxides, sulfur oxides, hydrogen sulphide, nitrogen oxide, suspended powders (dust, radioactive powders), noise and vibrations caused by road and river traffic.

The polluting noise is observed from the activity of road traffic for the neighboring houses.

The measures to permanently track the pollutant emissions from the atmosphere in the territory, with the alert-alarm system, ensure the necessary protection of the population at present.

Also, uncomfortable smells are noticed in the living areas due to the storage of garbage on platforms without sanitation measures.

1.2. Water pollution

The Danube River, a collector of water in Central and Western Europe, is subject to a variety of pollutants over which the pollutant emissions in the Danube Cluster area overlap.

Characteristic for the pollution of the Danube river, it is the quality of the Danube water as a source for drinking water for the riparian localities in the area, continuously degrading by the continuous increase of the oxygen deficit, which justifies the renunciation of the Danube water as a drinking source and the transition to new sources.

The main polluting sources of the Danube River in the Cluster area are the following: navigation on the Danube with leaks of oils, fuels and various other pollutants used to clean the ships; specific biogenesis of accumulation lakes, oxygen consumers, noxious generators, suspension generators, etc .; spillage of polluted water; the discharge of the industrial waste water of the economic units in the Danube; wastewater discharges without purification prior to evacuation.

It is a priority to establish measures to improve the wastewater disposal facility in the Danube for water quality rehabilitation.

1.3. Soil pollution

There is degradation of the soil on the Danube, in the areas without shore defense works and in the areas of irregular streams of rivers that flow into the river. At the same time, it is observed that no measures are being taken to rehabilitate the land in the areas of exploitation of the construction materials.

The area with degraded and unhealthy land is mentioned by wastewater discharge in the vicinity of the Danube cliff - the area of Orșova city.

The protection and conservation of the environment remains one of the essential priorities of human society, taking into account the interdependence relations that exist between man and his environment.

2. Development of sustainable tourism in the Danube Cluster

Tourism is a temporary movement of people to destinations other than work and residence, and involves the activities and facilities they have during the trip. Such a move involves the enjoyment of leisure and recreation (Goodal, 1987, p. 475).

During the tourist act, visitors can undertake different activities that can affect the natural environment, sometimes up to the stage when it exceeds its self-regeneration capacity. Precisely for this reason, the ecotourism has been affirmed, which involves carrying out tourism activities in harmony with the natural environment, in order to protect and protect it.

Ecotourism is also called responsible tourism, alternative tourism, sustainable tourism or green tourism.

Awareness of the practice of this type of tourism materialized when people realized that worldwide species of plants and animals were on the verge of extinction, thus they imposed a system of protection of them, of regeneration. Often the tourist activities come in opposition to the nature as the arrangement of the access roads, the structures of

accommodation and public food lead to the degradation of the natural environment. In addition, as the number of visitors in a region increases, the more the environment does not meet the increasing tourist demand.

The practice of ecotourism is the only way that can lead to ensuring an unaltered environment for the development of future generations. It must be understood by the agents involved in the tourism activity, both at the global and national level that natural resources are limited, which is why tourism must also have certain boundaries in accordance with the sustainability of the relief.

Green tourism in order to be actively involved in environmental protection must be based on certain manifestation criteria. They refer to:

- change the attitude of the people who practice tourism with a view to sustainable development;
- protecting the fragility of terrestrial or aquatic ecosystems;
- consideration of the way of life of human communities;
- giving local communities the chance to preserve their environment unchanged;
- limiting the exploitation of natural resources;
- practicing conscious tourism.

The development of responsible tourism implies the development of the rural-urban relationship, the use of alternative means of obtaining electricity, modernization and efficient management of the infrastructures of access, accommodation and food, but also the development of the areas related to the tourist activities to avoid over-exploitation.

The Danube Cluster is a region with a strong tourist attraction at the level of Romania, both due to the particular beauty of the natural setting, where the Danube is the central element of this landscape, as well as due to the anthropic areas that comprise numerous historical or art monuments, some unique in Europe.

The Danube Cluster area has great potential for ecotourism development, especially due to the fact that the area overlaps the “Iron Gates” Natural Park where some rare flora and fauna species are protected in our country. The implementation of sustainable tourism, in harmony with the natural environment, should begin with the population living in the area, with the parties involved in the tourist act, hosts and visitors, all being possible with the support of local authorities and with educating the population on the importance of preserving the environment intact, but also of the customs and traditions because ecotourism in the area of Cluster can not miss the two major components: the natural environment and the native population that will enhance this environment.

The Danube Cluster has the criteria necessary for practicing quality tourism, where visitors are charmed not only by the components of the natural fund, but also by the hospitality of the hosts, the area being burdened with ancient customs.

From the point of view of the attractiveness of the area, the Cluster is visited year by year by an increasing number of tourists. At certain times of the year, especially during the winter or Easter holidays, but also during the summer season, the occupancy rate of the accommodation units in the area is almost 100%. The predominance of Romanian tourists is observed, but the area also enjoys tourists arriving from outside the country's borders.

It is practiced both the tourism of stay with the included meal, as well as the tourism of transit, the visitors also enjoying the possibility of practicing the hiking as the area has numerous ecotouristic routes. Tourists purchase holiday packages both through specialized agencies and on their own directly from the hosts.

At the level of the analyzed area we identified a number of problems that prevent the development of sustainable tourism:

- the lack of an authorized body that contributes to the real promotion of the area both nationally and internationally;

- lack of tourist information points which leads to difficult access to tourist information;
- the area is faced with poor access infrastructure, lacking road information panels or bus parking;
- small investments made in tourism;
- the region is facing an insufficiently trained workforce in the field of tourism.

From the point of view of the tourist offer, the Cluster area has a high potential, noting the Danube Boilers, a unique place in Europe due to its size, which makes you compare the area with the presence of the Norwegian fjords constituting an attraction for nature lovers. In addition to the variety of natural landscape in completing the tourist offer, the anthropic potential is added.

In the area of the Danube Gorge, many types of tourism are practiced:

1. the rural tourism practiced mainly for rest and recreation, there are numerous villages that still keep alive the traditions and customs. The area also enjoys the presence of agrotourism pensions or the existence of traditional festivals that are becoming more and more spectacular year by year: the Festival “Different ethnically, but culturally united” from Eșelnița, the Banat Festival from Eibenthal, the Festival of Accordionists from Moldova Nouă and others.

2. cruise tourism characterized by rides with boats or yachts on the Danube. This type of tourism attracts a large number of visitors, who are eager to enjoy the adrenaline rush of the old river, while admiring the main sights.

3. gastronomic tourism, also known as culinary tourism, attracts visitors who travel especially in the Danube Gorge to enjoy traditional dishes. The slice is famous for fish preparations (fish brine, grilled fish) which is a magnet for tourists. At the same time, the bean sausage and the traditional zacusca complete the menu. Serbian communities in the area offer visitors grilled meat, grilled meat in spicy sauce and Serbian rice.

4. sports tourism attracts visitors with the desire to practice different sports and get out of daily sedentary life. The area has a number of 15 ecotouristic routes arranged where hiking, cycling, sport fishing can be practiced. These have varying lengths, and the degree of difficulty differs from one route to another.

5. cultural tourism based on a series of anthropic objectives that include churches, monuments, archaeological sites, museums. Among them a great tourist potential have the Face of King Decebal from the area of Mraconia Bay, Mraconia Monastery, Saint Ana Monastery and the Catholic Church, both in Orșova, Tabula Traiana.

6. Religious tourism, as a particular form of cultural tourism, is represented by the movement of people to places of worship on the occasion of different Christian holidays or church holidays. In addition to the pilgrimages made on such occasions, the consecrated monasteries of the Clisurii area are visited: Saint Ana Monastery and Mraconia Monastery (see photo. 1).

7. The speleological tourism by visiting the caves, the avenues in the area, the tourists being accompanied by specialized guides presenting the specific characteristics of each visited object. Since the Danube Gorge area has a rich karst relief, there are also forms of the endocarst, the most beautiful caves being the Veterans Cave and the Poncova Cave.



Photo. 1. Mraconia Monastery - (Băbăț, 2019)

Following the presentations I can say that the Danube Cluster area has a rich and diversified natural and anthropic tourism potential that makes this part of the country to become in the near future a top ecotourism region at national level and why not even internationally.

Conclusions

Sustainable development brings major, but positive changes for all, because population, but also nature, have become goals, not means. Even if this involves additional costs and decreased productivity, they can be offset by additional quality of life benefits.

The inhabitants of the Danube Cluster must understand that the approach of sustainable development in the context of tourism development represents the optimal choice for a future as best and the only way to enjoy both present and most important generations, and future generations of everything on Earth.

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