

## RESEARCH REGARDING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRITOURISM IN THE NEIGHBOURING AREA OF COZIA NATIONAL PARK, ROMANIA

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### Abstract

*The work was performed based on the research undertaken over a period of more than 20 years on the activity of agritourism and rural tourism in Oltenia, aimed at the touristic and agritourist potential of the neighbouring and protected area of Cozia National Park. Through careful research and SWOT analysis, it was concluded that the studied area possesses a very rich and valuable touristic and anthropic potential, which presently has not been sufficiently utilized. Furthermore, a veritable capacity of attracting tourists was discovered through large quasi-virgin areas, of great originality and variability, which have suffered almost no human intervention. These areas enjoy a rich flora and fauna with unique species in Europe and a relatively large number of touristic attractions and monuments of nature, included on the list of UNESCO world heritage. The research clearly underlines the impact of industrial tourism over time, on the natural and anthropic environment, realising that almost all of its components have been reversibly or irreversibly affected. The final conclusion is that the only viable option of agritourism and tourism that can be practiced in the area of National Parks is based on the principle of ecologic sustainability, which would not damage the natural and built environment and would have a favourable impact on the economic and social-cultural life. In this paper, a series of general recommendations are clearly formulated, on the implementation, strategies, policies, directions and objectives of development of this form of tourism.*

**Key words:** agritourism, ecosystem, pollution, protected area, resources.

### INTRODUCTION

The problem of sustainable development takes part on global level in a veritable trend to change the planet, to combat pollution, fight against drainage of resources, protection of varieties of biosphere, saving of species and, is based on a set of new values, mirroring a new cultural mentality as compared to nature embraced especially by the younger generation (Malița, 1998).

Presently, the concept that enjoys the largest audience among the specialists on a global level is that of sustainable development, which is often used as a synonym along with those of viable development, sustainable, human and even ecological. This represents the manifestation of economic development falling within the scope of using the planet's natural resources, forms of conventional and non-conventional energy, while at the same time protecting and preserving the environment, representing a trend to save nature and our

natural surroundings (Stănciulescu, 2000; Căndea, 2006).

The World Commission on Environment and Development defines sustainable development as being "a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The Finnish economist Malaska explains more comprehensively: "Human development is ecologically sustainable, in relation to the environment, if the interventions and effects imposed by human activities, whether economical, technological, social or cultural, do not alter the rate of change of nature and ecosystems in a way which is not controllable by nature or in an irreversible way from the point of view of future generations". Essential for sustainable development is the respect for the interests of those who come after us. The central idea is not to exhaust resources needed, preoccupation which did not characterize the pre-modern or modern economy (Iagăru et al., 2016; Păcurar et al., 2014).

The general current strategy of international development also led to the development of world tourism, desiring to introduce a new economic world order and to gradually reduce the existent discrepancy between industrialised countries and developing countries. In this respect, tourism and implicitly agritourism are considered a major activity in the lives of nations because of the direct influence on social, cultural, educative and economic sectors with large openness to international exchanges (Bran, 1997, 1998; Comen, 2006).

If we refer to the evolution of tourism at present, it is characterised by a profound renewal of world tourism offer, especially by the development of a new tourist product range, higher from the qualitative and quantitative point of view. Tourism, more than any other field of activity, is dependent on the environment, this representing its primary matter, the object and the field of activity and of carrying out of tourism being its framework support, the bearer of its resources. Tourism is carried out in the environment and through the environment, its quality being able to favour or to deny tourist activities. The more the resources are varied and more complex, and especially not altered, with properties as close as possible to the primary ones, the more their tourist's interest is higher, and the activities which are generated by them are more valuable and more attractive, answering to various tourist motivations (Stănciulescu, 2000).

The appreciation made by the Swiss specialist professor J. Krippendorf (1987) is very conclusive: „If we can lose, and then rebuild capital in other economic fields, it is not the same thing in tourism, where the basic substance – landscape and land – once lost, is irremediably lost”.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The work presents in the first part the quality and favourability of tourist resources in Cozia National Park, in performing agritourism and rural tourism activities, and then an analysis regarding their sustainable development in the researched area is carried out.

The methodology used in assessing and diagnosing the agritourist phenomenon in the area is the one presented by Glăvan (2002) and

Călina et al. (2017): observation, getting of information – as basic method, being thus emphasised aspects such as: tourism environment, tourism resources, tourism infrastructure, etc.; description, presentation of facts – as means of rendering, presenting all noticed elements; analysis, investigation – which comprises involvement of a set of instruments, techniques and methods of enhancement and explanation of relations which are established between the elements of tourist phenomenon.

Emphasis is put first of all on the 3 interdependent elements of agritourism and rural tourism: attraction towards the beauties of nature, novelties, charm and events specific to life in the countryside; accommodation and meal, without having the expectation to be at hotel standards, but to be of quality and offered with hospitality; transport, access routes to the rural environment are primordial elements to ensure a continuous flow of tourists.

The main aspects aimed are particularised by Călina and Călina (2011):

### *1. Environmental context*

*a) Relief.* The studied area comprised in Brezoi – Titești inter-Carpathian depression and a part of the Getic perimeter, or the Getic depression formed in the Carpathian geosyncline, where sedimentary, marine and alluvial deposits are predominant, where the system of Olt river with its median direction carved deep valleys, (33% mountains, 45% foothills, 20% sub-Carpathian hills and depressions and 2% flood plains), marked by pronounced fragmentations. The area presents a relief of mountain and hill with sub-Carpathian depressions and plateau hills. The high step is constituted by mountains and comprises Căpățanii and Lotrului peaks, Cozia massif and, partially, the southern sector of Făgăraș Mountains and Tara Loviștei intermountain depression.

*b) Climate.* As in the territory of the studied area various forms of relief are found, which by their orographic particularities influence the carrying out of thermal, wind and atmospheric rainfall conditions, the climate, although a moderate continental one, has certain nuances which are imposed first of all by the relief in steps, from heights exceeding 2000 m (Suru, Mizgavu) and up to 300-400 m in Drăgășanilor «plain». Under these circumstances, we meet

oscillations of temperature varying from  $-2^{\circ}\text{C}$  (in the mountains) and  $+11^{\circ}\text{C}$  (in the southern part of the area), the winters are longer and rich in precipitations, and the summers are sometimes short. The months of July, August and September provide the best conditions to organise trips. The annual average of the temperature in Râmnicu Vâlcea is of  $10.2^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

c) *Hydrography*. The main axle of the entire hydrographic network of the area is Olt river, and its most important tributary is Lotru river, which springs from Parâng Mountains and gathers the waters from the northern versants of Căpățâni Mountains and the southern ones of Lotru Mountains. It has a length of 80 km and the area of the hydrographic basin is just about  $1000\text{ km}^2$ , over which a density of hydrographic network of  $0.77\text{ km/km}^2$  is overlapped, greater than the entire sector ( $0.65\text{ km/km}^2$ ), but specific to a mountain area.

In Parâng Mountains, the glacial lakes Câlcescu – from which the Lotru river springs - Găuri, Lacul lui Vidal, Pisari and others originate from the accumulation of water in the cauldrons of former cirque glaciers. Glacial lakes of a rare beauty are also found in Latoriței – Cioara, Iezerășul Latoriței, Muntinul Mic and Singuraticul Mountains (Călina and Călina, 2011).

d) *Vegetation*. The forests cover in 93% of cases the Cozia, Narău, Doabra-Călinești massifs. The main existent levels of vegetation are represented by multi-tiered forests, depending on the altitude, from 300 m to 1667 m. The general composition of the forests in Cozia National Park is mainly formed of beech (57%), holm (14%), spruce (18%) and mixed species: hornbeam, cherry, lime, manna, etc. (11%). The area of brushes aged over 80 years is of 62%, and the quasi-virgin natural brushes total over 6000 ha. The scientific value of Cozia National Park is constituted by the existence on large areas of forestry ecosystems and natural meadows, slightly altered by human intervention, of great originality and variability. Among the rare plants in the flora of our country, in Cozia – Narutu area grow: sănzâiene (goldenrods) (*Galium kitaibelianum* Schult.), which are found only in the Romanian Carpathians Mountains, garofița albă (white mini-carnation) (*Dianthus spiculifolius* Schur.), glacial relict which grows only in the

Romanian Carpathians, laleaua (*Tulipa*) (*Fritillaria montana* Hoppe ex W.D.J. Koch), gladioli (*Gladiolus imbricatus* L.), albina (dark-bee orchid) (*Ophrys fusca* Link.), a Mediterranean orchid which is a Neozoic relict, located here in the most northerly European station and other rare species. Moreover, the Cozia – Narutu mountain area is rich in endemic species whether to Carpathians, or to the entire country. We mention just a few: *Dianthus kitaibelii* ssp. *spiculifolium* Schur., *Dianthus henteri* Heuff. ex Griseb. & Schenk, *Centaurea coziensis* Nyár. (vinetele de Cozia - Cozia aubergines), *Iris hungarica* ssp. *dacica* (Beldie) Prod. et Nyár., *Rosa coziae* Nyár. or măceșul Coziei (Cozia dogberry) etc.

e) *Fauna*. Fauna, interesting and rich in species of different origins, keeps almost the same spectrum mentioned in the flora, in the sense of the predominance of European elements. The composition and the repartition of fauna on the studied territory are reflected, like in the case of vegetation, by the climatic particularities, by the diversity and the altitudinal tier of the relief. Consequently, the fauna differentiates as follows:

Among the elements of central Europe, we mention here: echinus (*Erinaceus europaeus* L.), mole (*Talpa europaea* L.), bear (*Ursus arctos* L.), squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris* L.), wolf (*Canis lupus* L.), lynx (*Lynx lynx* L.), wild cat (*Felis silvestris* Schreber), marten (Martes martes L.), weasel (*Mustela nivalis* L.), deer (*Cervus elaphus* L.), doe (*Capreolus capreolus* L.) and badger (*Meles meles* L.) among the mammals, and among the birds we mention: nutcracker (*Nucifraga caryocatactes* L.), jay (*Garrulus glandarius* L.), robin (*Erithacus rubecula* L.), ox-eye (*Troglodytes troglodytes* L.), owl (*Athene noctua* Scopoli), eagle owl (*Strix aluco* L.) etc.

As elements of the Euro–Siberian fauna, we mention: grosbeak (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes* L.), which comes in the hot season, crossbill (*Loxia recurvirostra* Vrolik.), megie (*Pica pica* L.), sparrow (*Passer domesticus* L.), crested lark (*Galerita cristata* L.), chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs* L.), blackbird (*Turdus merula* L.) a.s.o.

The fauna of mammals of Cozia Mountains comprises 39 species, out of which two are protected: chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*

*carpatica* Couturier), recently returned, especially in Narutu Massif, and the lynx (*Lynx lynx* L.), species that in the last decade increased their number in this part of the country. Of the total of mentioned mammals, 16 species pertain to Rodentia order, and 12 species pertain to Fissipedia order. Habitual of these are the mammals specific to Carpathians: bear, Carpathian deer, pine marten, forest dormouse (*Dryomys nitedula* Pallas), echinus. The aquatic fauna of Cozia Massif comprises over 130 species, out of which the majority (84) pertain to Passeriformes order, the predominant and qualitative, not only quantitative group of birds.

Aquatic fauna is represented by a huge number of invertebrates and over 30 species of fish specific to mountain rivers, such as: trout – *Salmo trutta fario* L., bullhead – *Cotus gobio* L., minnow - *Phoxynus phoxynus* L., nase – *Chondrostoma nasus* L., barbell – *Barbus barbus* L., carp – *Cyprinus carpio* L., Romanian loach – *Sabanejewia romanica* Băcescu, the last one being endemic in Romania and thus it is imposed to ensure not only the survival of the species as is, but also its survival in as many basins in the country as possible.

### 2. Position and accessibility

- Attractive geographic position between the Danube and the Carpathians;
- The region is crossed by 3 European Roads (10,000 km of roads): E 70; E 79; E 81; 4<sup>th</sup> European Corridor; 5 ports on the Danube and Craiova International Airport.

### 3. Economical-social and cultural framework

- Agriculture and forestry represent 51.2% of the economic activities of the population in the region;
- Preponderantly rural population-54.6% of the population in the regions lives in rural environment;
- Representative ethnographic centres of the regions are as follows: Horezu, Vaideeni, Polovragi, Ștefănești, Bărbătești, Somănești;
- From the cultural point of view, the thesaurus is completed by museums, house museums, historical monuments, monuments of laic, religious arts, archaeological sites etc; moreover, the area is considered to be a land of monasteries, churches and hermitages, being

the second region, after Moldova, as number and importance (Călina and Călina, 2011).

In Romania, the problems related to evaluation of the impact on the environment were regulated by Law no. 135/1996, where the detailed provisions to elaborate the environment agreements and balances with the participation of environment agents, and specialized companies in environment issues were established. In the WTO publication “Tourism in the year 2010” it is specified as follows: “Sustainable tourism develops the idea of meeting the needs of present tourists and the tourist industry while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as a leading management of all resources in such a way that we can fulfil economic, social, and aesthetic needs while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems”.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the research and on pursued objectives in the research methodology, the team of experts carried out the SWOT analysis, through which all positive and negative aspects were very clearly, realistically and pertinently emphasized, which may favour or prevent development of sustainable agritourism and tourism in the researched area.

### Strengths:

- richness of natural patrimony of Cozia National Park;
- access infrastructure in the protected area insufficiently artificialized;
- diversity of natural tourist resources;
- fauna and flora rich in species which are unique in Europe;
- existence of wild areas, not affected by human intervention;
- relatively large number of tourist objectives included in the UNESCO world heritage;
- existence of the legislative framework which allows the development of the network of protected areas and their preservation, as well as the necessary conditions to establish the administration for protected areas, in view of initiating their management.

### Weaknesses:

- precarious information and lack of awareness/education in respect to the natural

heritage, of its importance at present, but especially in the future;

- chaotic location of constructions and extension of the built-up area in the space in the immediate proximity or even inside the protected natural area, aiming at developing and further execution of buildings or even tourist resorts;
- reduced perception of local community near the natural park of the importance of practicing sustainable agritourism and tourism, as supplemental financial source both for the individual and for the local community;
- reduced level of training of tourist guides in sustainable agritourism and tourism, as well as of the specialty staff administering the accommodation structures;
- the offer of activities and services, as well as the accommodation capacity at the level of the protected area is reduced, and the defective administration of tourist facilities already existent produce large quantities of waste;
- the lack of sewers, with wastewater treatment plants – leads to the pollution of brooks;
- the irrational exploitation of natural resources by massive felling of trees and inappropriate storage of sawdust, by inadequate grazing and overgrazing, poaching, uncontrolled tourism, etc.;
- the lack of an effective administration to initiate a management of sustainable development of the protected area, as well as modern marketing through which its true value, both on a local/regional level may be emphasised, as well as on national/international level.

#### *Opportunities:*

- the increase of the number of internal and external tourists/ visitors who have as motivation sustainable agritourism and tourism, based on ecological principles;
- the diversification of specialty offer on sustainable agritourism and tourism, based on ecological principles, by including some representative tourist objectives of Cozia Mountains;
- the discovery, diversification and promotion of some events based on „nature calendars” (e.g.: clopping of deer, dance of the grouse, blossom of mountain peony, etc.);
- providing facilities to investors in national/natural parks by the administration of

parks, or even by the competent ministries in our country.

#### *Threats:*

- competition on a national and international level in respect to the offer in the field of sustainable agritourism and tourism, based on ecological principles;
  - superior and high performance systems to manage waste in protected areas and their neighbouring areas, existent in other areas in the country or in the countries in the region;
  - process of accentuated urbanization of rural population with direct implications in losing immaterial/material cultural heritage existent in the National Park;
  - probability of decrease of income of communities from the park or in its neighbouring space as result of the restriction of some economic activities specific to the areas, if they are not compensated by the new business opportunities that appear by practicing sustainable agritourism and tourism, based on ecological principles;
  - proliferation, near Cozia National Park, of some forms of industrial tourism, to make unfair competition, due to the non-observance of the minimum conditions to protect natural and built environment;
- Moreover, research carried out on the tourism potential of Cozia National Park and especially on natural and anthropic tourist resources, aimed the identification, inventory and analysis of main types of impact caused to the natural and built environment as follows in table 1 (phenomenon also stressed out by Bran et al., 1997, 1998; Bălteanu et al., 2008).
- From the analysis of data collected on site, it was established that the main factors which significantly contributed to the increase of agritourism implicitly, are as follows, factors also found by Lieth & Whittaker (1995):
- substantial increase of tourist circulation and of the number of tourists on a local, regional or even national and international level;
  - emersion of complex developments and facilities in the area, for winter sports or spa treatment;
  - increase of the number of tourist structures of different types and sizes, as well as of those of public food;
  - substantial increase of road and railway traffic, in particular, and less of air traffic;

- increase of the degree of dissatisfaction of local population due to the irrational development of tourist activities, leading to illegal expropriations and processing of natural resources;

- continuous degradation of the landscape and environment;
- extremely reduced number or even the absence of minimum facilities to stop or limit pollution (water treatment plants, incineration of household refuse and others).

Table 1. Types of impact caused to natural and built environment

Impact on natural environment	Impact on anthropic environment
<p>a. Changes in the composition of flora and fauna species</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- destruction of valuable vegetal species to crop plants and to valorise wood and cutting of natural vegetation to realise tourist facilities;</li> <li>- restraining the areas of natural reservations, of sanctuaries with wild life;</li> <li>- destruction of the habitat of the species and hunting of animals for pleasure, gastronomic curiosities and souvenirs market;</li> <li>- acting on the internal and external migration of animals.</li> </ul> <p>b. Pollution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- pollution of soil;</li> <li>- pollution of atmosphere;</li> <li>- pollution of water by discharge of wastewater, discharging of petroleum substances;</li> <li>- sound pollution due to tourist activities and transportations.</li> </ul> <p>c. Erosion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- increase of the phenomenon and degree of landslides;</li> <li>- trampling and compaction of ground, resulting in the increase of discharge of pluvial water and superficial erosion;</li> <li>- emphasising of processes that trigger avalanches;</li> <li>- affecting o special geological forms and sites (caves, sinkholes);</li> <li>- increase of the level of shore erosion on the main watercourses.</li> </ul> <p>d. Natural resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- diminution of the debit of water sources by over-solicitation and over-exploitation;</li> <li>- diminution of classical fuel resources for the necessary energy to support tourist activities;</li> <li>- increase of risk for natural fire.</li> </ul> <p>e. Visual impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- tourist structures and facilities (hotels, recreational constructions, auxiliary services);</li> <li>- garbage and waste resulting from tourist circulation.</li> </ul>	<p>a. Urban forms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- emphasising the contrast between the urban area arranged from the tourist point of view and other residential areas;</li> <li>- modifications in urban structures (industrial areas, residential) and other utilities (leisure, structures to receive tourists)</li> <li>- transformations in equipments and urban furniture (streets, surfacing of roads, paving, lighting)</li> </ul> <p>b. Urban environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- set aside of lands:</li> <li>- modification of hydrological, climatic regime.</li> </ul> <p>c. Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- occurrence of new facilities of general and specific infrastructure;</li> <li>- increase or over-loading with elements of infrastructure (roads, railways, parking, electric grills, communication systems, water supply);</li> <li>- re-orientation of environment management, to adapt areas for tourist purposes (winter sports, hiking, escalades, cycling tourism).</li> </ul> <p>d. Restoration and competition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- re-use and restoration of old urban sites, of historical buildings;</li> <li>- restoration and renovation of old buildings as a second residence;</li> <li>- decline of some tourist attractions or of a region because of the emersion of other attractions or the change of motivation or of tourist habits.</li> </ul> <p>e. Visual impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- significant increase of areas occupied by constructions;</li> <li>- new architectural concepts and projects, not harmonised with the existent ones and with the environment;</li> <li>- conglomeration of population and goods.</li> </ul>

In order to solve the problems approached within the research theme, from the beginning, the plans of common actions were established, being correlated with those of WTO (World Trade Organisation), WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council) and the National Strategy for Tourism Development, which are supposed to know and approach the following problems:

- first of all, by the research methods, all natural and cultural particularities were inventoried, which may constitute the basis of tourism potential and analysis of all the aspects;
- then, all the values and opportunities that may form the basis of sustainable tourism, in protected natural areas with tourism potential were identified;

- clear specification, from the beginning, of the purposes for protection for the protected natural area, with participation of specialists and all interested parties in its tourist exploitation;
- multidisciplinary working teams were established and conditions were ensured for a better collaboration with local population, with regional and local organizations interested in tourism;
- carrying out of a study regarding the launching in protected natural areas of a new tourist product, based on the amplification of the educational, teaching and scientific role;
- analysis of the capacity to support different areas, components of natural areas with tourism potential, to ensure quality at the level of international standards;

- analysis of the degree of exploitation of resources, taking into account the requirements for environment protection and creation of conditions to implement the plans of complex economic arrangement and exploitation;
- implementation in the area of a new technical management, appropriate to develop systems of sustainable transportation and a promotional and communication strategy to promote the idea of protected natural area, within the context of creation of new tourism products;
- then, the internal and international markets regarding the diversification and the development of tourist activities in protected areas were pursued and analysed and a final appreciation was made concerning all the impacted aspects;
- moreover, the programmes that monitor information about natural areas regarding tourist circulation were established, the consequences and the periodical review of plans of tourism development in order to observe environment quality standards;
- in the end, specialty consultancy will be provided in supporting travel agents or economic agents, interested in the development of activities that are compliant with the national and local policy on environment protection.

*General recommendations to achieve sustainable agritourism and tourism*

Keeping all the tourist-based functions of the national parks and of the biosphere, reservations must have as basis the drafting of specific tourist development plans, which should not be limited to these natural spaces and to be inscribed in a much wider regional context.

The isolated actions of partial establishment exclude the achievement of a sustainable tourism.

Means of transport, which should be as noiseless as possible, have to be developed and promoted, by using alternative energy sources, and the tourist endowments and equipment must be achieved in such a way and on such a scale, that the fullest harmony with the local environment be achieved, by using local and traditional construction materials. This is demanded for future types of holidays which require low energy costs and which could exploit the least amount of existing resources

and at the same time which should contribute to the environment preservation and safety.

Both for tourists and for the local population it is important too that the role and the method of putting into practice the sustainable tourism be explained, as well as the gradual achievement of a life style compatible with the environment international safety standards, something which is very useful for the future generations development requirements.

Complying with these basic requirements necessitates a political and economic commitment from all the units interested in the tourism development, providing actual financial support, opening partnerships between the international, national and local bodies.

Following these partnership activities, the following measures which are useful in the achievement of a sustainable tourism for the protected natural areas can be elaborated:

- rigorous instruments and law provisions on the running legal status consolidation of the national parks and biosphere reservation;
- European Charter drafting of practicing sustainable tourism within and outside the protected natural areas;
- elaborating a European Action Program for the sustainable tourism which should include putting into practice certain pilot priorities which should prove the touristic and ecologic efficiency of this type of tourism.

*The impact of the agritourism and rural tourism development in the researched area on the economic, social and cultural life*

The implementation and development of agritourism and rural tourism in the neighbouring areas and in the Cozia National Park had a particularly favourable effect on all the aspects, but especially upon the inhabitants' economic, social and cultural life, the mentioned effect being showed by the following:

- providing durable and sustainable development of the rural localities by rationally using all the resources, wastes decrease and removal, recycling, providing environment preservation and safety, decrease of the process of taking agricultural and sylvan lands from the agricultural and sylvan circuit, impact also noticed by Louwagie et al. (2009);
- stopping the population exodus from the rural areas towards the urban ones, especially of the

young population, because of the lack of occupation (impact also notified by Comen, 2006; Moinet, 2006);

-considerably enhancing the number and volume of investments in the area – in the infrastructure, agriculture, trade and tourism, phenomenon also stressed by Călina et al. (2017);

-increasing the level of education, culture and civilisation of the inhabitants from the villages, because by practicing agritourism they need to study, keep themselves updated and continuously perfecting, in order to be up to the level of demands of the guests coming from different social media and countries;

-improving of the inhabiting space, the endowment with material elements of modern civilisation (restrooms, running cold and warm water indoors, sewage system, telephone, fax, television, etc.), which represents a true revolution of the degree of material civilisation of the Romanian rural space after the communist period (aspect also found by Stoian 2006);

-significant increase of the jobs percentage, especially those occupied by the female personnel, preponderantly attracted in the agritourism activity (Glăvan, 2002; Moinet, 2006);

-direct source of capitalization and modernisation of the agricultural exploitations, because the incomes reach directly to the agriculturalist families;

-acquiring new professional competence, distinct from that of an agriculturalist - in the field of providing tourist services (impact also found by Giudici & Dessi, 2011);

-keeping and perpetuating traditional jobs and crafts such as: pottering, artisanal processing of wood and leather, weaving, painting on glass, handicraft and embroidery, etc.;

-substantial decrease of the unemployment rate in the rural space and increase of the incomes of the rural farms and farmsteads engaged in such an activity (also noticed by Marques, 2006);

-increasing the standard of living of inhabitants from the rural areas where it developed rapidly and tirelessly (phenomenon also notified by Goodwin, 2003);

-recovery of the agricultural building stock and capitalisation of all the cultural traditions from

the rural world and of the typical products from the agriculture and of the traditional gastronomy in the region (Bitsani & Kavoura, 2012);

-the possibility to capitalise as efficiently as possible on the elements of representative architecture, civilisation, religion, art and culture, which express a certain cultural identity and develops the tolerance spirit (impact also found by McGehee, 2004);

-substantial decrease of the gap between the way of habitation from the rural environment as compared to the urban one.

*The strategy and policies of sustainable development of agritourism and rural tourism in the researched area of the Cozia National Park*

Regarding the *strategy and policy* in the researched area there is the need that modernisation and development of the infrastructure be taken as primary measures and endowment of the area and of localities, the rebuilding and safety of both the natural and built area, of both the spiritual and cultural thesaurus, making population aware and keeping them updated as well as the tourists, privatisation, revitalisation and a wider promotion of tourism.

The National Institute of Research and Development in Tourism, based on the studies made, proposes a few primary lines of tourism development, within the global and social and economic strategy of the area, in the context of the environment safety and of the tourist resources and of institutional and organisational regulations of the tourism activity.

In order to comply to the demands of I.N.C.D.T. (National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism), it is required, within the sustainable development of agritourism, that in the sustainable development of agritourism and rural tourism, a series of global strategies at the level of the region with rigorous policies and programs should be adopted, based on the partnership between the government, the local authorities and the public and private actors. All these needs to be oriented towards the creation of a responsible administration and of a rigorous and efficient institutional and legislative climate, which can contribute in a decisive manner to the need of

environment safety and rehabilitation, on the territory of the Cozia National Park.

The required policies and strategies are as follows:

-firstly, promotion policies at the level of all the educational institutions, as well as informing the population regarding the need to practice sustainable tourism and agritourism in the researched area;

-policies on the modernisation and development of the general infrastructure and territory and localities endowment;

- rigorous policies and a protectionist character on the removal of pollution sources, of ecologic reconstruction and sustainable development, of the natural and built environment safety, of the priceless cultural, historical and spiritual thesaurus;

-policies which could favour the sustainable development of tourism and agritourism, as well as their restructuring and modernisation.

*The development lines of tourism* are:

-it is primary the development and promotion of specific forms of specialised tourism: *scientific* (in natural reservations); *ecotourism* (both in the protected areas, and in the neighbouring areas), *speotourism* (in the mountains areas), *horse riding*, etc;

-revitalisation and development of the wellness and spa treatment tourism by persistently promoting the prophylactic cure and of fitness in all the tourist resorts;

-consolidation and development of repose and relaxation tourism, with emphasis on the diversification of the holiday and recreation offer;

-development of the transit tourism, by achieving modern infrastructures for the road and railways traffic, which should not affect in any way the protected area;

-promotion of the itinerant tourism with cultural and religious traits;

-the maximum capitalisation of the tourist potential of some rural localities;

-implementation and promotion in the nearest vicinity of the business and reunions tourism.

The objectives which must be included in the *development strategy* are as follows:

-tourist offer diversification;

-development of the tourism within the territory and introduction into the circuit of new tourist areas and values:

-restructuring and modernisation of the tourism activity;

-achieving an adequate institutional and organisational frame of the tourist activity;

-environment and tourist resources safety.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the study of tourism potential of the researched area, we determined that Cozia National Park has a very valuable natural and anthropic tourism potential, represented by the various climate, rich flora, fauna and relief resources, which have not been used and promoted at their true value and beauty in the activity of sustainable tourism and agritourism, both on a local and national level. Practicing of industrial tourism and agritourism, not based on sustainable and ecological principles, led to the manifestation, in protected areas as well as in the neighbouring areas, of negative aspect with strong and almost irreversible impact on the natural and built environment, influencing in a decisive manner the decisions of the research team to rigorously and scientifically study and the necessity of implementation of sustainable tourism and agritourism. With an experience of more than 25 years in the evolution of tourism, in general, and of agritourism in particular, we came to the conclusion that these activities had a very unfavourable impact on the protected areas as, between 1990-2000 the so-called *wild tourism* was practiced, which rapidly and chaotically developed, with no respect for the natural and anthropic environment. Subsequently with the creation of a legislation in the field and the increase in the level of knowledge and information of the local population and authorities, the foundations of a new type of tourism was establish, based on sustainable and ecological principles, which served to obtain advantages both for the environment as well as for the local population. Paying close attention and balancing the negative aspects caused by the impact of the tourism activity in general on the environment and the advantages which are gained by practicing this new type of tourism with revolutionary aspects, based on ecological principles, we determined that the two concepts, preservation of natural and anthropic environment and tourism, may be compatible

only if the latter is implemented and developed on healthy principles, which do not prejudice in any way the natural and built environment. Moreover, the research team, based on practical knowledge and experience gained over the years of research, formulated several general recommendations which may influence in a positive manner the development of tourism, and elaborated a plan of strategies and policies aiming at promoting, on the level of all educational and local administration institutions, the necessity to practice sustainable tourism and agritourism, the development of general infrastructure and fitting of the territory and the localities, protectionist policing regarding elimination of pollution sources and the invaluable cultural-historical and spiritual thesaurus. A particularly important contribution regarding the research is shaping the direction of tourism development in general, which mainly aims at practicing scientific tourism, focused on knowledge and protection of environment of protected areas, ecological tourism, itinerant tourism with cultural and religious valences, likewise that which is based on making the best use of cultural, historical and ethnographic heritage of rural localities in the neighbouring areas of the National Park. At the same time, the objectives that must be included in their future development strategy must be very clearly and correctly established.

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