



Dumitru Nancu - Abstract Thesis:
*Studies on SMEs involvement in the agrotourism development from
the Danube Delta's Area*

Abstract

The present paper, intitled „Studies on SMEs involvment in the agrotourism development from the Danube Delta’s Area”, represents a systematic research, with a substantial economical-managerial content, aiming to offer entrepreneurs, but also to those who take decisions at a macro-level, a coherent system, strictly and rigourous scientific, to approach the set-up and development problem of SMEs in the agrotourism field, with direct and concrete references to the delta space.

We express our hope that entrepreneurs and those who take decisions at a macro level, will have, by using the present’s material results, an informational/related to ideas support, usefull in every stage of the decisional process. Before describing the stages and the methods used to create the present study, we specify that purpose of the present paper represents an absolute necessity, at the areal level overlapped on the administrative territory of Tulcea county.

As Constanta TOSMEC’s managing director, I was faced in my professional activity with series of difficuties, starting with getting to know the potential of the area, to carry on profitable activities of a certain profile, the bureaucracy linked to the SMEs’ set-up, to obtain their authorization in the agrotouristic field, to attract financing from communitary funds. Obviously, the specialized literature has already approached the above mentioned aspects, but either in a general, or in a heterogenous way, focusing on certain elements, mostly overlooking to emphasize the role and the importance of SMEs of the agrotourism development in the Danube Delta Area.

In our approach, we accomplished a methodological system, structured according to the working stages, concrete, stipulated in the analysis plan, which lead to drawing up of some coclusions and recommendations – partially - presented in the chapters’ content, but especially at the end of the thesis.

Sources were obtained both through direct informing, but also through the instrumentality of the doctorate degree thesis coordinator and of other field specialists, by consulting the thematic indexes of the studied work.

As a consequence, we distinguish in our work various information stages: on the field (visits at certain companies, associations, specialized units, cental and local public administration agencies etc), office (including press and internet research and documentation etc.).

From a content point of view, the material that was used, belongs to various categories, as: presentation, popularizing and promoting documents, in which studies with a general and a specific character have the precedence (management/ agrarian marketing books and papers, public relations, advertising ...).

Regarding the data collection techniques, used in the documentation on the field stage, we usually used direct techniques, wich imply an immediate contact between the reasercher and the investigated reality, but also indirect techniques, the reasercher investigating through documents, archive sources, economical testimonies (reports, accounts, statistical statements etc.).

Within the indirect technique (documentary), specific to human sciences, we took into consideration various scientific papers from the studied field, but also from borderline subjects, official and archive documents, as well as those found on the Internet (the European tourism situations, agrotourism trends, concept, trends etc.).

We this way collected data referring to the SMEs evolution in the rural and agro tourism field, structure and some of the characteristics of tourists segments, data regarding prices of some of the companies.

From agropensions' registers from Tulcea county (so through internal sources) we have rendered valuable the information concerning some economic services situation (specially, by studying some specific reports). From all the external resources, we used publications of tourism companies associations, specialized agencies ("The agropensions guidelines", "The tourism information journal", different statistic publications etc.).

By carrying out analysis operations, we founded our arguments on the utilization of some methods having the folloing repartition: methods establishing the level/the magnitude of the phenomenon (comparative method), methods that define the phenomenon's structure and the correlations with other phenomenons (especially the documents division method); analysis methods of phenomenons characteristic to a group of homogenous entities (statistic method).

The division method was used so that global results of phenomenon and processes can be decomposed into elements, which led to an expansion of the comparative area, from general to particular, facilitating conclusions and recommendations, suggestions and action lines formulated in the final chapter.

Through the research carried out, we aimed at pointing out the achieved results, their systematization into an unitary subsystem, integrated into the paper's general structure.

The biography used was organized in an alphabetic order of the authors and it contains all the fundamental works that contributed to the present study. We have linked it in the footnotes to the used source for different ideas, statistic data, tables, graphs and other suggestive pictures.

The primary objectives of this work have concretized in a "radiography" of the set-up and the development of the SMEs theme, on the emphase of the economic parameters of the SME sector's evolution in Romania, but also in the study concerning the incidence of economical, political and social factors on the SMEs sectos, within the European integration framework.

In the first chapter – Setting-up and expanding SMEs in the national economy, we have debated the concept of Small and Medium Enterprise in the EU and in Romania, the communitary acquis in the small enterprises field and we have made vast refereces to some national aspects concerning the European legislation adoption.

We have also analysed the Strategy for SMEs and Cooperatives Development (2007-2013), taking into account the international competitiveness growth desideratum of SMEs through technological modernizing and in accordance with the European standards and with the business infrastructure development.

Given the difficulties which SMEs face with in practice, including the aspect of obtaining European funds, we cthought necessary to insist on the highly qualified consultancy services addressed to the SMEs and on their orientation towards the market, against the striking necessity to facilitate the access to financing through promoting financial instruments adequate to the SMEs' needs.

Chapter II – Economic parameters of the SMEs sector in Romania – have as starting point the presentation and the analyse of statistical data regarding SMEs, trying to emphasize the SMEs sector in Romania – from a quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

This is also where we focused on the innovative activities and on the business incubators. And, in our opinion, we brought solid arguments in favour of a rapid SMEs setting-up and development, analysing factors that can influence the set-up of small and medium enterprises, and also the advantages and disadvantages implied by the SMEs set-up and development.

Obviously, we couldn't avoid stopping on the causes that generate difficulties in the SMEs activity, resorting on an evaluation of the overall situation of SMEs from Romania (taking into account official statistical data published in 2008, for the previous year).

Chapter III focuses on the economical, political and social factors incidence on the SMEs sector, within the European integration context.

We thought it necessary to approach the main aspects of the EU's Lisbon Program implementation (Modern policy for SMEs focused on economic growth and jobs creation) and of the Romanian SMEs penetration on the European market.

The Romanian entrepreneurs' integration into an open and competitive environment theme has also implied approaching the following aspects:

- Improving SMEs access on different markets;
- The access on a single market requirements (the CE mark – health – public safety);
- Quality standards and the incidence of Copyrighting and intellectual property rights and of the Commercial Politics on the Romanian SMEs, while accessing the extended Internal Market);
- The SMEs performance improvement necessity vs. Innovation (the main policies and results in the research-development sector, the development of companies fundamented on technology);
- Participation to the pan-european SMEs networkings.

In the fourth chapter we have resorted to a presentation/analysis of the Danube Delta's polarizing potential regarding the SMEs focused on eco-tourism, rural tourism and agrotourism activities.

We have tried to clarify the conceptual aspects regarding rural tourism, agrotourist resources and the main components of these ones, making vast references at the rural touristic product and showing the rural tourism and agro tourism perspectives in the European Union.

- We have attributed a special consistency to the multicriterial approach regarding the Danube Delta – Tulcea county areal, including points of reference as the following:
 - Demographic and socio-economical characterization of the delta space;
 - Regional economy – Specific sectors and activities – Rural tourism and agrotourism in the Danube Delta Area;
 - Indicators of the touristic activity in the Danube Delta;
 - Delta's reserves in ecological, rural tourism and agrotourism.

Rural, agrotourism and ecotourism in the Danube Delta can take place all year long, implying reduced investments – except for the infrastructure problem, which does not belong to the SMEs sector – and a low risk level, representing an occupational alternative for the rural labour power, a method of diversifying economic activities from the rural area and a stability and stabilization factor for the regional population.

By debating and judiciously arguing during the present work, we wish to outline the fact that SMEs that are focusing on the agrotourism activity, entail a strong (sustainable) economical development component, beyond their well-known potential, and they offer an integration path worth to be taken into account into the European Union of the romanian rural society.

Given the targeted for reaserch areal's natural-economic potential, we consider that we have identified the most existent oportunities of agrotouristic genre, valuable through the SMEs regional sector's consolidation.

We point out that in the researched areal there are approximatly 5.000.000 SMEs that are making a turnover of more than 400 million euros/year; the employees number is of approximatly 21.000. At the same time, we mention that under 10% of these SMEs companies from Tulcea county, have as activity object tourism services.

Given the regional potential in agrotourism, the Danube Delta being part of Tulcea County, we evaluate that the SMEs sectors has plenty of developing perspectives and resources.

An important conclusion resides in the fact that, according to the new status of preserving the Danube Delta, all the actantc involved in the administration and the preservment of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reservation are looking for a wise way to harmonize the economic interests with the environmental preservation.

The principles elaboration for a sustainable development, adapted to the wet areas of the delta, the design and the elaboration of the facilities for an ecologic tourism as well as the native's involvement in providing touristic services by implementing a rural tourism, shoul produce equal benefits for nature, tourists, tour-operators and native population.

Chapter V – The economic development strategy for the micro-region Nufaru from the Danube Delta – placed mainly in the own contributions area, constitutes the real substance of our work. It is at this point that we insert our Case study: The set-up of a agrotouristic pension (SC Egreta Tours SRL) using communitary funds for SMEs.

Nufaru micro-area is situated at the north-east of Tulcea County, on the Sfantu Gheorghe arm, in Maliuc's vicinity. In this chapter we approached the following elements linked to the researched micro-area:

- Administrative aspects. Accomodation;
- Elements of the natural framework vs economic and agrotouristic side;
- The environmental theme;
- Population. Demographic and social elements.

The SWOT analysis applied to the administrative territory circumscribed to Nufar village pointed out the following:

- ✓ **STRENGTHS** (It is situated at approximately 10km on dry and wet land, of Tulcea – district residence, on the highway toward the Danube Delta, the local transportation into the town is regular and provided by multiple companies, Internet and phone network, existence of different vestiges – Xth century pensions for tourists);
- ✓ **WEAKNESSES** (Lack of competitive economic agents, insufficient use of the links with the community, lack of a viable strategy which could lead to reveal, preserve and value the historic vestiges, no professional touristic activity, arable plots of land of small dimessions, most of them under private property, lack of commercial societies or of local companies to process agriproducts, weak market, reduced buying power, elders carry out the agricol activities and they are using obsolete technologies, many natives don't use the refuse collecting and transportation services, no sufficient parking space, very few sidewalks, no roads for bikeriders, human resources not absorbed by the economic potential of the community, that is why many of them migrate towards cities and foreign countries, financial resources (local budget) are extremely limited, no training courses are organized in the area, a high percent of the roads are not modernized, a reduced level of SMEs development and insufficient services and specialized personnel).
- ✓ **OPPORTUNITIES** (Attracting investors that have financial resources to implement clean technologies, implementation of some environmental programs/projects, region financed mainly by international agencies, developments in the non-poluting industries and services, of high technology and increased added value, region with touristic and recreational potential, traditional crafts development, development and/or set-up of farms, miller activities, bakeries, milk processing, wood and stone processing, services for population, sport grounds and sport activities under way,



existent feasibility studies, funds granted for drinking water supply systems, sewage, road rehabilitation).

- ✓ **THREATS** (The archeological area placement make difficult the process of obtaining authorizations for construction or restauration – especially in the core of the village, population migrating towards cities and foreign countries, demographic reduction, social conflict growth).

Proposals concerning the strategic economic potential growth objectives assume the sustainable utilization of the resources constituting the natural capital from Nufaru area, obtaining profit from goods and services generated through the natural capital, promotion through aggressive marketing of Nufaru as provider of touristic resources and services, organizing recreational tourism: hunting and fishing, creating recreational areas in Nufaru, setting-up the necessary touristic infrastructure.

Taking into account that the potential is specific to the delta space, we have designed the application “Setting-up a agrotouristic pension – SC Egreta Tours SRL, with communitary funds for SMEs (EU Financing/ Session M 3.4 – 05.2006)”.

The case study reference points have included the detailed presentation and analysis of the following:

- Technical and economic data concerning the new investment objective;
- SC EGRETA TOURS SRL’s business plan;
- Description of the activities and technologies applied within the project
- Sale market;
- Financial indicators.

Ideas learned indicate that the projects viable and genuine, made by compliance with the SME community in terms of funding from the EC, can turn into successful business in agro tourism deltaic area, enjoying some measure of the programs for the allocation of structural funds (Pre-accession until 2006).

Our findings show that the Danube Delta is one of the most important tourist regions of Romania, the original landscape (relief, water, vegetation, fauna, population and human settlements). We have relevant strengths of the Romanian tourism:

- diversity and richness of natural tourist resources;
- fauna and flora rich, containing species with unique value in Europe;
- existence of wild areas, unaffected by human intervention;
- infrastructure access protected areas is insufficiently developed and modernized, which limits the movement a major tourist;
- existence of the legal framework that provides for the delimitation of natural parks and protected areas, the regime protected natural areas, preserving the natural environment, ways of managing protected areas to achieve their management.

Our belief, is that the development of tourism on the range and the Danube Delta Tulcea county must take into account the principles of sustainable tourism, including:

- Minimizing the impact of tourism on the natural environment;
- Minimizing the negative impacts of uncontrolled tourism activities on local communities and its members in order to achieve sustainable social development of those forms of tourism that does not disrupt the daily life of the population tourist destination;
- Maximizing the benefits of economic development brought by tourism at the local level in order to achieve sustainable economic communities;
- Coordination of local, community participation and consultation on the development of its tourism development, population as a factor in the decision active.

Our view is that in the short term, should be given increased importance to the development and diversification opportunities in the tourism demand of tourists - in nature



tourism, leisure activities and relaxation, activities and information on education, cultural tourism etc.

It also reveals that the restoration and development of tourist infrastructure for ecotourism in parks and natural reserves and tourism in the Danube Delta should be the subject of strategic actions implemented at the national level, all of which are designed to stimulate private investors who intend to create SMEs agro tourism profile in the Danube Delta area.

These include:

a) modernization and development of transport infrastructure and access to the main center and the entry into the Delta (Tulcea, Sulina, Saint George, Murighiol, Mahmudia and Dunav);

b) building a system of networks and public utilities (water, sanitation, environmental points of transfer and storage of waste) in the main cities which are points of concentration of tourist flows in the Delta (Crisan, Mila 23, Uzlina etc.).

c) develop a system of platforms for camping, properly equipped for tourists who come on their own;

d) promotion on the foreign market Danube Delta as a tourism brand for Romania.

Measures short and medium term should include important milestones, such as:

- Recovery path and develop access to the main tourist attractions natural;
- Restoring and develop networks of refugee (shelters) for ecotourism;
- Arranging points observation / filming / photography;
- Marking the limits and restoring panels and indicators for strictly protected areas, areas of extreme importance and buffer zones;
- Achieving / upgrading networks for public utilities (water, sewerage, purification stations, transfer points ecological waste) in the localities in the Danube Delta;
- Cleaning, maintenance and dredging the main channel of access and the associated walking trails;
- The arrangement of items of information and documentation in ecotourism;
- Development of information materials and promotion, particularly with maps and brochures highlighting the main tourist attractions, documentary films, informative panels and guidance.

Our view is that private investors who intend to create SME profile agro tourism in the Danube Delta area, see more opportunities to invest when their potential intervention in an area or another is part of a program that provides support and coordinated in a wide-ranging partnership, consisting of public and private entities. If public investment in the development program is financed by European funds, then, with certainty, investors will find additional items of attraction.

Therefore, to emphasize believes that the organization of partnerships - to attract SMEs profile agro tourism - can not be designed only to improve the chances of public and private funding by creating a double effect for a common interest.