

Training COURSE

SMART VILLAGE RURAL TOURISM

DEVELOPING BUSINESSES THROUGH CIRCULAR
ECONOMY AND SOCIAL INNOVATION



O2/A2 - Handbook

"Implementing sustainable rural tourism, including ecological, healthy food and recreational tourism".



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Background & understanding of key concepts

Smart Tourist Destination is a term of high academic relevance, but what happens in rural tourism? Smart regions and smart villages projects are interesting for rural tourism, but it is necessary to support more research. This is where this handbook can help as part of a general training toolkit to bring together, explain and make accessible the concepts of intelligent tourism and in particular its development in villages.

The rural tourist value the technological innovation of rural destinations, especially those ICT utilities that increase the value of their tourist experience. That is the “during” stage of the rural trip. It presses on the smart developments that rural tourism demands.

Smart Tourism is a complex concept implemented at wide level already in the big urban centers of Europe and of the world. Following some recent researches it seems that the idea of smart tourism destination is correlated more and more with the concept of smart village, as the rural tourist appreciates the technological innovation of rural destinations, especially those TIC utilities that enriches the value of their tourist experience.

This handbook aims to merge the concept of smart tourism development in Europe with that of rural tourism. Here you will find guidelines on how to make your tourism product greener, more social, closer to the needs of the end user and ultimately "smarter".

When it comes to smart tourism, a "smart" region and combining environmentally friendly activities with natural assets, we must never forget that the main soldering link is the human being. It is the driving force behind all those things, both good and unfortunately bad, that mark the term 'human activity'. Therefore, by mentioning these terms we are actually marking the presence of man at the heart of it all.

When we're talking about rural communities and the sustainable development of these regions, we must take into account that there is no development of a region without the development of the human factor within it. Therefore, in the context of the SMARTVILLAGE project the target group, adult people from remote rural areas (in risk of social exclusion), will learn how social innovation can help rural services such as health, education, energy, mobility and other social services of key importance in marginalised rural areas where these services are often in decline. They will learn as well how to help themselves to develop a new business and contribute to the development of the community they live in.

This guide will help you better understand the idea of what exactly is a smart tourism product contributing to the sustainability of your region and what exactly is sustainable rural tourism.

Due to the synergetic effect of economic, environmental, social, cultural and other dimensions of sustainable development, it was necessary to create an integrated approach that would have complied with all of these components based on the principles of sustainability.

From this point of view, it could be said that sustainable development represents an integral economic, technological, socio-cultural development, in line with the needs of safeguard, protection and improvement of the environment, which enables current and future generations to meet the needs and improve the quality of life.

Growing awareness of the negative impact of tourism on the environment and local communities has led to widespread recognition of the need to promote a new tourism model in the second half of the past century. In the early 1990s, this model was called 'sustainable tourism', after it was imposed on the concept of sustainable development.

“Smart tourism is an advanced stage of tourism informationization” (ZHANG, p.58-66). That means it consists of digital, intelligent, and virtual tourism based on digital, intelligent, and virtual technology. Information relating to tourist activities, the consumption of products, and tourism and social resources can be instantly integrated based on information and communications technology; it provides to tourists, enterprises, and organizations with a variety of end-user devices

1.1. The Rural tourism concept

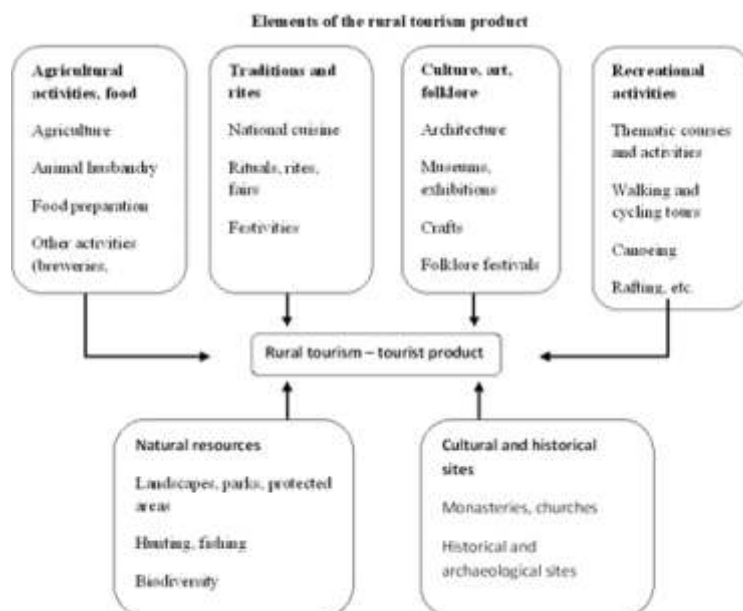
World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines the rural tourism as „a type of tourism activity in which the experience of the visitor is linked with a large series of products linked in general to activities based on nature, agriculture, lifestyle, rural culture, fishing and visiting tourism objectives. Rural tourism activities are implemented in non-urban (rural) areas with the following characteristics:

- low population density;
- landscape and land usage for agriculture and forestry;
- traditional social structure and lifestyle.”

According to the recommendations of WTO, national, regional and local governments, private sector and communities should implement and encourage sustainable policies and practices for a more efficient utilisation of local resources and a reduction of emission and wastes for green economy. This involves the usage of solar energy, as the eolian energy and biofuels in tourism activities, the elimination of single use plastic materials and toxic substances and implementation of food wastes management and recycling programs.

The general programs of waste management should be included in the management plans of villages and other no-heat technologies and implemented as part of the development process.

Rural tourism, realized as a holiday in a rural area, is today a modern and alternative way of tourism, becoming more and more popular and preferred. On the other hand, it is a form of tourism that makes a major contribution to the sustainable development of rural areas by preserving the natural environment, reviving traditions and customs, creating additional employment and improving the well-being of the local population. In the scheme below can be seen the “key elements of the tourist product in rural tourism” (University of economics Varna #).



1.2. When the rural tourism turns into sustainable

The Circular economy and its role in developing sustainable tourism.

Circular economy and its role in the development of sustainable tourism.

The circular economy is an economic concept that aims at the green economy and sustainable development, but in the same time considers a sustainable management of raw materials and energy sources in the production of goods and services. The concept includes more than reducing the ecological impact of industries and the amount of waste, the objective is to conceive and put into practice processes and solutions for the usage and efficiency of resources, and reduce waste. The definition of the circular economy place the focus on the importance of design, production and consumption in a sustainable way, but there is no official and unique description, leaving room for multiple descriptions.

Talking about the concept of a circular economy, we have to mention that it is closely linked to the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth concerning the framework of the initiatives to promote a more resource-efficient and competitive economy. New business models are being developed, stepping on the efficient management of alternative processes and products as well as opportunities to access new markets.

The circular economy is based on several fundamental principles: ecological design, industrial and territorial ecology, management and recycling, the economy of functionality, extending the life of materials, improving waste prevention, sustainable procurement, responsible consumption.

Considering all these definitions, we can define CE as an economic model that is interrelated with sustainability and whose aim is that the value of products, materials and resources, such as water and energy, stays in the economy as long as possible, thus reducing waste generation. It is about implementing a new economy based on the principle of 'closing the life cycle' of products, services, waste, materials, water and energy, reconsidering waste as a new resource that can be reused in the system. Therefore, the CE implies a radical change in the current production system and consequently in the way of doing of companies, citizens, policymakers and legislators.

If we look at the literature, we do not find studies that identify specific guidelines to carry out the transition of the tourism sector towards a circular economy, as it exists in other sectors such as the industrial one. In addition, the flows of resources and materials within the tourism sector intersect with other sectors, which reinforce the need to carry out this transition. Circular tourism implies a model in which each tourism actor (tourist, Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), suppliers (hotels, restaurants, etc.), and resident population) adopts an eco-friendly approach.

Many of the studies, for example, found are focused on agriculture and rural tourism. Some researchers discuss a development model of leisure agriculture and conclude that it can be used to promote the sustainable development of local ecotourism. Others present some preliminary aspects for a comparison between the agro-tourism sectors in Italy and Romania or other EU countries, taking into account the main topics that can affect their sustainability, including the CE concept. According to some findings rural tourism can only be an integrated and coordinated component within integrated rural development models specific for each territory able to ensure a balance between consumption and reproduction of rural collective resources in a new approach to the circular economy.

However we could make a general conclusion that CE is a crucial way to contribute to a more sustainable tourism industry. The tourism industry has a significant role to play because of its importance in the global economy. Therefore, it is urgent to have a joint and multidisciplinary response in order to achieve a successful transition to a CE model in the tourism sector.

1.3. When sustainable rural tourism becomes smart?

Smart tourism concept is derived from the Smart City concept. Planning and management of destinations, as well as in business tourism, concepts and terms such as "e-tourism", "connected" tourist, "social" tourist, "Prosumer", "ewom", "e-commerce", "tourism applications", "geo-location", "smart destination" (Upkabi and Karjaluoto, 2017) have become landmarks used by specialists and are part of a familiar language.

The concept of smart tourism is mostly applied in the field of tourism destination (Gretzel, 2018) for various reasons:

- ICT is a fundamental pillar for the competitiveness of destinations (Koo et al., 2016);
- without the use of ICT, destinations are not able to obtain a substantial value of their tourism market geographical attributes (Jovicic, 2017);
- destinations use ICT primarily to change the tourist's relationship with the destination (Femenia et al., 2018).

Rural tourist destinations efficiency are strongly linked with public and private services from these areas that need to be part of a smart system, interconnected in real time (Berné et al., 2013) implemented by:

- strategies adopted by the local public administration which can incorporate ICT in the rural areas services, obtaining this way a better monitorisation of tourist flows, visibility and good communication and information results (Garau, 2015, Sedmak et al., 2016);
- strategies adopted by entrepreneurs who can add value to the experiences of tourists coming to rural areas by incorporating ICT in services, products and marketing (Cooper, 2016).

The profile of the rural tourist is a well-informed person, is someone aware of the importance of his active role in rural tourism and why not, sophisticated (Rodrigues and Virtudes, 2019). Rural tourism consumers are using digital media and many of them are very active in seeking information about rural destinations (Bethapudi, 2015).

Thus, the concept of smart tourism must be applied beyond the city limits and should start evolving in all tourist areas and especially in rural areas. In this sense, rural areas need to develop smart specialization strategies (McCann and Ortega, 2013). Smart specialization allows the generation of knowledge about the future value of a direction of change by developing innovative ideas in a specific field, such as tourism (Weindenfeld, 2018).

In 2017, the European Union launched the Smart Village initiative. The dimensions of the Smart Village concept are similar to those of Smart City: the use of traditional and new networks through digital technologies, innovations and a better use of knowledge (Zavratnik et al., 2018).

The only way to take advantage of rural tourism is to develop Smart Rural Tourism, a combination of immersive experience in traditional rural culture with ICT (Shen and Wang, 2018).

Here are some international initiatives that promote the concept of Smart Village in Rural Tourism: China Rural Smart Travel Tourism, Germany Digital Dorfer Sustainability, Hungary Hungarian Turistvandi Rural Tourism, Italy Smart Basilicata Sustainability, Tuscany Cultural Tourism, Sardinia Rural Tourism, Norway (Lapland) Artic Smartness Project Sustainability, Portugal (Madeira) Calheta Tourism, Slovenia Youth Drain Sustainability. Globally, the research on smart rural tourism is doesn't cover many aspects. Most studies focus on the development of technological infrastructure. There are many small organizations that participate in rural tourism, and they have a reduced capacity to adapt ICT (Zavratnik et al., 2018). The high volatility of ICT, which is constantly changing, adds difficulties in adapting rural tourism companies to the technological and digital innovations that appear on the market (Nkosana et al., 2016).

At the moment, here are some of the most important aspects that characterize smart rural tourism:

1. Technology and travel (Social networks influence the opinion of a destination; Technologies help to a more satisfying experience; Technologies are a fundamental part of travel; Technologies are a useful tool in travel; Tourists follow the comments of other tourists using portals such as TripAdvisor or Booking; Technological and innovative value of a destination);

2. Tourist experience: Finding general information, reservations, searching for opinions or criticisms about hotel companies, transport or leisure, searching for photos and videos, opinions or criticisms about attractions, consulting maps or using GPS, sharing experiences, communicating with family and friends, online payments, use of destination applications, use of guides (audio, video, etc.);
3. Sharing travel experiences (before / during / after): Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, WhatsApp, TripAdvisor, Telegram, Booking, Pinterest, Flickr, Vine;
4. Characteristics of the trip and motivation: type of rural accommodation; booking method.

The motivations of tourists and the dimensions of rural tourism are mainly focused on the attractiveness of nature, so the use of ICT should be of less interest to tourists and the technological equipment and applications should not be relevant factors for the evaluation and choice of rural destinations (Dolnicar, 2002 and Weinstein, 2011 versus Yan, 2018). However, sustainable rural tourism is becoming more and more attractive, especially if the destination is defined by characteristics specific to smart villages.

2. Opportunities for sustainable development of rural tourism in the conditions of Covid-19.

2.1. Social innovation and product innovation.

Social innovations are new social practices that aim to meet social needs in a better way than existing solutions, resulting from community development, education, working conditions or health. These ideas are created with the aim of expanding and strengthening civil society.

Reference: <http://www.socialinnovationacademy.eu/8-key-social-innovation-concepts/>

New business models must be based on knowledge for successful development and it is necessary to connect with platforms or networks of tourism organizations (both NGOs and for-profit) that connect people, ideas and resources. Such business models include social innovation, innovative entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, based on research and development, increased funding and contemporary derivatives, such as crowdfunding and international intellectual property protection (Bertoncelj et al., 2016; Peterlin et al., 2015).

Previous research in the tourism and hospitality industry has shown that sustainable development has the potential to provide employment opportunities, infrastructure and financial gains to marginalized rural communities (Alkier et al., 2015; Butler and Hinch, 2007; Sloan et al., 2014; Zeppel, 2006). The increasingly important role of social innovation in tourism is already known. It applies to service design processes generating creative projects in various fields of tourism and offers employment opportunities for both young and old. An integrated service system that uses local resources and interdisciplinary knowledge meets various requirements of all stakeholders in the development and promotion of sustainable tourism.

According to some studies (Hall, 2014; Germak and Robinson, 2014; Štrukelj and Šuligoj, 2014), social entrepreneurship in the tourism industry has several forms:

- social enterprise;
- social innovation;
- social venture,
- venture philanthropy and
- social affairs.

Social innovation defines a set of innovation solutions, processes, and ideas, used in order to create social value not only on organizations and individuals, but also on the processes through which they are generated (Van der Have and Rubalcaba, 2015).

Tourism is a complex phenomenon and it has an important role in economic and social development. The development and promotion of tourism in a given destination implies an active participation from the stakeholders network part for whom the development of this sector is a source of economic and social progress, but we have to take into account that in the same time could be a cause of negative social, environmental and economic effects (Carlisle et al., 2012). For this reason the tourism industry should be focused to ensure sustainable growth, which involves the establishment of an innovative environment, providing tourism entrepreneurial projects that add value not only to the tourist but also to all local stakeholders (Gabriel and Laeis, 2016; Pranicevic and Peterlin, 2015). The importance of social innovation varies depending on the level of socio-economic development of tourism destinations. In several rural destinations, they are more oriented towards social solutions and in other on missions. Social solutions in tourism transfer innovative knowledge and offer products, services and solutions to the needs of tourists and community stakeholders. The following table indicates the value added of tourism social innovation for the local community, the government, for-profit organizations, the non-profit sector and mainly customers:

Table 1: Value added for stakeholders

Stakeholders	Value propositions	Working models based on outdated processes	Post-industrial business model solutions
Tourist	Cognition of locals life background, Leisure	Nature landscape, Travel experiences, Hospitality	Low carbon, Tourism and Hospitality,
Community	Bridging social divides, Equal life standards, Quality of infrastructure	Tourism industry, Community interactions, Public transportation, Traditional education, Traditional culture	Senior citizens reemployment, Life after retirement, Healthy community, Characteristic education system, Culture inheritance
Profit Organizations	Social capital, Lower taxes for creation of new work places, Profit	Cost revenue	Human capital, Corporate social responsibility, Long-term profit
Non-profit sector	Social capital, Revenues from public sources, Revenues from sales of goods and services, Donations	Knowledge transfer	Internet platforms, Social entrepreneurship, Social enterprises
Government	Compliance (taxes), higher rate of employment, GDP growth	Political system, economic politics	Economic development, Tax revenue, Natural land scape protection

Source: author's adaptation according to Peng, K. L. and Lin, P. M. (2016). Social entrepreneurs: Innovating rural tourism through the activism of service science. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 28, No. 6, pp. 1225-1244.

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Two interesting models of innovative socio-economically oriented projects have been developed in rural areas of Gambia and Tanzania:

- The Gambian ASSET project includes 80 members from the private tourism sector, small and micro enterprises, skills centers, community tourism, cultural and entertainment sectors and the fashion and textile retail trade which offers a collaborative marketing action with the involvement of all stakeholders;

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316452275_Challenges_of_the_social_innovation_in_tourism

- The Sokoine University Program was designed in Tanzania to transfer knowledge between universities, local firms, banks, government agencies and donor agencies. A collaboration framework has been implemented for all stakeholders around a wildlife tourism product. The purpose of universities was the transfer of innovative knowledge in this tourism product (Carlisle et al., 2013).

Rural regeneration opportunities generated by the Covid pandemic19

Within the current COVID-19 pandemic on the one hand, rural areas have been threatened even more than urban areas due to less available resources and greater isolation problems. But, on the other hand, , the lack of adequate public green spaces open in larger cities, the possibility of working remotely and teleworking, and the need for social distancing began to be claimed as factors for people living in densely populated settlements to move to rural areas. The possibility of regeneration through improved rural tourism or the direct repopulation of rural areas through smart and remote work and so-called "stationary" have already been explored during the summer of 2020 and look like a stable trend for the coming months. (Airbnb, 2020). In this context, the COVID-19 emergency crisis has brought rural and inland areas to the platform of the current planning debate, with some experts arguing that this COVID-19 crisis could repopulate rural areas.

Rural areas have much to gain from this opportunity, but they should be prepared to manage it properly to avoid unplanned gentrification problems and to "protect" current natural, social and mostly, human capital. Due to this, it is necessary to establish inclusive, sustainable and community-based local plans and strategies in order to respond to current challenges in a fair and sustainable way.

Starting from the challenges and possibilities generated by the COVID-19 crisis, the main objective of this paper is to show how participatory processes are needed in rural areas to discuss, obtain opinions, create innovations and make decisions on topics such as cultural services. and infrastructure, green network, local resource management and tourism. One of the sectors that has been most frequently mentioned as critical for the economic recovery of rural inland areas is tourism.

BORGOFUTURO, an experience of rural regeneration through art and festival based in Ripe San Ginesio, Marche region, is one of the additional replicators selected.

In the rest of the globe, in rural areas COVID19 has severely affected cultural initiatives, often based on traditional organizational structures, which were unable to adapt to safety regulations required by pandemic (De Luca et al., 2020). At the same time, the need for social distance, open spaces and safety measures, made the events that takes place traditionally to reinvent themselves or to cancel. A good practice is a festival from Italy, BORGOFUTURO that in this period expanded its scope to four other neighboring municipalities that the one which has hosted before, deciding to embrace the new ones in their project and host a month of cultural activities in the summer of 2020 under the name "Borgofuturo + , il buon contagio "(" good contagion ").

Covid-19 Crisis Strategy: Heritage-Based Opportunities for Rural Regeneration

Building on the RURITAGE narrative, this policy summary reviews how the new challenges posed in rural areas by the COVID-19 pandemic can be turned into opportunities for the sustainable growth of rural communities in the future. Moreover, it addresses the multidimensional topic by focusing on recommendations divided into six different capitals: natural, cultural, social, human, construction and financial.

Fundamentals for comprehensive responses to COVID-19 challenges

Rural areas face exacerbated challenges, fewer resources available and greater isolation problems.

Rural communities are struggling to find solutions adapted to their already fragile environments.

However, rural areas respond to the challenges posed by COVID-19 through strengthened networks, better cooperation and solidarity for enhanced resilience. They show that cooperation has always been and is essential.

What is developing now is a better understanding of the needs of the local community to use and manage capital in an integrated way to achieve sustainable and inclusive rural growth.

Actions and recommendations to think beyond the COVID-19 crisis in rural areas

Actions and recommendations for thinking beyond the COVID-19 crisis in rural areas cover three different areas for improvement:

Policy: the need for a more efficient and coherent implementation of existing EU policies, legislation and instruments.

We do not propose new regulations, but rather informal revisions of existing ones, to better meet rural needs, practices, responsibilities, continued networking efforts and feedback from stakeholders implementing on-site policies, in line with with the activity of ENRD.

Funding: the need to identify, support, integrate and improve existing as well as innovative sources of funding for rural areas at the relevant institutional level, including European Structural and Investment Funds, promoting a strategic approach to ensure synergies between different funding instruments and policies, both at EU level and at national and regional level, and to avoid duplication.

Knowledge: the need to stimulate the development of evidence-based policies, working to build capacity at the local level and to introduce actions aimed at improving local knowledge or skills through dedicated education and training activities.

There is a great need for a fully integrated policy and investment framework capable of supporting such a complex environment of natural, cultural, human, social and built capital. To support the rebirth of rural areas as vibrant centers of development based on local heritage, natural resources, creativity and social inclusion, the EU should stimulate effective rural regeneration and a transition beyond sustainable food production through better integration of other sectors. The recommendations address the six capitals discussed above and are applicable at three different levels: national, regional / local and EU.

3. Let's be Eco. What does „ecological tourism“ mean?

3.1. Ecological and rural- is it possible and how?

Ecotourism: According to the UNWTO definition, ecotourism refers to forms of tourism that have the following characteristics:

1. All forms of nature-based tourism, in which the main motivation of tourists is the observation and appreciation of nature, as well as the predominant traditional cultures in natural areas.
2. Contains educational and interpretive features.
3. It is generally, but not exclusively, organized by specialized tour operators for small groups. Destination service provider partners tend to be small, locally owned businesses.
4. Minimizes the negative impact on the natural and socio-cultural environment.
5. Supports the maintenance of natural areas that are used as ecotourism attractions by:
 - Generating economic benefits for host communities, organizations and authorities that manage natural areas for conservation purposes;
 - Providing alternative employment and income opportunities for local communities;
 - Raising awareness about the conservation of natural and cultural assets, both among locals and tourists.

3.2. Strategies for eco-tourism in regional, national and international levels (short overview).

Sustainable tourism development is a major concern for destination management organizations (DMOs) regarding the cultural and natural heritage tourism. Leading specialists of smart tourism argue that technology-based innovations can help DMOs to optimize tourism development by addressing issues such as support stakeholder management and capacity and community involvement.

Research on smart tourism has grown since the term "smart" appeared in the literature related initially about urban development and ICT in the early 2000s (Johnson & Samakovlis, 2015). The term is used in general to indicate the intelligence and connectivity of technologies, often based on advanced sensors and ICT, including machine learning, wireless communications, cloud computing and autonomous systems (Baggio et al., 2020; Jovicic, 2019). In tourism, smart is most often used in a destination context, based on innovations used for "smart cities" (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2014) where smart technology is integrated with urban infrastructure to optimize the production and consumption of resources (Gretzel et al., 2015a), for the benefit of businesses, government and citizens.

The growing presence of technologies such as social networks, virtual reality and augmented reality, mobile applications, offers opportunities for improving tourism experiences (Ye et al., 2020).

Boes et al. (2015) argue that the key dimensions of a smart destination are innovation, social capital and leadership, allocating to technology a secondary role and emphasizing the importance of governance. This emphasis is highlighted by Coca-Stefaniak (2020), who emphasizes the need for smart destinations to become "wise" by including urban sustainability issues in their approaches. Issues of privacy concerns and digital inclusion have also been raised in the analysis of smart tourism, as tourists leave behind a substantial "fingerprint" in their travels, which can be commercially exploited by the company (Gretzel et al., 2015b).

Source: Mandic, A and Kennell, J. (2021) Smart Governance for Heritage Tourism Destinations: Contextual Factors and Destination Management Organization Perspectives in *Tourism Management Perspectives*. 39.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2021.100862>

Strategies are holistic approaches that integrate a comprehensive set of interventions in a coherent way. Strategies are structured according to a clear intervention logic, including general, specific and operational objectives in response to challenges and needs and based on assets and opportunities, a set of planned activities and indicators to measure achievements. Smart village strategies have all the key components of local development strategies. At the same time, smart village strategies aim to identify innovative solutions (digital, technological, social or other) in response to the challenges and opportunities of the community and the local area.

The basis for developing the smart village strategy is understanding the specifics of an area and its community.

There are many different ways to identify the challenges and assets of an area, from basic research surveys to more participatory methods, such as participatory consultations and profiling of the locality.

It can be used a Community Profile Tool that aims to generate an evidence-based community involvement process by presenting official (statistical) community data in an accessible way, thus generating discussions between community members. The process is usually done through close cooperation between the community and a research institute / university.

Stakeholder engagement is crucial at all stages of developing and implementing the smart village strategy.

This - among other things - will ensure that the needs of the local community are met, that people have ownership of the strategy and - consequently - can be mobilized more effectively for implementation.

This could be an itinerary for using the Community Profile Tool in elaboration of a smart village strategy:

Mapping the Rural EcoTourism Network

A network of tourism companies dedicated to the principles of ecotourism and offering joint initiatives, such as destination marketing should be configured first.

An ecotourism network is a network recognized by companies in a locality / region that can demonstrate ecotourism "best practices" and which have obtained independent accreditation in terms of achieving sustainable standards in tourism.

Tourism companies are required to adhere to a code of sustainable tourism practices, which may require them to carry out any or all of the following actions:

- ü Develop an environmental policy and an environmental action plan for their business;
 - ü Implement practices in the fields of waste management, water conservation and protection, energy consumption;
 - ü Complete the "Leave No Trace" awareness training and follow the "Leave No Trace" principles at all times;
 - ü Engage in responsible marketing practices, visitor interpretation, green purchasing and sustainable transportation.
- Once established, the ecotourism network offers the following benefits to its members (regardless of their size):
- ü "One voice" representation on key issues of local development;
 - ü Possibility of marketing strategies / campaigns and shared destination promotion;
 - ü Support for training and innovation for business development;
 - ü Members discriminate positively in favor of each other and have networking opportunities to develop innovative visitor packages;
 - ü Joint conservation and advocacy activities in the area;

To maximize marketing and business opportunities, members are expected to use and correctly display logos and related materials, connect to visitors' websites, and actively promote and support network initiatives.

Identification of smart solutions for sustainable rural tourism

The solution is smart primarily because of the business innovation it demonstrates, encouraging a more cooperative approach between local tourism businesses to pave the way for new business opportunities (innovative business-to-business packages), cost savings (shared destination promotion) and the types of skills development and training opportunities are usually only possible for larger companies.

It is also smart in how it combines local environmental / sustainability goals with local economic development, focusing on good practices in sustainable tourism at the heart of the local development approach.

4. Is the food of the village the hidden treasure of Gastronomy Tourism?

The UNWTO Tourism and Competitiveness Committee (CTC) defines Gastronomic Tourism as a type of tourism activity that is characterized by the visitor's experience with food and related products and activities while traveling. Along with authentic, traditional and / or innovative culinary experiences, sustainable and smart rural tourism may involve other related activities, such as visiting local producers, participating in food festivals and participating in cooking classes.

Source: <https://www.unwto.org/gastronomy-wine-tourism>

Any destination that should be considered a tourist spot should be both tangible and intangible products and services in its area. Food is one of the many important resources that should be present. While a new era of tourism has emerged and evolved, there is an increase in receptivity regarding the role of gastronomy in the emergence of a different tourism on destinations in different cities, regions and countries.

Gastronomy is often defined as the art of cooking and eating well; however, it is just part of the whole image. Many experts have argued that gastronomy is the study of the connection between culture and food. Others suggest that it is the involvement of preparation and cooking to experiment, experiment, evolve and document food. Similar to the studies of Brillant-Savarin (1994), Gillespie and Cousins (2015), gastronomy is the art and science of cooking, eating and drinking as a pleasure using different senses.

Gastronomy experimentation is an important attraction along with other tourist activities that could influence the choice of destination, general satisfaction and the intention to revisit tourists (Kim et al., 2013; Kim and Eves, 2012). Because local cuisine can be easily accessed by anyone because it is an inseparable part of the products of any destination, local food has become an integral part and an element of a tourist experience (Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2016 ; Tsai, 2016).

Local food also represents intangible habits and legacies that lead to unique characteristics of the destination (Chang et al., 2018; Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Kozak et al., 2007). Gastronomic tourism is an emerging tourism market for many countries and regions that create a unique source of competitive advantage for tourist destinations (Blichfeldt and Halkier, 2013). According to Morales and Cordova (2019), destinations that are aware of the role of food in their tourist success have begun to use their gastronomic potential in their promotions and positioning in the tourism market as an element of national identity.

4.1. Let's be healthy! How important is good and pure food for rural tourism

Food - the best ambassador of a region's culture, wealth and heritage. When we talk about food, our association is always linked to either our favourite childhood dishes, or our mother's or grandmother's delicacies. Each region has both its history and its specific dishes, bringing together all the specific products that are characteristic of the place from which they originate. That food and tourism are inextricably linked, it is enough to look at the figures illustrating the turnover of restaurants, guesthouses and all accommodation establishments as proof.

It is impossible to consider rural tourism and its elements without paying special attention to food. Rural life has always been associated with more activity, lots of physical labour outside, more activities and good food. This stems from the fact that village life is linked to the very process of providing food. The bulk of village life has to do with producing the food that the people living there put on their own table.

Or in other words, the path of food to the table is traceable at every stage—from production to consumption and from there, easily controllable, hence the quality and taste are different.

In today's modern world, allowing smart technology to enter in our daily lives and our knowledge and strive for making our lives healthier, greener and cleaner, the rural lifestyle has also changed. Words such as organic farming, organic food, eco-friendly regions, food provenance, smart production, eco-tourism, and healthy living have entered. Realizing how important it is to take care of our health and our bodies, we increasingly start looking for alternatives to our daily activities. We are looking for an escape from the urban environment with its dirty air and fast food.

This is where the countryside comes in as a good, close and cheap alternative, offering the peace, the comfort of the farmhouse and the taste of home cooked clean food. Food is an important fundamental element of the village.

And it is the food that only we can produce, in the way we ourselves want: pure, natural, organic.

The countryside hosts an increasing number of alternative food networks: rural tourists can play an important role in acting as both consumer and “cultural broker” (Sidali, pp. 1179-1197) between these networks. This paper provides a theoretical framework for niche marketing food specialties in rural tourism by combining two different consumer behavioural theories, the “experience economy” and the “intimacy” model, representing a reorientation from classical marketing thinking. It explores the meaning of local food, including the pursuit of reconnection with nature, resilience to globalisation, the role of local food in reinforcing personal identity, the search for freshness, taste and authenticity, support for local producers, and environmental concerns. It considers the challenges for rural entrepreneurs and policy makers in marketing food specialties and rural regions to the post-modern consumer.

Using examples derived mostly from secondary literature it identifies seven dimensions that elevate food products to an appealing culinary niche, namely, coherence, anti-capitalistic attitude, struggle against extinction, personal signature, mutual-disclosure, rituals of spatial and physical proximity, and sustainability related practices.

Food providers may use these features to signal food distinctiveness to rural tourists; policy makers can include them in their regional development models to enhance rural tourism without altering historically, socially, and environmentally layered culinary traditions.

In addition to pleasure, food is also a way of expressing an authenticity typical of an area. Food carries information, history, preserves the memory of generations, and in this sense it is a conduit and mediator between communities, it is a link between everyday life, pleasure and new adventures. It is often with food that we associate certain places, stories and experiences. Local food, usually traditional, is a tool for tourists questing for authenticity.

Authenticity could be viewed as 'unique' and could therefore encourage tourists to specifically visit such tourism destinations and have a satisfactory experience. Food authenticity includes cooking methods, cooking odors, recipes, ingredients, food and drink customs, social connotations, related ceremonies and festivals, and hunting and farming traditions.

So far, we define rural tourism as an alternative form of mass tourism, something that gives a completely different experience. Unlike mass tourism, which is usually passive - a holiday at the sea, sleeping, food, beach, alternative tourism is associated with activity - physical: sports, adventures, intellectual: getting acquainted with a culture, learning, for example, crafts, exploring natural sights or observing local flora or fauna, emotional: new experiences and creating good memories. And while mass tourism is anonymous - the cooks of the food are not visible, the maids and waiters make sure not to be seen, alternative tourism is personalised and the personal relationship with each guest, the personal contact, for example with the hosts of the farmhouse, the guide of the mountain walk, the craftsman who teaches, the diving teacher, is the leading factor. It should be highlighted here that the “training and qualifications of the owners and staff of accommodation, restaurants or attractions are extremely important”.

(United Bulgarian Consultant)

If we're talking about the food and goods that could be offered as a product of rural tourism, the adapting of European legislation has now made it easier to offer goods produced in farms and dairies. The newly adopted Ordinance for Direct Supply from Small Farms allows direct supply from producers to end consumers or local retailers supplying goods directly to end consumers of small quantities of milk, eggs, honey, fish, fresh meat from poultry and lagomorphs, small and big game meat. This enables small farms to look for good alternatives for offering their produce as well as become part of holiday travel deals. Supplying the produce of their farms and dairies to a pub, their own restaurant or merely the guests' dining-room results in a much higher price, i.e. profit generated from agricultural produce for local producers.

Thus, on the one hand, the development of farming establishes better opportunities for supplying a good-quality complex product, and on the other hand the development of tourism raises the value of agricultural produce. Similar services are usually provided in specially established sites in the mountain areas, and have lately become available close to natural landmarks. Frequently, the food supplied consists of local area products (often small privately-owned farms) which are ecologically pure (milk, meat, dairy and meat products, trout). For example, a farmer living in a village attracts tourists with home-made yoghurt. The agriculture in the region is environmentally friendly, and the yoghurt is of excellent quality.

At the end for sure we could say that the food adds value to the tourism product offerings in rural areas. Food tourism can be described once as a part of rural tourism when traditional food and regional specialties are offered to tourists, and as a part of cultural tourism when tourists discover the destination through food, wine and cultural heritage. The food is considered a natural complement to the tourist service in rural areas often overlooked by locals as a resource with potential for development of a regional brand. Regional gastronomy as a tourism resource is a key element in rural tourism performance and can be used as a tool for the development of tourism in the area.

4.2. Food and village- the traditions and the modern. Keeping the food traditions in the villages.

Food tourism has become one of the most dynamic and creative parts of tourism and has grown considerably in recent years (OMT, 2012;). Gastronomy currently plays an important role in tourism, allowing visitors to access the cultural and historical heritage, as is an essential part of all cultures. The increase in attractiveness and popularity are the result of the increase of gastronomic offers based on high quality products and the development of creative and innovative experiences of food tourism (Richards, 2011; Dodd, 2012; Getz et al., 2014).

Traditional dining experiences are implemented with more attractive elements to increase the quality of the visitor experience. Gastronomic events and festivals, art exhibitions in wineries, gastronomic and wine museums are some examples of more attractive products.

Since the development of the "Economy Experience" (Pine and Gilmore, 1999), tourists have not asked for basic services, but have increasingly sought something new, consuming the creativity and culture of the places they visit. The product development process includes the transition to co-creation, and producers work together with consumers to create meaningful experiences and moments (Boswijk, et al., 2005). Beyond this, a careful balance should be found between innovation and authenticity to meet the needs of new tourists and increase their level of satisfaction.

As stated by Richards (2012), food can provide a basis for tourism experiences in supporting local culture, developing critical infrastructure for food production and consumption, linking culture and tourism, producing distinct foods and developing the culinary experience. In this process, gastronomy can be considered a fertile breeding ground for "creative tourism" (Richards and Raymond, 2000), as it allows visitors to create rather than consume.

Food and drink can add value to travel experiences in many ways. The most popular tourist gastronomic products are, for example, memorable and culinary unique experiences in visits to wineries, breweries or distilleries, cooking classes, agricultural markets, agricultural fairs, food and beverage events and festivals, local restaurants or food trucks, gastronomic and wine routes (World Food Travel Association, 2016). Traditional experiences are often limited to visits and tastings and can be extended to create more attractive products (Getz, 2000).

For example, Jaffe and Pasternak (2004) suggested a list of potential developments for winery experiences: art gallery and monument on taste and refinement; wine cellar as a retail outlet; winery as an educational institution; winery as a living history; family and business house, where all visitors are personal guests; winery as a museum, winery as a place of fun-filled events; the destination of the viticultural field; cultural routes.

The combination of traditional and non-traditional elements can contribute to creating a link between innovation and authenticity, as well as stimulating a sustainable development of food tourism not only based on preserving the past, but also creating the future (Richards, 2002). New foods with augmented experiences are a way to improve the quality of the visitor experience, as well as to expand the food experience and market products.

The development of interactive and creative food experiences has become important in many regions.

Traditional experiences such as tasting and visits to local producers allow to satisfy the desire for authenticity expressed by tourists, but require a boost of innovation and a high level of involvement from the owners. Going beyond this vision allows the development of initiatives that combine several elements, especially culture, art, food and tourism.

There are a wide variety of successful initiatives that combine art, food and tourism, such as food and wine museums, art exhibitions, gastronomic events and festivals, cultural awards, etc. And they are often undertaken by local entrepreneurs, especially wine producers, for the purpose of pursuing their personal passion.

Investing in creative cultural activities often does not offer immediate economic benefits, but the level of satisfaction suggests that entrepreneurs seem to have understood the potential to improve their activities and attractiveness, also towards tourists.

4.3. Community collaboration and the value chain in agro-food sector

Associativity is a criterion widely used conceptually today, but with a very difficult concrete application.

The fluctuation of institutional instability and legal insecurity, economic reality with periodic crises, generates a number of factors that increase competition with loss of value of institutions, without rules, and a state of constant uncertainty that promotes what we call a state of tension where the survivor predominates. More and more the dissociation of people, companies and their institutions is promoted. Sometimes, we seem to detect the loss of the feeling of "society", which is nothing but an identity group, of which we feel part and which contains us.

The lack of this feeling leads us to the constant loss of the dimension of the value of the other, of his role in front of or next to ours and of the necessary interaction that unites us for our own development.

In tourism and its protagonists, the situation is not foreign to this reality, the dissociation between its actors is part of the script and its consequences are visible.

Thus, associativity appears as a central concept or criterion, around which the sector must work, and after which must be lined not only small and medium enterprises, which in their associativity can recompose the competitiveness of their locality, but also public and private actors, promoting the search for common goals and convergent actions that make the other's efforts more effective.

In order to encourage and settle the collaborative network for development and promotion of smart tourism in a rural destination, as a first step, it is important to make a short list of some of the actors who in one way or another are involved in the tourist value chain, which has, in particular, a characteristic diversity in the multiplicity of actors to which we could add a chain. We can mention among others:

- Accommodation: Hotels, temporary apartments, pensions, etc.
- Gastronomy: Bars, Restaurants, Typical meals, International food Region Center Value chain Tourism - 24 - Formats Fast Food Vegetarian
- Tourist services: Business tourism, Alternative tourism, Language tourism, Hunting tourism, Health tourism, Sport tourism, Rural tourism, Car rental, Travel assistance, Travel agencies, Event organizers, Entertainment, Cinemas, Theaters, Discs, Amusement Parks Adult Entertainment - Walking, Museums, Churches, Parks, Sports Facilities -
- Shopping Shopping centers, Airport transport, Bus terminal, Public transport services, Taxi
- Miscellaneous services: Currency exchange offices, Kiosks, Public telephones, Telephone booths
- Cyber - Infrastructure, Routes and accesses Roads and pedestrians, Signage and signaling, Media lighting (public and private) including Tourism for people with disabilities
- Industry Regional products: Handicrafts, Works of art, Clothing and traditional clothing.

In this way, the commercial and commercial range, and thus the institutional one, which refers to tourism, is extended, generating a complex network of interrelationship and interdependence, which will have to work definitively in order to reach a certain level of cooperation around tourism.

Source: ESTUDIO PARA EL DESARROLLO DEL TURISMO COMO CADENA DE VALOR DE LA REGIÓN CENTRO DE LA REPÚBLICA ARGENTINA, Maximiliano Carlos Mauvecin, 2010.

5. Recreational tourism as a part of the rural tourism

With the process of global integration, the spatial distance between urban and rural areas is constantly reduced. The Internet has become the background color of everyday life, and the concept of smart tourism is gradually being realized. For example, the development of rural tourism in China has been on the ground in recent years, creating many new measures in the development and use of resources, brand promotion and so on.

The development and planning of the rural tourism route can strengthen the dissemination of tourist information, introduce intelligent and information-based tourist service facilities to meet the diversified tourist needs of tourists and make full use of Internet resources.

The construction of beautiful and livable rural areas, with natural resources and beautiful landscapes, has become a hot topic on social media, having in view the proposal of the rural revitalization policy. Leading the joint development of urban and rural areas through "Tourism +" has become an important implementation of the Rural Revitalization Strategy. As to find new directions in tourism reform, the national, regional or local tourism planning offices must allocate funds for tourism to focus on a development plan for building new types of tourism projects, such as leisure tourism, holiday tourism, rural tourism and cultural tourism.

Given the external situation and its own needs, regional governments need to present policies and plans to improve the development environment, promote the development of rural tourism, stimulate investment vitality, strengthen planning and classification guidelines and to make progress in rural tourism in close cooperation with various parties, within the framework of national policies.

At the same time, as living standards have improved, tourism has shifted from small group entertainment to mass entertainment. In the past, the mode of travel of the single group tour has been changed to trips with internal and external varieties, such as group trips, free trips and individual trips. Due to the high pressure of life and work, the short holidays, the fast pace of life, the contradiction between the continuous growth of tourist demand and the limited tourist attractions has become more and more prominent. Long-distance travel seems to be more laborious and time-consuming. Rural travel and peripheral travel have gradually become new travel options for entertainment and leisure.

The tourist resources are dispersed and the tourist attractions of the village have their own characteristics. Internet technology can be used to integrate humanistic resources, information folk art resources, to establish a system of intelligent tourism services, rural geographic information resources, to establish a national 3D network - three-dimensional map of rural tourism, software excellent information for the recovery of the rural guide, route-guide of rural tourism, etc. It can provide the most fast and advanced professional services for smart rural tourism. Meanwhile, it provides the optimum public infrastructure, such as healthcare, transportation, networking, fitness and so on, which is the hardware guarantee for achieving smart tourism. For example, to coordinate the construction of infrastructure of villages and towns in Hubei Suizhou Province, including improving the rural environment (water, toilet, wireless network coverage), modernizing village roads, setting up the rural tourism service, Suizhou has developed a big data link management platform, integrating information about food in rural tourism, housing, transport, tourism, shopping, entertainment, etc. It should be systematically promoted the construction of beautiful villages such as the green landscape, the transformation of rural homes, clean and beautiful houses with the support of rural management. Also, the development of smart software for tourist mobile telephony that offer intelligent navigation, online reservations, electronic voice explanations and other services, so that tourists can have a new experience. At the same time, smart rural tourism is an important part of national smart tourism and smart living.

With the continuous development of the Internet in the world, new technologies and environments offer a new impetus for the development of rural tourism. Relevant governments and departments should cooperate with tourism enterprises to choose their own way to develop smart rural tourism, promote local rural culture, to attract more tourists and use Internet technology to scientifically plan, advertise and build a smart rural tourism system, to lead the development of the environment and to lead the new fashion of rural tourism. Furthermore, the constant and solid efforts to promote the development of rural information tourism services must be related to the adjustment and modernization of the industrial structure in rural areas, which is related to the integration and development of urban and rural integration. It refers to ecological protection and the management of clear waters and green mountains which are invaluable assets. It is an efficient and reliable way to revitalize the rural environment by promoting the development of smart rural tourism and coordinating favorable resources such as human resources, material and financial resources, policies, and by promoting rural culture and building the modern landscape.

Source: Research on the path of revitalizing rural tourism from the perspective of smart tourism Lei Zhao¹, *, Die Zhang²

6. Entrepreneurship in smart rural tourism

6.1. Tourism Business in My Village

Rural areas typically face some disadvantages as a location for business development. The most important of these are usually related to geography, infrastructure and resources. However, current trends are creating new opportunities for rural development and the emergence of new businesses, new products and services in rural areas.

The internet and other digital technologies offer the potential to bridge geographical distances and create new forms of proximity to knowledge, markets and relationships.

Most rural tourism businesses hire a small number of employees. Mainly relying on family's own labor or a small number of people who are locally based. Hiring local people and working with local suppliers adds to the business loyalty of the local society and to higher flexibility to its operation. Furthermore, it is likely to lead to a more genuine experience for the tourist, as the whole team serving him will be immersed in the same local culture. On the other hand, by hiring part-time staff or seasonal workers, it becomes easier to respond adequately to the pattern of tourism demand, to control the costs and to manage the fluctuations in trade.

6.2. Implementation steps (actual how-to's for setting-up the business)

Many people think that starting a business in rural areas is a rather difficult or completely impossible venture. But this is not the case especially in recent years when more and more people are turning to nature, countryside, eco-friendly lifestyle and trying to experience the rural lifestyle, local traditions and customs. All you need to set up a rural business is an idea, a willingness to make it happen and implementation of a few steps.

1st step The idea

Consider the overall concept of your idea. Ask yourself why you want to start a business, why you want to enter the rural tourism market, and does your idea have the potential to succeed and is it sustainable? In order for a small business to be successful, it must solve a problem, fulfill a need, or offer something that the market wants, is looking for. That's why it's important to get to know and analyze your potential visitors and clients, their needs, wants and longings and what are the problems you can solve or help to improve.

You should know that just having a good idea is not enough to create a successful and viable business.

It is necessary to make careful analysis. It is crucial to critically evaluate your idea impartially and analyze whether it meets the needs of potential clients in the rural tourism market.

2nd step Personal resource assessment

The success of every enterprise depends largely on offering potential visitors an experience they can't get elsewhere and they will choose it over all other options.

The second step in establishing a new rural tourism business is to take a good inventory of the personal and local resources that could support your tourism activity, and will help you complete the next step, i.e. prepare a good business and marketing plan. It is important for each future entrepreneur to put himself in the position of tourists who might want to visit the specific region so as to sample characteristic products and services and have a pleasant time and differentiated, possibly unforgettable, experiences. It is also important that the future entrepreneur understands that what to him is 'normal' and 'not important', to a visitor may be unusual and a very interesting local custom.

Very commonly, a specific rural tourism business may combine several different types of services and assets.

3rd step Considering natural and social resources

Considering the natural and social resources of the actual place and the broader area is the key to start a tourism business. The first question to pose is: "Why would anyone come here?" or "What is the attraction, or mix of attractions, that would draw visitors to this region or community?" That is an important question to answer, because it is not right to assume that the area shall attract tourism based on the experience of another, perhaps neighboring village or region. To ensure the attraction of an area which may be costly to attain, it is necessary to create a recognizable and competitive product that responds to the tourist expectations and needs. One key to success is, after identifying attractions in each region or village, to think about ways to make them appealing and accessible to visitors. As the resources' inventory is completed, the multiple-use or complementary resources and interaction among them will become apparent. Usually, key to the success of this effort is connecting interesting attractions so as to create a fulfilling unified experience. Further, an assessment of lacking or over utilized local resources is necessary.

Natural resources

Natural resources are a key factor in establishing a rural tourism business. The identification of natural resources that can support activities regarding rural tourism can be written down in an inventory which could include: landscape features natural, wetlands, pristine nature and wildlife habitats.

Culture and Heritage

It is useful to to appreciate the cultural and historical assets of the region, aimed at preserving the art, heritage and special character of a rural area, such traditional settlements, traditional handicrafts, customs, lodging in traditional preserved buildings, conducting native dancing or musical performances and demonstrating local food preparation.

Social Resources

The community does have an integral role in the development of entrepreneurial businesses. The community may be the neighbors, the county, or a larger entity. In order to have an effect on community decisions and activities it is worth contacting the Municipality, the Chamber of Commerce or other organizations and local businesses and potential partners. As an active member of the community, it is easier to influence community involvement in the business, but also it is more likely to receive local support.

4th step Analysis of Strengths, Opportunities, Challenges and Problems

An analysis of strengths and opportunities versus challenges and problems is a useful tool to manage and overcome weaknesses that might otherwise stop the whole endeavor. It is also useful to look at competitors and figure out ways to distinguish one's enterprise from theirs. Anyone can use this form of analysis as it does not require special training. It helps thinking through the questions and answering in a sincere way.

Issues relating to strengths and opportunities may relate to useful links, good opportunities, necessary equipment or facilities already available, existing favourable conditions and trends, established skills and competences.

Issues regarding challenges and problems may be related to: lack of resources and equipment, lack of necessary skills, lack of start-up initial capital, need for licenses, difficulty in accessing and travelling to the location which may be costly and/or time consuming, etc.

5th step Regulatory barriers

Rural tourism entrepreneurs must meet many requirements imposed by local and national legal and regulatory frameworks. Some of these address the health, safety and well-being of travellers. Others aim to ensure that businesses pay the necessary fees and taxes. The next step for setting-up the rural tourism business is to develop a business plan.

6.3. Develop a rural tourism business plan incorporating the key concepts

Any potential entrepreneur who wishes to start their own business is well advised to develop a business plan, regardless of the size of their business venture. A business plan will help you understand how much money you will need to start it, what it will take to make your business profitable, what needs to be done, when and where to go. You will also need it if you need funding or are looking for partners to make your idea a reality. You should keep in mind that a business plan is a document with practical value and applicability. It is not just an expression of wishes and aspirations, but of opportunities to achieve practical measurable results. There are no requirements as to how big the business plan developed should be, but in any case it is good to include the following elements:

Executive summary

The executive summary is an overview of your business and your plans. This is the first part of your business plan, but we suggest you write it last. Briefly write what your company or business idea is and why it will be successful. Include your mission statement and your marketing slogan, the problem you are solving in the market and what is your solution – your tourism product or service, your target market. Describe your competition - what are alternatives of your business and what makes your business different. Also present your new company and team, and the financial overview of your business idea.

Opportunity

The opportunity section is the main chapter and core of your business plan. This part is hugely important because it's where you expand on your initial overview, providing more details and answering additional questions that you won't cover in the executive summary. It includes information about the problem that you're solving, your solution, who you plan to be your clients, and how your product or service fits into the existing competitive landscape.

Problem and solution

Start this part by describing what problem you solve for your customers and how are they solving their problems today? Defining the problem you are solving is the most critical element of your business plan and it is crucial for your business success. If you can't define a problem that your potential customers have, then you might not have a viable business concept.⁶ Entrepreneurship in smart rural tourism

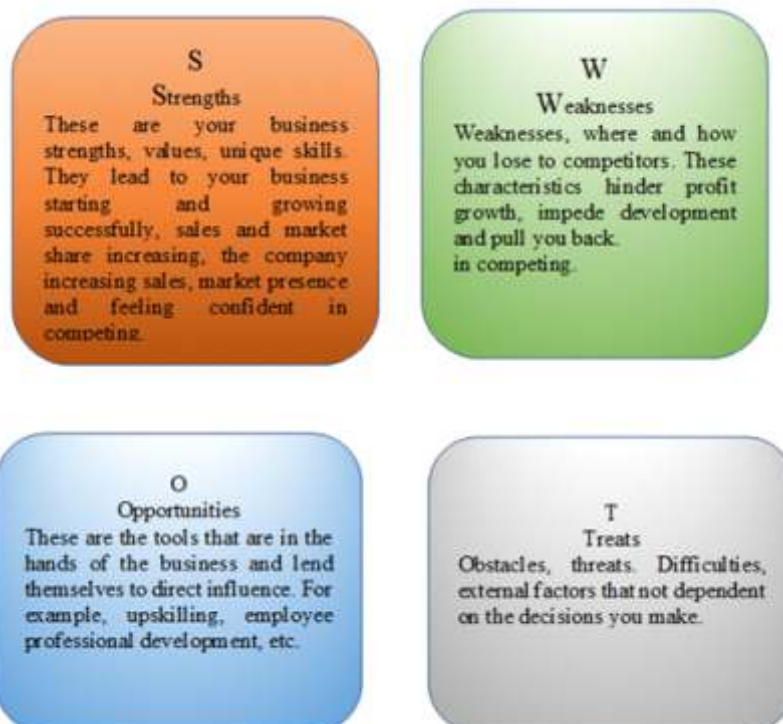
Target market

It's time to turn your focus toward your target market: Who will buy your rural tourism products and services? You need to know who your customer is and have a rough estimate of how many of them there are. Research and analyze relevant information, facts and trends reported about the market you are targeting. Describe the characteristics of your potential customers and how they have needs that you will address with your particular product or service. The next step is to separate your customers into different segments. You can segment your customers by – their age, their gender, where they live, their income, their work, what they like, what are their interests, how many they are, etc. Rural tourism businesses should target special groups interested in nature issues, rural lifestyle, local traditions and customs, local cuisine, crafts, ecotourism, etc. After defining your market and its segmentation, you can describe your target market, including its size – who are your target customers, why they are likely to buy from you and what is the market's growth potential.

Competition

This section focused on who is your competition. Most business plans include market research and compare their features against their competition using a SWOT analysis. The most important thing to illustrate is how your solution is different or better than other offerings that a potential customer might consider.

SWOT analysis - analyzing both your strengths and weaknesses and your opportunities and threats. Strengths and weaknesses are internal elements your business can take advantage of or improve on. Opportunities and threats are external elements over which you have little control. Even if you cannot change these, your plan should address how you will minimize threats.



Execution

The execution chapter covers everything related to how you'll actually implement your business. You'll cover your marketing and sales plans, pricing, promotion and advertising plan, distribution.

Marketing and Sales Plan

This section details how you plan to reach your target market segments, how you plan to sell to those target markets, what your pricing plan is, and what types of activities and partnerships you need to make your business successful. The first part of your marketing and sales plan is your positioning statement. Positioning is how you will try and present your company to your customers. Explain where your company sits within the competitive landscape and what your core value proposition is that differentiates your company from the alternatives that a customer might consider. Are you the low-price solution, or are you the premium, luxury brand in your market?

Pricing

Your positioning strategy will be a major factor in pricing your offerings. Price sends a very strong message to consumers and can be an important tool to convey your positioning to consumers. If you offer a premium product, a premium price will quickly communicate that message to consumers.

Basic rules that you should follow:

- Covering your costs: you should be charging your customers more than it costs you to deliver your product or service.
- Matching the market rate: Your prices need to match up with consumer demand and expectations. Price too high and you may have no customers. Price too low and people may undervalue your offering.

Promotion

A promotion plan details how you plan on communicating with your prospects and customers. Remember, it's important that you'll want to measure how much your promotions cost and how many sales they deliver.

Advertising

Your business plan should include an overview of the kinds of advertising you plan to spend money on. Will you be advertising online? A key component to your advertising plan is your plan for measuring the success of your advertising.

Social media

Today, a social media presence is a must for almost all businesses, especially those in the tourism industry, including the rural tourism sector. You don't need to be present on all social media channels, but you do need to be present on the ones where your customers are present. Many of your potential customers use social media and will use it to look for up-to-date information about your company, your products and services.

Strategic alliances

For the smart industry, partnering with other organisations is a very important element. To be part of this industry it is good to consider and describe who your partners will be and how you will interact.

Distribution

For companies that are going to produce products, it is important to think about distribution or how your products will reach your customers.

Team

The team chapter of your business plan is where you make your best case that you have the right team in place to execute your idea. It should show that you have thought about the important roles and responsibilities your business needs in order to grow and be successful. Do you and your team have experience in the field in which you plan to develop your own business? What roles need to be filled?

Financial plan

In this section you must describe your plans for your revenue and expenditure. Provide a prospective financial outlook for the next 1-3 years.

To help you develop this section, try to answer the following questions.

What expenses are necessary to start your business?

What are your sales expectations for the next 1-3 year?

What expenses are necessary to operate?

When do you expect to become cash flow positive?

How much cash do you need upfront to start your business?

Do you need funding?

What funding is necessary for your business idea?

7. From theory to practice - presenting relevant case studies as good experience

With the current best practices, the Handbook provides examples of real businesses created with a main goal: preserving and protecting the traditions of the lifestyle and culture of the regions in which they are developed. The added value of these businesses is that, in addition to preserving cultural and historical heritage, combined with innovation and technology in today's life, this ensures the sustainability of the regions concerned. Here you'll find some examples from the real business in regions from Romania, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Greece, Austria, Italy and Ireland.

8. Conclusions

From everything presented in our handbook and the examples we have described, it is very clear that there is a trend that more and more regions are adopting, not only in Europe but around the world, and that is the sustainable approach to doing tourism. Whether it is an individual trip or a group visit, local people who develop the service are increasingly relying on close contacts from their region. In the product chain, suppliers from the region are mainly concentrated, the service involves people from the region and the representation of the region is complex- history, food, traditions, lifestyle, culture. It is the sustainable approach that can provide what is needed in those regions that rely heavily on tourism and services. Tourism, as a complex service, involves multiple spheres that make up the overall appearance and quality of what is provided as a final product. Therefore, the more local businesses get involved, the more sustainable the product becomes.



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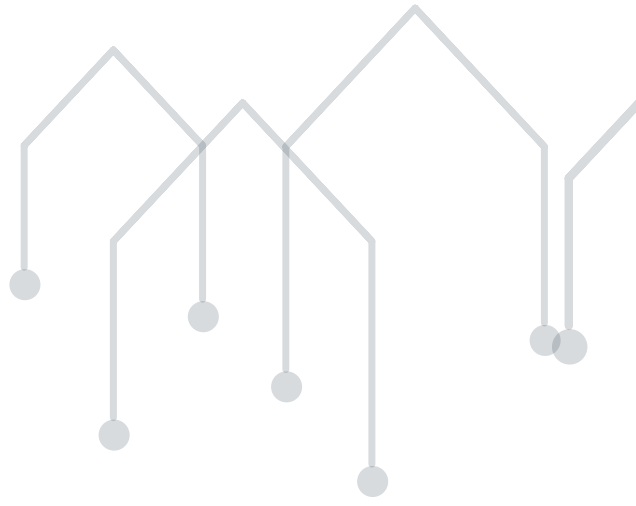
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At the foot of the Neamț mountains, 5 km from the Neamț Monastery, in the footsteps of Dragoș Vodă, in an oasis of peace and relaxation, the "La Moșie" pension is waiting for you.

At Moșie, a passionate in the culinary and hospitality art - Stelian Voina was trying to discover the hidden and unhidden treasures from the Nemțișor area and the Bison Land.

At Moșie, it is a small corner of heaven, because the man, that is Stelian Voina, is the one who brings the blessing here. According to the saying "Man sanctifies the place" and here the grace of the Lord flows in full.

Wonderful landscapes to walk through, welcoming hosts, excellent reception and kitchen services.

You can only leave here as a friend!

Stelian is a character full of humor, wide heart and continuous mood. He is like the actor from Borat, only he exalts with jokes, culture and profession with passion.

He is the kind who, after cooking, drinks and eats with you, dances, sings and is the first to get on the table!

The social innovation aspects or circular economy principles found in this case study:

- Enhancing and saving territorial geographical and faunal possibilities Local food.



MURE FILIOARA offers you the tastiest and most natural fruits and the most delicious organic blackberry jam without preservatives or food additives, syrups, frozen fruits, blackberries and raspberries. Offers fresh BIO products for guesthouses and confectioneries in the area. Tourists can pick fruit directly from the blackberry plantation.

Blackberry products prepared at the farm location:
Blackberry jam, blackberry nectar, blackberry syrup, raspberry syrup, cherry syrup. Actively participate in fairs and tourist events in the area. All the fruits used are from our plantation which is handmade and without splashes.

Andrei Vasile-Vleju is a talented young painter. He is from Agapiei Branch, he is 30 years old and he is a graduate of the "Veniamin Costachi" Theological Seminary, from the Neamț Monastery, Patrimony section, where, in 2006, he obtained a certificate as a technician in Byzantine painting.

He then continued his studies at the "Dumitru Stăniloae" Faculty of Theology in Iași, at Sacred Art, Conservation-Restoration Department, during 2006-2009. Being passionate about history, he took his master's degree at the Faculty of History, Heritage and Cultural Tourism, in 2011, after college. As I said, I am fascinated by nature, including berries and mushrooms.

I laid the foundations of a small blackberry plantation lightly. has easily taken on a bit of contour since 2014. I am a small producer and I try to create organic products without any other additions. For now, we are at the project stage in this regard.

The plantation currently has about 1000 square meters and I named it Mure Filioara after the locality where I live.

The social innovation aspects or circular economy principles found in this case study:

- ✓ Respect and growing of biodiversity;
- ✓ Enhancing and saving territorial geographical and flora possibilities;
- ✓ Cooperation with local bodies at different level and sectors;
- ✓ Boosting tourism and local economy through territory potential;



CRAMA
Crama vine de un tipul generos, de aproximativ 100 de ani. Este un tip de vin
roșu, cu o aromă de păstăie, aromatizat în cel puțin două zile.

Hanul Ursilor
RESTAURANT



Ursu trout farm is the consistent part of what we like to call home. It is the place thanks to which we managed to fill a void both in our hearts and in the local area we belong to. Ursu trout farm can be the place where you can have both a culinary and emotional experience. Come and relax and enjoy a quality time with us, in Vânători-Neamț.

Ursu trout offers dishes to suit everyone - fish specialties, barbecue, pasta, salads and fasting menus. Fish, especially trout, contains Omega 3 fatty acids that contribute to the proper functioning of the cardiovascular system and enrich memory.

What is a trout farm?

Some would say that it is a simple place where the trout is raised. Others would answer that a trout farm is a business. For us, Trout is a passion, a hobby and a place where we feel best. All we do is complete the mission that represents us. The trout is our friend at all times, and for you, we are his messenger.

Health is paramount, and a balanced diet rich in immune system support is mandatory.

The social innovation aspects or circular economy principles found in this case study:

- ✓ Respect and growing of biodiversity;
- ✓ Enhancing and saving territorial geographical and faunal possibilities.

Nebrodi park sicily, awarded as an eco-tourism by legambiente - data 2021



www.turismofvg.it/strada-del-vino-e-dei-sapori
www.parcodinebrodi.it

Nebrodi Park: a standout Park

The Nebrodi Park, the largest of the Sicilian protected areas, has grown up as a fourteen-year-old boy, which since its inception has paid particular attention to the world of schools and its little walkers with the aim of promoting the culture of respect for the environment and the protection of biodiversity.

It is, in fact, since October 1996 that, having signed the program agreement between the Ministries of the Environment and of Public Education, the Park wanted to make this document its own, stimulating the institutions to make suitable in-depth tools and to offer opportunities for "direct" knowledge of the places of Nature.

The Park on the basis of this agreement which provides for a progressive enhancement of guided tours in protected natural areas, has accepted this challenge and has persistently continued to propose educational packages based on new educational offers: teaching tools, didactic cards for the management of Education projects.

Environmental, training and refresher courses for teachers, internships, thematic areas, educational workshops, guided tours with lessons in the field.

The agro-food and artisanal productions of the Nebrodi are characterized by high quality and the enhancement of typicality, understood as a close link to the territory and the culture it expresses.

The Nebrodi basket intends to collect and offer a set of typical products that can be found in the territory of the Nebrodi Park and more generally in the Nebrodi district.

Vizitați Parcul Nebrodi



Unde să dormi



DRUMUL VINULUI ȘI AL AROMELOR

Cele mii de arome din Friuli Venezia Giulia te vor uimi

Itala Vinului și Aromelor din Friuli Venezia Giulia - o experiență de călătorie profundă între vin și mâncare pentru a descoperi Friuli Venezia Giulia



Sauris scattered hotel



www.turismofvg.it/strada-del-vino-e-dei-sapori
www.albergodiffusosauris.com/

The “hotel diffuso (scattered)” is the idea of turning a range of local housing into accommodation possibilities for tourists.

When put together under a common commercial strategy and online booking platform, the result is an incredible and innovative offer, more than a hotel where the rooms are available across the village. Tourists have a chance to live an authentic local experience, living like locals while staying in traditional houses of the village.

The online platform also promotes and directs users to local farm and artisanal products, as well as restaurants and other touristic activities available in the village. It also presents local stories, local people and local traditions.

The Albergo Diffuso is smart because it combines broad commitment of the local community together with the possibilities offered by online technologies to create a new vision of a hospitable village to tourists, building on local potential (housing and produce).

It's a win-win system generating benefits in different sectors: from home owners to local business activities and contributing to a wider improvement of local services for everybody in the village.

- ✓ Boosting of territorial potential
- ✓ Innovative solution to enhance local tourism
- ✓ Circular and local economy centred
- ✓ Valorize community at different levels



ALBERGO DIFFUSO SAURIS
Houses of an authentic village, to feel like a local

EXPERIENCE AN AUTHENTIC VILLAGE WITH LOCAL TRADICES

EXPERIENCE ROMANTIC MOMENTS

SPORTING FUN AND EXCITEMENT ALL AROUND



A SENSUAL, EXCLUSIVE RELAXATION AREA IN OUR SPA



THE SAURIS MUNICIPAL SPA



DA NOI IN PIANURA
FVG



DA NOI SUI COLLI
FVG



DA NOI SUL FIUME
FVG

Wine and Flavours Route FVG



www.turismofvg.it/strada-del-vino-e-dei-sapori

The Friuli Venezia Giulia Wine and Flavours Route is a project that brings together wineries, restaurants, delicatessens, wine bars and producers from Friuli Venezia Giulia that respect the values of quality, genuineness, professionalism and uniqueness of the products.

A taste guide that allows you to explore six different itineraries along a path that ideally connects the coast with the mountain area, passing through the vineyards and hills of the regional hinterland.

For true wine lovers to discover new taste experiences, we recommend the Passport of the Wine and Flavors of Friuli Venezia Giulia route.

A real passport that will guide you to discover the wineries of the region. It's possible to download a Passport or collect it in one of the PromoTurismoFVG InfoPoints, choose the company you want to visit among those participating in the project (you can consult the list below or at the link that will be sent to you by email when you collect your passport) and enjoy 3 free tastings including 2 glasses of wine in three of the participating wineries.

Upon reaching three tastings, come and visit us in one of our infopoints listed below and collect a free bottle that the member companies have made available to you.

- ✓ Boosting of territorial potential through local products
- ✓ Innovative solution to create local tourism
- ✓ Circular and local economy centred, based on the economy of small rural businesses
- ✓ Valorize community at different levels

Events

Discover the best and food events around you.

Packages and offers

Choose the option that best suits your holiday wishes.

PROMOTURISMOFVG TOURIST OFFICES



INCLINE EXPERIENCE / PRINCE

PIÙ AVVENTURA E PIÙ VOCI DI POGGIO ARSIZIO 2021



Forest Camping Mozirje

 www.campingmozirje.com/
 www.facebook.com/campingmozirje



Forest Camping Mozirje, located near the town Mozirje, directly along the Savinja river, is eco-friendly and meets all the tourist's expectations. It is suitable for individuals, friends, families, groups, nature explorers, cuisine lovers or thrill and adventure seekers. Respect for natural and cultural values is one of their main strengths. The space in the camp is open for tourists' socializing and cooperation and offers consistent education and awareness-raising. The camp guests will be offered several educational activities regarding the importance of nature protection and conservation of the environment. These educational workshops are not like the traditional classroom lessons; in the camp, people learn from artistic, photography, culinary, pedagogic, and experimental workshops.

They expect many foreigners to come to this part of Slovenia for its natural beauties and this could be an option to experience intercultural learning by familiarizing with other cultures and ethnicities (or as the owners of the camp would call it, a "two-way information system"). Forest Camping Mozirje offers a wide range of rental accommodation services, such as wooden huts in the forest area of the camp, rental tents, and pitches for your own tents, trailers, or campers.

Tourists will not miss out on any adrenaline and sports activities. Savinja river is very suitable for swimming and relaxing, and tourists can also go rafting or kayaking. Since e-biking has become such an attraction in the past few years, it has become available almost everywhere, even here. For those who like to go on foot, the optional activities are hiking, canyoning, mountain climbing, and caving.

Tourists do not have to leave the campsite for recreation. The camp offers several leisure activities such as relaxing on the shores of Savinja river, library under the trees, educational and artistic workshops, and the camp's mini animal park.

The recreational activities provided are volleyball on grass, basketball playground field, football, ping-pong, badminton, speedminton, and children's playing equipment made of natural materials.

The main mission of the owners is to bring nature and active life closer to people. They also want to keep Slovenes in Slovenia during the vacation season because many do not know the beauties of their country. Each person needs to familiarize himself or herself with their country before they go out and explore the rest of the world. Their next goals are to have more of such camp sites around Slovenia, and the current part of their expansion is Naturplac na skali, located alongside the Savinja river in the village Ljubno ob Savinji.

- ✓ Outdoor pedagogy (several workshops regarding the protection and conservation of the environment) where guest from all over the world can share their experiences and knowledge.
- ✓ Boosting tourism in the local area (connection with other places via sports activities, and their promotion of other places, e. g. giving advice on where to go cycling, eating etc.).
- ✓ Expansion of the business to other places.

Tourist Farm Podpečan – A Dairy Farm with a Long Tradition and Many Social Innovations



www.kmetijapodpecan.si



<https://sl-si.facebook.com/kmetija.podpecan/>



Tourist farm Podpečan is in the Savinja region of Slovenia. Farming was common for centuries near this area, and this was the case for Podpečan family. In a 120 years old house currently live three generations who own 33 hectares of land and dairy cows. The cows are brown breed, which is distinguished by excellent milk quality in terms of protein content.

Their main activity is milk production, and they manage to milk from 700 to 800 litres a day. They milk the cows with a machine which needs from five to eight minutes and runs 24/7. Because of the good quality of milk and its vast amount, the cheeses from Tourist farm Podpečan are the primary “gift” of their cows.

They are made of whole milk – nothing is taken away or added to the whole milk except culture and rennet, needed to produce cheese.

The owners of the tourist farm got advice from a French milk processing expert and technologist, Ivan Larcher, who designed their cheese factory and cheese tasting room.

His ideas were realized by Mateja Kavčič, a Slovene architect from Škofja Loka. Now, the cheese factory runs daily and makes cheese only from their home-made fresh milk.

Cheeses are not the only products produced on the farm. From their home-made whole milk, they also produce several other home-made products such as yoghurts (plain and fruit), cottage cheese, cottage cheese spreads (with horseradish, roasted peppers, chives), and pickled products (white cheese with homemade smoked trout in olive oil, and cottage cheese balls with garlic, chives, or pepper in sunflower oil). Tourists can buy their products and fresh milk in their shop.

One of their services is also food tasting. As already mentioned, they have a tasting room where the family members explain the process of cheese-making. As the tasting room has a panoramic view into the production plant, guests can follow the process by themselves and on the floor are peepholes which reveal the ripening room. Their tourist farm is the first in Slovenia that enables guests an open, but at the same time a hygienic inspection of milk processing.

Besides selling a wide range of their home-made products, it is also possible to buy other home-made delicacies from other Slovenian producers in their shop, for example pasta Šili, home-made juices Grčín, and apples from fruit farming Hrustel. They are all united by sincere love for making home-made products and they support each other by selling each other's products.

Technologically advanced barn (machines milk the cows, clean the barn etc.).


Sustainability:


- ✓ products are made from their milk,
- ✓ cooperation with other providers of home-made products, and
- ✓ selling local, home-made products in the shop. ✓

The production line and the ripening room can be observed by the guests.

They can also drive through their new, technologically advanced barn with a bus. ✓

Ecological Viticulture – Wine Frešer from an Innovative Young Farmer

 www.freser.si/en

 www.facebook.com/freser



Frešer wines are known for the organic viticulture. Matjaž Frešer, the director of the Frešer winery and his family's seventh generation in viticulture, got the Innovative Young Farmer Award for innovative ideas in farming in 2015. His wines got several awards in the past few years which means that their business model indeed gives their wines a better quality.

In 2007, the Frešer family received the money for the investment in their wine cellar and wine processing in a European tender for the development of the Slovenian countryside. During Matjaž's time in the family viticulture business, he expanded the number of vines and made several investments and improvements. He arranged a tasting room in the old wine cellar, he bought special machines for organic cultivation of vineyards and updated their wine shop.

With organic grape production, they have increased the quality of their wines and reduced the entry costs. For their family, adaptation to the modern customers who want and respect local production with high quality is important, therefore, they abandoned the competition with other larger wineries in terms of quality and price. To offer wine with a higher added value and move away from their competitors, the Frasers went for a more sustainable and environmentally friendly wine production.

They protect their vines by natural means such as: copper, sulphur, acid clay and horsetail extracts. These allow the vines to develop their defence system by drawing nutrients from the depths of the earth. The grass between the vines is mulched only a few times a year and when they cut it, the vines are forced to draw their nutrients from the earth which in turn makes them more resistant.

As already mentioned, they also have a wine shop which they opened a few years ago. There they offer authentic Pohorje cuisine, to get even closer to the customers. Dried meat products such as Pohorje bunka and home-matured dry salami, several sorts of cheese such as Pinot Noir cheese, charcoal cheese, goat cheese and pumpkin seed cheese can also be found on the shelves of their store. In addition to all these products, they also serve jams from home-made fruits.

- ✓ Ecological grape production and better quality of wine.
- ✓ Protection of vines with natural means.
- ✓ A tasting room to entertain guests and promote their wine.
- ✓ Selling local products from local producers.



ECO VILLAGE AZAREIYA

Azareiya is eco village with six wooden houses for guests in Bulgaria. The village is open for its guests all the seasons and it is close to a lot of landmarks – monasteries (Glozhene Monastery, Troyan Monastery, Zelenkovski monastery), villages and museums. The Azareiya village represents new type of ecological buildings, where the newest building technologies are combined with scientifically proved solutions for ecological and healthy lifestyle. It is a combination of unique location and ecological solutions – in the center of Stara planina mountain close to Troyan, Chiflika and Shipokovo, assumed also as the center of the country. An area full of thermal springs, combined with ecological solutions in many aspects. The form and construction of the houses, namely pyramidal, has a proven positive influence on the human's health and the ecological materials used in the construction are the closest possible to the nature. According the team of Azareiya the eco houses have energy potential helping to good the course of all processes in the human body and its good health.

The researchers showed that even staying no more than 10 days in eco houses there will be effects in the those areas:

- Normalizes the regular energy flow and immune system.
- The headache and stress disappear.
- Normalizes blood pressure.
- Normalizes the regular function of nerve system.
- Normalizes the sugar level in the blood.
- Enhancing the people' s energy status

Staying in such an eco-house makes us think about our way of life, about the momentum that leads us unknown where, about our priorities in life, about moving away from nature with quick steps – our natural environment. Looking from above, the village is shaped like a colorful mandala. On the central site is located a wooden pyramid, which is used for treatment and meditation.

The Azarya eco-village has 3 composters, as well as a solar hot water system and a wastewater treatment facility. Purified water is used to water the ecological vegetable garden with natural fertilization. During the year there are various seminars, including healthy eating and lifestyle and personal development. There are also a lot of sport facilities and opportunities available for the guests: table tennis, badminton, martial arts, football, swimming and mineral water, cycling, hiking, horse riding.



 www.azareiya.com/en/azareiya.html



- ✓ Azareiya offers unique selling proposition – a combination of unique location and ecological solutions;
- ✓ A combination of rural, religious, ecological and health tourism;
- ✓ Living in a highly developed technological society, fast-paced, subjected to tension and constant stress, the eco village unites people who are looking for a suitable form and way to protect nature, achieve balance and harmony with nature;
- ✓ New type of ecological buildings, where the newest building technologies are combined with scientifically proved solutions for ecological and healthy lifestyle. The materials, used in the construction are ecological and the closest possible to the nature;
- ✓ An self-maintained organic garden that uses the permaculture knowledge and has its own production, which is available for the guests;
- ✓ The village has 3 composters as well as a wastewater treatment facility. The composters are used for the processing of food and plant waste into manure which are then used to fertilize the garden and purified water is used to water the ecological vegetable garden with natural fertilization;
- ✓ A solar system is installed for the daily needs of the visitors;
- ✓ Boosting tourism and local economy.



Surrounded by forests, Omayo Eco Village is nestled at the foot of the Pirin and Slavyanka mountains, after the town of Gotse Delchev and the village of Gayaninovo, near the border with Greece.

The place is cozy and peaceful, away from the city noise and tension. The village is situated on a vast territory of 500 decares of forests and meadows, with two natural lakes and forest streams and an outdoor swimming pool.

The village's units are all individually designed. It has seven unique houses in its architecture and furnishings, which are built entirely of stone, clay and wood.

Each of them strikes with the developed fantasy of its creator, coming out of a fairy tale, unreal world. Each of the village unit has its own name, which reflects its essence – Magic house, Fairytale house, forest house, Air house, Shell house, Tunnels house and Lake house.

Omayo eco village is organized as a large complex, which is not accessible by car. Every little detail is in perfect harmony with the natural terrain of the area, as everything is made of natural materials. The stones in the shape of fairy-tale characters and monsters are combined with a modern pool, surrounded by comfortable sun loungers and a modern bar.

The complex has two restaurants that use organic produce from their own farm with a closed production cycle – vegetable and orchards, vineyards, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and serve locally caught, fresh game meat. Guests can also fishing in the property's lakes and the haul could be cocked in the restaurant upon request. You can also have a picnic in the many designated areas. From the restaurant you will receive baskets of prepared food.

And in the summer pool bar you can taste homemade ice cream and cocktails, as well as relax in the evening with pleasant music under the stars. The homemade products are available and in the farm's shop.

In addition to a quality, organic and delicious menu prepared by a master chef, the complex offers numerous opportunities for active recreation and sports: swimming in the outdoor pool, volleyball, table tennis, boat rides and water bikes on the lakes, and bicycles for cycling and eco-tourism.

Eco village Omayya



www.omyavillage.com



www.facebook.com/ecovillageomaya/



- ✓ Combination of location and unique individually designed eco villages;
- ✓ Living in a highly developed technological society, fast-paced, subjected to tension and constant stress, the eco village unites people who are looking for a suitable form and way to protect nature, achieve balance and harmony with nature;
- ✓ An ecological building, which are built entirely of stone, clay and wood. The materials, used in the construction are ecological and the closest possible to the nature.
- ✓ Omayya eco village is organized as a large complex, which is not accessible by car. Every little detail is in perfect harmony with the natural terrain of the area, as everything is made of natural materials.
- ✓ 2 restaurants and a shop offer eco-friendly food from own farm with a closed production cycle.
- ✓ Boosting tourism and local economy.



The farm is located in Bulgaria at the beginning of the village of Gorno Pole, nestled in the Eastern Rhodopes, between the protected areas of Cherna Skala (Black Cliff) and Pchelen Kamak (Bee Stone). The owners are the Vasilevi family. The farm is the first bio-certified slaughterhouse in Bulgaria and the first processing plant for organic beef.

New capacities have been introduced by building a plant for the production of high-quality products at optimal costs and closing the cycle of own calves – finished products (sausages, canned food, etc.). The Wild Farm is home to more than 1,200 indigenous cattle, who lead not just a free but almost wild life all year round.

They inhabit the beautiful region of the Eastern Rhodopes near the village of Gorno Pole, rich in protected areas and untouched nature. There are domesticated and wild bees, rabbits, Karakachan sheep and dogs, hawks and many other birds of prey, threatened with extinction worldwide. In the dam close to the “Farm” is the hiding place of the domestic otter, which is also an extremely rare and endangered species.

The quality of all over 25 bio-certified products is ensured by the free way of life of the cattle, as well as by the way of preparation. The owners of the farm have a huge contribution to it – Betty, who is a chemist by education and an exceptional chef, is a technologist and author of recipes for delicacies from the “The Wild Farm”, and Niki is a zoo engineer, winner of many awards from national and international competitions.

In addition to raising animals and producing organic products, The Wild Farm also has a guest house. It is not the generally accepted “guest house”, but an open home for all friends – old and new, seeking freedom, the call of the wild and the color of life.


The house has double and triple rooms with private bathroom with a total of 15 beds and a large green yard, saturated with the smell of hay, fresh grass and lots of flowers.

In addition to accommodation, the farm offers great adventures in the area of the “Wild Farm” – wild bird watching, horseback riding, gold mining by the ancient method, a tour of minerals, searching for wild bees, kayaking – the opportunities for experiences in the Rhodopes are endless.



The Wild Farm

 www.divataferma.com/en/home/

 www.facebook.com/divataferma



- ✓ A family business, which offers local products and boosting tourism and local economy;
- ✓ A combination of rural, eco and food tourism;
- ✓ First bio-certified slaughterhouse in Bulgaria and the first processing plant for organic beef. A plant has been built for the production of high-quality products at optimal costs and closing the cycle of own calves;
- ✓ The Wild Farm also offers accommodation and great adventures for all people, seeking freedom, the call of the wild and the color of life.
- ✓ Ensuring the sustainability of the local economy through the development of a family ecological business, combining tourist service and production of organic products.

Wine Valley Dome and Home – Glamping Experience in Maramures

 www.facebook.com/Casavaleavinului



The Dome Wine Valley and the restored Traditional House are situated in an idyllic place, which remains imprinted not only in the photo gallery of the phone, but also in the gallery of the soul. This wonder is located in Vișeu de Sus, Maramureș County, northern Romania, in an area where tradition, tranquility and nature reign supreme. The journey towards this oasis, takes you through inhabitants dressed in folk costumes, who still practice centuries-old customs and crafts.

In the midst of nature and tranquility you have time to give yourself time only for yourself, to admire the place, to tell stories and to go hiking. Discover the picturesque area that will be next to you this holiday: the forest, the Rodna mountains, with its natural jewels and mineral springs. A few minutes from Casa Valea Vinului you will find a spring or dump, as they say in the area, from which you can taste to get energy for hiking.

From Valea Vinului Dome, in exploring for about an hour you will reach the Maramureș Mountains Natural Park, a delight for the eyes, where forests, pastures, rivers and beautiful panoramas flow. Nature is felt through all the pores, a pure air, a call to peace and the desire to know a piece of the magic of the place, the fauna and the well-preserved flora.

As the night begins its show, the next day, the same destination will be a perfect start for mountain experiences, such as the glacial lake - Vinderelu, located between the peaks of Farcău and Mihăilescu. The walk with the Mocănița is another enchanting route, where the human-nature symbiosis is memorable.

This holiday will send you an indescribable joy, which is emanated from the whole area of Maramureș, a special hospitality and a world that has remained intact for centuries. A place, as I said before, of the soul. Words are too few to describe the area. Go and discover the charm of the Romanian lands, the traditionally cooked dishes and the nature that never gets tired of pleasing the eye.

When I first saw the place, it reminded me of a childhood story. It was a summer evening, I was sitting with my mother and looking at the moon, I asked her innocently: who lives there? She, with a smile, told me that Santa Claus lives there. Hmm, I was enchanted, I had the same feeling when I saw this unique field, that it offers the bridge to move from the innocence of childhood stories to their fulfillment in reality. So, feel and imagine that from the traditional house you can even go to the moon, a place where everything can be admired.

The dome or the month in which you will spend the night has all the comfort, a restful bed that reveals a panoramic window full of stars, mountain ridges, pastures and forests. A pleasure to fall asleep and wake up in this fairytale setting.

The traditional house shelters the feeling of going back in time, you will arrive in moments without worries. The house is over 120 years old, being moved piece by piece from the Izei Valley. It was rebuilt as a puzzle, taking into account the traditional structure and elements, which would give it the glory it deserves. Inside the house there are wooden clothes. From the bed, the windows paint the picture that will attract you to stay for a while.

Valea Celor XII (The Valley of the Twelve)

 www.valeacelordoisprezece.ro

 ValeaCelorDoisprezece



With an investment of several hundred thousand euros, Ionuț Buta, a young entrepreneur from Neamț County, in North-East Romania, built a fairytale retreat. The small oasis, called "The Valley of the Twelve", is meant to remind visitors of a time when happiness came from simple things and nature was closer to us than nowadays.

The Valley of the Twelve is a small retreat, situated in a rural area near Targu Neamt, in the village of Dobreni. Covering an area of about 5000 square meters, it is an ensemble of 12 small, rustic houses, resembling hobbit homes, where visitors can overnight.

Outside, the small hobbit homes are one of a kind, and inside, rooms have a rustic feel, with traditional Romanian motifs and textures of linen, tablecloths, and other décor elements. The temperature in the rooms is constant, 18-19 degrees throughout the year.

In the cold season, the heating is provided by wood stoves. The lighting is traditional, using lamps, there are no electrical outlets in the rooms so that guests can truly disconnect for a while and enjoy quieter moments, off-grid, away from the everyday hustle and buzzing gadgets.

The establishment comprises also a restaurant and terrace, where traditional gastronomy can be enjoyed, from locally sourced produce. A small farm and pond complete the picturesque scenery.

"I thought of it as an eco-retreat, and the construction is based on raw materials, such as wood, earth, and stone. We only used cement for stone masonry, on the facades. I installed glass windows instead of double glazing. No house is like another ", says the owner.

Tourists can also visit the houses during visiting hours when the whole village functions as an open-air museum. The small retreat provides a sauna, open-air wooden tub, massage, guided hikes, free bicycles, and carriage rides.

During winter, ski permits are available for sale, for the nearby ski slope. Also, travel packages are available, with curated trips to nearby locations. On top of this, the retreat is available for rent for photo and video shoots.

Raven's Nest

 www.ravensnest.eu

 www.facebook.com/RavensNestTransylvania



As the founders themselves recall, the story of Raven's Nest started in one of their mountain hikes. As they were exploring the area, they noticed two ravens flying above, leading them to this cauldron-shaped piece of land. As they were to discover, ravens along with eagles chose this amazing place to build their nests. Eventually, so did they.

Here, they found a whole ensemble of barns, sheds, and stables that locals use for grazing and hay-making from mid-spring to mid-autumn. Some of them were in ruins and had to be replaced, while one was refurbished to its original appearance.

Seeing the rich environment, the spectacular landscape, and the perfect location in the heart of Transylvania, they quickly realized the endless exploration possibilities of this place. The desire to preserve this unique area and the energy of this land determined them to build “Raven's Nest – The Hidden Village” as a small, secluded, and welcoming retreat. In time, it also became a highly sought-after experience and an exclusive, closed-circuit guesthouse. This spectacular location is situated in a small, mountain village, in Alba county, the western part of Romania.

It took several years and the help of local craftsmen, artists, builders, and friends, who teamed up to create this unique project, making sure that everything is in line with the authenticity of these grounds. The establishment is made entirely from wooden structures, originally rural houses or sheds from the Apuseni mountains, with the oldest building dating to the 19th century in 1896. The external walls of the houses were kept, and wooden tile roofs were added.

The minimalist approach is central, inspired by Romanian folklore, hence the subtle presence of the geometrical shapes found in painted, crafted, and woven elements. The interiors display wool carpets and bed covers, jute, and cotton curtains, vintage objects as old as the houses, reconditioned hardwood furniture, and paintings inspired by the local fairytales.

The walls are made of a mixture of limestone and hemp, using an ancient technique that has a sanitary effect on the air inside the houses. This also has an isolation purpose, as the walls retain the heat better than other methods, keeping you cool during summertime and warm during winter.

Along with the archaic inspired elements, they used contemporary ones, to ensure comfort, mostly when it came to the bathroom facilities or lighting. Some pieces of furniture were collected from locals and needed restoration and most of the woven fabrics come from Săpânța, Maramureș, handcrafted by a local artisan.

The secluded retreat offers absolute peace and immersion in nature. The hosts also created hiking and biking trails. The village offers plenty of recreational sites so guests can enjoy peace anywhere around the property. After exploring the surroundings, they can relax on one of our panoramic decks, take a hot bath in the cliff-top jacuzzi, or watch a movie at the outdoor cinema.

The food here is simple, organic, based on local, healthy, and seasonal ingredients. The recipes come from the local gastronomy, especially Transylvania; most of them were collected by Radu Anton Roman, a well-known Romanian personality who spent years documenting ancient Romanian dishes.

Raven's Nest offers outdoor activities and memorable adventures, as well as a true immersion in nature. The retreat enhances and promotes local heritage – architecture, gastronomy, history, natural sites, and landscapes, sustainably.

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Accommodation

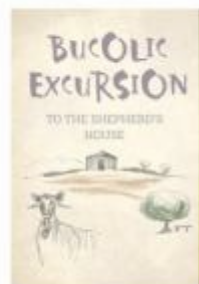
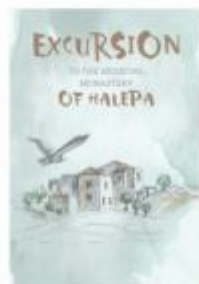
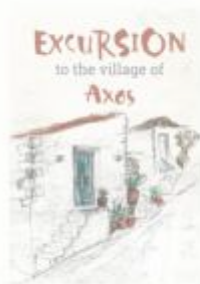
Eco-tourism through Enagron

 www.enagron.gr

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Activities



More

Enagron Cretan Ecotourism Village is a special hotel space, that provides a hospitable and traditional Cretic environment, combined with high standards of accommodation, genuine traditional cuisine, and the ability to enjoy the nature. The activities proposed cover a wide range; for example, traditional cooking lessons, bread and cheese making, or excursions and hiking.

It grows 60 acres of olives, vines, fruit plants and fruit trees, all kinds of fruit and vegetables and dozens of aromatic plants and herbs, with drinking methods, free of fertilisers and chemicals. Products such as milk, eggs, meat originate from the animals on the farm. Visitors can take part in milking, in making cheese and cooking. They can also hike through paths or walk with donkeys and ponies.

Both eco-tourism and rural tourism follow the principles of sustainable development, develop soft approach activities, promote, support and enhance the protection and management of the environment, respect local communities and support their economy, raise awareness and promote education and energetic participation of visitors.

In particular, rural development means fostering the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry, ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources, and climate action, and achieving a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities including the creation and maintenance of employment.

- ✓ Respect and growing of biodiversity
- ✓ Enhancing and saving territorial geographical and faunal possibilities
- ✓ Cooperation with local bodies at different level and sectors
- ✓ Boosting tourism and local economy through territory potential



NEWS

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DISCOVER



Philoxenia Bungalows



www.philoxenianet.gr/



www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100008338925014

Fun and entertainment

for children and adults

At the Philoxenia Hotel, we have created a rich daily entertainment and activity program for all ages, from morning till night, that will delight you. Experienced animators and fitness instructors organize yoga, aerobics, tennis and ping-pong classes, where you can participate while your children play with their new friends, building, learning and swimming safely. Your evening entertainment includes unforgettable Greek dancing, dance competitions or karaoke.

DISCOVER

Eco-touring

in places and paths of unique beauty in or outside Halkidiki.

Philoxenia Bungalows is a touristic resort located in Halkidiki, Central Macedonia. Philoxenia Bungalows implements the International environmental standard ISO 14001:2004.

They apply a set of practices to reduce their environmental footprint such as:

Using lights and LED technology lamps with very low energy for both the interior and exterior areas of the building,

Solar panels are installed on the roof of the building for the production of hot water,

A photovoltaic system has been installed for a smaller production amount of electricity.

More specifically, part of the electrical energy consumption of the enclosure is covered by the photovoltaic system. Additionally as part of the vehicle fleet there has been a fuel replacement of petrol with gas. This ensures cleaner exhaust and reduced GHG emissions. At the same time, gases emitted through the kitchen operation and the water heating process, are discharged into the atmosphere and then through specific particulate retention filters in order to minimize the environmental footprint.

They also:

Use recycling bins of plastic, lamps, batteries, glass and paper are available for waste management,

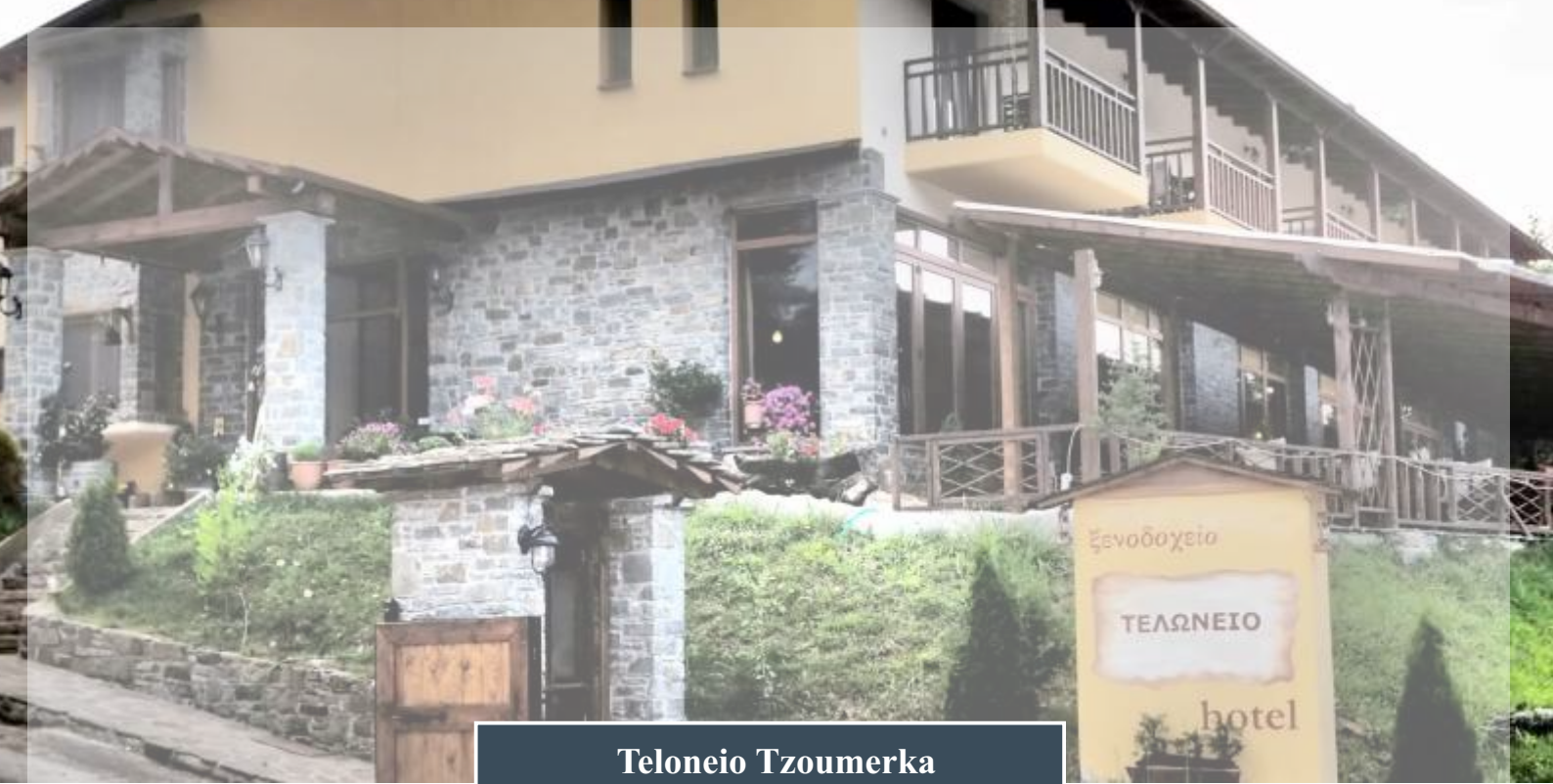
Use environmentally friendly detergents and cleaning articles

Use propane instead of oil in order to maintain the hot water temperature in the event of bad weather.

- Treat processed liquid waste from tertiary organic for the olive trees,
- Remove sludge and then transfer it to a treatment and composting plant. An important aspect of the hotel's environmental policy is the separation and recycling of waste (plastic, metal, paper, batteries) and the reuse of cooking oil.

The company also ensures that the goods and cleaning products supplied are specifically designed to be eco-friendly. Finally, Philoxenia Hotel seeks to promote an eco-friendly culture and encourages its customers to engage in its important effort to protect the natural environment.

- ✓ Boosting of territorial potential
- ✓ Innovative solution to enhance local tourism
- ✓ Circular and local economy centred
- ✓ Valorize community at different levels



Teloneio Tzoumerka



www.teloneio.gr/



www.facebook.com/hotelteloneio



Tzoumerka is a region of special natural beauty and offers to its visitors a great alternative tourism experience.

Within this area near the river Arahthos and the bridge named Plaka there is traditional bread-themed hotel called Telonio.

The wider area of Tzoumerka includes The National Park of Tzoumerka, the valley of Acheloos, Agrafa and Meteora. The National Park includes thirteen areas that are part of the NATURA 2000 program, of which seven of them have been identified as Special Areas of Conservation, on the conservation status of habitat types and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest, five have been designated as Special Protection Areas, for the conservation of bird species, and one for both. The rivers are the natural site of the Via Natura in Telonio.

The activities are linked to the protection of the environment and are respectful towards the region's heritage. The main activities include excursions, hiking, climbing, rafting and canoe – kayak. The goal is to keep the active participation of tourists in cultural activities, seminars and local works. The food is made by local products: olive oil, traditional tastes and pies, handmade jams from local fruits or genuine honey they cultivate.

The long-term goal is the promotion of tourism in the wider area of Tzoumerka and the development of the local economy, in parallel with the protection of the habitat and the wider environment.

- ✓ Boosting of territorial potential through local products
- ✓ Innovative solution to create local tourism
- ✓ Circular and local economy centred, based on the economy of small rural businesses
- ✓ Valorize community at different levels

Collaborative Consumption and Sharing Economy by FoodCloud in Ireland

 <https://food.cloud/>



Over 1 billion tonnes of global food are lost or wasted annually, based on reports collected by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 2021). This means that an unsustainable system permeates every stage of the global food value chain, from agricultural production to consumption, causing significant environmental, economic, and social damages (Martin-Rios et al., 2018, p.197). As a result, food waste minimization and management have become pivotal in sustainability and circular economy efforts, posing new challenges to the foodservice industry.

FoodCloud offers an innovative solution for food redistribution by creating an interface between the food industry and societal benefit organizations. FoodCloud has implemented collaborative consumption and sharing economy policies with the scope to reduce food waste and, at the same time, make a social impact. This social enterprise operates as the link between businesses with surplus food and charities in the respective local communities. Through a software platform, FoodCloud applies the basic principles of circular economy and prevents food waste: it facilitates the distribution of food surpluses to charities and other support services where they are needed the most. Applying a strict food safety policy, the company commits to a safe-sharing economy that combines functionality with the minimization of negative impact on all its projects' stages.

To tackle the challenges that surplus food imposes and to preserve sustainability, FoodCloud uses efficient technology features that ensure timely recording, tracking, and distributing amongst a wide food banking network, and is committed to reaching UN Sustainable Goals 12.3 and 12 for food waste and world hunger respectively (FoodCloud, 2020b). By operating Hubs in Cork, Galway, and Dublin, FoodCloud ensures the safe transport, preservation, and redistribution of large quantities of surplus food in the entirety of Ireland through an advanced warehousing system (FoodCloud, 2020a). Retailers can also use the FoodCloud app to signal availability in products that charities and community groups can collect themselves from the respective stores or facilities.

FoodCloud also prevents food waste by organizing large-scale gleaning projects, during which volunteers hand-pick harvests' leftover crops to ensure sustainable procurement (FoodCloud, 2020c). In this way, edible and otherwise useful raw materials that are leftover or discarded by commercial harvesting are utilized and repurposed instead of becoming waste. By adding gleaning to its food waste management practices, FoodCloud highlights the importance of including all stages of the food waste hierarchy in a sustainable system, without neglecting the initial stages of agricultural production that leave a significant amount of resources unexploited (Papargyropoulou et al., 2014, p.106-115). A socially responsible and green economy, as seen in this case, optimizes waste prevention, management, and recycling practices while simultaneously tending to the social needs of local communities.

Thanks to its circular economy model, FoodCloud managed to repurpose over 2,000 tonnes of surplus food and aided over 1,000 charities by 2017 (FoodCloud, 2020a). This socially responsible strategy relies on partnerships and support in retail and the food industry, as well as on a wide network of community groups and food banks in Ireland and the UK. With a commitment to venture philanthropy, ecology, and sustainability, the FoodCloud case combines speed and effectiveness in a sustainable and socially designed system.

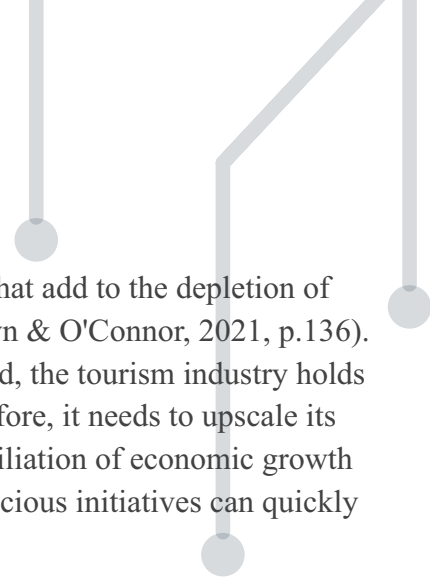
The FoodCloud case applies innovative and sustainable practices by successfully promoting collaboration between key actors and, at the same time, applying the basic principles of the circular economy. A changemaker in its domain, the FoodCloud social enterprise makes a social impact that enhances local communities via social inclusion, reduces pressure on the environment, and responsibly tackles the challenges of food waste and insecurity in the 21st century. FoodCloud's social design enables communities to actively participate in improving the economic and social shortcomings of modern production, distribution, and consumption practices. By offering immediate solutions to the repurposing and distribution of surplus food, as well as directly responding to food shortages affecting vulnerable or marginalized populations, FoodCloud combines socially responsible investment strategy and venture philanthropy. Subsequently, FoodCloud's policies and practices strengthen and protect civil society by enabling the interaction between various actors (businesses, charities, community groups, etc.) and transforming surplus food into an opportunity to empower local communities.

Circular Economy and the Irish Hospitality Sector: Hotel Doolin



www.hoteldoolin.ie



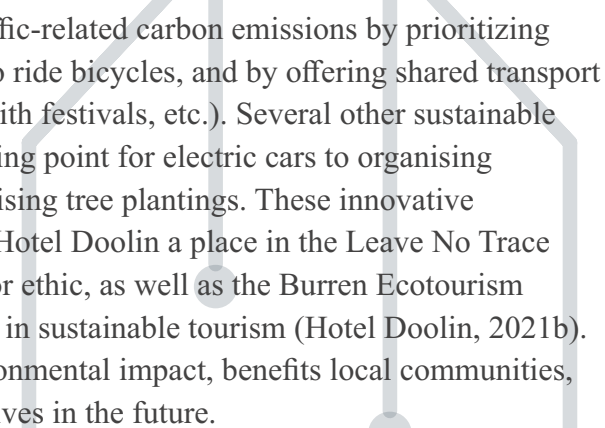


The hospitality sector is known to cultivate unsustainable systems that add to the depletion of natural sources and have a detrimental environmental impact (Brown & O'Connor, 2021, p.136). As noted by the National Centre for the Circular Economy in Ireland, the tourism industry holds a vital role in the Irish economy (Rediscovery Centre, 2020). Therefore, it needs to upscale its practices and keep up with a changing reality that imposes the conciliation of economic growth and sustainability (Julião et al., 2018, p.954). Environmentally conscious initiatives can quickly have a multifaceted impact on localities.

In the case of Hotel Doolin in County Clare, eco-design meets corporate and social responsibility, and the hotel itself has already won several awards as a changemaker in Ireland, offering strategic solutions to enhance the local community. Hotel Doolin has carefully designed and implemented an efficient and effective action and management plan that comprises multiple “green initiatives” (Hotel Doolin, 2021a). As a result, it has become Ireland's “first carbon-neutral hotel” and a leader in Irish green hospitality (Conghaile, 2019). The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) applauds Hotel Doolin's Green Team in its effort to “do better for its guests, community and local environment” (Grant, 2020).

Through a circular economy and strict environmental policies, Hotel Doolin ensures sustainability in all its activities, all the while keeping a socially responsible profile by engaging local suppliers and raising money for charities and local hospitals. Hotel Doolin's eco-design successfully abides by circular economy's basic principles: it pursues “holistic sustainability goals through a culture of no waste” and harmonises “the ambitions of both environmental conservation and economic growth” (Julião et al., 2018, p.954). Hotel Doolin has invested in reducing waste, re-using any possible material, recycling, and inspiring the local community, its visitors, and its suppliers to assume the same responsibility. The hotel has also minimised its use of paper and single-use plastics, invested in water efficiency and rainwater harvesting, and, more importantly, adopted an air-to-water heating system in their Eco-Barn to reduce oil consumption (Hotel Doolin, 2021a). This system's coefficient of performance (COP) is so high (4.5), that it exceeds the European Commission's eco-design requirements (Official Journal of the European Union, 2017).

Furthermore, the hotel has invested in minimising traffic-related carbon emissions by prioritizing local exchanges and local trade, rewarding guests who ride bicycles, and by offering shared transport solutions (car-pooling, buses that link local villages with festivals, etc.). Several other sustainable practices range from providing a free-of-charge charging point for electric cars to organising clean-ups of local roads and villages, as well as organising tree plantings. These innovative sustainable tourism practices, have justifiably earned Hotel Doolin a place in the Leave No Trace network in Ireland that commits to responsible outdoor ethic, as well as the Burren Ecotourism Network (B.E.N.) that promotes the highest standards in sustainable tourism (Hotel Doolin, 2021b). The collective impact of such networks reduces environmental impact, benefits local communities, and raises awareness of the importance of such initiatives in the future.





ZOTTER Chocolate

Riegersburg, formerly a remote small city in the south of Austria. The region of Südoststeiermark (South-East-Styria) only gained economic importance when thermal spas were created in the 1990s. Josef Zotter, coming from that region, decided to create his own business - a chocolate factory - in 1999. Handmade chocolates containing organic and fairtrade cacao beans from selected farmers that are personally known and visited by Josef Zotter are produced and sold at the place. The focus is on variety, quality, innovation, creativity and sustainability. 100% ORGANIC + FAIR TRADE + BEAN-TO-BAR.

For more information see philosophy.

There are shops in Austria and Germany, but products are also sold online and via partner shops.

Number of visitors to the Chocolate Theatre, which is an exhibition-show-tasting experience: 200,000 visitors every year, tours also offered in sign-language (prior reservation).

Energy production: the factory is 60% and the Edible Zoo 100% energy self-sufficient through the use of solar power, steam power and geothermal energy.

Sales and distribution: worldwide, though mainly in the German-speaking countries (Austria, Germany, Switzerland).

At the Edible Zoo visitors can enjoy the beautiful landscape and atmosphere and scenery, relax and watch our animals. Lots of action and fun await at the adventure playground, the giant slide and the Farmer's Golf course.

Our organic restaurant "Öko-Essbar" team is welcoming guests. Organic food, directly from the owner's pastures and gardens, freshly cooked, with pure solar energy (open Tue-Sat) are offered.

See Food & Drink at Zotter.



www.zotter.at/en



www.facebook.com/zotterschokolade



Zotter's success is living proof that ecologically and socially sound business practices are economically viable. Zotter is one of the most sustainable companies in Austria, holding for example the Klimabündnis seal of quality. The company's holistic concept, which follows on from the decision only to use organic and fair traded ingredients, is evolving and progressing continuously.

Zotter also gained an EMAS certificate (see <https://environition.at/emas-certification-what-is-that/> for more information): External environmental experts assessed production life cycle and environmental goals and found them exemplary.

Sustainable Development and Leisure Services: Changes and Trends

 https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-59820-4_1

Is leisure still a 'luxury' in the globalizing world? On the one hand, the number of hours and days that can be allocated to non-compulsory sports, recreation, cultural or tourist activities increases. However, the issue of rationality and seriousness in managing leisure is still difficult to assess.

On the other hand, due to socio-demographic and climate changes, people migrate massively (to large cities or other countries) in search of a better life and opportunities to improve their material status and thus often neglect leisure.

Those who can afford it, transfer their own leisure models to new communities, while maintaining their cultural identity, customs and habits. However, numerous people adopt new patterns. The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) encompass the key social, environmental, and economic dimensions in sustainable development. SDG 3 focuses on ensuring health and promoting the well-being of all people, at all ages. It seems that the role and functions of leisure in people's lives in many communities are important.

We need to bear in mind not just the health of people, but also their integration, compensation and use of nature for serious leisure. The purpose of this chapter is to identify leading trends in the leisure market, including sustainable development. It is important to refer to the ongoing changes from the perspective of this issue's key dimensions, i.e. social, business and environmental responsibility.

The authors' critical view is not an essential element of argument, but only a voice in the discussion on the need to promote and disseminate information on sustainable development in the scope of leisure management in communities, and the reactions of enterprises to the communities' needs.

Sustainability Challenges and Drivers of Cross-Border Greenway Tourism in Rural Areas

 <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/15/5927>

This article provides a practical example of the development of cross-border tourism and its link to achieving sustainable development goals. Greenways (GWs) are successful and recognized initiatives in Western Europe, but have recently also shown development trends in Eastern Europe, notably, in the Baltic Sea Region and Russia.

These initiatives improve the quality of life and provide opportunities for sustainable economic activities for the local communities, especially in rural areas, adding value to their natural, cultural, historical and human heritage.

The authors studied examples of best practice in scientific literature and practice, encouraging the development of cross-border tourism and GWs in Europe and Russia, in order to further adapt it to other continents. Analyzing the environmental, economic, social and institutional factors in the region and their role in sustainable development, the need for institutional regulation that would allow the development of a wider development of GWs is identified.

Research results reveal sustainable development dilemmas of positive socioeconomic effects of GWs and negative environmental effects of increased flows of tourists. Focus groups and expert interviews allowed us to assess the level of various factors contributing to sustainable development and clarify the directions of the future research.

PROJECT TEAM



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