

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN ATTRACTING FOREIGN TOURISTS IN THE MURES VALLEY REGION, NAMELY IN THE WINE ROAD AREA, COUNTY OF ARAD, WESTERN ROMANIA

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Abstract. The present paper tends to give a fuller picture of the importance of the English language in rural tourism and the alternative of sustaining it by improving all connected facilities within the area, emphasizing the importance of English in local tourism development in all the villages of the Mures Valley, namely the Wine Road Area, in Arad county. Tourism, as an important component of economic, cultural and social life, a phenomenon with multiple implications, has a powerful link between foreign tourists and local tourism in the English. Providing all the information, data, services available, in English advertising internationally, leads to an increase of foreign tourists in a recently officially declared: Tourist Resort of Local Interest. Tourism and English language are linked and nowadays they are major actors in conserving the feasibility and durability of localities from the entire local countryside as the phenomenon of urbanization keeps on growing and most of the teenagers are leaving the countryside for the urban areas abandoning old households and lands. Foreign tourists are attracted by our local beautiful landscapes, by the well-known hospitality, but without a mutual spoken language, the impact and the consequences would be minimized. Advertising on the international market by: organization of different types of activities, tourism fairs, on-line promotion, delivering flyers to local tourism companies and agencies, supported by local authorities through their tourism departments, information campaigns at Embassies of Romania in more foreign countries, promotion on social networks, short promotion videos in English or in Romanian, subtitled in English, introducing the local offer into tourism catalogues, all these activities point out the importance of the English language, spoken and written form. At the end of the paper, I proposed a possible touristic guided program for the "rural tasting tourism" in English, a program that includes 2 days.

Keywords: English, tourism, language, promotion, wine-road

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become a major factor in the development of the area called "The Wine Road", part of the region "Arad's Vineyard", the development of the entire region relying on all the activities connected to tourism, one village from this region being even proposed for becoming a "Local interest recognized resort".

Rural tourism has a lot of possibilities for development (we only point out the most visible possibilities) in the Mureș Valley region, an area with great tourist potential. Customs, traditions and handicrafts with multiple ethnic Hungarian and German cultural influences are still preserved in the area, attracting tourists from Germany and Hungary, France, Italy, Belgium, Slovenia, being correctly and efficiently promoted in English language. The development of the tourism product, and implicitly the development of tourism, should be based on the use of the public-private partnership.

Consequently, in an area which has become famous by its lakes, hills-attraction for international motorcycle contests, accommodation in traditional but also modern resorts, camping places, specific museums, prestigious vineyards and wine caves, where the wine

industry is at home, English language has become a must among the providers of several touristic services in order to attract foreign tourists and to provide qualitative services.

If we add to all this the fact that every 26 seconds a new job appears in world tourism, we must conclude that world tourism has become the largest "industry" (CÂNDEA et al., 2006). The originality of agrotourism, the reality of the conditions, the civilization and the culture, the inhabitants of such simple but amazing fairy areas, together with all the warmth of the people, the desire for a change and an improvement of the living conditions and the aspiration for creating a suitable and welcome environment, will demand and determine, step by step, the adoption of the English language in all localities with increased touristic possibilities from the region. Consequently, sustainable environments will arise from the villages, more and more independent from the cities, attracting foreign tourists, leading to an international promotion and a capitalization of the rural space (BOTEZ, BRAN, et al., 1998).

English is used in the interaction with foreign tourists, some of them turning from tourists into investors in the area, and when required, the use of a local interpreter is also possible, especially for larger groups intending to visit the museums, or other types of specific objectives. A translation company exists in the area, providing also interpretation services. Locally, the English language is taught in schools, high schools but also by independent courses provided by NGOs, or language services providers. Even the employees from several city halls in the area have attended English classes, B2 level.

All these point out the importance of English language, in an era where digitalization and internationalization of all the services, including tourism, require a good knowledge of one or more foreign languages.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research method used is an analytical one with descriptive elements.

The material used relies mainly on some PhD theses regarding the development of tourism and wine tourism in the area, articles, published studies, books on the Wine Road region and the Arad's Vineyard, and above all, individual experience and research.

English language is the key for giving an international dimension to all the area.

The vocabulary and the tenses used in English in order to create a proper image of all important places and objectives within the area should be of a beginner-intermediate level, accessible to everybody, having the purpose to give concise and precise data. All touristic objectives should have brief explanation and a short history, and website links.

Materials, all in English, such as: brochures, flyers, small panels at the entrance of localities, even free of charge phone applications could be used in order to promote better and offer a clear overview of the surroundings. Social media channels would be useful in these cases to promote the local events, traditional products and dishes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The importance of speaking, and using the English language, because it is used everywhere in the world, but mostly because the majority of the tourists arriving here speak English, is one key the development of the local tourism. (FELISITAS, 2012) Attracting foreign tourists is necessary in rural areas, both economically and socially, because it contributes to the financial and social life of the community, creating: a good perspective of long-term development of the village in close connection with agriculture, infrastructure, environmental protection, the possibility to become a support for new business and jobs that will lead to local development (CÂNDEA et al., 2007).

Thus, it acts primarily on the economic development of the respective locality, by increasing the incomes of the population, which causes changes in the structure of expenditure, the significant increase in investments, the development and arrangement of transport and communication routes, the widening of economic activity by the emergence of new branches complementary to the activity of (agri)tourism (local industry) (BHATIA et al., 2001). With its development, there is a steady increase in trade activities, which are constantly being used by both tourists and the indigenous population; households that practice (agri)tourism invest their income in housing facilities, upgrades of rustic space, repairs, household and household equipment (BUCIUMAN, BUTLER et al., 1997). Another impact of English language is the social area on which tourism works, positively influencing it, concerning the factors of civilization, education and culture. In addition, friendships can be made with inhabitants of other lands, countries, thus creating the first germs of a consciousness, planetary, progressive.

On the other hand, the other category of tourists is influenced by the knowledge of the original folk customs and traditions of the real history, the authentic life of the people concerned (BALINIȘTEANU et al, 2008).

English language represents here a bridge between cultures and civilizations, societies and religions, the connection between several villages, a good example being the twinning of several localities from the region with localities/villages/communes/cities from other foreign countries. It has led several times to a lot of exchanges of tourists from the twinned villages/partners, increasing this way the international visibility of the local areas we are referring to. Furthermore, the foreign partner has included on their city hall's website a link of the twin village, all the data and information being translated into English, with useful information, highlighting the most important touristic points and objectives to be visited.

It can be appreciated that a favorable image of the region is created in the world, the English language being therefore the most effective and pacifist ambassador.

Promoting very well, in a clear language, all the area, will attract foreign tourists, but it can also act on the management system of the locality, on local organizational factors, mobilizing them, increasing their concerns for the development of the rural area in terms of infrastructure, indirectly obliging them to find sources of financing for the realization of the objectives of upgrading access routes, restoration of tourist sites, repair of functional buildings, etc. The role of local factors is constantly increasing, with them being obliged to analyze the economic and social situation of the rural village, to carry out concrete economic development programs, to advocate and act to achieve them. The European Union, for example, through the principle of subsidiarity at territorial level, gives the role of decisive factor in the organization of economic, social, financial, local management organizations, with central organizations supporting only the activities of those localities. Implementing all the programs require a good English knowledge and facilitates the access to everything but it also facilitates the access to the area for foreigners (TRANG et al, 2015).

For foreign tourists, prices or tariffs in rural tourism are lower. Due to the lower prices, less favored social categories are allowed. The reception places are also spread throughout the countryside, so tourists can spend their free time each time in another region. Good and varied accommodation conditions allow tourists the opportunity to choose the accommodation according to the financial possibilities, the degree of culture. Direct contact with nature, local traditions, community, agricultural activities allows knowledge of the rural environment and familiarity of the townspeople with country life. At all these advantages for the tourist, adding a proper medium and advanced English level to the host will increase the chances that the touristic service and product will get a higher value, making it international, and important. For agricultural holdings, income from rural tourism and agritourism goes

directly to the families of farmers and rural economic agents without going through specialised enterprises and tourism subsidiaries that drain those incomes outside rural areas without having a beneficial impact on them, and agritourism income is an important way of capitalising and modernising agricultural holdings (ALECU et al., 2006). Farmers gain a new professional competence different from that of farmers in the field of the benefits of tourist services which they must do professionally. Members of rural families in the situation of unemployed can secure a suitable job and income in their own household because agritourism increases the employment of the agricultural holding. Hosting tourists on farms will require improvement of a certain part of the existing living space, equipping with elements of modern civilization (sanitary group, electric light, sewerage, telephone, television), which represents a revolution in the rural area, resulting in the reduction of the differences in endowment between rural and urban areas. 3. For the local rural community, agritourism is a direct source of income for members of the rural community, allows the improvement of living standards and especially the development of infrastructures and the beautification of localities and landscape, helps to prevent environmental degradation and last but not least avoids the spending of important public funds for infrastructure. For the region, agritourism supports the conservation efforts of the region, tourism revenues. Rural tourism helps to prevent social tensions as well as to preserve or develop local traditions, to reduce development differences between regions and ensure better understanding and interregional cooperation. Rural and agri-tourism activity can solve some of the economic and labour problems involving the rural population. The advantages that are obtained from the practice of agritourism for rural areas can be of an economic and socio-cultural nature.

Among the main methods in order to intensify and develop the use of English language within the area, several types of courses, provided by different NGOs have been made, and the purpose is to reach to all City Halls with these courses of basic English, level beginners and intermediate, and then, a second round with specialized courses, namely: English for tourism (MOL, 2008).

While other regions may offer a slight range of services for tourists, within this area, a wide range of diversified services may be offered and provided to foreign tourists, due also to the ability of the use of a good English language (SINDIK, J. & BOŽINOVIĆ, N., 2013).

One may notice that only during last year the number of foreign tourists increased considerably, services for translation and interpretation in/to English language raising from 10 to 35 %, taking into account also the rural area.

From an overview at the National Institute of Statistics, regarding tourism in Arad county, in 2019, the number increased with 18 869.

If we take a look only at the last 2 years, one may notice that :

In 2018 the number of tourists who arrived in Arad county was: 216.016

In 2019 the number of tourists who arrived in Arad county was 234.885

There is an increase of almost 9% , with at least 5 000 only in Arad city. And in 2019, 130 000 tourists arrived in the area subject to our research, from them almost 10 000 being foreign tourists.

Such a difference from a year to another could be explained by a very good promotion of the entire area and county abroad, on social media, providing useful data and info in English. Of course, infrastructure and facilities developed in the last 2 years, too, the variety of the providing services increasing from an year to another. For example, the parking places from the Lake of Ghioroc increased with 250 places in the last year, new pensions and hostels arose in the area, promoting their very attractive prices and local traditional dishes, more restaurants on the beach of the lake opened, some local museums started to have social media

promotion and their historical background and services presented in English very wisely. Road and rail infrastructure improved. Even in the train stations, promotion materials in English made more visible the area with all its offers.

International projects brought tourists through youth exchanges; Erasmus+ programs for youth sector increased the option of foreign partners for this region, finding mutual activities in the sector of education, teaching English classes to teenagers, tourism, wine industry, agriculture, preservation and conservation of heritage.

Local summer festivals, such as Wine festival, the Days of the village, or Ghioroc summer fest, organized with local university and youth organization, had a very good promotion on English social media channels, among the youth, attracting teenagers from all Romania and also Eastern Europe.

All these events, without being promoted in English on a wide range of social media channels and platforms, wouldn't have revealed internationally the beauty of this region.

Local tourism increased with 25% in 2019, and according to the evolution will raise every year with 10-15%, taking into account the local investments in the area: camping places, restaurants, terraces, wine caves, modernization of the citadel of Siria, the road from Siria to the monastery in the wood –Ferede, the Lake of Ghioroc, with the sandy beach and the accommodation places, modern parking places, vineries all along the wine road area.

CONCLUSIONS

The importance of the English language in the capitalization of rural tourism on internal and international market, namely in the Wine road area became a priority in the last years and will be in the next ones, because all the providers from this area have realized that except providing good and qualitative services, they have to add the international component, which, in this case is the English language. All the provided services have to be available at least in English, starting from their promotion and advertising on the international markets, to the service itself on the spot (BOLD et al., 2003).

Analyzing the external tourist market of rural tourism and comparing the advantages of the Romanian offer in the field, the local tourism in the Wine Road area is characterized by:

the high share of the virgin hills, natural environment, in natural composition, unchanged;

- Preservation of the old elements of rural civilization and their application in everyday life;

- The presence of representative ethno-folkloric traditions and values (folk architecture, crafts, folklore and folk costume, folk holidays and folk customs, etc.);

- Romanian hospitality with Latin influences, gastronomic customs from the great Christian Orthodox religious holidays;

Priorities regarding the development and promotion of rural tourism on the internal market, but especially on the external one could be introducing English language in all promotion actions (BĂLINIȘTEANU, et al., 2002):

- Attending national and international tourism fairs with offers from all the touristic sectors available in the area;

- Good websites for all the tourism providers within the area, from private companies, to public authorities, institutions;

- English panels with indications for several road trips, pensions, hostels, restaurants, attractive touristic objectives;

- Cooperation with English trainers, teachers, language providers, interpreters, translation companies, touristic guides.

Enclosed, we have presented a potential touristic program for groups of foreign tourists for 2 days tour in the region, including tour guide.

Day 1

9:00- 11:00 departure- Arad city tram station- Trip with the Old Green Arrow from Arad to Ghioroc (1h30 m).

11:00 - 13:00 Visit of the Tram museum (tasting local traditional cheese and wine varieties).

13:00 -15:00 Lunch at one of the restaurants from the Lake of Ghioroc.

15:00 -17:00 Visit of the Wine Museum from Ghioroc.

17:00 -20:00 Visit of the Wine caves from the area Ghioroc, Minis, Paulis.

20:00 - 22:00 Presentation of Bala Gheza resort and Winery, with degustation of wines, Lunch.

22:00 – Accommodation at hostels/pensions in the area.

Day 2

Museums morning

9:00- 11:00- Visiting the Museum of Ioan T Florea, the museum „Zestrea Satului,, from Covasint, the museum of the Romanian writer Ioan Slavici, Şiria.

11:00 -14.00 Visiting the citadel of Şiria and the meteorological station.

14.00 -16:00 Visiting the Monastery of Feredeu with Lunch there.

16:00 -19:00 – Visiting the wineries from Maderat, with degustation.

19:00- 22:00 Lunch in one of the pensions from the area, followed by traditional Romanian evening, with traditional music and dancers/dances.

24:00 Accommodation in the area or return to the previous accommodation place.

Of all the areas in the Mureş Valley, the Arad Vineyard presents the most favorable conditions for practicing the tasting agrotourism, the ideal area for the "Wine Road" proposed by us being made up of the communes belonging to the vineyard area of Arad, but "the Road" can be extended to the other neighboring communes. Visiting these lands, the tourists will be able to complete the series of travel and knowledge experiences, following the "Wine Road in Arad's Vineyard" touristic circuit.

The vineyard from Arad county is one of the oldest vineyards in Romania, being documented at the beginning of the 9th century. The vineyards of the Arad county are concentrated, almost entirely, in the Minis-Măderat area, occupying steadily established positions in the hills on the western edge of the Zărandul Mountains, stretching over a length of about 60 km and a width between 1-4 km. The Wine Road in the Arad Vineyard could consist of the following landmarks: Păuliş, Ghioroc, Covasânt, Şiria and Pâncota. All these data, posted in English on each public authority's website, together with short information panels at the entrances in the localities, will give an international dimension, providing useful information to the foreigners, making them aware about the importance of the places.

For more days the program can be adapted adding the camps from Casoaia to be visited with traditional meals into the forest, accommodation in wood chalets, or Moneasa touristic resort, with accommodation there and visiting the Izoi hills, eating traditional meals, too. All the program includes English tour guide/interpreter.

At all the touristic objectives, I propose to have English flyers, including the information about the host, description, contact details and website.

For the moment there isn't such a habit among the touristic providers within the area, but I will have an initiative proposing such thing, pointing out the importance of having everything important in English, in order to attract more foreign tourists.

As a final conclusion, English language has become a must not only in promoting the business and the area but also new horizon, new possibilities and many opportunities for development, cooperation, attracting foreign tourist and investors.

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