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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF OSTROV AREA, CONSTANTA COUNTY THROUGH RURAL AND WINE TOURISM

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Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to discuss the conceptual and solid dimension of the sustainable development of Ostrov area, Constanta county, regarding the rural and wine tourism and wine, and their correlation and determination of the relationship between them. The research is both a theoretical one, which exposes the ideas on this aspect, but also a practical one, which can show the efficiency and sustainability of applying a development plan. The ultimate purpose is to provide a theoretical and methodological, but also an applicative background for the development of Ostrov area. The suggested aspects have a relevant importance for development, because it determines the areas that are attractive and repulsive, managing to highlight proposals for the development strategy of the area. This approach is based on the use of some qualitative data, analyzing and forecasting the dynamics of the commune and area, and the tourism potential generating image, and finally ideas to improve and promote the existing situation through an integrative management. The main theme of this paper is to highlight and capitalize the importance of Ostrov area, for which, through the rural and wine tourism, the sustainable development becomes a certainty.*

Key words: *development potential, sustainable tourism, rural tourism, wine tourism, wine tasting tourism*

INTRODUCTION

The wine tourism is called generically also wine tasting tourism, or newly grape tourism. What is and what does grape tourism represent? One thing is certain, namely, that it goes around the same area, so much discussed and written, grape vine. In short, the grape tourism is the tourism segment that refers to all activities related to grapes.

This type of tourism has developed in our country recently, due to the European programs that have helped, by access to funds, to develop, first, the viticulture, and then, the tourism segment preceding the viticulture area. With the support of the European Union for the development of the vineyards, the consumer education for the Bacchus drink was only a step. By the thematic courses to complete the talent of taster, the profession of sommelier, of general notions about wine, it was sought to educate, a change in popular mentality, to make us consume wine, to know better the secrets of this liqueur, to respect it. Once the concepts about wine were learned, the need to know the vineyards directly was a serious motivation for the development of this segment of tourism. The wine tourism aims, firstly, to attract the wine lovers, connoisseurs, professionals in the area, but also the ordinary people who want to know the secrets of each vineyard. Analysing the mystery of wine tasting wine, learning about wine process, about the respective process, about the local customs and traditions in the area, is a crucial factor that the wine tourism, wine tasting tourism.[1].

MATERIAL AND METHODS

As research methods, we used documentation, the analysis and data processing from a secondary analysis. These methods are based on the synthesis processes, induction and deduction, analogy and comparative analysis. Once the information was defined, known and interpreted, the next step was the detailed documentation of the interest area. In the analysis activity, the study of the documentation available for the area or for the analysed system is a starting point. This allows in the analysis to obtain the first knowledge and information. The documentation implied also the analysis of the legislation or the compared analysis of the various specialised sources.

The documentation, the analysis and the data processing and the information obtained from the following sources: monographic papers [3], scientific papers about tourism and agro-tourism [1,2], informative data collected from S.C. OSTROVIT S.A. [8], direct information, from the

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inhabitants of the area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Ostrov commune, **Constanța** county, is located in the South-Western part of Dobrogea, on national road DN3. It is bordered in the physical-geographical unit of South Dobrogea Plateau, sub-unit of Oltina Plateau, fragmented by short, deep valleys, finished by river coasts when flowing into the Danube – Bugeac Coast. In Ostrov commune area there is a very important economic factor Ostrov vineyard area. Ostrov Vineyard Area is in the region of the Danube Terraces (Region VII), near Greaca vineyard. This region is located mostly on the Danube terraces in the South-East part of the Romanian Plain and includes in its area, besides Ostrov and Greaca vineyards, also 5 vineyards centers in the vineyards: Aliman, Băneasa, Oltina, Ostrov, Greaca and 3 independent wine centers: Zimnicea, Giurgiu and Fetești [9].

From the existing documents there were no reliable data about the age of the vineyards in this vineyard in Ostrov. The natural complex conditions, so favourable for the vine, may be evidence that wine-growing was also practiced in this part of the country from ancient times. Ostrov vineyards area is located in the South-West of Constanta county, along the right bank of the Danube on the Upper Terrace, with a length of 30 km.

The hills presence and the Danube waters gives very good conditions for the grapes to reach full maturity and fulfil all the organic and physical-chemical characteristics in order to obtain high quality wines [2] .

S.C. “OSTROVIT” S.A. [3] is situated in the South-West part of Dobrogea and it lies on the territory of Lipnita and Ostrov commune. It borders the Danube river and the land border to Negru-Voda and Bulgaria. By crossing the Danube one can reach Călărăsi, that is located at a distance of 10 km. Compared to Bucharest, it is at a distance of 140 km, 140 km of Braila, 175 km of Galati, 135km of Constanta.

Its geographical location is favourable for the trade relations with Western and Eastern Europe countries; it has a specific microclimate that allows obtaining some products very important in ensuring a balanced and diversified food consume for the population in the area and in Bucharest.

The current owners have successfully managed to bring the vineyard and winemaking technology according to the European standards, so that the way to follow in order to achieve a high quality wine to meet the most demanding conditions, bottling of „Ostrov Vineyards” can be done in its own cellar.

The wines produced in this vineyard have noble and original features which gives them a strong and distinct personality. The wines in „Ostrov Vineyards” respect and promote the quality requirements of the European Union. High quality guaranteed by the European Union by certification confirming the name of controlled origin and the geographical indication. Wines range in „Ostrov Vineyards” by its wide variety can satisfy the most demanding tastes, so the slogan is ... **Wine ... for you!** Ostrov Vineyards is the brand under which Ostrovit SA produces wines in Ostrov Vineyard.

The varieties that are grown in Ostrov Vineyards are the following: *Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Fetească Neagră, Pinot Noir, Syrach* and *Rebo* for red wines. For white wines the varieties grown are: *Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Fetească Albă, Fetească Regală, Riesling Italian, Muscat Ottonel* and *Crâmpoșie* [4].

The main wine ranges, *Ostrov Vineyard brand* are the following: *Ostrov Vineyard Reserve, Cetatea Durostorum, Canaraua Fetii, Domeniile Ostrov, Cosa di Vino, Premiat, Labyrinthum* and *Vinaria Ostrov*.

At present, *Ostrov Vineyards* has an agricultural surface of 2000 hectares, a wine area of 1300 hectares (including wine centers Ostrov și Lipnița, Constanța county, situated on the left bank of the Danube, at Romania border with Bulgaria), 500 hectares orchards (apricot, peach, apple, plum, cherry, walnut), vegetables have a surface of 200 hectares. Ostrov Vineyards Area includes two wine stations: Ostrov Wine Cellar [8] is located in Regiei street, Ostrov commune, near the

customs Ostrov, acting as wine storage and bottling. Ostrov Wine Cellar is the vital center of Ostrov Vineyards Area. The precinct, with an area of 27,000 m², is about 700 m from the ferry and „*Ceas bun*” terrace in the national road DN3. Ostrov wine cellar has the following visit objectives: a modern *wine station*, at European standards (primary winemaking with a capacity of 150 t/day, with an automatic production process, storage 450 wagons in *three wine cellars* in polstif tanks of one two or three wagons); *cold bottling plant* (12 million of conventional bottles/year and bag-in-box packaging); basement for wine aging barrel (60 oak barrels from France, for wine varieties Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot; *laboratory for physical, chemical and wine analysis*; tasting room, administrative meetings, dinners, folk and fashionable events; *outdoor space*, complementary salon.

Inside the wine cellar there is also a *distillation plant*, with a copper cylinder with 7 segments (for occasional and exclusive products for personal consume); concrete tanks for storing grape marc, lees and wine.

The second station is **Lipnita Wine Cellar** [8], located when leaving Lipnita village, 27 km from Ostrov Wine Cellar, having the role of wine and wine storage. „Wine Cellar”, we use the term as a generic, it is an example of combination of culture, industry, business and tourism. The visit to the wine cellar involves presenting old and new technological process, also tasting the famous Dobrogea pie takes place here. It has a primary wine of 200 t/day and a storage capacity of 850 wagons in concrete, polstif and steel tanks (interior and exterior). 30 Romanian oak barrels wait to enter the circuit.

An interesting thing is that Lipnita Wine Cellar is the fact that there are three types of technologies in different periods of time, namely: the 70s period, represented by about 10000 1 Romanian oak wood barrels, the 80-90s period, represented by polstif tanks, and the current technology represented by the stainless steel tanks.

The administrative building houses the former *grape crushing and pressing station*, waiting to be exploited from tourist point of view. The building structure, the dimensions of the existing spaces with the mentioned industrial archaeology plant, the constructive outbuildings, on-site storage, single-family and duplex houses outside the premises of Wine Cellar, prison relics that provided most labour force during the Communist period (along with the pioneers, students, military), lead to the organization of an interesting **Wine Museum**.

Ostrovit producer has implemented the requirements of the standard of Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) on the entire chain of production, being authorized EUREP GAP - the world leader in the standards of Good Agricultural Practice (GAP).

During 2005-2013, at Ostrov Vineyards Area, an extensive investment program was achieved, both in terms of conversion of vineyards and orchards and providing them with specific equipment (viticulture and orchards equipment, irrigation systems) and the modernization of the two wine stations.

From 2005 until now, at Ostrov Vineyards Area 24 million euros were invested [8]. The money was used for the conversion of plantations (strong start, but later in the competition with the large vineyards from Cotnari, Jidvei or Murfatlar) by successive annual programs, irrigation systems, providing equipment and specific equipment. Also, the two wine stations, Ostrov, respectively Lipnita were brought up to modern standards. Slowly but surely, the wines from Ostrov Vineyards have their honourable place on the national market, even international market. Clearly, Ostrov Vineyards recovered, largely, the delayed start to compete the high quality wines.

The investments in the modernization and acquisition of fixed assets, every year in the analysed period, determined also a reduction of profit, these investments being achieved based on the obtained results. In Figure 1, it is presented the number of employees in the analyzed company. It is found out that in 2012, the number of employees increased by 81% compared to the previous year, then, the following year, decreased to 72%, following the reconsideration of the staff policy and of the company financial situation.

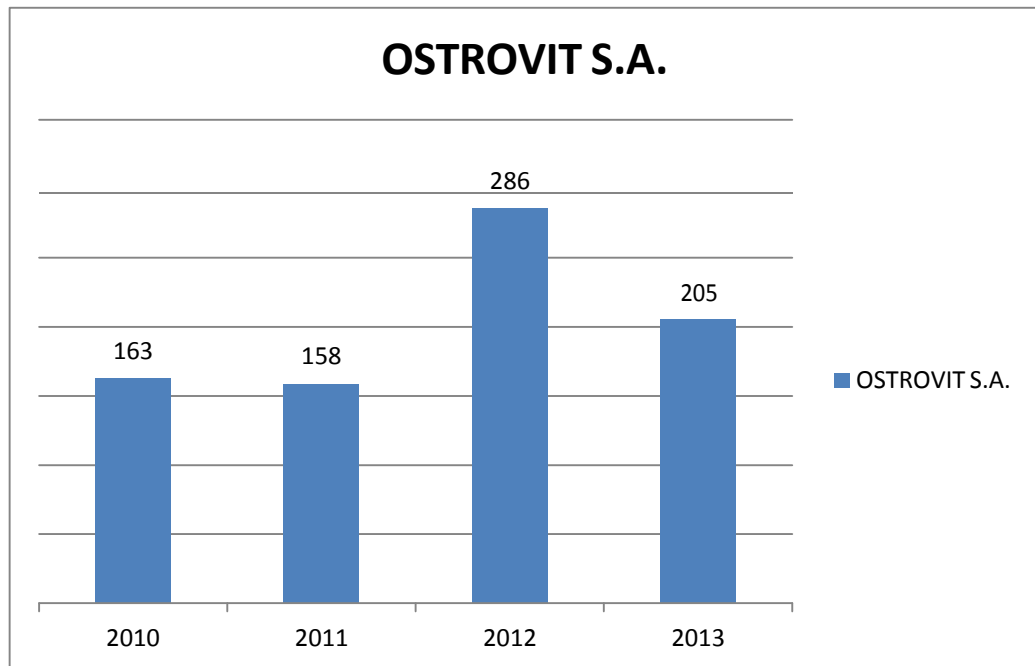


Fig. 1. Evolution of the number of employees [8]

As it is shown in figure 2, the turnover has the oscillations from one year to another. In the analysed period, 2010 records the highest turnover, and year 2011, the lowest value. The situation improves in 2012, but, following the replacing of the old plantation of wine and trees [8] it decreases in 2013, to 81% compared to the previous year.

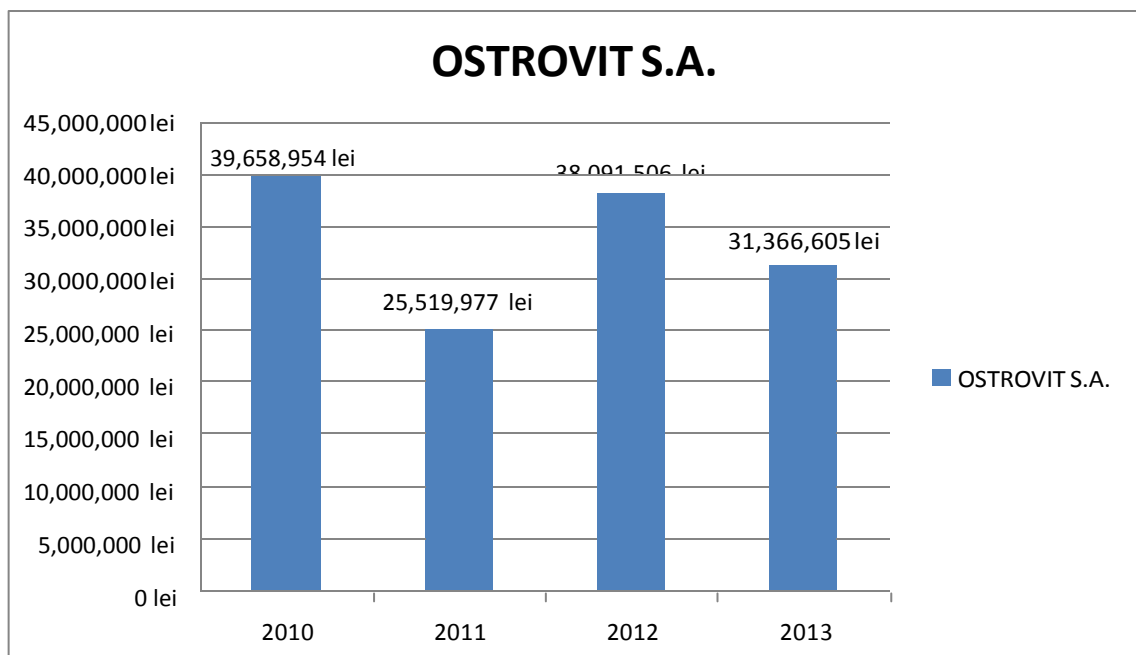


Fig. 2. Evolution of turnover [8].

In the analysed period, we see that, except for 2013, each year the income exceeds the costs and the company obtains profit. Net profit margin decreased from 1.13% in 2011, to 0.35% in 2012 and to - 4,98% in 2013, as it is shown in figure 3.

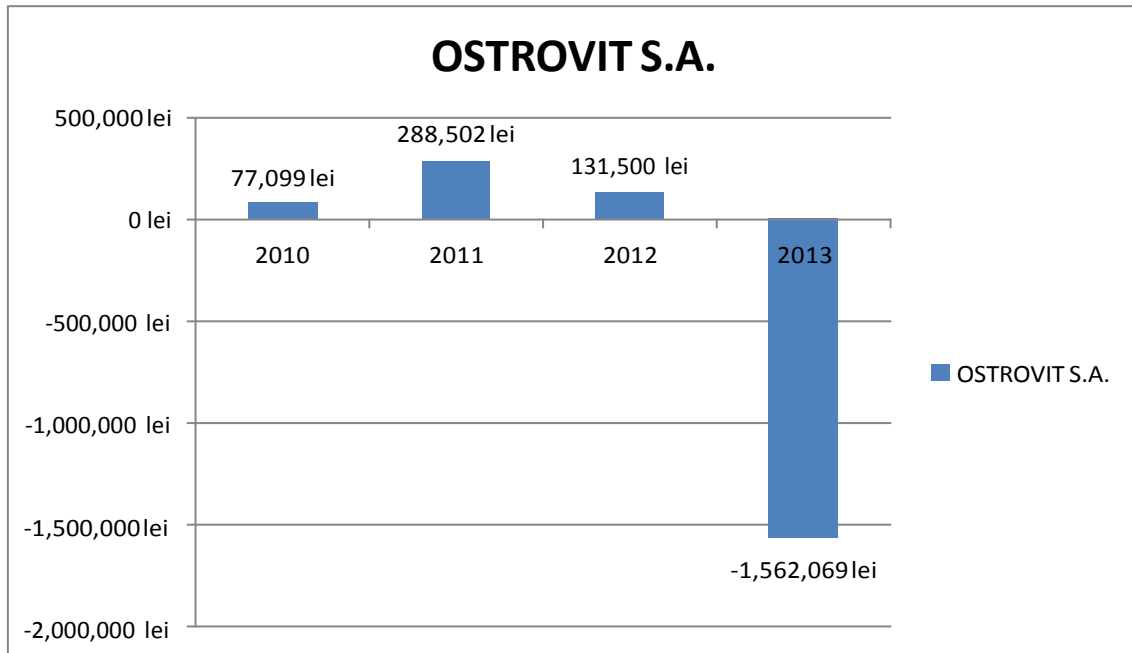


Fig.3.Evolution of net profit [8]

As regards the tourism [5], Ostrov Vineyards Area benefits by a rich cultural heritage represented by the churches in villages Bugeac and Ostrov, Durostorum archaeological site, the remains of the Byzantine fortress Păcuil lui Soare, cemeteries, such as those in Bugeac and Ostrov, and others. Ostrov commune also has a valuable natural tourism potential that is considered as a rich local resource and it provides the opportunity to develop a sector with positive results for the local economy. It is noted a striking similarity with the Danube Delta by numerous islets, with arms and separating channels, winding, created by the Danube water, vegetation and fish fauna characteristic to the Delta [9].

This rich and expressive presentation of the tourism potential was a motivation for which Ostrov Vineyards Area decided to launch also in tourism, especially in wine tourism. A tourism so fascinating that covers almost all types of tourism. The purpose is to attract to the area tourists who know the art of wine but also ordinary people that can be initiated to this fascinating way.

CONCLUSIONS

A visit to a wine cellar organized in a detailed manner, or rather, free, provides the opportunity to learn some technical aspects of wine making and the cultivation of the vine. This enables in the same way the tourist to get acquainted with a great diversity of landscapes without being deprived of the luxury of a comfortable accommodation and a good meal [3]. The consumers benefit, among others, by a practical advantage, which is to taste the wine before buying it and buying special types which are not on the market.

In Romania it is also considered the exploitation of the important recognized wine potential of our country, by organizing visits for tourists, with tasting at wine cellars in famous vineyards [6].

The Ministry of Tourism [7] performs in this regard special actions to promote the program „**Romania – country of wines**” by the participation in international fairs and exhibitions and publishes various information materials. Among the areas covered by the program there are included vineyards from Murfatlar, Niculitel, Valea Calugareasca, Vinju Mare, Potelu and Ostrov.

Moreover, Romania is in the top ten wine countries in the world. And this is normal, because many ancient sources attest that the vine, and of course, the wine enjoyed a great attention among the Dacians. Maybe too much attention, since Burebista (82-44 BC) had, it seems, to give

order that vine roots to be removed from the large areas of land [4]. And last but not least, our country offers fantastic views and unforgettable wine roads.

The tourism potential is quite large in terms of tourism sights that Ostrov area has. The religious, historic, natural sights are striking reasons for attracting tourists to the area, and for the development of the rural tourism. But Ostrov area comes with something in addition to the other area, and that is wine tourism represented by Ostrov Vineyard. Ostrov Vineyards Area was able to take advantage of the tourism potential of the area, developing, besides the agricultural chain, the tourism sector, by building a very important complex of hostels, hotels, recreational facilities and a program to start the wine tasting. All these are prerequisites for the success of the implementation of wine tourism.

The recommendations that support the development of this sector are the following: first is the need to promote. Promotion is through its website through advertisements both on TV and radio stations, a comprehensive operational and marketing program is needed for the direction Ostrov Vineyards Area has to move. Another way is to participate in fairs and wine tourism promotion with brochures, flyers, sheets for vineyard and pensions presentation, which presents the vine offer, the wine offer and thus promoting the area too. Another recommendation is to organize wine festivals, where advertisement, promoting the area is more practical.

The wine tourism in Ostrov area, represented by Ostrov Vineyards Area is vital for the area, because it is a quite important potential economic factor, and this should be speculated by all major stakeholders in the political, economic and legal sector.

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