

EVOLUTION OF TOURISM IN EUROPEAN CONTEXT

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Abstract

Tourism globalization requires seeking solutions to the problems that involves sustainable development. Tourism sustainable development should meet the present needs of tourists and regions that receive tourists, leaving open the gates to further development of tourism with the preservation of cultural and natural heritage for future generations.

Romania, with an experience of over 2000 years in tourism activities, in present its improves the forms of tourism exercise, tourism infrastructure and is in the stage of adopting a strategy of tourist activities, taking into account the experience of advanced countries, the scientific developments from the large university and academics centres. Romania has universal opportunities, specific, unique in tourism development. Romania cannot (nor should) take to a model developed and used in other countries of the world. Romania has its own scientific and practical potential which to substantiate its own strategy, entirely original, which to apply through methods, also, fully specific. Such an orientation cannot be explained only by historical experience or by originality of geographical conditions, climate, traditions, customs, arts, culture, etc.

Key words: *tourism, tourism area, tourism activity, European tourism.*

JEL classification: *L83, O19*

1. INTRODUCTION

Romania's position is at the crossroads of European and Asian countries, which makes her easily accessible from east to west or from north to south. Airlines, rail lines and trans-European roads, inland waterways and maritime links it to the four parts of the continent. The relief with harmonious forms, with mountainous areas, hilly and plain, offers to this country an ideal configuration for tourism. Within the national strategy of Romanian tourism development is necessary to establish a hierarchy of priority areas to be considered in the immediately following period, taking into account the potential offer and the categories of tourism demand that could be met through the capitalisation of existing offer. The studies made by the author in this field led to the conclusion that there are some tourist areas of interest that, included in an appropriate strategy of development, can lead to the re-launch of Romanian tourism. These areas could be: the area of Bucharest, Romanian coast of the Black Sea, areas of Brașov and Sibiu, northern region of Moldova, the Danube Delta, and Carpathians.

2. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ROMANIA

The general strategic objective of tourism development is the creation of a competitive national tourism product, at the level of tourism resources values available to Romania and that to impose this field as a priority economic activity within the national economic system. Achieving this objective involves: doubling the number of foreign tourists at the horizon of 2010;

increasing consequently the currency revenues from tourism, from approx. 800 million USD in 2004 to approx. 1000 million USD in 2007 and 2000 million USD in the years 2010 - 2012. The main objective of environmental policy of Romania is reduction of disparities compared to EU Member States as regards sustainable development and environmental protection.

To achieve this objective, are taken into account the following lines of action: promotion of local and community capital investment for realisation of measures and works of environment protection; protection and improvement of biodiversity and natural heritage by supporting management of protected areas, including the implementation of the network Natura 2000; reduce the risk to natural disasters in all regions of the country, and implementation of preventive measures in most vulnerable areas; assuring protection and conservation of natural resources; improve of soil quality, by improving waste management and reducing the number of historically polluted areas; for supporting and promoting tourist offer from Romania, to increase tourist movement was officially launched the project of Strategy of Romanian tourism with the participation of professional and patronal associations from tourism, local and regional authorities from Romania, tourism NGOs and international consultants and began the national branding process through a project supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which includes also the representatives of professional associations and employers from tourism, which correlates with the

project of creation the national brands launched by the National Agency for Governmental Strategies, is noted in the *Summary report on the performance of provisions of the government program in 2005 and the first quarter of 2006*.

By the accession of Romania, in September 2005, the “*Charter for Geo-tourism*” of National Geographic, Romania has been declared the third geo-touristic destination in the world. The action strategy contains a package of drafts of legislation harmonized with legislation from EU countries which will provide both higher services quality and offer diversification and was launched the project for the development and implementation of the *Romanian Tourism Strategy*. The project is carried out within a broader national and international partnership and has as nucleus the Country Report for Tourism developed in collaboration with the World Tourism Council, presented in March 2006. In the legislative field, the *National Authority for Tourism (ANT)* has worked to simplify the specialized legislation in the field, and in collaboration with the specialists from *Tourism, Hotels, Restaurants Sector* and with the support of experts from the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family and the National Institute of Statistics, has made an important step to update the nomenclature Occupations Classification from Romania for Tourism, Hotels, Restaurants Sector. Have being formulated a set of priority projects which were promoted both in media and in the network of tourism associations, namely: Tourist Information Centres - CIT sites, tourist buses, Danube and Danube Delta, Super-ski in Carpathians and in Social programs and it established target tourist areas (the Danube and the Danube Delta, integrated ski area, circuits of Saxon fortified churches and medieval towns of Transylvania, Sibiu - 2007 Cultural European Capital, etc.). Tourism from Romania will be focused and integrated into regional and global trends, in terms of growth and guidance in structuring the offer. Objectives which the Romanian government set them in the field of tourism are: increasing tourist movement in Romania; offer diversification and increase of tourism services quality. Through these objectives the Government of Romania aims at least a doubling of revenues from tourism until 2008. The strategy that the Government of Romania will promote for capitalisation of national tourism potential concern the following issues: setting priorities in developing the support infrastructure to tourism in line with the general infrastructure development; governmental bodies cooperation with private sector to promote cross-border investments; improvement of training process and natural environment protection; functioning the consultation bodies between tourism industry and public administration at central and local level; transfer to the private sector, in accordance with international practice, the activities of marketing and promotion, licensing, certification and classification in tourism; using a share from the funds for professional conversion of unemployed persons, for their education and training in trades and occupations specific to

tourism; improving and finance of profile educational forms (schools of tourism and profile faculties); computerization of tourism promoting actions; defining and promoting a national tourism *brand* for individualization, personalization and increase of attractiveness of national specific offer, both for consumers and for investors. (Băltărețu, 2003)

Elaboration of the concept *Romania Branding*. The added value that Romania will bring to the European Union includes in particular: Romanian culture, natural and cultural heritage, diversity of natural habitat, the quality of human capital, performance sports, contribution to regional security and promoting of democracy and market economy values in space of immediate neighbourhood, diplomatic expertise accumulated in various regions of the world; the construction of promoting strategy for the profile of the country - the combination of governmental experts with the professional associations, with universities, journalists, artists, private consultants; the definition of clear objectives and action plans.

Development aspects of local and regional tourism of Romania are approached and deepened inclusive within PHARE program which is coordinated by the Department for Local Public Administration and by the Inter-department Working Group, whose foundation is found in so-called “Green book”, recently developed. As is noted in these studies, Romania focuses at continental scale “natural and cultural interference of European size” and worldwide by a large diversity, supported by a generous geographical frame: mountains, hills, plains, lakes, Danube Delta, Black Sea coast etc. It is widely recognized the fact, that the uncontested picturesque of various Romania's natural areas, supplemented by the real cultural treasures - some of the world interest - constitute still many motivations for travel.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF TOURIST AREAS

Within the regional policy regarding the valuation at European level the tourist targets of certain value, a special place have the funding programs to protect them. But are plenty of situations where indifference and lack of education, important elements of national heritage, natural and cultural, are left without a careful surveillance with incalculable consequences, such as the case of Dacian castles form Orastie Mountains or the capital of Dacia - Romanian Sarmisegetusa etc. Practice so far has shown that in most of the pilot projects of regional development, include the need and opportunity: introduction of tourism in the development equation; identification of all tourism targets; assessment or reassessment of tourism objectives on the account of real value; their

prioritization as opportunity of economic support and protection; guidance on promoting or improving the current situation in the field; assessing the positive economic influences resulted from their organized valuation through tourism; increase of the training level of persons employed in tourism. (Băltărețu, 2003)

The quality of tourism product is affected in the highest level of education and training of the personnel involved in tourism, which determines the quality level of direct services. From the contact with providers and careful analysis on the development of service quality level in tourism, is found that evolution is very slow, generally, to the extent of privatization. Until the changing of aspects related to heritage, in the sense of inclination of the ownership balance in favour of the private one, we cannot base only on certain quality regulations and control measures, especially organized at regional level. Strategy of local and regional development, especially for regions that include in their areas tourism objectives of high value, should consider the fact that increasing flow of tourists, domestic or external, influences positively the regional economy: direct, through the total revenue originated from tourism consumption (home, meals, taxes, purchases); indirect, through local bilateral cultural contact and influences, knowledge of the local economic values and eventual business opportunities, employment of labour in services, creation of favourable image, improvement of the involved infrastructure etc.

Local revenues from tourism can represent an important income for the community and region. In this framework we keep in mind the fact through that tourists are the best customers for the stores network, fairs with different profiles, exhibitions etc., aspect which, wholes direct revenues, encourages the development of organized trade, affects the number of shops, their quality etc. (Băltărețu, 2003).

Local and regional economic development must correlate and integrate the tourism, necessarily, among other components of the economy, taking into account also the fact that this clean industry does not affect major the environment and, generally, does not involve large investments. A good project for tourism development, included within the regional development program, involves investments much less expensive in this activity as the integration is more harmoniously realised.

Economic development strategy of Romania, including also the tourism cannot be influenced by the European ones, so by the one of the countries with traditions in this field.

Engagement of tourist units for a spectacular increase of service quality has managed to enjoy by the tourists' feedback, they recognizing the eco-labels as environment with a performance of "quality addition". The message sent by the label is also an advantage in advertising and enhances the holiday experience of tourists. Eco-tourism can be regarded as a sustainable tourism strategy and customising, can appreciate that it is beneficial its practice in Romania, because the fact

that our country represents a critical area of the European ecosystem through Black Sea. Tourism in the Black Sea region has a great potential as a sophisticated tool for economic development and natural environmental conservation. Having seashore at the Black Sea, Romania can offer a wide range of tourism products, including sun and sea, professional health care, sports such as water-skiing and golf, special concerns for studying bird behaviour, cultural activities, gastronomy, folklore, etc. These products match the demographic trends from the main tourist generating countries, where they travel for leisure and health care. Unfortunately, the publicity material about environmental tourism is not very rich, manifesting a greater need for information in this area. For a big help today, the Internet can provide a source of actualised information and could successfully meet the needs of users of this "virtual library". Taking account of the potential eco-tourists of Romania come from countries where the Internet is to reach everyone, promoting eco-touristic areas in this network would be an inexpensive way and with high impact to make known the offers of our country (Băltărețu, 2003).

4. EVOLUTION OF TOURISM ACTIVITY

Regarding the euro-market strategy of tourism products, is necessary to nominate that at the beginning of XXI century, the main determinant factors of the development of European tourism were grouped so by WTO experts: increase of incomes for consumption; relative decrease of departures of tourists from northern and eastern Europe; the liberalization of travels in countries from Eastern Europe; two wars from Golf and the former Yugoslavia, as inhibitor temporary factors; the depreciation of U.S. dollar against major Western currencies, including against the *euro*; development of promotional policies of governments of European countries, specific to the tourism sector from each country.

The strategy subordinated to the objective of the European tourism development requires for the first decade of XXI century to achieve 1 billion nights, aspect which is mainly aimed at:

a) Linking offer to demand through changes of the existing tourism products. New tourism products and programs will seek stimulation of tourism development in peripheral tourist areas and increase of visitors' number by reducing the number of non-tourists with the creation of facilities for extra-season tourism;

b) Specialization of tourist products on market segments that include age groups between 15-24 years, 25-55 and over 55 years; especially for the category between 15 - 24 years, which in the countries of European Union count 51 million of

people; will create educational arrangements specific to exchanges of people, programs and experience between teachers, students and pupils from the profile institutions from European countries;

c) Modernization and development of social and health tourism through the system of community grants, in conditions in which the potential of this subsector is insufficiently exploited because of its low profitability for travel agencies and lack of motivation of the offer;

d) In mountain tourism the risk of lack of snow causes a tendency of de-seasoning of holiday in the mountains combined with the market spread over several segments including Eastern European to reduce the mentioned risks;

e) New or in expansion euro-tourist products, including: Euro-touristic products with large facilities and price discounts, transportation with coach, for market segments with modest incomes, according to the project "Tourism for all", adopted by 18 European countries participating in the conference from Gatwick – England, as a pan-European project of tourism; touristic products substantially subsidized, within social tourism, by associations and trade union organizations for market share: "father, mother and children with pittance", in the case of Greece, Cyprus and Spain or with government subsidies in the case of Sweden; product development "euro villages" launched as a product of social tourism by the European Group of Economic Interest having as members the representatives of specific segments of the rural tourism from France, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, Portugal, Spain and Germany; product "cheques vacances" development and expansion on the markets from several countries and whose success lies in its subsidization, between 20 and 80% of the voucher value, by the establishment committees of employees; F.I.T. tourist products of short term destined to the segment of individual tourists offered by tour operators, hotel chains and airlines; expanding offer of rural tourism product in the entire European pool; development of product "holiday club" as a lucrative market segment and in continuing expansion in the countries of north and south Europe.

Support of development of new products' market and tourism market in general represents in many European countries the incentives, subsidies and financial support of the tourism consumption at all micro, mezzo and macro levels of tourism offer. Respective systems include hierarchically also the institutions, tourism businesses, governments and local administrations.

These systems of features include, on countries: in *Greece and Spain* – financial supporting allowances of investments depending on their size and importance, preferential financial allocations for specific investment objectives (particularly in hotel domain), subsidies to interests and long and medium term credits with government guarantees for the development of some tourism sub-sectors or sectors, tax subsidies through tax reductions; in *Switzerland* - subsidizing the

development of isolated areas that have a tourism potential; in *Sweden* - subsidizing social tourism with government support; in *Portugal* - the fund for tourism is a governmental source of loan with subsidized interests, covering 60% of investments cost; in *England* - primary sources of financial assistance are the groups working directly in tourism and the secondary sources are manifested in the public sector being represented by capital grants and loans with low interests; they are administered by the eight committees and councils specialized on components of the tourist offer (Art Council, Historic Building Council, etc.) (Beldeanu, Popescu, 2004).

European implementing program of support for tourism is realised within the Action Plan for Tourism and is coordinated by the Directorate "Tourism Unit" of the Commission of European Communities including sub-programs of studies, assistance, advice and financial support in developing tourism sector of member countries.

After the first years of the third millennium, WTO experts have developed "Vision over Tourism until 2020", long-term study, having as basis of analysis for the next 17 years, the period 1950-1995, 1995-2010, 2010-2020. In those conditions, increase of international tourism and its quantitative and qualitative development (new products and tourism motivations, new marketing-management systems) will continue, so that WTO experts appreciates that the total number of international arrivals will increase from about 565 million in 1995 and 700 million at the beginning of the third millennium, to over 1.56 billion in 2020. Of these, 1.18 billion will be intraregional arrivals and 377 million will be arrivals on long route (Beldeanu, Popescu, 2004).

From the total of tourist arrivals, the regions that will be in the first three places will be Europe, with 717 million of tourists, East Asia and Pacific, with 397 million and North America, Central and South America with 282 million, these regions being followed in the last places by Africa, Middle East and South Asia. Eastern Asia, Pacific, South Asia, Middle East and Africa are projected to record a growth rate above 5% per year, compared to global rate of 4.1%. For mature regions from the touristic point of view, such as Europe and North America, Central and South America is appreciated that will have an increase under the global rate. Europe will maintain the largest tourism market share in tourist arrivals, but will suffer a decline from 60% in 1995 to 46% in 2020. By 2010, North America, Central and South America will lose the second place held currently, in tourist arrivals in the favour of East Asia and Pacific, region that will receive 25% from the total of international arrivals in 2020, and North America, Central and South will register a decrease from 19% in 1995 to 18% in 2020 (Table 1).

Table 1 – International arrivals on regions (millions)

	Basic year	Forecasts		Increase (%) / year	Market share	
	1995	2010	2020	1995-2020	1995	2020
Total	565,4	1006,4	1561,1	4,1	100	100
Africa	20,2	47,0	77,3	5,5	3,6	5,0
America*	108,9	190,4	282,3	3,9	19,3	18,1
Eastern Asia and Pacific	81,4	195,2	397,2	6,5	14,4	25,4
Europe	338,4	527,3	717,0	3,0	59,8	45,9
Middle East	12,4	35,9	68,5	7,1	2,2	4,4
South Asia	4,2	10,6	18,8	6,2	0,7	1,2
Intra-regional**	464,1	790,9	1183,3	3,8	82,1	75,8
Tourism on long routes***	101,3	215,5	377,9	5,4	17,9	24,2

Source: 2002 Vision on tourism until 2020, the World Tourism Organization, September 2002

Notes: * North, Central and South America

** Intraregional includes arrivals when the country of origin is not specified

*** Tourism on long routes defines journeys that not include intraregional tourism

Tourism on long routes will register a faster growth, of 5.4% per year by 2020, compared with intraregional tourism, which will be only at 3.8%. Relationship between tourism on long distance and intraregional tourism will be approximately 76:24 in 2020.

Analyzing distorted perception of the Romanian tourism offer at European and global level, mentioning, that in a marketing study entitled "The tourism consumption in Central and Eastern Europe: prospects of development", published in 1993 by the European Commission, Directorate - General XXIII - Tourism Unit, one of the chapters includes a marketing analysis regarding the Romanian tourism. This analysis can be considered incomplete and poorly documented in terms of offer and thereby unfavourable to an image fully actual of the Romanian tourism offer. However, the Romanian tourism, analysed, plays more real data, relevant regarding international tourist movement (main flows) that is necessary for the sake of knowledge of possible causes of the deficit of Romania's tourism image abroad for the change of unfavourable effects in a future effective promotional strategy on external markets. In the study, according to the European Centre for Data regarding travels, tourism market from Romania is grouped into six regional markets (Bucharest, Muntenia-Dobrogea, Oltenia, Banat-Crişana, Transylvania, Moldova) and ten large urban centres, after the number of population (Bucharest, Braşov, Constanţa, on the first three places).

Romanian economy is treated, also, summarily, through the official rate of inflation rate and on the informal market on the RON, reduction of working time, increase of unemployment, the net monthly income considered of three times less than the miners, foreign investments, introduction of VAT. Paragraph on the tourism industry shows that it had 1% of GNP in 1990, experts considering possible, due to perspective of stabilizing the situation in Romania, an increase in tourism demand, as a result being possible an increase of the tourism contribution to GDP and to the improvement of the payments balance situation. The study suggests the urgent need for a complete

modernisation of existing touristic products and tourism management, showing the interest manifested for our country by foreign companies Radison Hotels, Hilton, Holiday Inn and Kempinski, the last two being interested in full taking of hotels from Romania. Is mentioned the dissatisfaction, according to the study, of Romanian business tourists, by those that once Romania has opened the borders to foreign tourists, some European countries have imposed mandatory visas for Romanian citizens. This fact is no longer current, from 1 January 2003, due to the elimination of passport visa requirement for Romanian citizens travelling within the Schengen area. Accommodation capacity from Romania of 1991 is considered inadequate in proportion of 95% as standard of comfort, service and infrastructure. The forecast that "would be difficult for Romania to leave in the coming years from the count of lower prices" has not been confirmed by reality. Since 1998 have being organised special tourist programs with moderate prices, so that most Romanians with very low incomes to have access to mountain or season tourism, such as "Litoralul pentru toti", special programs for students and pupils or offers from some hotels such as: „Plăteşti cinci zile și stai șapte", etc., also, through the privatization of tourism have created opportunities for the development of luxury hotels, being attracted major international groups that work in tourism field as Accor (Sofitel), Hilton International, Ramadann etc.

During 1990-2006, the countries receiving tourists from EU-France, Italy, Greece, Spain, Ireland, Austria, Portugal have registered, in general a surplus of payments balance, even if in some countries has increased also the rate of expenditure from this sector. Likewise increased the number of jobs in tourism or in the worst case, this number remained constant, contributing to the stability of the entire economic system. The countries issuing tourists like England, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, and Sweden have

developed, in general the tourism sector although the costs caused by tourist departures represent more than the incomes from tourism.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The tourism sector brings to the European Union more than 70 billion of U.S. dollars annually and provides employment to a greater number of 940,000 people, only in France, a country that situated on the third place in the world in terms of revenues from domestic tourism and on the second place within the countries of the European Union in the same field.

Tourism is not under the direct incidence of any European policy, but many measures and rules of transportation, environment, information technology, energy, nutrition, hygiene, and taxes have a direct effect on tourism; resolutions of the Council of Ministers of the European Union will be reflected indirectly over the community tourism and the future Member States of the European Union. Within the member countries of the European Union feels the need to improve the cooperation arrangements between countries in terms of tourism and also a better support of small and medium enterprises in implementing the touristic product.

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