SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL TOURISM

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Abstract
Development of tourism as an economic branch meets all requirements of sustainable development considering that can be touched all three pillars of this type of development: economic development, social development, environmental protection. To achieve sustainable development is necessary to initiate and support a strategy with concrete actions, summarized in specific and measurable objectives. Sustainable development of tourism requires long-term effort enforcing complex implementation techniques: establishing an integrated strategy serving to identification of business portfolio (tourist activities); approval of tourism development policies at national level and at each regional level; planning and development programming for about five years period, containing programs and development projects with the necessary actions (generally known as tourism action programs). Implementation of tourism policies and plans is a responsibility both of the authorities and the private sector. Each policy will support the strategic development directions previously determined and also it must act as a long term strategy for integrated development and administratively assumed on tourist area.

Keywords: sustainable development, regional, tourism, strategy, policy, planning

JEL Classification: H50, H54, M10, M30, O13, O21, O44

1. Introduction and general context
The concept of sustainable development means all forms and methods of socio-economic development of which foundation is to ensure a balance between socio-economic systems and natural potential. Sustainable development can be regarded as an adaptation of the society and the economy at large problems identified until now.

The best known definition of sustainable development is given by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED): "Sustainable development is development that aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

The key issue of sustainable development is the reconciliation between two human aspirations: the need for continued economic and social development and environmental protection and improvement.

Sustainable development has become an objective of the European Union since 1997, when it was included in the Maastricht Treaty, and in 2001, when on the Goteborg Summit was adopted the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, which was added an external dimension to Barcelona, in 2002. In 2005 the European Commission launched a review of the Sustainable Development Strategy and in June 2006 was adopted renewed Sustainable Development Strategy for an enlarged European Union, based in Goteborg strategy and result of the process started in 1997.

Sustainable Development Strategy of the European Union faces many challenges. Some of these challenges are very similar to problems encountered and the Union’s Lisbon Agenda comprising three pillars of development: economic competitiveness, social inclusion and environmental protection.

The stated purpose of the renewed Strategy is to work towards continuous improvement of quality of life for present and future generations. But this cannot be achieved only within communities capable to use resources
rationally and efficiently and to discover the ecological potential of the economy, ensuring prosperity, environmental protection and social cohesion.

The renewed Sustainable Development Strategy impacts across Europe and therefore suggests ways to improve cooperation with the government and other stakeholders, the NGOs and citizens, entities that must work together for sustainable development. [10]

Cooperation for sustainable development should be a concern for the EU and for the Member States. European Union policy on sustainable development should be complementary to the policies implemented by the Member States.

To prevent, counteract and eliminate repercussions of the economic, social and environment problems and ensuring economic development, social progress and human development are necessary to initiate and support specific actions, summarized on specific and measurable objectives, included in national strategies for sustainable development.

To adapt the society to these requirements were developed national strategies, with targets transformed into actions solving in the future the problems that our society faces today. [1]

Since November 2008, Romania has a new National Strategy for Sustainable Development, its essential element being the country's full connection to a new philosophy of development of the European Union's own development and shared throughout the world, that is sustainable development.

Romania still have to recover significant differences from other European Union member states, while learning and putting into practice the principles and practices of sustainable development in the context of globalization. Despite progress in recent years, is a fact that Romania still has an economy based on intensive use of resources, a civil society still in search of a shared vision and a natural capital faces the risk of degradation that may become irreversible.

National Sustainable Development Strategy sets goals for moving, in a reasonable time and in a realistic way, to a development model generating high added value and oriented to continuous improvement of people's lives and their relationships in harmony with the natural environment.

National Strategy for Sustainable Development provides a positive outlook for tourism development. This strategy states that "the most efficient segment of the economy is the service sector. Taking as the baseline the previous activity of the main economic sectors it appears that the total productivity of resources used in the service sector was substantially higher than in industry and construction. Although the structure and quality of services in Romania is not yet adapted to the requirements of modern economy, this sector is only in which the added value exceeds the consumption of resources (39.3%)." [9]

For the following period until 2020 the sustainable development of the country will focus on decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation, following the development of some business domains that will ensure the environmental sustainability of the natural and social environment, among these business areas being found also the industry of tourism.

As a result, will be considered in the next 5-7 years to accelerate the overall development of services and tourism sector and its contribution to GDP growth in order to reach a share of about 60%. Tourism will be one of the major beneficiaries of the fund to stimulate services sector development to grow with minimum consumption of energy and material but high added value. [9]

2. Sustainable Development of Tourism

Development of tourism as an economic branch meets all requirements of sustainable development considering that can be touched all three pillars of this type of development: economic development, social development, environmental protection. In recent years tourism has benefited of sustainable development approaches, like other economic areas, unfortunately more in economically developed countries than in less developed countries such as Romania. Sustainable Tourism Development aims to ensure efficacious coordination structures, integrated policies and functional/operational processes that take place without destroying or deplete resources, providing economic, social and environmental development. Resources should be exploited at a rate identical to that of renewing their, giving up the exploitation when the resource is regenerated very slowly, to replace the one with greater power of regeneration.

With sustainable development of tourism can benefit all three planes. Economic and social advantages offered by tourism development planning are based on multiple quality of life changes in developed rural villages, continuing with development of social and community infrastructure and the opportunity to develop services and activities. [2] Environmental advantages and its protection are focused on balanced environment supporting a positive quality tourism.

Sustainable tourism allows understanding the effects of tourism on the natural, cultural and human environment, but also the importance of environmental sustainability for future development of tourism. A balanced development can be ensured through planning and zoning land to allow adapted development for tourism to the capacity of ecosystems. Any equipment or infrastructure item that is done at community level is a potential incentive for local development. Natural and human environment will become more active, stimulating local people to
Sustainable tourism development will be achieved through some major changes taking place in the tourism industry in Romania, in the following period. These changes will cover both aspects of structure and decision in tourism and processes and interactions in tourist activities. Decision-making and structuring issues will focus on tourism policy issues and regulations including: making institutions and the framework for implementing sustainable tourism; the conservation and protection of basic tourism resources; mobilizing all forms of sustainable tourism practice in accordance with environment requirements; establishing a legal framework to support tourism businesses, local authorities, to improve operators and tourists attitudes towards the environment.

In terms of specific processes of travel and tourism and resources needed to develop the tourism sector, will be improvements on several levels: the identification and development of natural resources and cultural resources, having tourism valence; setting future tourism demand and its comparison with offer capacities; identifying new opportunities and new orientation of planning decisions and development of tourism in relation to these opportunities; use of advanced processes for designing a competitive tourism, responsive to environmental problems, by application of architectural solutions and equipment without damaging the environment and tourism resources offered in each tourist area; improving the quality of management at tourism operators and local authorities.

The purpose to achieve a sustainable tourism plan should be subordinated to national plan of economic and social development. Actions can cover for economic (income growth, diversification and integration of activities, controlling, enhancement and development zoning) for social (poverty and improving income distribution inequality, socio-cultural indigenous heritage protection, participation and involvement of local communities) or ecological (protection functions of ecosystems, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity). [7] Some experts prefer to talk about sustainable development of tourism, rather than on sustainable tourism, the first referring to all aspects of development, and the second in some aspects and components of tourism - such as long distance air transportation who cannot be sustainable under current technology, even with the use of best practices.

Implementation of tourism policies and plans is a responsibility both of the authorities and the private sector. Public sector is responsible for: setting planning and implementation of basic infrastructure; development of certain landmarks; establishing and administering rules regarding facilities and services quality; establish measures for management and recovery of the territory and environmental protection; setting standards for training in tourism, maintenance of public health and safety. The private sector is responsible for development of accommodation, the operations of travel agencies, commercial enterprises with tourism activity, and is based on superstructure, the development of tourist attractions and promoting them through specific marketing activities.

Sustainable development of tourism requires long-term effort enforcing complex implementation techniques: establishing an integrated strategy serving to identification of business portfolio (tourist activities); approval of tourism development policies at national level and at each regional level; planning and development programming for about five years period, containing programs and development projects with the necessary actions (generally known as tourism action programs).

3. Strategic directions for regional sustainable tourism development

   A. Improving tourism infrastructure in the area of action by including an extended partnership and local and regional initiatives relating present and future of tourism. To maintain the region in the tourist circuits, is necessary to develop the tourism assets at least 75% of the best competing travel destination;

   B. More dynamic movement of tourists, increasing number of tourists and direct and indirect income to maintain a balance of tourist traffic, between 500,000 and 1,000,000 visitors every year. This level of tourist traffic can be achieved by developing forms of tourism without aggression but with constant demand as:
   - mountain tourism (climatic, skiing, ecological);
   - rural tourism and agro-tourism;
   - cultural tourism, historical, religious;
   - business tourism;
   - leisure tourism;
   - other forms of tourism (sports, transit tourism, extreme tourism, etc.);

   C. Ensuring sustainable use of natural resources and capitalization of ethno-cultural traditions simultaneously with protecting, preserving and enriching the heritage of the region;

   D. Diversification and increase the quality of services provided for the tourists in order to ensure real attractiveness and sustainability at medium and long term. In this context it is necessary to coordinate the quality efforts of numerous tourism developers, and public or private investors at all levels. The quality result of these efforts must to exceed the average range. For example, we consider a high quality level, that over 80% of accommodation facilities to be classified more than 3 stars;

   E. Promoting the development area as a tourist destination and create a regional tourism brands for specific identification on the market and representation of tour operators and consumers. Finally it is necessary to the
positioning in some segments of demand but also differentiation within the highly diverse national and international offer. Networking for global tourism is also necessary to correlate with similar initiatives (national or regional). This allows convenient placement in the national tourism offer, the ideal being classification in Class I as a tourism area;

F. Promoting tourism projects with local or external financing development as a solution for domain growth. Simultaneously with the promoting policies is needed development based on large projects for general and touristic infrastructure to create opportunities for strategic investors but also for local people. At the same time should be performed support action to business environment as the main source of opportunities for regional tourism development;

G. Promotion of partnership and volunteer complete major tourist investments. The development of partnership must be made by effective participation of the public authorities, civil society and private sector (business environment). In this sense small investment can become growth factor by combining synergistic effects resulting from the creation of local or regional associations and voluntary chains for types of tourism or types of facilities (such as a joint local brand for small inns and guesthouses);

H. Attracting local and foreign, public and private investors, through taxes or administrative facilities. These facilities are set by consultation with all investment partners or with professional and civic organizations from tourism, to avoid any further pressure or long-term adverse effects of development. Investments for quality in tourism are critical and the experience of the tradition areas of tourism in Europe show that the minimum invested capital in 3-5 years exceeds a few billion.

4. Public policies for sustainable development of regional tourism

Development policy to tackle systematically and coordinate development will include several principles which should guide all decisions of local government but also the political lobby at governmental level (Government and Ministry of Tourism and Regional Development). Will also be created the institutional framework to implement policies by setting up an Office or zonal Agency for Planning and Tourism Development, a body to coordinate sustainable development on a longer period (10 to 20 years).

Each policy will support the strategic development directions previously determined and also it must act as a long term strategy for integrated development and administratively assumed on tourist area.

Zoning policy and touristic integration of the area

Zoning will be necessary to implement the land use plans for resorts, tourist facilities in areas of attraction for urban tourism and other types of tourist areas. Zoning regulation will require the establishment of development standards such as tourist density, the upper and lower of employment etc. Zoning should be done even to develop areas close to tourist areas, so they are compatible with tourism industry development.

Environmental protection legislation, with county and local level stipulations should be adopted. The basic rules in construction, including fire-fighting law should be reviewed, in all communities so as to ensure that they meet standards.

Policy regarding unified management for touristic sites and architectural and landscape design

Locations management, architectural and landscaping design in tourist areas must be achieved through an administrative agency which shall coordinate a committee or an architectural review board chosen for this purpose. This organization should review and amend, if necessary, all proposed tourism development projects in accordance with standards design established by the Commission. However, analysis procedure of projects improves compatibility with natural resources and harmonize with the local environment and architectural traditions.

With the quality standards of tourism facilities and services must be developed and adopted other regulations, especially related to health, safety and sanitation. These regulations include operating conditions and procedures to check the hotels, other accommodation, restaurants, travel agencies and guides. Technical standards of infrastructure and buildings should be reviewed to ensure that they meet standards.

Development project can be a complicated process, especially large projects, such as a resort development project, with many hotels and facilities. A program development requires careful analysis of critical path method. It is a planning method of actions so that them to be fulfilled in rational and efficient sequence and for project implementation in a coordinated manner.

Policy regarding tourism planning

Tourism scheduling is based on priorities strategic plan to diversify offer, tourist attractions, infrastructure development and transport network. If properly designed tourist programs not only provides exciting activities for tourists, but also a wide geographic and demographic distribution of economic benefits.

Development of tourist facilities and services such as restaurants and handicraft shops along the tourist routes to encourage tourist spending during halts.

Tourist programs may include traditional routes with bus and taxi, walking and riding (or walking with another animal), boating on rivers and lakes, railway routes. Local air tour by plane or helicopter are possible in the area by reactivating the old airports.

Funding policy for management and tourism planning
Financing of for local tourism planning, like urban plans and ecotourism attractions planning public like national parks or historic archaeological sites, are under the responsibility of the local authorities. [3] Financing of detailed development plans and feasibility studies is usually the responsibility of the private sector.

Planning a bigger touristic center can be realized by the local communities, private company or a development company. Even if planning is done by the private sector, the local authorities have responsibility to implement standards as they were originally approved and to review the plans and accept them only if they meet approved standards.

Commercial projects are usually undertaken by the private sector. Large projects such as future tourism resort centers require substantial initial investment, particularly of infrastructure, so they can become profitable only in a few years. Such projects require a solid managerial experience. If local private sector is less developed and managerial inexperienced or don’t have enough investment capital to carry out important projects, then can be constituted a development public company, established by local authorities or in association with the private sector to find funding sources and for hiring experienced managers. [5] This company is responsible for the infrastructure or other noncommercial components of the project and continue to deal with these components after having made the resort development. Usually, the company leases for private sector to develop commercial components and uses rental income to cover investment costs and operational to support of the tourism resort. Development company can be set up to run several tourism projects in the region.

Financing policy for infrastructure development

The main components of the infrastructure are financed by government or public authorities by financing various projects. However, taxes can recover most of this investment or at least operating costs. This infrastructure serves the general need for development. In a development program, internal infrastructure funding will be made by the local authorities and the private sector which take development initiative.

Policy concerning funding major tourist attractions

Local parks and national, historic and archaeological sites, museums, cultural centers and other types of attractions must be, in part, financed gradually by private management, and by paying entry fees is covered some operational costs. These attractions determines tourists to visit an area and spend.

As it was explained above, the financing arrangement and restoration of tourist areas may be realized by the private sector, but with support from authorities. Commercial attractions such as theme parks, should be financed by the private sector, hoping to bring profits.

Supporting policy for development of superstructure (hotels, facilities and commercial services)

The private sector usually is the source of financing for the modernization of hotels other commercial facilities, this being politics and the tendency in most tourism areas. Local authorities will be the initiator of development in new tourist areas before private investors decide to invest, or may cooperate with private investors for certain projects.

In the initial stage of development are required large investments. Some incentives for investment are:

- providing land for the development of tourist facilities at a moderate price or free. In some areas where land acquisition by the private sector is difficult, regional and local authorities' intervention is sufficient to stimulate investment;
- providing free outdoor infrastructure;
- ensuring all internal infrastructure or only a part for which the cost could be covered by taxes or rental price of the hotel or other commercial premises;
- total or partial exemption from local taxes for the initial development and putting into service of tourist facilities. This opportunity is offered by local authorities;
- development loans by an interest rate or low normal or guaranteeing by the local authorities the loans made by private institutions. It may grant a longer period of grace for the loans repayment;
- granting of subsidies for development up to a certain percentage of investment costs or subsidies for staff training programs.

5. Strategic planning on action areas

A. Priority: Developing policy, setting structure and legislation on tourism:
1. approval of policy and local and regional tourism plan, as an official document of the tourism development;
2. facilitate the development of a regional center or tourism agency to support capital development in tourism;
3. strengthening local legal framework for tourism so as to ensure proper application and to ensure high standards in relation to similar areas;
4. setting network points, centers and resorts across the area to provide guidance for the establishment of tourism programs (zoning);

B. Priority: Development and training human resources:
1. development of vocational education for the tourism sector to include a number of skills of staff to meet the criteria for employment;
2. education and training of staff for all tourism activities, particularly of the major museums and monuments that serve to improve the facilities offered by their guests, especially the hospitality facilities, interpretation and marketing;

C. Priority: Development programs through partnerships:
1. encouraging the involvement of local communities in tourism development and setting integrated development plans for tourism, including all elements of infrastructure to prevent uncoordinated development;
2. efficient organization of public and private sector and maintaining close coordination between public, private and governmental organizations, where they are involved;
3. developing partnerships for special areas (mountains, lakes, gorges and valleys, etc.) to provide facilities and attractions throughout the year;

D. Priority: Support for environment conservation and development and setting resources:
1. supporting the development of ecotourism in the mountains, national parks, reservations and rural areas;
2. environmental protection measures, standards for development (incorporated in the regulations for local development) and setting guidelines for tourist facilities;

E. Priority: Developing infrastructure and promoting investments on tourism:
1. development of regional transport system including road and rail infrastructure priority based on tourism requirements;
2. extending the system for collecting, analysis and dissemination of statistics and regular market surveys to assist in supporting investment and marketing decision-making;
3. introduction of mechanisms and subsidies to facilitate investment in tourism both from local investors and foreign investors;
4. identifying investment opportunities and take measures to allow expansion of the tourist season in the area;
5. increasing public funding (local government and community) to develop tourism attraction and infrastructure;
6. programming projects, and required actions;
7. efficient and systematic funding of individual tourism projects;

F. Priority: Develop diversify and promote tourist offer; Information services:
1. creating a coordinated network of tourist information centers in all the main tourist areas to expand the message of hospitality to guests, providing them with accurate information to assist in orientation, enjoyment and appreciation of their destination;
2. extending the marking system of local interest, regional and national sights according to EU standards and the introduction of thematic tourism routes;
3. setting tourist routes, touristic points and stops;

G. Priority: Destinations marketing, in terms of natural heritage, historical and cultural conservation:
1. achieving a regional database of products, facilities, events and services both for tourism industry and the public access;
2. creation of a tourism web portal of the area as a major instrument for promoting, informing and making appointments;
3. creating and promoting for tourism market a database of cultural events to help promote visual and auditory arts, particularly traditional festivals and folk events;
4. and efficient tourism marketing promotion for the whole region and private firms;

6. Conclusions
Actions conducted at strategic level, policy level and planning will be completed by tourist programs that may be interesting to international tourism markets. In this context it is necessary to establish a new structure of offer: vacation tourist centers, tourist centers with specific and towns that have accommodation structures. Important changes taking place in tourism will lead to long-term to a balanced development of the area communities and protecting concerning natural, economic and social environment.

Finalities of regional tourism strategy for sustainable development can be summarized on a few directions:
- developing a formal document whose contents cover actions that are included in national or European strategies for development and promotion of tourism;
- to build arguments for local and national policy makers to implement action contained in the strategy or to take action regarding necessary legislative changes;
to highlight the wealth resulting from natural and authentic cultural heritage;
• to develop a real tourism industry, fair and profitable with a low environmental impact;
• to increase the number of jobs and level of professionalism in the tourism industry;
• to promote public/private partnership interest and voluntary actions of civil society in developing and promoting regional tourism;
• to establish clear lines of action of tourism for the next at least 20 years;
• to represent the interests of a large group of citizens, associations and foundations, etc. directly or indirectly involved in tourism development in the area.

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