

THE ROMANIAN TOURISM IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Currently tourism represents one of the basic elements for the sustainable development, considering that it is properly understood and implemented. To perform an analysis of tourism in this context, we must consider the three coordinates, interdependent, that influence and equally are influenced by the tourism activity. It is about the particularly impact that tourism has on living standards in areas with high potential for exploitation of tourism activities, about the impact and the effects generated in the economy and, not least, we discuss about the effects that tourism generates on the environment.

Key words: tourism activities, economic impact, quality management, quality of life, environmental quality, communication strategies

JEL Classification L83, Q5, O44

Introduction

Romania currently holds a real tourism potential, which properly harnessed, can attract numerous competitive, economic and social advantage. The quantitative and qualitative evaluation, given by the variety of landforms, by the cultural, historical, technical and economic objectives, allows us to say that Romania has several competitive advantages, such as: tourism resources varied in volume and in value of structure; the concentrated positioning in territory of tourism resources; cultural heritage values and local traditions preserved in the daily life; the allocation of one third of the European mineral water resources in Romania; etc.. In the context of a correctly designed and implemented communication platform and under the conditions of a properly applied quality management, in terms of offering this tourism potential, we believe that tourism can be one of the basic coordinates for sustainable development. Considering these aspects, the article aims to treat the subject of Romanian tourism from the perspective of sustainable development, taking into account three key issues for achieving a correct sustainable development: economic effects, quality of life and environmental quality.

The impact of tourism activities on the economy, on the quality of life and on the environment

The basic condition for achieving a sustainable tourism, which brings a substantial contribution to the *economy*, is given by providing qualitative tourist products and services. Therefore, a particular interest should be given to quality management. We highlight here the correlation between the communication and the promotion activities with the real tourism support, which must be characterized by quality services, able to provide consumers the promised satisfaction through the communication strategies.

Among the first concerns in this area we notice the rules and principles presented by Taylor in 1911 [3]. Over time and over the diversification of products and services, these rules changes. So it is that currently, quality management for tourist products translates into determining the quality level of tourism products and services through registered complaints. [2] Achieving quality requires taking into account several issues, but the most important are given by the adaptation of the tourism offer to the consumer's demands, so that the customer's satisfaction should represent a priority, and by achieving a balanced report quality-price.

The quality management represents therefore a matter worthy of consideration in the current economic context, because achieving quality ensures, equally, the satisfaction of consumer's needs and the sales growth for tourism operators. The ultimate goal is to have quality services, to attract a satisfied customer and therefore to become loyal to the consumed tourism product or service. But loyalty is achieved only through a correct report quality-price and through qualitative tourist goods and services. Finally, practicing a quality and sustainable tourism is reflected on the economy. An analysis of tourism supply and demand in Romania, for the period 2008 - 2011, indicates the following data:

Table no. 1

Existing tourist accommodation capacity

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Existing (thousand seats)	294	303	312	279
In function (thousand seats - days)	59188	61104	63808	68417
Private Property, majority (thousand seats - days)	51395	54164	57192	62316

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Romania in figures, 2012, available on-line on [http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/Romania%20in%20cifre %202012.pdf](http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/Romania%20in%20cifre%202012.pdf)

Table no. 2

The number of tourists housed in tourist accommodation establishments (thousands)

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	7125	6141	6073	7032
Of which foreign tourists	1466	1276	1346	1517

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Romania in figures, 2012, available on-line on [http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/Romania%20in%20cifre %202012.pdf](http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/Romania%20in%20cifre%202012.pdf)

Table no. 3

The number of overnight stays in tourist accommodation establishments (thousands)

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	20726	17325	16051	17979
Of which foreign tourists	3359	2668	2767	3067

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Romania in figures, 2012, available on-line on [http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/Romania%20in%20cifre %202012.pdf](http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/Romania%20in%20cifre%202012.pdf)

The figures show a descending trend for the period 2008 - 2010, a period also characterized by strong visible effects of the economic crisis in all fields of activity and in all services sectors. In 2011, however, the number of foreign tourist arrivals in Romania was 7611 thousand, up 1.5% compared to 2010, the highest share being recorded by the Hungarian tourists, according to data from the National Institute of Statistics (table no. 4).

Table no. 4

The Romania's foreign tourist arrivals (thousands)

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total, of which	8862	7575	7498	7611
Austria	210	180	177	193
Bulgaria	1114	877	786	797
Italy	433	375	331	352
Germany	522	443	395	381
Republic of Moldova	1429	1043	1216	1330
Turkey	303	258	265	271
Ukraine	730	724	672	648
Hungary	1950	1836	1735	1546

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Romania in figures, 2012, available on-line on http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/Romania%20in%20cifre_%202012.pdf

The growing numbers from the last year allow us to make a correlation of tourism activities with the the wonderful effects they have on improving the *quality of life standards*. Among the effects that tourism can generate, we mention: creating jobs; developing local markets for marketing the Romanian traditional products; improving living standards; changes in behavior; etc.

Equally, however, we must take into account the issue of the impact of economic activity, implicit tourism activities, on the *environment quality*, wich needs to be approached starting from a detailed analysis of the consequences of the modern economy. So it is that a careful analysis of the economic effects, felt in the environment level, sees a close connection with the tourism activities. Further, we propose to realize a short analysis of this correlation.

According to the results of studies conducted over several years, the situation of global emissions of greenhouse gases is alarming, standing out especially carbon dioxide emissions. Between 1970 - 2004 there was a 70% increase in emissions of greenhouse gases and the increase due to transport is 120% [5]. Another study conducted by Australian researchers points out that in 2006 carbon dioxide emissions have doubled compared to 1990 [4]; one of the main sources of carbon dioxide emissions is the final product resulted from the auto industry, which generates the transport phenomenon. One of the major effects of the impact of tourism on the environment is manifested by air pollution by vehicles, and this is more evident in the developed tourist areas, as well as by using means of transport such as ATVs, vans or SUVs, for tourist purposes, as part of the tourist offer provided by the tourist operators. This effect is more felt as these vehicles' age increases.

An analysis of foreign tourist arrivals in Romania by means of transport used (thousand) in the period 2008 - 2011 shows that the highest percentage is recorded by the road transport sector (table no. 5)

Tabel no. 5

Foreign tourist arrivals in Romania by means of transport used (thousands)

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total, of which	8862	7575	7498	7611
Road	6885	5925	5906	5676
Railway	253	208	222	258
Air	1462	1277	1215	1509
Naval	262	164	154	168

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Romania in figures, 2012, available on-line on http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/Romania%20in%20cifre_%202012.pdf

Nationally, efforts have been made in this sense, one of the measures being the most controversial was the car tax, which went through several forms. The new formula for the car tax, which the Government launched it, is calculated precisely taking into account the emissions of carbon dioxide that the means of transport generate. At European level, the European Commission decided, in an ambitious plan, to increase ten times - to at least 10% - the proportion of biofuels in total consumption of petrol and diesel by 2020, provided by the availability on the market of biofuels of "second generation", with a sustainable character and sourced from non-food crops. When discussing the phenomenon of pollution, we must take into account the global dimension, because the effects are felt not only locally. Since 1992 the alarm regarding the air pollution was noticed. Thus, the conclusions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, held in June 1992, noted that air pollution is the most serious problem facing our future, every ecosystem of the earth being related to the composition of atmospheric air. For this purpose, national emission ceilings were set, which regulates the maximum amount allowed at the country level and the European Union agreed to reduce, at its level, its emissions of greenhouse gases (and thus carbon dioxide emissions) 8% by 2012 (according to the Kyoto Protocol - framework of United Nations Organization Convention on Climate Change, 1997) and at least 20% by 2020. These changes are particularly important as the Stern Report, which presents a detailed analysis from economic point of view on the climate change, warns that in the first instance, global warming can lead to damage of 5-20% of global GDP, percentage not to be neglected; in the

current global crisis specialists noticed that a decrease of 3-5% of GDP can be a disaster, economically, socially and politically [4].

Another statistic presents a worrying aspect: the protective role of forests begin to fade as a result of the degradation process. More than 90,000 fires have destroyed about 4 million hectares of forest in 2006 [4]; one of the sources of these losses is given by an inappropriate management of natural resources, as a result of tourism. In addition, we add the negative effect of the tourism activities and the improper waste management issue which is currently a big minus for tourism activity and which constitutes into a powerful process of pollution for this environmental resource. The situation is particularly worrying as there was a 40% increase in emissions of greenhouse gases due to reduced capacity of forests to "capture" carbon dioxide emissions. Lately, in our country, there have been numerous efforts to resolve these problems; they come in a large percentage of the area of volunteering, corporate social responsibility activities and environmental NGOs. We believe that these efforts should be combined with intense social responsibility campaigns, which involves culture and environmental education.

Under these conditions a warning must be once again sounded, because the concept of sustainable development can be applied only by ensuring a good quality of environmental resources and in terms of their conservation.

In Romania, the first monitoring of pollution factors actions were initiated by the District Environmental Protection Agencies and through the legislative framework provided by the Environment Act no. 137/1995. Also, by this device, there have been established the methodologies to achieve balances and environmental impact studies. With regard to the situation of our country, based upon the environmental quality data collected from the monitoring network obtained from Ministry Environment and Water Management [8], results a slight improvement in environmental quality. This is due, on the one hand, to the upgrading and modernization programs at the level of industrial units, but also in the structure of tourist accommodation; it is not wrong to claim that tourism must be performed using techniques and equipment less polluting and depending on the capacity of supportability, given by the form of tourism and of environmental resources available. On the other hand, this improvement is due to activities undertaken by the Environmental Protection Agencies and Environmental Guard, by increasing the number of inspections of businesses, including the tourism, whose activity produces impact on the environment. So it is that Romania currently has some advantages in environmental quality, which maintain compared to other European countries, that allow the exploitation of several forms of tourism: is about rich mineral resources - one third of European mineral resources are owned by our country [8] - which is an excellent base for spa tourism, and the fact that the largest area of virgin forest and green natural pastures on the continent is still in possession of our country [8], which provides an excellent basis for ecological tourism.

Therefore, based on the previously presented, we can state that tourism activities, seen as part of the economic activities, have a strong impact on the environment. We can not therefore neglect the effects felt by the environment resources. It requires action, targeting a global collaboration, leading to many changes. Such changes are fully compatible with EU priorities that concern the economic sphere, for jobs and economic growth as well as for sustainable development objective. Costs of this action is very low and is, in any case, much less than the cost of environmental damage caused if nothing is done in this regard. If, for example, developed countries agreed to reduce their collective emissions by 30% by 2020, annual economic growth will be affected less than 0.2% [5]. But changes do not come only as a result of high-level decisions, they come also from individual contribution of each. So culture and environmental education plays a major role. Currently, recycling policy should be better understood and put into practice. Tourism activity should not generate a genuine source of pollution of environmental resources. If, for example, tourists should be informed and well-intentioned, would know that plastics, represented by bottles, degrades in 1000 years [1], and it would avoid after a long day of hiking to leave behind such a waste. Or if it is known that the aluminum packaging degrades in 100 years [1] and recycling produces only 5% doioxid of carbon emissions, compared with the primary production (Greenpeace), would choose the recycling.

Conclusions:

In the present paper we presented some considerations about the impact that tourism activities have on the economy, on the environment and quality of life, trying to emphasize that in order to achieve a sustainable but also quality tourism, we must take into account all these three aspects. To better achieve this goal, it requires a deeper analysis of these effects, based on evidence obtained as a result of a careful qualitative and quantitative research. No doubt that, at present, we can state that the tourism, properly managed and practiced, should be regarded as a strategic priority of sustainable development.

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