

THE NATURE AND THE SUSTENABILITY OF TOURISM

SANDA GHEORGHE GABRIEL

ASSOC. PHD., FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, "CONSTANTIN BRÂNCUȘI" UNIVERSITY OF
TÂRGU-JIU

e-mail: diforum@yahoo.ro

Abstract

The general policy must take place at national, regional, local level and the laws and regulations set forth in the main government bodies must ensure the preservation of the quality of the environment in the interest of tourists, of the local communities, in accordance with national objectives. Therefore, the following objectives must be taken into account such as: outlining the global theoretical potential tourism, on long term, in relationship with the existing national and regional resources; setting the type of tourist product or image that you want to be performed; the examination of the level of demand for a particular tourist product; estimation of useful material conditions to achieve appropriate reception capacity, in relation to the existing transport network, the volume of investments required; the definition of the dimensions of the socio-economic, cultural and ecological impact of the environment of any kind.

A set of complex rules underlies the impact measurements, variable in space and time, meant to direct the development of an optimum level of any tourist areas.

Key words: *tourism activity, impact, environment*

JEL Classification: L 83

1. Introduction

The international tourist practice has demonstrated, over time, that regardless of the type of tourism practiced (mass tourism or alternatively), in the end, it follows a series of impacts felt both by the society and by the natural environment. Clearly, mass tourism is the one responsible for the most visible and most profound negative influences in the landing areas, which are, in the vast majority of cases, negative impacts (there are of course exceptions imposed by the individuality of the destination). The alternative tourism (**modern** or "post mass" as is found in other bibliographical sources), is trying to avoid the traditional destinations of mass character, focusing on the responsible and ethical attitude if its consumers participating in new forms of tourism.

The current tourism development is characterized by profound renewal of the global tourist offer, in particular by developing a new range of tourist products, superior both in terms of quality and quantity.

In this regard, the following guidelines can be drawn:

✚ **The far-away destinations**, which make it possible to achieve a diversification of the place of stay in the off season;

✚ **Thematic holidays** (culture, sport, scientific discovery) organized at the request of the demanding clientele and performing more tourist trips per year;

✚ **Loisir products** associated with dispersed tourist accommodation that seek the genuine sentiment and allow the development of informational and cultural exchange between tourists and the local population.

Four General factors determine and influence directly the tourist activity:

- *Qualitative and quantitative value of tourism resources;*
- *Overall economic growth, which largely determines labor jobs and revenues;*
- *The currency exchange rate, which determines the purchasing power evolution of the residents and nonresidents;*
- *The distribution, which determines the evolution of the customers' purchasing power.*

These factors are based mainly on the exploitation of the natural, cultural resources with tourist interests. All tourist activities determine in time and space the potential effects on the environment, health or social system. These combined influences are expressed by the notion of impact.

The development of this concept originated from the English and American specialists, and who shocked international public opinion with the study of "Limits of growth". Thus, the authors have demonstrated that both the reserves and the planet's natural resources are limited, and the absorption of all residues and the waste resulted.

Each state enjoys a certain territory, and this eco-friendly space for each nation, is a given, an attribute of the unequal realities established by the course of history. The idea of sustainability must not reduce the field of action and purpose of development. In this context, it is necessary for tourism to formulate clear goals for development and planning, acceptable in terms of economic benefits, of access to a relatively greater well-being of the population and to resolve vital social problems, while maintaining the balance of the natural environment.

2. The environmental impact policy

The only way to ensure a safer and more prosperous future consists of a balanced treatment and development of the environment. Only through a proper orientation of the development we can reach the modification of the production way and the current consumption, which has revealed the obsolete character and the adverse consequences on the environment.

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a decision support tool, having as object the determination of the main environmental effects. E.I.M. is a procedure through which the decision makers acquire knowledge of the possible effects of the development on the natural productivity and the quality of the environment; it is a means by which are collected and processed the data necessary for a project to assess the degree of satisfaction of sustainability and the conditions imposed by it. In the Romanian specialty literature, it has been named the environmental agreement, which can be filled with the balance sheet of the environment, both ruled by the Environmental Law.

The content of an EIA had been established by Lee and Coalley in 1970 and later was accepted by the countries of the European Community. It includes the following main aspects:

- a description of the proposed project: *the presentation of the objectives, of the phases of development, the rate of exploitation of the existing resources;*
- *the presentation of the basic situation, meaning of the current state of the environment, of the evolution of the environmental characteristics, in order to know the possibilities of realization of the project;*
- *the analysis of the impact aspects: the investigation of the types of impact that may occur, the assessment of their future development;*
- *the description of alternatives: creating variants and sustaining the best;*
- *the development of proposals for improvement of the impact problems appeared, especially those with negative role;*
- *monitoring plan (continuous tracking) of applying measures for improvement and of those regarding the well functioning of the project.*

These impact assessments are required by the European Community and the World Bank in support of any development project, with substantial financial support.

The achievement of this target has the merit to reduce the cumulative effects of the human activities, which, in general, are pretty hard to detect and assess.

Under the recommendations of the European Union and United Nations bodies, each State can elaborate, depending on the types of media available, its own development and impact assessment strategy.

Even though in the early phase, in the elaboration of any development project, are not surprised absolutely all the elements of the EIA, it is necessary a continuous analysis of the real

impact, noticed also after the completion of the project. In this moment in our country the environmental agreements are carried out for the start of economic activities or for obtaining the notification for continuing the activity and, more rarely, are followed closely and at precise intervals the transformations that take place.

The problems are various, complex and demonstrate once again, the need for obtaining ETM in the modernization action or of new investments in tourism.

In our country, impact assessment issues were governed by the Environment Law, where there have been laid down the methodological norms for the development of environmental agreements and the environment balance sheets with the participation of environmental agencies and specialized companies on environmental issues.

3. The assessment criteria of tourism

The social progress and economic well-being depend on the activities that exploit natural resources and which could have serious impact on the environment. Environmental issues have become global, and, consequently, the strategies for prevention and reduction of the forms of pollution reflect this reality.

The advance held by the developed countries in the elaboration and implementation of the protection strategies of the environment is indisputable. Faced early on with a significant pollution, the developed countries have put in place technical and pragmatic forms of control and reduction of impacts.

The transfer of experience gained, towards countries in the developing world and Eastern Europe, is a concern that has gained momentum lately.

In this context, the tourist resources cannot be exploited wildly without risks of being degraded or destroyed. The imperatives of developing all forms of tourism should not affect the social and economic interests of resident population, nor of the environment and, more particularly, of the natural resources that constitute the main attraction, along with historical and cultural sites.

Most of the times the exploited tourist fortunes are part of the humanity's heritage and, in that case, all nations should ensure their conservation. Thus, the reduction of problems related to tourist saturation and increased pressure on tourist resources, over the past decade, have led the emergence of the concept of reception capacity, and its assessment.

It must be noted that the criteria for assessing the receipt capacity are based on the already well established rules and other norms, under test. Some criteria are subjective, so are non-measurable. Moreover, impact studies have well defined role, and they cannot substitute the assessment of the reception.

There is dissociation between tourist development areas that will hold the tourist structures where they already exist. In the first case, it is easier the balanced management of resources in order to solve the degree of affordability and environmental load and for the diversification of the offer.

The problems regarding the loading capacity refer to three types of tourist areas:

1. **The area of sending tourists:** overuse comes from a poor organization of departure points or in areas with dominant forms of tourism (seaside, winter sports, cultural, etc.).
2. **Transit-loading areas** through overcrowding of means of transport (road, rail, sea, air) between the departure area and the destination one.
3. **The receiver area**, where the environment is disturbed physically, socially or economically or it can be destroyed the tourist image of an area, in time and space.

The criteria for assessing the maximum capacity of reception relate to two major components:

1. **Local environment** includes the basic elements of the natural environment, of the socio-economic development, of the cultural level, the resources being limited and exhaustible.

Criteria:

- ❖ **physical aspects:**

- visual impact with an acceptable level;
- the threshold where the ecological damage occurs;
- The need to conserve wildlife and marine.
 - ❖ **economic aspects:**
 - establishing the tourist volume which produces maximum of tourist benefits;
 - the level of jobs tailored to local communities.
 - ❖ **socio-cultural aspects:**
 - determination of acceptable level of tourism without being harmful to the socio cultural life of communities,
 - setting the level of tourism to enable maintenance, preservation of monuments, cultural traditions, without negative effects;
 - ❖ **aspects regarding general and specific infrastructure:**
 - public services (water supply, sewerage, gas, sewage, etc.);
 - Transport infrastructure:
 - ❖ **Other essential facilities**, such as medical equipment or well qualified tourist personnel.

2. Image- tourist product

Where natural areas are less fragile in all likelihood, tourist traffic volume can be calculated (maximum and minimum) through the image - created tourist product. More recently, the idea of image is assimilated with that of landscape, which can be natural or man-made, associated with the range of tourist services offered.

The evaluation of tourist requirements will be calculated directly by means of an analysis of the demand. The basic criterion should be not only the satisfaction of tourists but also of residents.

For the tourist destination areas, are applied the following main **criteria** that refer to:

❖ **The physical aspects:**

- favorable climatic characteristics, related to lack of pollution;
- the degree of attraction exerted by the rural and urban settlements;
- the quality of tourist structures and leisure.

❖ **economic aspects:**

-The cost of stay (price policy and tariffs)

❖ **socio-cultural aspects**

- the interest of the local community and culture;
- the quality of the local handicraft, gastronomic curiosities.

❖ **aspects of general and specific infrastructure**

- the transport facilities, public and tourist services.

In general, these criteria are measurable in many cases (organic pollution, labor jobs, quality of tourism services), but in other cases they cannot be determined than appreciative (the impact on local cultural traditions).

The evaluation of the thresholds for receipt and loading of a territory is needed for two reasons:

- *it allows government agencies to draw up a policy and strategy for development of tourism without negative repercussions on the environment;*
- *it sorts out problems related to the existence of a tourist saturation phenomenon or about to occur.*

The tourist saturation phenomenon has a seasonal nature, since the imbalance between supply and infrastructure does not occur only during times of peak congestion.

This concentration in time and space leads to the increase in the number of constructions, lack of green spaces, parks.

The determination of the reception capacity should take into account the degree of development of tourist areas. There are two major categories:

a) tourist areas developing

In these territories, with valuable tourist potential, tourist development involves building on short and medium term. Here, it can be determined, concretely, the thresholds of the hospitality industry, in order to use resources as efficiently as possible, while avoiding negative effects.

Priorities should be established through the strategy of governmental bodies or through a quality management from public or private agents.

An essential role is played also by the previous experience in the development of other tourist areas. In this context, our country has important resources, some of them are inadequately capitalized:

- ✚ the development of touristic activities and structures in the mountain massifs of Capățânei, Căndrel, Cozia, Apuseni Mountains;
- ✚ the tourist arrangement of seaside between Complex Razim Lagoon and Năvodari;
- ✚ the capitalization in tourism of National Parks, etc.

b) developed tourist areas

These are found especially in countries with powerful tourist industry, where tourist activities have reached a high level of concentration. Here is imposed a management policy of the tourist resources, with the reduction of the pressure on the environment.

In Romania, there are areas with old tourist tradition, but where the development of touristic structures has led to an over-exploitation of resources, and intense tourist traffic has led to the degradation of the natural environment (Bucegi Mountains, Ocele Mari, Păltiniș, Balványos, etc.).

The presence of man in nature, as a tourist, has less desired effects on all the components of the environment. Of these, the most affected are the natural landscapes, soil, water, settlements and monuments.

The landscapes are degraded by anthropogenic interventions which are translated through the elevation of new tourist structures, where architectural solutions do not integrate under aesthetic and environmental aspects. This leads to the unification and monotony of landscape.

The soil is a component of the environment that supports major transformations in that there is a tendency of occupying it with tourist infrastructures and communications paths.

Of all the tourist areas, the most have suffered the marine costal space and the mountain one, natural areas with a fragile ecological balance.

The flora suffers negative consequences due to the intense tourist circulation and due to tourist landscaping of winter sports, leisure and entertainment.

The fauna has to suffer through the reduction of natural spaces which constitute the necessary habitat for the animal species, affecting their survival. The unreasonable practice of fishing and hunting destroys gradually the hunting and fishing stock potential of many tourist areas.

The urban settlements are affected by the development of tourist activities. The increase in the density of the urban constructions, in tourist movements has negative repercussions particularly on the historical centers of towns and old buildings, monuments, by amplifying forms of pollution.

The reduction of all these negative effects on the natural and cultural values with tourist interests is based on a qualitative and quantitative in-depth analysis of all environmental components.

Tourism is an industry which enables cashing in national currency and also in foreign currency, and which contributes to the development of local communities by creating new jobs. It differs from other industries in that the client moves in the country or in the desired tourist area for a particular product.

The performance of random, uncontrolled tourist activities, without taking into account the design and operating standards, could lead to environmental degradation and of tourist resources. These issues are influenced by two main groups of factors:

- ❖ **factors that are a direct result of economic development** (industry, agriculture, transportation and other industries);

❖ **factors that are the result of using the environment for tourism and recreation.**

Even if the tourist activities do not hurt the environment, as industrial units, it cannot be hidden the fact that tourism also has a negative influence upon the environment.

The positive impact is represented by:

- ❖ the increase of the number of accommodation units, especially in the disadvantaged urban and rural settlements;
- ❖ the increase in the number of public alimentation units, by supporting local initiatives to add value to traditional cuisine and the use of local specific products (wines, cheeses, meat products, vegetables and fruits, etc.);
- ❖ the creation of adequate and diversified leisure- entertainment conditions , which can also put value on local resources (horses, sleds, boats, traditional recreational facilities, orchestras and brass bands, etc.);
- ❖ the development of a specific trade with handicraft products, scrapbooks, brochures, maps, guides, slideshows, CDs, etc.;
- ❖ the modernization of the main communication routes and access to points of interest;
- ❖ tourist activities can occur in the provision of services which can integrate environmental and located at reasonable prices;
- ❖ offers the chance of professional growth by specializing personnel in tourism, especially guides, with high cultural level, connoisseur of foreign languages;
- ❖ the creation of conditions, through many forms of tourism, these can be practiced throughout the year, with the tourist season congestion avoidance;
- ❖ the growth of local and general revenues by encouraging new investments in tourism.

The negative impact is determined primarily by the destructive action of tourists on the tourist resources. The destructive actions - in many cases unconscious, due to ,especially, the lack of tourist and ecological education can be numerous, mostly in the areas or at the objectives to which it outlines a clear tourist concentration and in conditions in which the tourist facilities and landscaping do not meet the requirements of environmental protection.

They are **caused by**:

❖ the uncontrolled tourist movement, especially outside the marked trails, through destruction of soil, vegetation, wildlife disturbance. Other damages are brought by triggering fires, preventing ecological restoration, the practice of poaching, leading to the extinction of some species.

The uncontrolled tourist movement, in large groups, has negative influences also on the cultural objectives:

- the lack of specific facilities, intended for the installation of tents and halts, in the zones and the seaside routes of great tourist interest. Produces the phenomenon of degradation of the landscape through the accumulation of waste, garbage, etc.;

- the destructions caused by the automobile tourism through the parking and circulation in prohibited places, with deviation from the main roads, with stops in the glades, on the waterfront, by producing exhaust gases, noise, the destruction of floristic species. An intense tourist movement, parking congestion leads to altered air in tourist areas;

- the intensive exploitation of natural resources with tourist interests (mineral water, sludge, gas, beaches, water of salt lakes etc.). It is imposed the limitation of the exploitation of these resources in relation to the value of the reserves approved, ensuring rational exploitation. An important role is represented by meeting the hydro geological perimeters and health rules to protect the value of hydro-reservoirs;

- ❖ the tourist receipt structures, the public alimentation structures have no facilities to use the alternative energy, recycling and wastewater use, storage and composting garbage.

In terms of the development of tourist activities in a fast paced rhythm, the phenomenon of the **negative impact** may be expressed also through:

- the tendency to expand the tourist structures and services, instead of a complex usage of the existing facilities;
- ❖ the increase of the urbanization degree of communities;
- ❖ the expanded inflow of tourists leads to the saturation of existing tourist infrastructures and to the diversification of forms of pollution.

In this context, especially in the tourist areas which have the statute of reservations and national parks, it can appear the problem of developing a controlled and directed tourism (ecotourism).

The tourist activities from a protected natural area must be consistent with the environmental loading capacity and with the particularities of the existing ecosystems.

The adequate and prudent design and capitalization, as well as the effective management must become the strong point for the preservation of the ecological integrity of such resources.

The leading principle of tourism development in such a protected area must be that of balanced exploitation of all natural, cultural and human resources, in a manner that ensures outstanding satisfactions to tourists and balanced and sustainable development possibilities of the related tourist settlements. Although at first glance the tourist activities are perhaps the least polluting, yet over time they gradually lead to the pollution of the environment.

In first place we find the horizontally excessive development under the direct influence of population growth and urban growth, with the disappearance of natural lands and forests, and last but not least of agricultural lands through expansion of the infrastructure. Secondly, the intensive tourist movement, with private vehicles, in excess of the speed, generates many forms of pollution (air, noise, soil, subsidence, etc.). The assessment of the impact of tourism on the natural framework is translated through the presentation of major undesirable effects which may occur and influence the ecological balance of the component ecosystems.

4. Conclusions

The new international development strategy has led also to the development of world tourism with the desire to set up a new world economic order and to gradually reduce the existing discordance between industrialized countries and those developing ones. From this point of view, tourism is considered as a major activity in the life of Nations due to the direct influence of social, cultural, educational, economic sectors with wide opening towards international trade.

The impact of tourist activities on an area is given by the natural setting and variety of tourism potential, of the existence of a general infrastructure, of the presence of tourist accommodation structures, nutrition, recreation. These defining elements of tourism lead to several types of impact (economic, political, social, cultural, etc.), which can take positive or negative forms of manifestation.

Also, it cannot to be forgotten that tourism is related in its development- in the virtue of the multiplier effect of tourist activities - for industry and agriculture, which practiced in/or near protected areas lead to irreversible environmental changes. The attempts to reduce the negative impacts, meeting with environmental protection requirements, providing real support for such activities, having a multidisciplinary collaboration can pave the way to sustainable development of any form of tourism.

5. Bibliography

- [1] G. Gautier, *Foires et salons*, Les edition d'assurance, Paris, 2007;
- [2] Y. Tinard, *Le tourisme. Economie et Management*, 2 ed., EDISCIENCE International, Paris;
- [3] Davidson R. – „*Business Travel*”, Pitman Publishing, London, 2014;
- [4] Gautier G. – „*Foires et salons*”, Les Editions d'Organisation, Paris, 2015;

- [5] Holloway J. Ch. – „*The Business of Tourism*”, Fourth edition, Pitman Publishing, London, 2016;
- [6] Istrate I., Bran Florina, Roșu Anca Gabriela – „*Economia trismului si mediului inconjurător*”, Editura Economica, București, 2000;
- [7] Christine Petr, *Marketingul Turismului*, Editura CH. BECK, București, 2011;
- [8] Y. Tinard, *Le tourisme. Economie et Management*, 2 ed., EDISCIENCE International, Paris , 2020;