Sustainable Development and Restructuring Romanian Tourism Product in Accordance with European Tourists Segments

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable tourism development will be achieved through some major changes taking place in the tourism industry in Romania, in the following period. These changes should cover both aspects of structure in tourism and processes and interactions in tourist activities. First of all, the tourism in Romania shall also adopt a diversification strategy, focusing on the integration of new activity fields, as new services, along with the improvement of the existent ones, new tourist facilities, by the construction of centers/units, in compliance with the standards requested by the current tourism, but in the first place of some new products and tourist programmes provided by the current tourist centers. By studying consumer behavior of European tourists visiting Romania, and trends in their preferences regarding requested touristic product the authors propose a pattern for tourism product diversification and expansion of several existing forms of tourism.

Keywords: Business, Cultural, Diversification, Ecotourism, Product, Rural, Segmentation, Strategy, Sustainable Development, Tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

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.

Romanian 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 harmonious relationships with the natural

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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 a modern economy, this sector is the only one where the added value exceeds the consumption of resources (39.3%)” (Romanian National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2013-2020-2030, 2008).

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.

Therefore it will consider in the next 5-7 years to accelerate the overall development of the service 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 (Romanian National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2013-2020-2030, 2008).

Since the 90s the tourism in Eastern European countries was a topic of great interest for specialized studies provided that the number of tourists in Western Europe was still growing and foresees an extension of its East European space. The main issues identified for tourism in Eastern European countries were the touristic product restructuring and creation of country brands in the European market attractive enough for (Hall, 1998; Hall, 1999).

Thus with the economic recovery in the tourism sector in Europe after the 2009 economic crisis the main destination area of European tourists was also the Europe (Eurostat news release, 101/2014).

If central European countries such as Czech Republic, Poland or Hungary in the early 2000s managed to solve many of these problems, east-European countries like Romania and Bulgaria still struggling with the same weaknesses as in the 90s.

Sustainable tourism development in the following period will be achieved through some major changes taking place in the tourism industry in Romania. These changes should cover both aspects of structure in tourism and processes and interactions in tourist activities.

Decision relating to restructuring tourism issues will focus on: 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 (Rotariu, 2008).

In terms of specific processes of travel and tourism and resources needed to develop the tourism sector, will be improvements on several levels: 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 targeting new planning decisions and development of tourism in relation to these opportunities; using performant processes for designing a competitive tourism, responsive to environmental problems, applying 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.

Tourism analysis indicates positive net evolutions after 2000 regarding tourist flows from Western Europe to Romania (Bălăcescu & Răbonţu, 2010). In the period 2011-2014 even though the number of non-residents tourists is still below 15% of total nights spent the tourist traffic increase on this segment is more than 5% annually compared to evolution of resident tourist overnights which is stagnant (Eurostat news release, 16/2014; Răbontu and Vasilescu, 2012).
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