

New Products and Strategies for Sustainable Tourism in Romania

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Abstract

This study aims to assess the current situation regarding the sustainable aspect of the Romanian tourism market and also to identify innovative products which can be regarded as sustainable. One of the main objectives is to examine to what extent such products can influence the market and also to be an important tool for the tourism specialists to develop proper strategies. A secondary statistical data was used regarding the touristic activity in Romania and the tourism contribution to the national GDP. Ecotourism plays an important role for the economical development of some destinations, as in the case of the two destinations that are labeled as Ecotourism Destinations and in the case of another eight which will follow the same pattern. As a result, there are proposed strategic objectives with correspondent measures for creating an appropriate marketing and development plan and for obtaining a better promotion strategy. This study has revealed a series of innovative products and pattern to develop a sustainable destination and site by applying certain rules.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism; Sustainable products; Romania; Marketing strategies; Management

Introduction

Currently, sustainable Romanian destinations are increasingly affected by the new strategic challenges posed by innovative technologies and often related to tourist consumer behavior and environmental pressures. In order to address these challenges, destinations first have to analyze the global trends and then respond proactively [1], strongly emphasizing that innovation is extremely important, even indispensable to evolution [2].

Recently, the objective of sustainable tourism that supposed to be achieved should be clear and explicit. Though, there is no standardized way to reach such a goal. In spite of that there must be developed a strategy and an action plan for sustainable tourism of useful measures to ensure effective and coordinated steps on the road for achieving its goal.

This is also one of the best provided approaches that include the involvement of all major interest groups and have an interest in establishing sustainable local development rule. It is simply defined as a tool of development and conservation.

On the other hand, the sustainable development can join us as an alibi, an utopia maintained voluntarily by the political and economic actors, preoccupied by justifying and proving their economic logic, but also by preserving and keeping the economic powers already acquired.

We believe that solving the problem, adapting the social, economic and ecologic systems to this fact of the globalization: the sustainable development would be enough. We should draw the attention towards the fact that the transformation/the change/the improvement in tourism need another strategy than the continuous improvement, because the success from the past can sometimes be a great obstacle. But, are the foreign investors necessary, is a new strategy, or are the people prepared for a change, especially for the acceptance of the new and of the sustainable things in Romanian tourism?

Or do we wait again for the good interventions of the state? These are more than normal questions which, we think, any person – citizen of this country – who feels useless when sees that the things do not go well at all in the tourism field asks one, although we have tourism potential!

This article tries, briefly, to underline the various favorable elements which the Romanian tourism can use in its favor...

Tourism and sustainable tourism binomial relation

Tourism represents an important domain in the revival and modernization of any economy because businesses are rather small sized and capital needs reduced imprinting investments a fast rhythm. Investments in tourism also imply investments in those sectors the activity of which are strongly correlated with tourism hence the double impact of tourism: stimulating the investments specific to tourism as well as the national ones. At world level, investments in tourism represent 7% of the total investible efforts.

Tourism is considered a mean of lessening the inflation phenomenon as it ensures a more balanced money flow. Inflation aspects in tourism are to be found mainly in the areas where touristic development is in progress as there is a greater tourist demand which brings along an increased seasonal fluctuation of prices, a discrepancy between the purchasing power of the residents and that of the tourists as prices go up especially for food, accommodation for tourists, investors or external employees.

The most direct way to reduce the adverse impacts of tourism-related travel is to increase opportunities for people to engage in appealing tourism activities in their own cities, regions or countries. In various cities of the world, this local tourism concept is known as “green tourism.” Green tourism in contrast to “eco-tourism,” which relies on travel to distant locations seeks to provide recreational attractions and hospitality facilities to local people within their local regions, thereby reducing tourism-related travel [3,4].

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While green tourism has the positive economic effect of stimulating local economic activity, it reduces the flow of foreign currency to developing nations and any resulting economic benefits that may occur to developing towns and cities from these revenue flows [5,6].

Already for a long time, the tourism industry has started to develop the concepts of sustainable tourism and ecotourism, with the purpose of guaranteeing the minimization of the negative impacts of tourism, while maximizing its economic positive advantages, because “2017 is a unique opportunity for us to promote the contribution of tourism to achieving the future we want – and also to determine, together, the exact role we will have tourism play in the sustainable development agenda, to and beyond 2030, a unique opportunity to ensure that tourism is a pillar in achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”, UNWTO Secretary General, Taleb Rifai, opening of the event.

The key aspect is making the tourist aware that his/her trip might contribute to some negative impacts on the destination, inviting him/her to care about their minimization.

Tourists should accordingly be invited to choose those destinations, products and services, which give some kind of guarantee about this minimization. This is the spirit of sustainable tourism and ecotourism.

The promotion of a unitary idea about Romania’s sustainable tourism image is necessary, as well as it should be completed with secondary images according to fields, strategies and planning which have to be consistent with the unitary image.

A branding program should be based on an integrated policy through which to communicate and execute in a coordinated and repeated manner motivating themes that differentiate Romania from other countries.

A umbrella mark (a ecotourism nation mark) is necessary, which can be used as a reference by all the other secondary marks developed in various fields and/or areas.

The product, corporation, city, ecotourism destination or region, district marks must be an integrand part of the national brand/mark. It, in its turn, may be integrated into a supra-national brand, in our case Central and Eastern Europe or the European Union.

The number of tourists travelling to spend their free time elsewhere than in their country of residence has exceeded 1.2 billion, which means that one in six people on the planet travel for tourist purposes [7].

The world economy at the moment undergoes two revolutions, one in the field of IT, and the other in the field of tourism.

Tourism is a factor of economic growth, creates and maintains jobs, every 11th employee on the planet works in a field of the travel and hospitality industry.

Tourism is a factor of social transformation; it facilitates an unprecedented closeness in history between cultures and civilizations, people travelling to more and more distant places from their own location, meeting other people, other food, other music, and other habits. The direct spontaneous and always peaceful cultural exchanges occur during the process.

Romanian sustainable tourism

With strict reference to Romanian tourism and its promotion in the world, Taleb Rafai stated at the World Tourism Organisation, at the event organized by the National Authority for Tourism (NAT), in partnership with the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the

International Conference “Integrated Quality Management for Tourism Destinations: The Key to Competitiveness” June 23, 2016, a memorable event for Romania, where I had the honor of being invited as an expert in tourism: “You cannot promote your mountains, lakes, rivers and beautiful beaches or the tasty food anymore. All the countries in the world can boast that. You need to find something unique, Romanian’s soul. That means a brand, “Tourists look for challenges and for unique things” [8].

“Believe in your country, because if you do not believe in it, no one will do it!” Taleb added that this should be taken into account because visitors will feel good in a place as long as the hosts will also feel good (Figure 1) [8].

This article, based on tourism geography specific methods, gives a real diagnosis to the phenomenon of tourism increase, which, specific to Romania, depends on accessing two levers, one related to transport - direct flights - and one related to administration - visa granting improvement. This requires electronic visas, outsourced visa centres, transparency and speed of public service, including various forms of ticketing to support tourists in and to Romania.

A sustainable tourism destination follows some basic rules, as stated in the General Assembly of the European Commission for Tourism, which was held later in Brasov. At least two-thirds of the activities offered to guests must be related to nature, more than half of the accommodation places must be small, with only few rooms and built of traditional materials, and the menu must offer local products, preferably bio products.

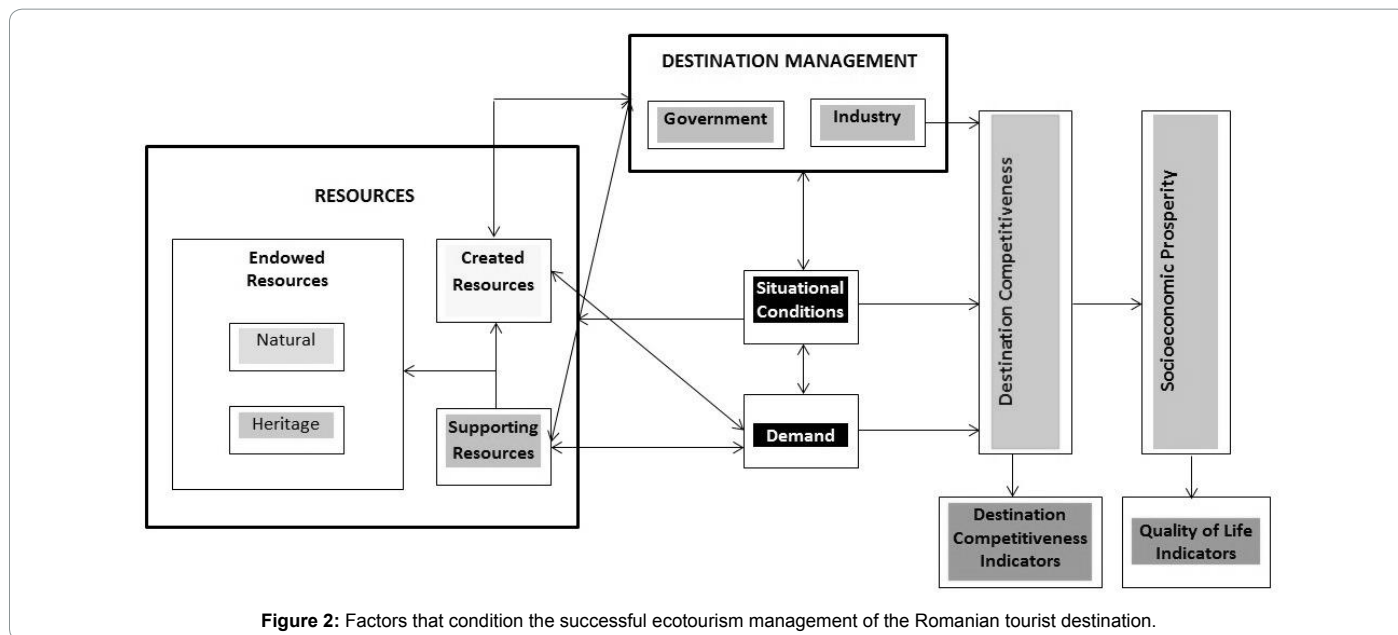
Romania will have for the first time on July 1, 2017 the first Master Tourism Investment Plan, which will include more than 1,400 projects submitted by county councils and city halls that have subordinated national or local resorts (they will establish the priorities and measures to be taken on the infrastructure investment as well as the clear definition of tourism products of Romania and the ways of their promotion in the domestic and foreign tourism market) and a National Tourism Development and Promotion Strategy and the budget of our country’s external promotion is about 5 million Euros this year, of which it will be possible to organize info-trips for bloggers, journalists and foreign tour-operators that were also promised by the previous government (Figure 2).

Starting with July 2017, Romanians will receive holiday vouchers



Source: (<http://turism.gov.ro/conferinta-internationala-managementul-integrat-al-calitatii-pentru-destinatiile-turistice-cheia-pentru-competitivitate/>).

Figure 1: International Conference “Integrated Quality Management for Tourism Destinations: The Key to Competitiveness” June 23, 2016.



created for the employees in the public system, meant to contribute to the growth of domestic tourism. In order to become a competitive tourism market at European level and beyond, Romania must apply new and more effective promotion policies, much more aggressive, in parallel with the competent managerial coordination of attractive destinations, joint actions at the level of government and tourism industry.

The need of such studies regarding the sustainable development of touristic destinations must be a priority for each state, because it is very important to assess the current status of each destination and after this audit, certain plans and strategies must be developed. The main objective of a destination is to create some sustainable products in order to increase the tourism flows taking into account the preservation of the natural resources and the capitalization of the main touristic assets.

Literature Review

Durability in tourism

The literature includes a wide range of concerns about sustainability of tourism and sustainable development in general [9-14]. In other words, concerns about sustainable tourism have become “fashionable”, often alienating from its key concept, demonstrating in many cases major differences that the principles and policies of “sustainable” tourism do not necessarily contribute to sustainable development [15,16].

In the literature on sustainable development, a special attention has recently been given to the description of different perceptions of sustainable development [17,18], while the attempts to advance the understanding of the concept generally involve discussing alternative views [19,20].

Sustainable tourism

It is worth mentioning the recent diversification of the approaches related to sustainable tourism in the field of sustainability, tourism having a privileged relationship with sustainable development [12,21] and many important physical and geographic units for Romania’s tourist image, such as the Carpathians, enjoy a laborious partnership

(7 Carpathian Countries: Romania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Hungary, Poland, Serbia) in the Carpathian Strategic Strategy which is not an autonomous activity, but it is part of the efforts of the governments of the Carpathian countries to harmonize and coordinate the use, protection and promotion of the Carpathians as a tourist destination (mega). This effort is foreseen by the Carpathian Convention elaborated in 2013, aiming mainly at the harmonization of strategies for sustainable development, planning and management of sustainable tourism in the Carpathians (2013) .

WTTC predicts that during 2008-2018, a number of countries that do not represent best Top 10 destinations will record the highest growth rates on arrivals, receipts, created jobs and GDP growth on tourism. Among these countries are Romania, together with Namibia, Vietnam, Brunei, Qatar, Montenegro, Rwanda and Chile [22]. The Factors with Majors Incidence in the Development of Sustainable Tourism [13,23].

New products in sustainable tourism

Linked the sources of new products for sustained competitive advantage, given in most literature [24] important are the differentiation, the quality (chain and value system), the cost reduction, the niche marketing, the performance and the advanced technology, the type of management, the culture and the style of the organization.

Because of the specific tourist product or products (which, in turn, are composed of a multitude of services) that constitute or identify with the destination, and the existence of two types of constituent resources, basic - natural and anthropogenic (reason for which the company will work with the resources of comparative advantages and resources of competitive advantage), relevant to the destination management are the differentiation and its quality, others are somewhat included (cost reduction, culture, type of management and organization style) or determined by the two:niche marketing, performance and advanced technology [25]. In the optimal evolution of a tourist destination, such as Romania, we need to take into account the four mutually interdependent elements: demonstrate sustainable destination management practices, maximize the benefits of the environment and minimize negative impacts and maximize benefits to communities, visitors and heritage, and minimize negative impacts (Figure 3).

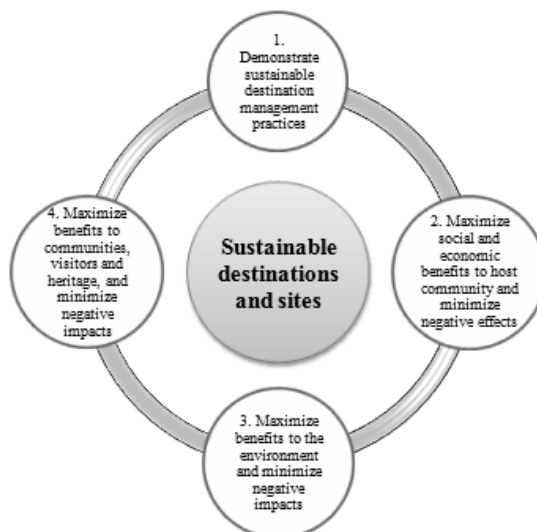


Figure 3: The 4 strategies for the optimization of ecotourism destinations.

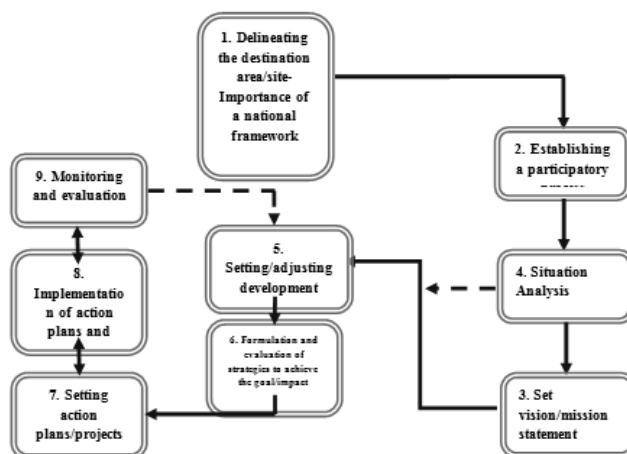


Figure 4: Marketing and management of sustainable tourism destinations.

Peter Drucker [26], the father of modern management, said that a business has only two essential functions: marketing and innovation. Marketing and innovation get results. All others are costs (Figure 4).

At the initiative of the Ministry, the National Tourism Research and Development Institute has developed the “National Strategy for Ecotourism Development in Romania” in two phases: Phase I - Ecotourism Experience at National and International Level in September 2009 and Phase II - Strategic Ecotourism Development Plan in Romania in November 2009.

The two documents, available on the ministry’s website, provide relevant information on ecotourism and its importance to the tourism industry and environmental protection, the two components of ecotourism. The overall objective of the Strategic Ecotourism Development Plan is to create the conditions for the development of ecotourism in the protected areas and in the neighboring areas, aiming to achieve a competitive ecotourism product at national and international level. The new objectives for tourism sustainability [23] in European Union framework for the development of economic, social

and environmental policies based, not only, on the partnership for Growth and Jobs and the Sustainable Development Strategy provides an adequate background for achieving objectives on the sustainability of the European tourism and challenges to be addressed to objectives of this “agenda”: economic prosperity, social equity and cohesion, protection of the natural environment and culture.

After all, these European objectives should also guide not only European tourism stakeholders in their policies and actions affecting the impact of outbound tourism from Europe and in supporting tourism as a tool for sustainable development in host countries, including tourists and Romanian sustainable tourism.

Materials and Methods

Tourism represents an important element within the political and economic context of a destination. It was important to explore current debates, critical reflections and pertinent queries regarding sustainable tourism in Romania. The analysis and synthesis method was used in order to evaluate the current trends at the European level that can

be adopted by Romania as well. There was also elaborated a Strategic Marketing plan of Romania destination regarding the sustainability expanded to a consumer behaviour in tourism.

The quantitative analysis was performed in the case of secondary statistical data analysis obtained from the National Institute of Statistics in Romania. The data presented the situation of the tourism activity in Romania and also the tourism contribution to GDP.

The present work offers new perspectives on a global approach to new products offered on the ecotourism market, with the emphasis on the durability of Romania's destination.

The planning and implementation of these new products and appropriate strategies imply a conceptual framework that includes new approaches that are abundantly present in this article, contributing "to the fullest" to improving efficiency and effectiveness in sustainable tourism, this research being done collectively (through the involvement of master students) by querying different sources of information such as national strategies, specialized books, European and global reports, the various tourism and ecotourism authorities.

Results

Current situation of the Romanian tourism

Tourism is a vital tool for political and economic change, this article aims to explore and critically examine current debates, critical reflections of contemporary ideas, controversies and pertinent queries relating the new products and strategies in sustainable Romania Ecotourism, to the rapidly expanding discipline of consumer behaviour in hospitality and tourism. The destination/site plan should include a marketing strategy. A Marketing Plan sets the framework and direction for all marketing activities for a destination covering:

- Market research
- Product development
- Brand development and management
- Advertising and promotion
- Cooperative marketing opportunities
- Product distribution and sales.

Recently, tourism has undergone profound changes, causing substantial changes in consumer habits, which question the traditional patterns of tourism organization. Although, according to NSI data, the arrivals in the tourist accommodation structures in 2015 were of 9,898,600, up by 17.2% compared to 2014 (arrivals of Romanian tourists - 77.4%, arrivals of foreign tourists - 22.6%).

The overnight stays in 2015 were of 23,445,400, up by 15.9% compared to 2014, Romania having one of the fastest rhythms of the increase in the number of overnight stays in hotels and tourist accommodation units (23.4 million nights), compared to the total in the European Union, which reached a record of 2.8 billion (+3.2% compared to 2014).

In 2015, tourism's direct contribution to GDP was 9.3 billion RON (1.3% of GDP). The total contribution of the tourism sector to GDP (including the broader impacts of investment, supply chain and impact of induced incomes) was 35.6 billion in 2015 (5.1% of GDP), according to data collected and interpreted by World Travel And Tourism Council, in the Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2016 report [27]. The tourism sector in Romania does not currently benefit from the real reflection of the actual sectorial indicators achieved in the total national economy, the lack of relevant, real, current information and correlated to tourism, making it difficult to carry out conclusive analyzes of the stage and evolution of the tourism services market, of supply and demand, of seasonality and of other determinants of the development of this sector (Tables 1-3).

This is also underlined in the study by the World Tourism Organization specialists in 2016, who stated that the way of collecting and interpreting tourism statistics is incomplete and undervalued, with profound implications that have led to the diminution of the strategic importance which tourism has in the sustainable development of Romania.

Another weak point is the use of promotion as the only "marketing" activity, the context imposing on all destinations, regardless of their type or size, the development of their strategic planning processes, as well as the management of tourist products, starting with the analysis of the needs and wishes of the consumers of tourist services, to the review of the adaptation of existing products until the integrated approach of destination management, by achieving the appropriate mix of products-markets.

Strategic objectives for developing sustainable tourism in Romania

In order to develop sustainable tourism in a destination, namely in Romania, a certain plan must be implemented with activities and measures as following:

General objective: To boost tourism activity in Romania, having as a direct effect an exalting balance of tourism receipts, together with the increase in tourism revenues in the Gross Domestic Product and as a secondary effect the increase of the number of jobs in tourism.

Strategic objective 1 – Developing sustainable tourism as an export

Accommodation units	2015				2016								
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Total	978761	811133	723934	655765	581273	630655	645846	725566	885473	1024536	1401600	1571333	1091211
Hotels	726626	614252	543647	469181	422174	467024	486123	532756	661490	759976	997473	1088013	806491
Motels	24977	22028	20720	19655	15144	16512	17450	20566	23329	24075	30748	35634	24130
Villas	26908	18560	17361	19185	18300	18000	14960	18690	22805	28945	49897	58753	32078
Chalets	9868	6062	4828	7638	7920	6598	4855	5978	7028	9821	16587	21526	12579
Boarding houses	89790	75812	70138	68374	60478	63736	63488	71205	80294	87518	114259	134485	96737
Agro-touristic boarding houses	67876	48978	44889	51119	40207	39284	37996	48790	60885	69553	103913	124034	76462

Note: The statistical survey on "Frequency of arrivals in tourist accommodation establishments with accommodation functions" is addressed to all facilities with a tourist accommodation capacity of at least 10 beds. Source: http://www.cluj.insse.ro/cmscluj/files/bsl/BSL_sept16.doc [28].

Table 1: Arrivals in the main types of tourist accommodation structures in Romania (2015-2016).

Accommodation units	2015				2016								
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Total	2343628	1859504	1650241	1333150	1145214	1247724	1236508	1471539	1907962	2413192	3877574	4370892	2580584
Hotels													
Motels	1843654	1479465	1300162	954252	834494	931243	947229	1127773	1495304	1900744	2953587	3263158	2023823
Villas													
Chalets	43946	39217	33873	30727	24438	30662	28466	33095	39903	40262	52925	56171	37871
Boarding houses	60926	40134	36266	39010	34840	33627	27730	35634	42851	62020	142241	169039	75748
Agro-touristic boarding houses	17721	10322	9397	15930	16440	14542	9611	9280	11477	16916	30780	41280	20722

Note: The statistical survey on "Frequency of arrivals in tourist accommodation establishments with accommodation functions" is addressed to all facilities with a tourist accommodation capacity of at least 10 beds. Source: http://www.cluj.insse.ro/cmscluj/files/bsl/BSL_sept16.doc [28].

Table 2: Overnights in the main types of tourist accommodation structures in Romania (2015-2016).

Accommodation units	2015				2016								
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Total	31,3	28,8	27,1	21,8	19,9	22,7	21,1	24,3	28,3	31,5	42,5	47,6	34,4

Note: The statistical survey on "Frequency of arrivals in tourist accommodation establishments with accommodation functions" is addressed to all facilities with a tourist accommodation capacity of at least 10 beds. Source: http://www.cluj.insse.ro/cmscluj/files/bsl/BSL_sept16.doc [28].

Table 3: Accommodation net use indices in Romania (2015-2016).

economy by increasing the reputation of tourism destination Romania and positioning (on the target and emerging markets) as a high quality tourist destination by 2020 (the 2020 Marketing Vision of the National Tourism Authority).

Measure 1 – Strengthening the elements of differentiation of tourism destination Romania and their promotion on the international tourism market:

- Permanent realization of market researches and studies for the most accurate knowledge of the dimensions of the tourist market (dynamics, structure) and of the tendencies in the behavior of the consumer of tourist services;

- Streamlining promotional actions through integrated communication on target and emerging markets, for all seven tourism forms and for all micro-destinations of Romania, depending on the marketing objective established at that stage and using state-of-the-art technologies for all the communication tools.

Measure 2 – Development of tourism in areas where the density of tourist attractions is lower by highlighting the identity forms of tourism.

Strategic objective 2: Improvement of the destination management system by the awareness of the role and importance of the destination by stakeholders in the public and private environments.

Measure 1 – Adaptation of the concept and criteria for setting up the Destination Management Organization (D.M.O.) - a form of integrated tourism management and promotion.

Measure 2 – Elaborate strategies and establish action lines together with the industry organizations and the private environment to meet the objectives of the National Tourism Authority's 2020 Marketing Vision.

Another set of objectives underline the necessity of creating a viable product in order to develop in a sustainable manner the destination and the community within it.

Strategic objective 3: The planned development of the seven key forms of tourism, which are tools for the realization of a portfolio of dynamic and modern products, adapted to the current market demands,

for the sustainable development of the respective communities (the National Tourism Authority's 2020 Marketing Vision)

Measures

- Developing product offer by increasing the attractiveness of rural tourism, nature and adventure tourism, cultural tourism, health and wellness tourism, city-break tourism, seaside tourism, business tourism.
- Developing Ecotourism in Romania:
 - ✓ promoting the mountainous area in Romania, for the sustainable development of tourism in the Carpathians;
 - ✓ Creation of a bicycle route on the Danube entrance in the country, up to Calafat;
 - ✓ Identification and support of the establishment of extensive authentic clusters in the Carpathians for sustainable tourism products, such as thematic excursions (e.g. architecture, gastronomy, land use, mixed: cultural and technical heritage, etc.), agritourism, hiking, cycling, skiing.
- Promoting the quality of tourist services/products:
- Developing a quality management system;
- Introducing the RoQ Quality Label.

Strategic objective 4: Improving the training and professional specialization of employees in the tourism and hospitality sector.

Measures

1: Supporting the organization of dual system education: involvement of professional and employers' associations in tourism, in the implementation of the specialized curriculum, as well as the practice of students within this system.

2: Training the human resource of execution: "The development of tourism schools by creating a Hospitality Training Institution Network with institutionalized vocational training programs located in tourist development areas (the new hospitality training institutes could be set up by transforming former hotels that are not functional anymore for various reasons, and they must be equipped with appropriate training

facilities). Each Hospitality Training Institute will be able to establish partnerships with similar hotel schools in the country and abroad to facilitate the development of curricula, teacher training and the exchange of experience and resources.” [28,29].

3: Prepare the human resource management at medium and higher level - Developing a legal framework that will allow the creation of partnerships for the realization of twinning programs with universities and specialized organizations from the country and abroad.

4: Redoing the system for granting certificates by the National Tourism Authority: setting up joint commissions, consisting of representatives of the National Authority for Tourism, in partnership with specialized organizations and the private sector, to organize examinations for the recognition/assessment of the acquired competences in order to obtain the tourism certificate, the tourist guide attestation, etc.

Strategic objective 5: Improve the way of tourism receipts are tracked and assess the indirect contribution of tourism to GDP.

Measures

1: Legislation and implementation of GEO on the Integrated Tourism Information System (ISTI): one of the components of S.I.T. Is the Integrated Tourism Information System (I.S.T.I.), which aims to provide a clear evidence of the receipts of this economic sector, which may justify taking immediate action to tax the activities in this area. After adoption, the new draft law will impose at national level on economic operators who are managers of the establishments of tourists' reception with functions of accommodation, the obligation to transmit the data on the tourist flows in units and the related statistical indicators.

2: The expansion of the Tourism Satellite Account, representing the standardized statistical instrument at international level: in accordance with the WTO Task Force on National Tourism Statistics in Romania in 2015.

Budget for 2017 - 2020: Marketing, Promotion and Representation: 15 Million Euros per year Investments: €22.5 million annually, Territorial Development: 80 thousand euro annually, RESPONSIBLE: Central and local public authorities/institutions.

Good practice examples: Granting the status of “ecotourism destination”

The Romanian micro-regions which are interested in obtaining the status of “ecotourism destination” must submit a cover letter to MDRT, requesting the inclusion into the evaluation program for ecotourism destinations. Subsequently, the applicants will be asked to make a self-assessment of the destination, based on the criteria and indicators which are available on the ministry's website. Finally, a team of evaluators coordinated by MDRT will handle the site evaluation. Depending on the results of these evaluations, there is given the status of “Ecotourism Destination” which is valid for a period of three years. Currently in Romania there are certified two destinations, which will be followed by another 8 (Figure 5).

Besides the two destinations already recognized by the European Commission for Tourism at the National Ecotourism Conference in Romania, Bucharest 2016, where, together with a representative of this European Tourism Commission, other representatives from 20 European countries participated, Zărnești - Piatra Craiului and Mara Cosău - Creasta Cocosului, a number of other 8 are to be certified: Danube Delta, Marginimea Sibiului, Hateg Land - Retezat, Transylvania Hills, Baile Tusnad and Surroundings, Zimbru Land, Dornelor Land, Pădurea Craiului.

Conclusions

This research emphasizes that we cannot perform, we cannot become competitive at European level and not only, in the background of a changing tourist market, adapting to the market requirements and tourists' motivations, without taking into account the following:

- -Without a good tourist product, you cannot exist as a business.
- Without proper sale, you cannot survive.
- Without efficient distribution, money cannot find you.
- With no smart marketing, you cannot hope for success.
- Without “client-care”, you cannot make real profit.

Tourists do not buy products; they acquire solutions for their experiences. To understand the consumers and to solve their problems

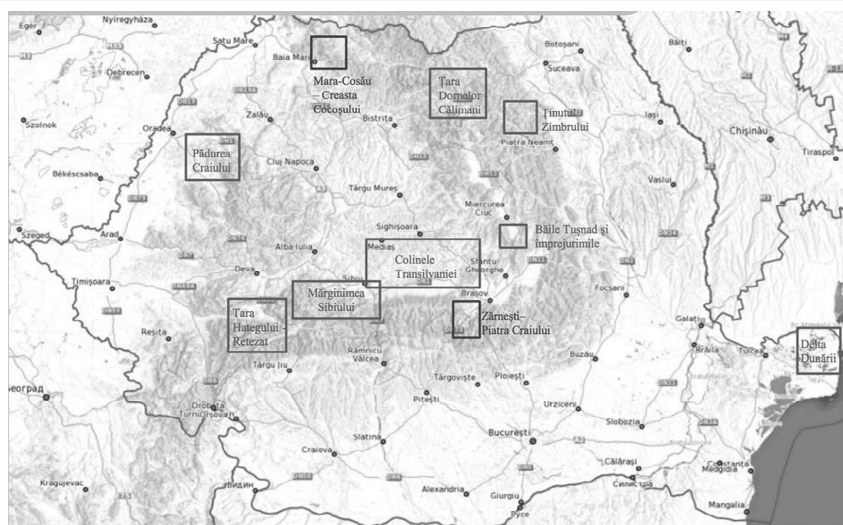


Figure 5: Romanian Ecotourism destinations. Source: (<http://www.turismmarket.com/10-destinatii-de-ecoturism-ale-romaniei>) [30].

better than they can do it themselves or their competitors can make it, this is the real challenge of marketing a company.

The major conclusions and desires of this study are also underlined by other studies developed by INCDT in 2009 and are the following:

- An ecotourism specific infrastructure should be developed within and near protected areas of local, national and international interest;

- Achieving over the next ten years of at least ten nationally and internationally recognized ecotourism destinations;

- Increasing the amount of revenues generated by local communities in ecotourism by at least 7% annually over the next 10 years;

- Over 10 years, 2% of the revenues generated from tourism at the ecotourism destinations should be used for nature preservation; increasing the duration stay to at least 5-7 days for foreign ecotourists and at least 3-4 days for Romanian ecotourists.

The aim and purpose of this article is to provide an overview of good practices and strategies for development, implementation and sustainability, including tourism investments at national level, taking into account and consistent with the heritage and the potential of sustainable Romanian tourist destinations.

The implications of this study involve also the rising of public perception towards the sustainable touristic resources of Romania that can be better capitalized only by having a destination management organization where all the important actors (tourists, residences, public authorities) can meet and discuss their main objectives and outcomes. Developing sustainable products and ecotourism destinations can bring many benefits on short term (economic growth, infrastructure development, increased tourism flows) and on long term (preservation of touristic resources, sustainable approach of environment and tourism, changing old mentalities and habits, understanding tourists behavioral patterns etc.).

The limitation of the study implies few quantitative analyses on sustainable tourism for the main ecotourism, Marketing and Management of Sustainable Tourism due to the incoherence of the national tourism strategies, the “rolling change” of the ministers in tourism, the legislative and, especially, the fiscal support of tourism, the multiplication of investments in tourism, etc. being worth mentioning and welcoming the new initiative of the current minister of Tourism for the Tourism Investment Master Plan (the Ministry of Tourism, in partnership with the General Secretariat of the Government and the Tourism Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), organized on May 15, 2017, the workshop “Investment Master plan in tourism”, event attended by more than 120 representatives of local authorities and development associations in the field of tourism.

Another issue, at the initiative of the Ministry, the National Tourism Research and Development Institute has developed the “National Strategy for Ecotourism Development in Romania” in two phases: Phase I - Ecotourism Experience at National and International Level in September 2009 and Phase II - Strategic Ecotourism Development Plan in Romania in November 2009. The two documents, available on the ministry’s website, provide relevant information on ecotourism and its importance to the tourism industry and environmental protection, the two components of ecotourism.

The overall objective of the Strategic Ecotourism Development Plan is to create the conditions for the development of ecotourism in the protected areas and in the neighboring areas, aiming to achieve

a competitive ecotourism product at national and international level [30,31].

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