

AN EVALUATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: Sustainable development is a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment, so that this needs can be met not only in the present, but also for the future generation. Sustainable development ties together concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems with the social challenges facing humanity. Sustainable development does not only focus on environmental issues. The United Nations 2005 World Summit Outcome Document refers to the "interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars" of sustainable development as economic development, social development, and environmental protection. The present paper analyses a sector application of this concept: **sustainable tourism**. Sustainable tourism development includes a set of heading principles. In implementing these principles, the reduction of the negative effects of tourism is needed. To include tourism in a sustainable approach, a few essential objectives must be attained. To reach these objectives, a link between tourism and other economical fields is needed, because tourism is a sector which has a lot of direct and indirect influences. That way, sustainable development of tourism means a permanent and continuous equilibrium between tourism development and environment protection. The sustainable tourism objectives in Romania covers: the diversification of the tourist services and their alignment to the international quality standards, the exploitation of each region potential, the arrangement of touristic and leisure zones, the promotion of both: urban and agro-tourism, the implementation of eco-tourism concept, training of the personnel engaged, new employment possibilities, the protection and conservation of the cultural and historical patrimony of each region, a good promotion of the touristic potential. Protection and preservation of the touristic potential - in the sustainable development view - is a distinctive activity, with specific issues, which requires the contribution of the specialists form various domains. The strategies used may have a satisfactory efficiency just when they assure a proper legal and administrative framework, which implies a good administrative organization, efficient economic resources, an efficient legislative support and a permanent civic education. In Romania, they are not necessary just simple investments in tourism, because it is also needed a marketing which may underline the opportunities of our country.

Key words: sustainable tourism, environment, touristic resources

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is a field with a huge potential and with a lot of sector applications. Such an application is tourism. The first theoretical approach of this field is interrelated with the activity of the World Tourism Organization. Nearby other ONU organizations, UNWTO tried to apply the sustainable development requirements in tourism. That way, the UNWTO experts presented their own sustainable vision at Johannesburg Summit from 2002.

All the tourism activities depend on the environment, because its components become exploitable resources. That way, through tourism, a lot of products which sustains the trade of the resources, are created. So, the income from tourism is higher than the value of the natural and cultural resources that are used in this process. Because of that, the link between environment and tourism is strong and obvious.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

It is well known that there is a tight interdependence between the global economic growth, the structure of economy, the use of natural resources and the changes in the environment. The economic activities using natural resources modify the environment. The nature of this change also determines the way in which these activities will take place in the future. People's welfare results not only from economic activities, but also from the joy to the environment.

As a distinct sub-field of economy, tourism develops in complex and diverse forms. Therefore, tourism became a growing burden for the environment because of the use of water, soil and energy, of the development in the infrastructure, of buildings and facilities, pollution and waste, soil fragmentation and so on.

Sustainable tourism development includes a set of heading principles, represented through:

- favorable tourism conditions, as a component of the human rights;
- the solidarity between the generations, as tourism forwarders;
- the development of a tourism based on high quality services and friendly to the environment;
- temporal and spatial coherence of the tourism development policy, at national, regional and local level;
- the appliance of the impact and environmental valuations, for all tourism types;
- the use of the newest results and information obtained from the environmental researches, with a huge role in establishing the coordinates of sustainable development;
- the input in the sustainable sector strategies, the caution principles and the payments by the polluters.

In implementing these principles, the reduction of the negative effects of tourism is needed. To include tourism in a sustainable approach, a few essential objectives must be attained:

- to maintain the touristical activities which generate the lowest impact on the environment;
- to reduce pollution, produced in tourism;
- the compliance of the cultural identity and diversity, equal opportunities and the decreasing of all types of discriminations;
- the application of the touristical projects with an innovatory nature, able to assure a social and economic competitiveness, where individual and collective prosperity is proportional with the environmental estate;
- the respect of the international legislation, of the EU rules and to extend the appliance of sustainable development;

To reach these objectives, a link between tourism and other economical fields is needed, because tourism is a sector which has a lot of direct and indirect influences. That way, sustainable development of tourism means an permanent and continuous equilibrium between tourism development and the environment protection.

At macroeconomic level, tourism is considered a field included in the third economical sector. Because of the concrete evolution of internal and external touristical markets, tourism detains macro-, mezo- and micro structural components.

The macrostructure shows the relationship between tourism and the other economic fields. Each macro- change or adjustment, influences tourism. At that level, tourism must attain the capacity to produce a various and attractive range of services, able to assure comparative advantages regarding other similar products, but in accordance with the environmental protection. This aspect is interdependent with the economic reforms. This is a complex

phenomenon and presumes a growth in this field, a growth in the number of employees, to find the necessary financial resources, to make investments in the specific and general infrastructure.

Macrostructure has direct effects upon the touristical forms. So, each major type (mountainous tourism, spa tourism, seaside or cultural tourism) has its own characteristics and may detain proper sustainable development strategies. Each of these types has sustainable development aspects.

The possibility to implement sustainable strategies for each tourism form, still exist. That way, an improvement in the consumption of available resources, without harming the environment through rapid depletion, is possible. So, the equilibrium between the quantity and the quality of tourist resources and the development level of tourist products is possible.

Each tourism form must benefit from restrictive and permissive measures, to diversify or limit the tourist programs, based on the impact of them upon the environment. Some specific activities may concern with:

- the implementation of some settlements and control in the existing touristical activities, for each tourism form;
- the implementation of some economic instruments, like taxes for example, for the use of natural and cultural vulnerable resources;
- the implementation of new programs necessary in financing some sustainable development activities, with direct influences upon natural and touristical resources.

These activities may assure an increase in the efficiency of each tourism form.

The mezo-economic dimension includes a lot of changing's able to influence directly or indirectly each major tourism activity. That way, the following activities must be underlined:

- institutional activities, whereby central, regional and local governmental organisms may elaborate development policies, establishing some main priorities;
- legislative actions used to sustain the development, the control, the promotion of each touristical product and service;
- resource allocation used to define the concrete exploiting modalities of touristical and energy resources, with direct impact upon the final costs;
- environmental actions, by using clean environmental equipments.

At microeconomic level, a few available principles applicable for each "touristical industry", in each country, are outlined:

- environment have a huge importance and value in sustaining tourism;
- in tourism, the products and services are interrelated with the whole available rural and urban potential;
- in tourism, the proposed and unrolled programs must be in concordance with the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the existent resources;
- in tourism must exist initiatives able to assure a minimal environmental pollution;
- the less known natural and cultural resources must be exploited because they are genuine, singular and may attract tourists and limit the trend to the zones with strong tourists flow (WTV - Agenda 21 for Travel and Tourism Industry, 1995).

The micro level shows each activity which takes place in any firm activating in tourism (accommodation, feed, transport, leisure). Each activity means: energy, raw material, finite products consume. To diminish its impact upon the environment, the control of the current consume is needed. That way, a huge role is given to the level of the equipment endowment needed to reduce capital loss.

The microeconomic level presumes a lot of specific initiatives, induced by:

- the achievement of a global attractive image of quality in tourism;

- facilities given to the tourists who use to book early;
- highlighting after each tourist or visiting program the specific consume of wastes or wastewater;
- the certification of the firms in accordance with the quality standards given in tourism;
- the implementation of a certification system, for sustainable tourism, able to indicate the low pollution and the good quality of the environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The advantages of sustainable tourism are:

- is a privilege to understand the effects of tourism upon the natural, cultural and human environment;
- assures the planning of the regional and local activities, able to permit the development of tourism adjusted to the capacity of the ecosystems;
- attract investments to endow the leisure zones, which may be profitable both to the local population and to the visitors, contributing with financial resources at the conservation of the archeological sites and of the buildings;
- favors an efficient use of the land with a low agricultural efficiency;
- respect and assure the environment protection needs, proving the importance of natural, cultural and historical resources, to increase the economic and social welfare of the local communities.

To protect and preserve the touristical potential - in the sustainable development point of view - means a distinctive activity, with specific issues, which requires the contribution of the specialists from various domains. The strategies used may have a satisfactory efficiency just when they assure a proper legal and administrative framework, which implies a good administrative organization, the existence of efficient economic resources, an efficient legislative support and a sustained civic education.

To establish tourism development plans means a way necessary to support the sustainable development strategy, which requires:

- the preservation of the natural tourism resources, for their continuous use in the future;
- the increasing of the life standard in the local communities;
- a better understanding of what means to preserve the environment;

The sustainable tourism plan is a way to control the future and it is interrelated with the environmental strategy. The plans concerning in tourism development uses long run forecasts, global or relied on each tourism type, in accordance with the external markets, and concrete plans, with medium and short run, elaborated for each region, zone or touristic activity. All of these are established in the virtue of the European standards regarding the exploitation of the tourism resources, the development and modernization of the touristic structures and services.

The ecological planning means to supervise and analyze each environmental element, to determine the best models needed for the territorial development and projects. By using the direct support of the government, it is possible to appreciate the general framework needs to protect the resources, to establish the exploitation and investment system. To evaluate the sustainable development concept in tourism, a lot of criteria's were elaborated, to demonstrate the unity of this implementation.

1. Politic and administrative plan

- general and sectoral development strategies;
- programs and projects proposed for tourism activities and for some tourism forms;

- priority objectives in tourism;
- the appliance of main changes for general tourism or for each element of them.

2. Physic and territorial plan

- accessibility at tourism resources;
- tourist accommodation level;
- public and private grounds for touristic activities;
- touristic communication ways;
- general and town infrastructure level;
- tourist attractions, classified after quality and originality.

3. Economic plan

- tourism investments;
- currently costs needed to produce touristic products and services;
- direct and indirect effects from other economic sectors;
- workforce demand;
- profit level;
- inflation trend;
- trend of touristic demand and offer.

4. Socio-cultural plan

- population stability (or trend);
- national and global migration;
- living standard;
- social issues;
- language and traditions.

5. Motivational plan

- the estimation of the preferences and motivation of tourists;
- to analyze the quality of natural and cultural landscape;
- types of touristic activities;
- tourists un-satisfaction level;

6. Ecological and environmental plan

- changes in natural processes (temperature, air, water, wind);
- the analyze of the pollution forms;
- the presentation of the risk forms (fires, slides, floods, soil erosion, rubbish);
- the estimation of wild biodiversity (flora, fauna, vulnerable species).

All these components which carry out sustainable development have basically a vertical integration, because they interact one with each other. There exists a horizontal level too, which shows that all the activities are connected: accommodation, good, leisure. UNWTO was interested in elaborating of some general indicators able to evaluate sustainable tourism. They are:

- indicators which measures the reliance capacity of the environment;
- indicators which certificate the degradation of the natural and cultural sites;
- indicators able to evaluate the economic activities needed to avoid the huge exploiting and the conflict of interest.

CONCLUSIONS

Using these indicators, it is possible to appreciate de tourist pressure, the use of that resource, how to administrate wastes, but also to evidence the consumer and local population satisfaction.

The sustainable tourism objectives in Romania covers: the diversification of the tourist services and their alignment to the international quality standards, the exploitation of

each regions potential, the arrangement of touristic and leisure zones, the promotion of both: urban and agro-tourism, the implementation of eco-tourism concept, training of the personnel engaged, new employment possibilities, the protection and conservation of the cultural and historical patrimony of each region, a good promotion of the touristical potential.

In Romania, they are not necessary just simple investments in tourism, but also a marketing which may underline the opportunities of our country.

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