

EUROPEAN TOURISM INDUSTRY IN THE FRAME OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS

Alexandru, Boboc-Cojocaru

Abstract:

Issues of European tourism industry have become to the fore in recent years, partly as a result of political and economic moves towards increasing European integration and unity. Having into considerations these facts, we propose in this article to analyze the importance of the tourism industry in the sustainable development process and to see how peoples choose to spend their holidays in different places of the world, in function of the some factors that assure a sustainable tourism.

Key words: *tourism, sustainable development, European challenges, integration process.*

JEL Classification: A0, O1, Q5

1. The connection between tourism and sustainable development

In time, the concept of *sustainable development* has witnessed many attempts to define but it seems interesting that the Brundtland Commission that says: „the essence of sustainable development is the way we must organize ourselves so as to consume land resources to satisfy our own needs and aspirations so as to not compromise the expectations of future generations to satisfy at the turn their needs”¹.

We believe that sustainable development is a very dynamic concept with many dimensions and interpretations, seen as a permanent process of change, very connected to the local area needs and priorities. The fact that many professionals do not need a single definition of this concept leads naturally to an awareness that no matter how we define, the problem is the same and is called: *the need to ensure a sustainable future to the world peoples and to the planet Earth*. To achieve this goal there must be a broad international cooperation, a very careful management of the process, political implication and much dedication. In short, all these involve the changing of behaviors of individuals so as to contribute of an economic growth based on sustainable development. Active involvement of people can be realized:

- Acting for poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, protection and management of natural resources for economic and social development;
- Promoting dialogue and cooperation, regardless of race, illness, religion, language, culture and tradition;
- Acting for stable partnerships with all major groups, respecting the independent roles of each of them;
- Providing assistance and participating in programs of sustainable development.

So, the human resources can contribute to the sustainable development process if they acting on the directions set out above. A very important sector that should be taken

¹ In terms of this definition, paraphrase, in short – for a clearer understanding – a variant of The Fable of the Golden Duck, of Aesop. Under it, once was a poor farmer that could hardly maintain his numerous family. He prayed constantly for help and in a night his prayers has brought an answer through a dream. It said that the next morning he will have to go to the village and to buy the first duck that he will see and if he take care of it, it will make every day a golden egg which will benefit his children and descendants. The next morning, the poor farmer went to market as instructed in the dream and went home first duck that has seen it in the market. In the second morning, to his great joy, he found near the duck a gold egg, small and brilliant. The same thing happened the next morning. The farmer was now quite rich and happy but soon began to be envious of the village chief who was richer than him. So, he wanted to become the richest with the help of his duck. He had forced the duck, successfully, to make two eggs every morning and then even three. But soon, the exhausted duck has died. The duck from this story is undoubtedly the generous benefits of natural resources. If we use them as required by sustainable development, without avarice, they will satisfy our needs without compromising the ability of survivors and satisfy their needs.

some measures in this regard is the tourism. This is a rapidly developing sphere of human activity, reflecting the changing economic and social conditions which underlie modern views of individual freedom of expressions through consumer choice, and the new technologies of transport and data communications which make it possible for large number of people to spend their leisure in distant places.

All these changes present both opportunities and challenges for the tourism industry. Five key issues or challenges can be identified from the literature (Faulkner, Moscardo, Laws, 2001):

- The need to get more accurate and uniform statistics on the size and economic contributions of tourism;
- Pressure to compete more effectively with other recreational and entertainment options. This is particularly a challenge for many small and medium enterprises that make up a substantial part of the tourism industry in many destinations;
- The need to deal with increasing diversity amongst tourists. We refer here to the fact that the markets for tourism will become increasingly diverse in terms of cultural backgrounds, age, family structures and experience, creating challenges for the development of products and the management of the interaction between tourists and hosts and tourists and other tourists;
- The need to ensure that infrastructure development and maintenance keep pace with growing demand. We mention that, in this case, infrastructure refers not just to the transport systems and built facilities, but also to the training and education of the human resources of tourism;
- The need to ensure sustainable tourism development. This becomes a dominant philosophy, with the preservation of social and environmental assets and the well-being of the host community becoming primary objectives. Hunter C. introduced four different approaches to sustainable development based on the four types of sustainability (Hunter, 2001):

Characteristics of the **very weak sustainability** type or tourism imperative scenario

Status: tourism at its early stages

Criteria: tourism activities do not generate more degradation

Benefits: tourism is an alternative form of development; creates more employment; increase environmental protection

Costs: creates certain antagonistic impacts

Characteristics of the **weak sustainability** type or product-led tourism scenario

Status: tourism is developed

Criteria: sustain tourism activities and develop new products

Benefits: improvement of the local economy and employment; assist preservation practices of surrounding destinations; expansion and diversification of tourism planning

Costs: conserve only existing infrastructure and products

Characteristics of the **strong sustainability** type or environment-led tourism scenario

Status: tourism at its early stages

Criteria: environmental management utilization

Benefits: environmental quality; economic and employment growth; specialized tourism destination

Costs: Only in circumstances lacking focus and commitment

Characteristics of the very strong sustainability type or neotenous tourism scenario

Status: Tourism at its exploitation and involvement stages

Criteria: Absolute preservation of resources

Benefits: Protection of renewable and non-renewable resources; long-term environmental attractivity

Costs: tourism growth is limited; tourism development is sacrificed in cases where other sectors employ better environmental practices; tourism development is abolished to minimize generation of negative environmental impacts.

Analyzing all these characteristics, we can observe that the tourism sustainability depends by the efforts submitted, by the degree of involvement of the empowered organisms (private and public), the adoption and application of appropriate legislation and regulations necessary for tourism development, the taking of measures that protect the environment, efficient and systematic financing of tourism projects, attracting investments from the private sector to develop tourist facilities and services (by providing investment incentives to attract these investments), training staff and improving all tourist activities – human resources development in tourism, the involvement of local communities in tourism development, tourism marketing and tourism promotion efficiency for all regions and for private firms, an effective and sustained management of the tourism sector. Of the four scenarios of tourism described previously, we consider that the last, which refers to *a very strong sustainability type of tourism* (neotenous tourism scenario) is the most desirable in any European country and not only.

In the context of sustainable development, tourism finds its natural place, bringing to the fore the idea of satisfying the needs of tourists and tourism industry, closely related to the environment protection and to the opportunities for the future. Sustainable tourism involves optimal use of resources (including biological diversity), minimizing the negative impact of economic, socio-cultural and ecological, maximizing the benefits on the local communities, national economies and on the conservation of the nature. As a consequence, sustainability refers to the structures and management to fulfill these goals. The goal of achieving sustainable tourism must be subordinated to national and regional plans for economic and social development.

2. The tourism among Europeans

The sustainable tourism indisputably contributes to the economic development of any state. But to have him, should respect some exigencies (we talking here primarily by an offering to tourists of impeccable conditions, the existence of a clean environment, etc.). In this direction, the European Commission had realized for the year 2009 a report (Eurobarometer). To find the opinions of the population, it was address some questions like:

Will you have the necessary financial resources to be able to afford to take your planned holidays in 2009 ? Which are the factors that determine you to choose a destination ?

The number of persons from Romania who answered at questionnaire was 675. A great part of respondents said they need to make extra savings for to be able to afford to take their planned holidays in 2009 (45,8%), and 23,8% don't have the necessary financial resources for this thing.

Another result of the Eurobarometer refers to the factors that determine the choosing of a destination. The questionnaire was applied to 1726 persons from the European Union. So, when deciding on holiday destinations, most Europeans named the location's environment (for example its overall attractiveness) as the key consideration (31%). Cultural heritage (24%) and the options for entertainment (15%) were the second and third most widespread responses in regard to factors that influenced a choice of destination.

These three categories dominated the responses in each Member State; the rest of the listed attractions were considered as having a major influence on holiday decisions by significantly fewer Europeans (gastronomy: 7%, arts: 5%, festivals, events: 5%). Eight percent cited other reasons and 6% had nothing to say.

An interesting question of the study sounds like: „During 2008, how many times have you travelled for business or private purposes where you were away from home for a minimum of one night ? Did you make a trip in 2007 where you were away from home for a minimum of one night ?”

Analyzing the answers of the European populations (from EU 27), we see that almost nine out of 10 Swedes and Finns (88% and 87%, respectively), and 84% of Dutch, Irish and Luxembourgers had travelled at least once during 2008. In Hungary, on the other hand, only 45% of citizens had made a trip during that period. Other countries at the lower end of the distribution were Romania (51%), Portugal (52%), Malta (53%), Bulgaria (54%), Latvia (56%) and Slovakia (58%). Hungary and Portugal (44% and 37%, respectively) had the highest proportion of interviewees who had not made any trips in 2007 or 2008. In Sweden and Finland, the share of non-travellers was 6% or less. The proportion of respondents who had not travelled in 2008, but who had made at least one trip in 2007 ranged from 5% in Finland to 13% in Romania and Malta.

In Romania, the number of trips is the lowest in Europe because here it is not promoted a sustainable tourism. To can speak about a sustainable tourism we should elaborate a set of strategic objectives which relate to: the encouraging of an tourism favorable of a sustainable local tourism through the involvement of local resources, the predominant participation of local actors, the support of the SME (small-and-medium-sized-enterprise) sector, the market segments that correspond to sustainability (whose behavior and motivations put accent on the respectation of the cultural, social, ecological values of the receiver space), the adoption of a system of indicators for evaluating the sustainability of tourism in the receiver regions, preventing and reducing the territorial and ecological impact of tourism by reducing seasonally, territorial planning, the adoption of some appropriate instruments for the reduction of the territorial disparities, the promotion of a responsible tourism by improving access to tourism, the stimulation of new behavior of production and consumption, the improving trening and the level of life of workers in travel, etc (Pascariu, 2006).

All these objectives wish to materialize a model of tourism development, that to answer of the needs of tourists and receiving regions, preserving and improving the chances of the future generations by access to tourism. These can be achieved through an interaction between public and private institutions, providers of tourism and population. We believe that the most appropriate system for sustainable tourism development, especially in regions in development, is represented by the public and private partnership. In the use of public-private partnerships as a way of promoting sustainable development is necessary to respect the following principles (Pascariu, 2006): the application of an integrated management system of the quality of destination, the conservation of the originality and authenticity of destination, the ensuring of an equilibrium between the economic, social and environmental objectives, the precaution and the prevention in the adoption of decisions, the reporting at the trends in the evolution of behaviors and of markets, the reporting to the permanent interests of tourists and the implementing of a strategy to stabilize the target markets, the information, the cooperation and the transparency, the improving of the free market mechanisms.

Conclusions

Human resource development in tourism industry should be a priority to offer quality services expected by the tourist market and requires a systematic approach to the design needs of staff and establishing ways of training necessary to provide qualified personnel both in the public sector and in the private. It is also essential to use techniques and methods of marketing tourism: setting goals and marketing strategies and developing a promotional program. Marketing activities must take place at the government offices of tourism, the local tourist office and tourism private sector because the development of a positive image of the new tourist area on the tourist potential markets is very important.

Increase tourism product of the values enshrined in the relevant international standards, involves, on one hand, the initiation and promotion of actions which include the conduct of a process of educating and training, a mentality adequate to the current type of development, and on the other hand, the emphasis of a sustainable development. This emphasis involves a balance between negative and positive outcomes of conducting tourism activities.

A priority in the process of sustainable development held in our country is the component that includes the activities of planning, operational planning and tourism as an integral part of sustainable development strategy of the area, region or country. To achieve a sustainable tourism, you need an integrated approach, partnerships with stakeholders.

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