

THE TOURIST DESTINATION – THE COMPETITIVE TOURIST UNIT ON THE FUTURE MARKET OF TOURISM

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Motto: “Romania has the seventh part of the world cultural sites heritage, including the painted monasteries of Bucovina, the historic fortress of Sighisoara and the Dacian fortresses from Orastie Mountains. Transilvania, a famous world due to its association with Dracula; the large category of architecture styles and the rich literary and musical history are reflected by an ethnic mix between Romanians, Hungarians, Russians, Rrom, Ukrainians, Germans and Turks. A diverse and unique population like the landscape of the country together with a rich history offer the visitor a trip to the past and the present of Europe”. (Report drawn up by World Travel and Tourism Council).

Abstract: There are many roles and various responsibilities in the management of the tourist destination and marketing. These are lead in different ways, in different countries, but, in general, they are divided between the national, regional and local levels. The national level is normally responsible for more strategic roles, while the local level is responsible for the operational elements.

The motto “action, not beautiful words” should guide the national policies of tourism from any country, starting from the compliance with the typical responsibilities taken to the levels mentioned above: national, provincial, regional, local.

Also, in the government of a tourist destination we must take into account the cycle of life of the respective destination. Any model postulates the fact that the tourist destinations tend to experiment five distinct development stages: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation and stagnation.

According to the reaction of the managers of the destination in stagnation, various scenarios are possible,

including the decline, the stabilisation, the rejuvenating and the reinvention.

Within the consolidation and the stagnation stages, the managers must intervene and act in order to avoid the unwanted decline of the respective tourist destination. That is why, it is very important to organise a **Destination Management (DMO – Destination Management Organisation)**, whose stages of governance ensure the destination sustainability, too. The more difficult such an action is, when the destination Drobeta – The Danube Bend – Ponoare, although endowed with an exceptional natural potential, which has offered a priority place in the excellent European destinations list (the 4th place) – a pilot project for promoting this region started by the European Commission – because of the lack of a coherent development strategy and of a management and of a sustainable development of the destination.

Key-Words: tourism, sustainable, destination, revival, re-launching, strategy.

1 Introduction

The perception of Romania as a tourist destination is unclear; it has not got a good reputation as a bona fide destination for occasional tourists. This is caused partly by: deficiencies in the destination marketing, the absence of governmental support in tourism, the unprofessional practices in the business tourism sector, the low standards of the services for the visitors, the deficient infrastructure, improper facilities and pass-time activities.

The re-launching of tourism from Romania, of the tourist destinations and the attraction of a larger number of foreign tourists could bring supplementary benefits, but with many necessary changes, in the tourism managers' opinion.

The attention must be drawn to the fact that the transformation-the change-the revival or the promotion in tourism needs another strategy than the continuous improvement, because the success from the past can be the greatest obstacle sometimes. But, are the foreign investors really needed, is a new strategy really needed or are the people ready for change, but especially ready to accept the new and the sustainable things in Romanian tourism? Or are we waiting again for the interventions of the state? These are more than natural questions which, in my opinion, any citizen of this country who feels useless when he/she sees that the things do not go well at all in the tourism field, asks himself/herself, although we have a lot of tourist potential! This article tries to emphasize the many element of favourability which the future sustainable Romanian tourism can use...

2 Problem Formulation

The tourists spend more and more on the cultural destinations, and the world tourism industry is more and more powerful, says the most recent report of the Euromonitor International – “The World Market for Travel and Tourism”. According to the study, it was predicted that, in the period 2000-2005, the cultural destinations would know a significant increase in the

sales values, of 51%, the tourists proving in this way the wish of spending more of their free time on educational visits.

“Tourism has become one of the largest and fastest industries, the number of tourists at a world level having increased with 16% in 2008 in comparison with 2007 and reaching 118.6 millions. Thus, the cities and the regions have begun to promote more aggressively the natural and historic advantages in order to attract the visitors. The evolution of the tourist objectives like the buildings and the historic sites, the art galleries and the museums represent, also, a result of the demographic changes, like the aging of the population. But the young generation is the one who helps the evolution of the more cultural attraction types trend”, said Caroline Bremmer, representative of Global Travel and Tourism Manager at Euromonitor International. Romania cannot take advantage of this thing because some objectives need investments, and in the other areas, where there are objectives that can be visited, the road status represents an obstacle in the way of tourism.

The promotion of the objectives requested by this segment of public would bring an increase of tourism in Romania, especially when the potential exists. “Romania has the seventh part of the world cultural sites heritage, including the painted monasteries of Bucovina, the historic fortress of Sighisoara and the Dacian fortresses from Orastie Mountains. Transylvania, a famous world due to its association with Dracula; the large category of architecture styles and the rich literary and musical history are reflected by an ethnic mix between Romanians, Hungarians, Russians, Rrom, Ukrainians, Germans and Turks. A diverse and unique population like the landscape of the country together with a rich history offer the visitor a trip to the past and the present of Europe”, shows a report drawn up by World Travel and Tourism Council.

The operators say that the tendency mentioned in the report is valid for Romania as well. I offer only an example: the power of Sibiu brand, the European Cultural Capital. Sibiu has become an attraction for

tourists, especially from Europe, but also for those from the American continent. It is estimated that almost 200000 of foreign tourists will choose Sibiu in 2009 as well for at least one night of accommodation. The promotion of Sibiu will be very important for the promotion of Romania in general as well. The majority of the tourist themed circuits will reach Sibiu, and the visitors will not limit themselves to this city and its surroundings. They will prefer all southern Transylvania, but also other regions from Romania. The themed circuits, realised by the travel agencies with the foreign tourists between April and October, contain many cultural and historic objectives. The most visited cultural objectives by foreign tourists are the Bran Castle, the Peles Castle, Sibiu, Sighisoara, the monasteries of Bucovina, the wooden churches of Maramures, Brasov (especially the Black Church), the fortified German churches, as well as some objectives from Bucharest, especially the Village Museum, followed by the Parliament and the National Museum of Art.

A great financial effort would turn Romania into a much more attractive destination, and each destination into a sustainable attraction, with a longer life cycle. (see figure 1)

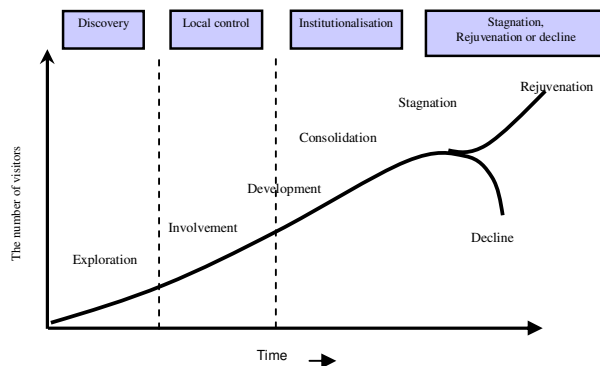


Figure 1: The Life Cycle of the Tourist Destination (I/III)

According to figure 1, the life cycle of the tourist destination is a model which states the fact that the tourist destinations tend to experiment five distinct stages of development: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation and stagnation, described as follows:

Exploration: Within this stage, a smaller number of visitors are attracted by the cultural or natural objectives; the number of visitors is limited and there are very few; the visitors can come from the neighbouring cities.

Involvement: Within this stage, there is a small involvement from the part of the local residents who

ensure some facilities for the visitors; the acknowledge seasons by the tourists and the market zones which start to appear; the visitors can travel outside the country or outside the region.

Development: Within this stage, a large number of tourists arrives and the external organisation, like the hotel chains and the tour operators which have an important role; the tourists can come from all over the country and from abroad.

Consolidation: Tourism becomes an important part of the local economy and its political importance grows, the policy can come to the fill in a central role. The number of tourists grows and certain facilities must be developed.

Stagnation: The number of visitors reaches the peak; the destination is no longer in fashion and an increase of the turnover in the field can exist.

According to the reaction of the destination managers to stagnation, more scenarios are possible, including the decline, the stability, the rejuvenation and the reinvention.

Within the consolidation and the stagnation stages, the managers must intervene and act in order to avoid decline.

Thus, objectives which should be restored, because of stagnation and even of the loss of attraction, would be the historic centres, like the one in Bucharest. Unfortunately, more cities have damaged historic centres or which are not restored. It is a pity, because the majority of the tourists prefer the old centres of the cities, where a lot of commercial activities or entertaining activities could take place, and on the other hand, although many objectives are restaurants, the road infrastructure still represents a great problem. The best examples are Maramures and Bucovina.

The importance of the cultural destinations reveals from the way in which the places which have not represented so far a special cultural attraction have begun to create various events, like the opera, art, cinema or literature festivals, dedicated to the culture lovers. For instance, the music festivals are very popular in Spain, events like Benaccassim attracting annually many fans of the festival. The tour-operators take advantage of this opportunity offering special packages which include such events, from classical music concerts to jazz festivals.

The tourist policy, so imperative for the revival of Romanian tourism on medium and long terms, will have to aim at the following priority objectives:

- reduction of taxation;
- maintaining the international tourism as an export activity treatment;
- reinvested profit exempt from taxes for a certain period;

- continuing the improvement of the legislative and institutional frames for their harmonisation with the norms of the World Organisation of Tourism and the European Union;
- involving the state in the financial support of the tourism investments, especially of those of public interest (infrastructure), as well as the international and internal tourist promotion;
- developing the special professional training and the professional reorientation for the work force laid off from the other economic sectors; founding the network of tourist education institutions integrated in the European network of the tourist and hotels management education;
- correlating the programs and the development of tourism projects with the regional development programs (transportation, tele-communications, the territory landscaping etc.);
- awarding a greater attention to opinion surveys – a useful tool for the hotel managers in order to maintain and increase the provided services quality;
- imposing the quality brands, in order to increase the competitiveness on the tourist market and the acknowledgement of the services quality in tourism.

3 Problem Solution

Briefly, the following are necessary for Romania:

- hurrying the creation of “the tourist brand of Romania”, a program for which there are 20-30 millions euros ready, and its elaboration having started in April 2008.
- The World Organisation of Tourism has criticised the current slogan of Romanian tourism, because it does not communicate the essence of Romania for the potential visitors. These have shown surprised by the fact that their expectations about this country have been exceeded. The challenge which tourism faces is to sow the whole world, before it comes to our country, how many beautiful things and experiences our country has to offer. Romania will benefit from European funds of 50 millions euros for promotion and tourist information programs, through the Regional Operational Program, until 2013.
- The purpose of the Master Plan is identifying the vulnerable points of Romanian tourism, then the elaboration of restructuring programs through the establishment of financial resources and the formation of a tourist market which can efficiently compete on the world market.
- In the next 10 years, Romanian tourism will generate services of over 11 billiards euros, as estimated by the World Council of Tourism. According to the study performed by the Peacock Hotels Company, new hotel projects with a total of

6200 rooms will be built. Bucharest is an attractive target and presents a great potential of development in comparison with other European cities regarding the medium level of occupation, as well as the size of the obtained net tariff, as estimated by the World Council of Tourism. The preliminary data reveal that in the year 2007 500 new rooms were inaugurated, for 2008 2000 rooms were expected to be built, and by 2011 other 5000.

- OMT estimates that the number of foreign tourists who will come to the country will exceed 15 millions in 2026, in comparison with the 7.5 millions recorded in 2007. The majority of the tourists will come from the European Union, over 8.6 millions. In 2007, the incomes from tourism were of 2.75 billiards euro. The incomes could reach 6.9% from the GIP in 2026 in comparison with the 3.5% in 2007, as estimated by the World Organisation of Tourism.

- The year 2008 exceeded the expectations of the international tourism with the arrivals, reaching record numbers of approx. 900 millions. This development was helped by a powerful world economy, which passed through the longest period of economic growth, for more than two decades.

For 2009, faith is high although weak on some markets, especially in the USA (high prices of the oil), fact that could lead to the damage of international tourism, although the World Organisation of Tourism does not believe in the end of the growth.

The local tourism market could record in 2009 an increase of only 5%, in the context of the international financial crisis which is more and more felt on the local market in the field, when, in 2008, there were estimated increases of approx. 15-20% on the segment of outgoing and 10% on the internal tourism, according to the representatives of the National Association of Travel Agencies of Romania.

For 2009, it is estimated that the Romanian tourist industry, although it will also be affected by the financial crisis, will not record a great reduction as the other countries of Europe. The increases of 20-25% have belonged to a market in development, that is why this plus of 5% would be a natural increase of this market. In comparison with other countries which had increases of 1-2% anyway, and now estimate a recession of this sector, if we have 5% it is an achievement!

The crisis could offer a chance for the development of tourism in Romania, the authorities in tourism counting on bringing a larger number of foreign tourists and on the attraction of Romanians in the internal tourism. Naturally, within the context of the crisis, the tourists choose closer destinations to their countries and cheaper probably, that is the reason why Romania could be an adequate destination for them.

The solution, in order to satisfy this segment of public, is to extend the season and to offer competitive prices. Other good measure within this crisis would be the following:

- ❖ the adoption of the law for the holiday tickets which could be offered by the companies to their employees;
- ❖ a better promotion, even aggressive of the country;
- ❖ the launch of a program of early-booking – this program meaning the offer of discounts of up to 20-30% to those who purchase holidays in advance. Around 20 hotels on the Seaside, from Predeal and Bucharest have adhered to the ANAT program, of early-bookings, which means discounts of up to 30% for the tourism tickets bought in advance for the summer season 2009, and also more hostels members of ANTREC (the National Association of Rural Ecologic and Cultural Tourism) have shown the intention of entering the program.

Parallel with these measures that the officials from tourism propose to the new government and to the new Minister of Tourism, there are:

- the adoption of a law of tourism;
- putting into practice of the Master Plan for tourism;
- the accomplishment of a partnership public-private for the promotion of tourism (the entity acting under the name of National Organisation of Tourism, ONT);
- depoliticising the local tourism industry;
- imposing a Destination Management (DMO – Destination Management Organisation).

The destination management is the coordinated management of all the elements which create a destination.

The destination management approaches strategically these entities, sometime very separate, for a better result.

The coordinated management can help to avoid the doubling of the efforts regarding the promotion, the services offered to the visitors, the training, the support for business and the identification and the management of the problems which have not been solved, complying with the following stages:

Stage I - The organisation of the destination management

Stage II – The organisation of the destination management

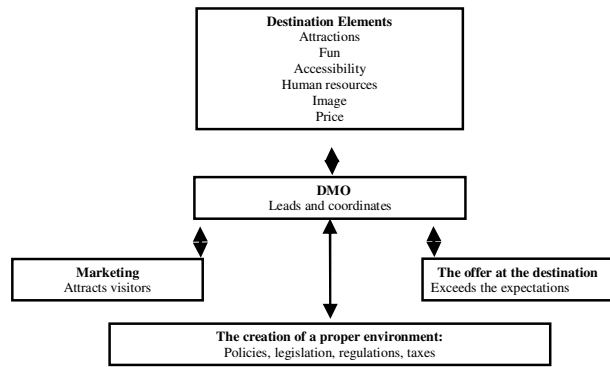


Figure 2: The organisation of the destination management – Stage I

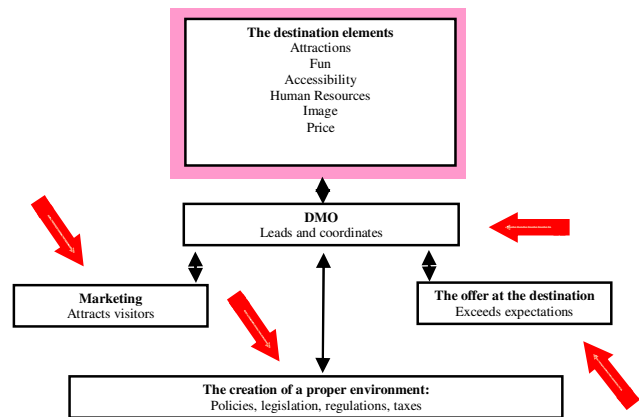


Figure 3: The organisation of the destination management – Stage II

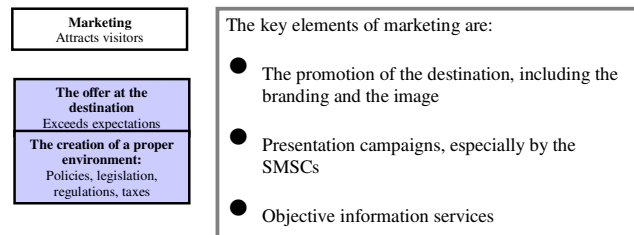


Figure 4: The Destination Management

4 Conclusion

Maybe, all these in collaboration with the specialist's conscience, doubled by a real training to whom reality should prove once more that the well done thing will always last, will show us that Romania, as a tourist

destination is not a ghost, but on the contrary a tourist area with unknown values which wait to be reevaluated by a trained hand and by an imperative Destination Management, rigorously elaborated, but especially rigorously applied.

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