

Tourism - Revival Factor at Social, Cultural and Economic Levels

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Abstract: The current crisis, with multiple aspects, represents a great threat to global stability. Our long-term political vision must focus on the action immediately, through rapid and strong measures. The commitments undertaken last year must be complied with, and their application accelerated. The crisis offers opportunities as well, to get closer to the developing countries and to start a new and better partnership, in order to invest more for the stimulation of the own economies, to redefine the priorities, to achieve the ecological economic growth, to restructure the international economic and financial architecture and to adapt to the realities of this century.

Besides the economic consequences, tourism has a profound social – human significance.

It acts, through its nature, directly on the tourists, as well as on the population from the visited areas. Moreover, the effects of tourism are spread over the quality of the environment, the use of the spare time and the connections between nations.

Tourism is, beyond everything, an element that favours communication, the exchange of ideas, information, stimulating the widening of the cultural horizon with effects on the intellectual formation.

At the same time, tourism represents a means of education, of raising the level of training, of culture and civilisation of the people.

Therefore, tourism contributes not only to the satisfaction of material needs, and to the satisfaction of the spiritual needs of the people. Any step of the travel becomes an adventure of knowledge; at each step you die and you resurrect of joy, the original makes you feel born again, nature places you on the pedestal of each day, as a witness to your one miracle".

Key-Words: the economic crisis, tourism, culture, revival, globalisation.

MOTTO:

"Europe is the world leader of tourist destinations. However, we must do more for preserving our competitiveness. Our proposals add value to the efforts made by the Member States. These proposals will help us to promote, in a more efficient and coordinated manner, the European Union as a unique tourist destination" (Statement of the Vice President of the European Commission, Commissar Gunter Verheugen).

1 Introduction

At the Conference of the Ministries of Tourism at the

level of the countries of the European Union *"Tourism - the key to the economic increase and the increase of work places"*, organised in Wien)

Answering to some request of social order, tourism promotes as an important means of spending the spare time. Contemporary evolution of the world economy is characterised by the tendency to increase the spare time, fact that raises problems regarding its organisation and efficient use.

If we consider the tourist activity as a production activity, with inputs and outputs, one observes that it means the exploitation of a varied range of resources, the natural ones having a fundamental role. Consequently, tourism exercises influence on the environment and its components.

Also at a social and economic level, but also on a political one, we must remind the important role of tourism in the intensification and the diversification of connection between nations on a world level. Indeed, together with the actual trading, international tourism tends to become one of the main forms of connection between people located on different continents, at large distances but small through the invisible, imperceptible connections which tourism creates in time.

In order to exemplify the quantity mutations from the field of Romanian tourism and of the population involved in the unfolding of the tourist act, in 2010 from 8,469,300 persons from the employed civil population, 134,000 persons worked in the field Hotels and restaurants.

The existing tourist accommodation capacity on July 2010 was of 287,158 places. (Data provided by the National Institute of Statistics).

2 Problem Formulation

According to the "Stiri turism" publication, from February 23rd, 2010, in the tourist industry from Romania, there were approximately 295,000 persons employed in the field at the moment of article publication. If we included the associated sectors to this number (restaurants, transport, etc.), the number exceeds half of million persons.

According to the ones published on August 6th, 2010 by Ziarul Financiar at the beginning of 2010, the number of restaurants, bars and cafés exceeded 34,000 units, increasing with 12% compared to the same period of the previous year, according to the National Office of the Trade Register (ONRC).

At a national level, according to ONRC, there are 21,333 bars and cafés, among which 1,000 units are located in the Capital and 12,900 of restaurants at a national level. According to the data provided by the Minister of Tourism, there are 25 cafés, 1,619 bars and 2,693 restaurants, classified units in Romania.

The experts from **Visionwise Consulting** appreciate that there are 5,267 companies in the field of restaurants, excluding cafés, food services in hotels and catering.

The largest number of restaurants is recorded in

Bucharest, with 949 of such locations and Constanta, with 530. Regardless of the data provided by the specialty newspapers, by the specialised companies or by the minister representatives, we find out that this field of restaurants is a field in continuous transformation, adaptation and, of course, improvement of the services offered to clients.

As in any service industry, the feminine participation in the tourism sector is high (approx. 65 %, and in all the European countries this is approx. 20-30 % of the total number of employees).

In order to offer quality services according to the legal requirements, of the occupational standards and of course of the client, the personnel, which works in this field of hospitality, needs initial qualification, but also a continuous one. Although the training schools in the field of tourism (high schools, universities, training centres, etc.) increased in number and all of these type of schools provide certificates/diplomas upon graduation attesting the training in an occupation/preparation of their possessors, and many times they do not represent a warranty of the quality of the training. The effects are found first found in the large number of graduates who do not work in the field, but also the poor quality of the services offered.

The explanations are found in deficiencies, like:

- the lack of research studies which determine the real training needs;
- the continuous use of some pattern programs without the express formulation of the objectives, of the evaluation forms,
- the lack of disciplines to guide them in the social and professional life;
- failure to apply the participating methods of teaching to involve the students, to motivate and to stimulate their creativity;
- the lack of endowments for the labs/workshops with equipment/pedagogical means necessary for the demonstrations and applications meant to form the work skills in pupils/students;
- the lack of a training performed on the individual and the work point; - the informational feature in schools.

Together with the most important educational and economic consequences and, we might say, even in an interdependence relation with these, tourism has profound implications at a social and human level, which leave their mark on the tourists as well as on the visited population. These effects are felt at the level of education and training, the use of free time, the assurance and maintenance of the health state, preserving the quality of the environment, the achievement of the connections between nations. Among these, we must first emphasise the importance of tourism in spending the free time due to the multiple implications which this might have at a social and cultural level and even at an economic one; in

other words tourism ensures the achievement of all the function which specialists in the field attribute to the free time¹: rest, entertainment and especially avoiding boredom, the routine of daily life or developing the personality finding itself among the main destinations for spending the free time, the weekend and especially the holidays.

Thus, by detaching from the daily routine, tourism has the role of improving the quality of life of the one who practices it, being considered an element of mental hygiene, because the tourist detaches from the daily problems, the pleasure and the new inter-human relationships accelerate the pulse, contributing to the physical and psychic recovery of the body through rest, recreation, movement as well as the ones specific to the spa tourism, thus contributing to the preservation of the biological and physiological balance of the contemporary man, finding in tourism a antidote against all sort of constraints.² In addition, due to the multitude of tourism forms which may be practised, tourism may represent a means of education, of widening the horizon of knowledge and even elevating the level of training, as well the satisfaction of some psychological and social needs of friendship, association, dignity, respect, tourism fulfilling certain function within the formation process of the tourist personality, especially in the case of the young people. It constitutes a socialising factor, forming new attitudes, remaking the family frame affected by the alert rhythm of the daily life.

At the same time, due to the multiple and complex effects which it has regarding the recovery of the physical and psychological ability, we may identify the conditioning relations between the size and the manner of use of the free time on the one hand and the evolution of macroeconomic variables on the other hand, like the GDP, the final consumption, the gross investments, the labour productivity.

An image on the manner of spending the free time through tourism at the level of our country may be done analysing the data supplied by the institute of statistics - The life conditions of the population from Romania - 2010 edition. Thus, only 26% of the persons, aged over 7 years, spent at least 4 consecutive nights, among these the largest share belonging to the persons aged under 35 years (54%)³, while the percentage of the persons aged between 50 and 64 years who practise tourism is only 5,3%, and the ones over 65 years is 1,5%.

The main reasons for the low demand are generally

¹ Oprescu, D. *Timpul Liber și instrăinarea umană*, Editura Politică, București, 1981, p.84-86

² I. Istrate, F. Bran, A. G. Roșu, *Economia turismului și mediul înconjurător*, Editura Economică, București 1996, p. 47

³ Institutul Național de statistică, *Condițiile de viață ale populației din România* - ediția 2008

the level of incomes or more exactly of the part that remains after the coverage of the basic needs, in the case of the families with a lot of children or of the retired persons, the lack of free time in the case of the employers, of the persons with responsibility positions or more jobs or with health problems. Regarding the tourist travel destinations, 95% of them were inside the national borders and only 5% abroad. These aspects leave their mark on the standard of life, the quality of life and indirectly on the professional efficiency of the activity, but also on the inter-human relationships, the stress and the fatigue influencing many situations.

We must emphasise the fact that, according to the same study, the demand for tourism increases proportionally with the level of education. Regarding the length of travels, the largest part of them fits the category of short and medium travels, respectively a third of them with a smaller length than 8 days, and 40% of them lasting between 8 and 14 days. Regarding the share of holiday expenses, the total expenses of the population are varying between 2.7 and 8.5%, emphasising the relatively low level of the tourist phenomena in Romania.

Moreover, tourism may have a significant contribution to the preservation and the improvement of the environment quality, becoming an active factor of the sustainable development.

The environment formed of the natural factors as well as the ones created by the human activities represent "the raw material for tourism" which is subjected to some transformations/actions that may have as effect its degradation. The impact that tourism has on the environment affecting the natural components as well as the social and cultural ones being necessary.

Taking into account the relation between the quality of the tourist product and the quality of the "raw material" used, the environment, tourism is involved in finding solutions of mitigating or even eliminating its negative impact. As a consequence, we may state that tourism has an ecological vocation due to the involvement in enhancing the attractiveness of the landscapes in some areas as a consequence of the fittings meant for recreation, the resort development control, the direction of the tourist flows, the prevention of the degradation of some areas through the organisation of parks and reservations, the less aggressive promotion of the holiday forms, such as: the green tourism, rural tourism, hunting and taking pictures, watching animals in their natural habitat, as well as through other fitting activities: the maintenance of the beaches on the seaside, the routes for hiking, the caves for visiting, by developing things that are harmoniously integrated in the landscape, as well as through the development of the ecological awareness of the tourists and of the love and respect for nature, etc.

Regarding the social and cultural impact on the visited

population, we have to emphasise a series of aspects connected to the changes in social structure through the change from agriculture to the services sector, the need to improve the level of culture through learning foreign languages, some elements of culture and civilisation specific to other people, learning information from the economic field, the use of modern means of communication, especially the internet, changes in mentality at the level of the traditional family regarding the role of the woman in the peasant families as well as regarding the relations between parents and children which become more liberal, the mitigation of the prejudices with national feature, the revaluation and the development of the local culture: of the customs and traditions, the traditional cuisine, the protection of the natural environment, the increase of the cultural and civilisation level, and, last but not least, the level of life quality, the revaluation of historic monuments, the stimulation of the artistic creativity and of the crafts.

At the same time, as a consequence of the special rhythm of the international traffic growth, tourism represents a contact way with the realities and the peoples of other places, contributing to the promotion of a better understanding between the peoples belonging to the different cultures and civilisations, to the revival of traditions and to the revaluation of the universal cultural legacy.

At the same time the specific content and the exigencies which health tourism means need that a significant part of the personnel that provides the tourist services have a higher qualification than in the case of the other tourism forms: specialist physicians, personnel from the health centres: kinetherapists, sport trainers, massagists, beauticians, entertainers, nutritionists, etc. which set a superior value for the labour force, the increase of revenues of the people working in tourism with effects on the life standard.

The multidimensional feature, the quality implications of its activity have made the economic and social effects to be more difficult to quantify, the quantitative indicators being able to partially reflect the results obtained.

The analysts in the field have tried to emphasise the certainties of the resource economies (expenses) meant for the care and restoration of health or for the reduction of the average length of the medical leaves with the help of the spa tourism, as well as the ones referring to the production yield and the productivity obtained through the improvement of health.

The multitude of positive aspects that practising tourism imply have lead to the acceleration of its development, meaning that it generates a series of

negative effects: some specialists consider that tourism, especially the international one has more negative social and cultural effects than other types of economic development. Among these, we may emphasise the "spatial neo-colonialism" expressed by the exploitation by the rich countries issuers of the tourist resources from the receiving countries, in development, as well as the negative effects on the environment.

The multiple effects that tourism has at an economic, social or cultural level have made that tourism be considered, by more and more governments, a key subject of the macroeconomic policy, towards which important investing businesses turn.

3 Problem Solution

➤ The development of tourism and its transformation into a successful sector in Romania, based on the potential it disposes of, means the elaboration and especially the application of adequate strategies at a macroeconomic level as well as at a microeconomic level, that should take into account the 4 relations determined by the complex interaction between globalisation, tourism and culture, synthesised in figure 1.

Continuing our analysis, we must mention that the concept of globalisation is very broadly used in the tourist literature suggesting an increase and a geographic extent of the connections between the regions, leading to the internationalisation of tourism, to the occurrence of global flows of tourists and to the increase of the competition in the field. The adaptation of globalisation to the field of tourism has lead to the intensification of three **trends in thinking**:

➤ **globalism**, which considers that the massive economic, social and political changes have eroded the power of national states, inaugurating an era of a borderless world. In tourism, this may be interpreted as a positive phenomenon, which offers more freedom by removing the constraints or as negative one, able to trigger the ecological crisis or a crisis of another type.

➤ **traditionalism** justifies that the recent trends determine only a long-term intensification and an internationalisation of the economic processes in which the states and the national markets continue to remain the main pillar. In the context of tourism, this means the inclusion of the farthest regions of the globe in the tourist circuit and an impressive number of tourists, but the main regulator is the state which maintains the border under control, invests in infrastructure and promotes the activity.

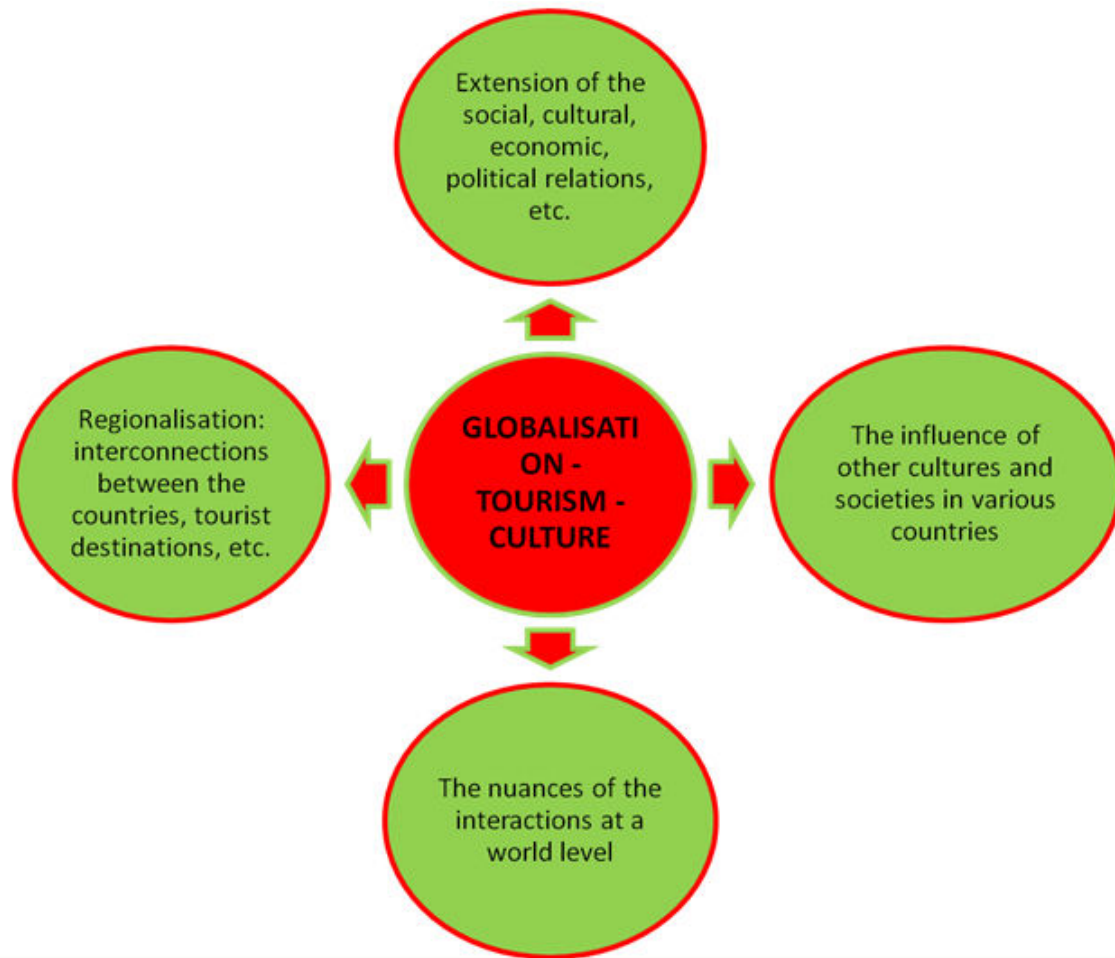


Fig. 1. The complex interaction between globalisation, tourism and culture

➤ **transformationalism** considers that globalisation creates a new political, social and economic climate, which fundamentally transforms the nature of the state, the intervention forms and its operations.

4 Conclusion

Regardless of the manner of interpretation, **globalisation in tourism is characterised by four features:**

◆ **extension of the social relations** – that is the setting of the wide cultural, economic and political network; meaning the whole surface of the earth transformed in tourist destinations;

◆ **regionalisation** – that is the emphasis on the interconnections between the neighbouring countries, especially the one of small dimensions, the most clear example is the European Union, where tourism is eased by the high level of incomes, by the political and social stability and by the richness of the natural and anthropogenic resources.

◆ **intensification** – the increased density of the interactions at a world level making the impact of the events to be more powerful than before. At the moment, new forms of tourism are developed and are mixed with the old traditional ones, with more tourist flows to the farthest destination, as well as the mass feature of tourism

◆ **mixing** – different cultures and societies at large distances are facing one another at a local level, thus creating a larger diversity because one of the tourism's features is the interaction between the hosts and the guests with very different effects. Tourism means more than flows of persons, but also "the transfer across the borders of consumption structures, values and lifestyles." Among the elements of globalisation, **the globalisation of the infrastructure** influences tourism the most, because it is essential in *the intensification, the extension and the mixing of the relations*.

The ability to use the Internet in order to book, the exponential increase of the air transportation, the satellite communication, the modernisation of the means of transportation and of the communication ways - all these have eased the development of international tourism. The internationalisation of tourism is a phenomenon that loses itself in the past, having occurred to the first commercial travels, the crusades of the medieval soldiers or the famous Grand Tour performed by the aristocracy of the

18th and 19th centuries.

However, international tourism is a product of the 20th century, especially of the post-war period.

We cannot deny the fact that the globalisation of tourism is a consequence of economic globalisation in general, but also a series of specific factors occur that contribute to it.

Tourism has become, over time, a huge phenomenon without precedent, which represents a chance or a risk for the culture, according to the manner in which it is managed. Tourism continues to be among the most important forms of cultural exchange, being more and more appreciated as a positive force of cultural preservation generating funds, educating the community and influencing economic strategies. Excessive tourism or its poorly organised development may threaten the nature, the integrity and the most important features of the heritage, having as final consequence the degradation of the visitors' experience.

Many times, tourism is a phenomenon that is self-exhausting. Because of this, besides the benefits that it brings to the host community, it has to generate a strong and continuous motivation to preserve the heritage, but without excessively using it and visitors' return. This preservation, together with the involvement and the cooperation of the local community with external experts, may guarantee a sustainable tourist development and protection of the heritage. The meaning of "development" varies from case to case, rarely being seen as the exclusive component of the projects. Sometimes, the development through tourism and culture is translated through the promotion of cooperation and understanding in society.

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