

# Sustainable Development Strategies in Domestic and International Tourism

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## **Abstract:**

*In this work-paper we have analysed a separate chapter of tourism's sustainable development, namely development strategies. Given the economic, social and political importance in tourism, and also the overall contribution to the development of a region, we considered that a distinct approach of the tourism development strategies was required in domestic and international terms.*

*Analysing the local level, the development strategy of Romania considers that tourism can become one of the key factors in the process of reinvigorating the economy, given the fact that Romania has huge tourism potential, which is appropriate to the different types of tourism, at national and regional level. It is considered that one of the main issues which needs to be addressed is the use of the Romanian tourism potential and its use in inappropriate conditions.*

**Keywords:** sustainable tourism, sustainable development strategy, domestic tourism, international tourism.

## **1. Introduction**

This paper aims to address strategies for sustainable development of tourism both domestically and internationally. The tourism industry has accepted the concept of sustainable development and has adopted the concept of sustainable tourism. The sustainable tourism develops the idea of meeting current requirements of the tourists and of the tourism industry, while protecting the environment and opportunities for the future. It has to meet all the economic, social, aesthetic requirements of the „actors” from tourism, while maintaining cultural and environmental integrity, the biological diversity and all systems that support life (Agenda 21 for Travel and Tourism Industry, 1992). In other words, all tourism activities in a country or region should be compatible with the maximum number of travelers and with the natural environment facilities, ensuring thus a sustainable economic and ecological functioning at all levels.

One of the main reasons for which we choose this approach is that tourism's issues are one of the most dynamic economic sectors, which recorded an upward trend with permanent changes. Between the end of World War II and until now, tourism has evolved from a relatively small scale activity, having limited importance, to the largest industry in the world.

The idea of adopting the concept of sustainable development in tourism has emerged in the early '90s, taking rise the sustainable tourism - an industry that has rapidly gained importance both in academia area and research area, and also in practice / business / tourist industry. Sustainable development is now one of the most debated concepts, both at international (UN Conference - Stockholm, 1972, meeting EU) and national levels.

## **2. Sustainable Tourism: The Basics**

### **2.1. Definitions**

Sustainable tourism is defined as “... a positive approach intended to reduce tensions and frictions created by complex interactions between the tourism industry, tourists, the natural environment and local communities that host tourists” (Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 1993).

Beyond Green Horizon Paper (Tourism Concern, 1992) defines sustainable tourism as “... tourism and infrastructure related to both present and future: operating between the limits of capacity for regeneration of natural resources; recognizes the contribution of local people and communities; customs and lifestyles in the tourist experience; accepts that people should have economic profits from tourism being based on their desire to be hosts to tourists”.

Specialists in the field (Nistoreanu and Tigu, 2006) believe that sustainable development is not only a fashion but a necessity imposed on the one hand by the high level of development reached by some countries on the other hand by the “remaining behind” economy of many other states.

Since its inception in 1987, the concept of sustainable development has permeated into all economic and social areas, from sustainable agriculture to sustainable transport and sustainable tourism.

Through the joint work of IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), WWF (World Federation for Protection of Nature), FNABE (European Federation of National Parks and Natural) since 1991, it has been defined the concept of sustainable tourism: “all forms of tourism development, management and marketing of tourism that respects the natural, social and economic integrity of the environment, ensuring the exploitation of natural and cultural resources for the future generations”. (Istrate, Bran and Red, 1996). From this definition it follows that any form of tourism should respect the sustainable development principles, starting from ecotourism, green tourism and rural tourism, to business tourism or automobile tourism.

### **2.2. Principles**

Tourism can bring both advantages and disadvantages of a region. Through careful planning, tourism can also create new jobs and increase revenue. Expansion of tourism activity even leads to the creation of new jobs and has beneficial effects on the qualification and training level of the workforce.

The prosperity of a region as a result of tourism development occurs in several phases:

- ♣ immediately, following the direct consumption of tourism products;
- ♣ short term, by continuing to absorb labor to welcome and encourage trade;
- ♣ long term, by the capital concentration in investment in general infrastructure and the tourism, travel and accommodation structures in development of urban services.

Given the importance of economic, social and political development of tourism, its overall contribution to the development of a region, the necessity for the development,

implementation and promotion of the tourism development strategies seems obvious, not only nationally but also regionally. One aspect that should be taken into account in developing such strategies is the compliance principles of sustainable development, aiming at the development of tourism while respecting the requirements for protecting the natural environment, taking into account the specific objectives of each area or region.

We could say that sustainable tourism is an alternative form of tourism but it is based on the following principles:

1. Minimizing the impacts of tourism on the natural environment to achieve environmental sustainability by contributing to the maintaining and improving the conservation status by returning a portion of revenues from the protected area. Practicing forms of tourism that do not affect the natural environment.
2. Minimizing negative impacts of tourism on the local community and its members to achieve social sustainability. The development of those forms of tourism which do not disturb and interrupt the daily life of the population from tourist destinations. Avoiding the occurrence of hostile relationships with the local community.
3. Minimizing negative impacts of tourism on culture / traditions / habits of local communities in order to achieve cultural sustainability. The development of a tourism able to determine the authenticity and individuality of local cultures and to avoid saturation of their “foreign” cultural influence.
4. Maximising the local economic benefits as a result of tourism development to achieve economic sustainability. This is one of the most important principles of sustainable tourism having it at the service of protection and economic development of local communities and protected areas.
5. Education, training, information for all those involved in tourism activity. Educating tourists through a higher understanding and appreciation of their impacts in order to improve personal attitude and reduce the environmental impacts. This includes an ecological educational component for visitors, locals, local government, rural and urban population, etc.
6. Local control - the basic principle of sustainable tourism. The local community is involved and consulted in all matters regarding the sustainable development tourism, being an active decision maker. The key element here is the local ownership over the tourism infrastructure elements (e.g. accommodation structure) and not only. The local community and local governments are involved and have especially financial control.

The tourism will be maintained sustainable only if development is planned rationally based on rigorous economic and social criteria and the development criteria will respect the principle of sustainability. Development will be achieved through the commitment and cooperation of public and private sector institutions. Also, this development should include civil society and local communities.

### **3. Sustainable Development Strategies in Domestic Tourism**

Tourism activity is one of the few phenomena that have been imposed in the contemporary era, its spectacular development being a characteristic feature of the second half of last century and the beginning of our century.

An economic branch of high major interest and availability, the Romanian tourism must become an important component of global economic system. As a subsystem of the national economy, the tourism bears influences from other subsystems and exercises, in turn, an increasing influence on their development. Although tourism in Romania currently has only a modest share of GDP, it is widely recognized for its ability to become a vital sector of national economy in a context that will meet national targets in this area.

Developing tourism in regional profile is a comprehensive and lasting process, being unable to be achieved in a short period of time. At the basis of the tourism's regional development are strategies that involve a coherent set of objectives, priorities and means for its achievement.

To develop a regional tourism strategy is necessary to take into account the current situation of Romanian tourism, as well as anticipated future developments. The tourism offers should be designed and developed from the European Union accession perspective.

This involves the integration of several strands, including: regional development, education, culture, cooperation.

Also, it should be noted that achieving a sustainable tourism market has become an urgent necessity, because only such a market can generate investment in the most profitable sectors, investment that will offer development of the whole concerned region. For Romania, it is essential that development strategies of tourism meet the developing requirements of the country and its regions.

Sustainable planning requires a regional approach of the tourism activity. This requires the community involvement in planning and development, and creates and develops forms of tourism that generate benefits for local people. If they benefit from tourism development, then they will be more interested in supporting the tourism development of the region, while pursuing the tourism resources conservation.

According to the objectives of macroeconomic policy, decision elements in the territory can establish their own economic development planning and set their priorities. From this point of view, regional and local organizations, public or private organizations, may establish the stages of the tourism sector development. To achieve sustainable tourism development planning at local and regional levels, there will be considered the following aspects (Hanciuc, 2003):

- Identifying and planning of the tourism resources, and attracting the private households to practice tourism;
- Achieving some form of regional or local training level for practicing some specific trades tourism;
- Providing financial assistance to obtain bank loans for the start-up of tourist activities;
- Support individuals in obtaining approval certificates for the interest structures and professional licensing and patents in the field;
- Preparing the local experts in matters of tourism.

A strategy made in order to develop and promote tourism activity within a region must be a distinct point in the framework of the regional development. The European reality and the Romanian one show that regional and local development is directly conditioned by

the implementation of projects of local interest that will be managed by local organizations, who know best the problems and possibilities.

A regional strategy for sustainable development of tourism should:

- contribute to sustainable tourism development in the region, generating income and jobs at local level;
- pursue the conservation of natural and cultural environments;
- create structures that would facilitate the investment, particularly in small and medium enterprises;
- facilitate the cooperation between the public and private sector and provide facilities for those who want to do business in the tourism sector;
- ensure an understanding of the role of tourism in the regional economy and the national government and regional organizations involved in tourism development;
- ensure the regional tourism cohesion of the development effort.

Beginning with all the general principles and specific regional development studies in the literature devoted to issues of regional development and planning, there are considered mandatory requirements that must answer any construction of a regional development strategy. Thus, it is believed that among the fixed points of prospective territorial development approaches, one cannot miss (Medium and long term strategies for regional development in Romania, the prospect of European Union, 2003):

**a.** defining the natural environment, economic environment, social, cultural and regional policy.

As a general rule, a geographical entity must submit to a specific physical unit, and the cultural, economic and sociopolitical units - a sufficient community of interests, so that territorial development strategies benefit from an appropriate framework, and action and nature converge in any human activity;

**b.** defining a general targets system in temporal sequence (up to fixed time horizon) and in sectoral structure. In this framework should be established a hierarchy of priorities (emergency) and should be defined criteria for actions selection, determined by the multiplier effect drive. In a logical sequence are then analyzed the possibilities of integrating these activities into an integrated whole;

**c.** defining the methods and means of achieving practical goals. In this context, the institutions and organizations that will ensure the coordination of various activities which contribute to achieving the objectives must be designed;

**d.** defining active cooperation and permanent conditions of the population in developing regional strategies.

Within the national strategy for Romania's economic development, tourism must be regarded as a priority sector, able to contribute in a significant extent on economic recovery.

In addition to recognizing the positive effects in economic and social plan, it must be given importance to the cost and resources required for tourism development. This problem acquires special significance when it is treated in terms of sustainable development, whose key elements are precisely the distribution and equity in access to resources in time and space, environmental protection and economic development capable of ensuring the quality and quantity of natural resources.

It is known that the use of environmental resources for tourism development often leads to weakening and damaging them, which limits further development of tourism and affects the quality of tourism product. Therefore, the literature devoted to environmental protection in relation to tourism development addresses this issue primarily as a resource management problem.

Given these considerations, it is obvious that a holistic view of regional strategies and policies is required. Such an approach reveals at least two key issues, namely (Constantine, 2000):

- Multiplier effects generated by expenditure in tourism in the economy of regions and of the localities;
- The relationship between tourism and the used resources, seen from the perspective of spatial planning, tourism zoning and the compatibilities of the environmental protection criteria within the context of sustainable development.

Development Strategy 2004-2006 aims to progressively reduce the gap between Romania and EU Member States by achieving the following **objectives** simultaneously:

- 1) Ensuring long-term revenue growth;
- 2) Combating social and regional imbalances;
- 3) Progressive compliance with environmental standards that Romania will have to reach in 2017.

Romania is among the least developed countries in Europe. Development strategy is to achieve steady economic growth, faster than the EU average, in the context of a balanced development of the territory, and in particular to reduce disparities between rural and urban areas. Therefore, national development strategy is formulated so as to support investment in sectors with potential growth, thus helping to create and maintain jobs.

Development strategy of Romania considers that tourism can become one of the key factors in the economic recovery, taking into account the fact that Romania has huge tourism potential, right for various types of tourism, at national and regional level. It is considered that one of the main issues to be addressed is the use of Romanian tourism potential or its use in inappropriate conditions.

The reform process in Romanian tourism will have to create the necessary framework for sustainable development in this area, aiming at the living standards growth of the local communities, the conservation of natural and human tourism resources, in order to obtain a continuous use in the future, good knowledge and awareness of local people and tourists of the idea of conservation.

#### **4. Sustainable Development Strategies in International Tourism**

Dynamic concept par excellence, sustainable economic development requires a new attitude towards the environment, an attitude in which the perception of "man conquering nature" should be replaced by "man part of nature and protective of her" (Tobultuc, 2003). Feeling of belonging to nature must become an imperative for all inhabitants of the planet.

It is very important internationally, for all actors involved in tourism activity to pursue a sustainable development of this sector. Tourism should contribute to the conservation of

resources, economic growth and prosperity of the communities of destination. Travel agents should have a shared commitment to sustainable development. On the other hand, local community education is extremely important for sustainable development of tourism worldwide. Understanding why it is important to protect an area, residents are given the chance to take decisions about their quality of life and to understand the reasons why tourists visit them.

Investigation of the tourism phenomenon on a global scale reveals a constantly increasing tendency of international tourist traffic, tendency recorded by the revenue made by the industry, as well. The rise that we speak about, actually demonstrated by statistics, is due to:

- Exceptional progress made by public transport in terms of capacity, speed and affordability;
- Their special interest manifested by local communities concerning the phenomenon of tourism, because it has become an important source of income for those settlements and a way to provide jobs for local people;
- The existence of different accommodation and enhanced comfort;
- The emergence and development of a truly international tourism industry, i.e. a range of products and services perfectly tailored to the requirements of foreign tourists;
- Improved infrastructure (modern highways, railways for high speed trains, airports that allow passenger inflows).

It is thus obvious that economic development, broadening exchanges of any kind between the countries of the world, globalization of world economy, reducing trade barriers, stimulating investment in tourism, to encourage its state policies, technological progress in transport are factors that favored tourist movement. On the other hand, the diversification of the ways of spending the holidays, relief to the tourists, raising quality of life and general level of education and culture have made tourism to become the most important form of leisure. In addition, modern man feels more acutely the requirement to leave the country within the borders of nationality and to have contact with other places, cultures and customs.

Sustainable tourism development strategy should consider:

- Conservation of natural and human tourism resources in order to continue in the future uses;
- Increasing the population living standards in areas where tourism is developing;
- Promoting both to the local population and especially to the tourists the idea of conservation.

To achieve a proper strategy to support sustainable tourism development at the international level, it is recommended (Gunn, 1994) to:

- Establish goals and objectives related to the implementation planning for a region and / or community;
- Formulate a set of indicators which reflect the objectives of development of tourism (the World Tourism Organization provides a set of indicators for those who develop and lead the planning of tourism, providing them with valuable

information. The 10 indicators proposed are pursuing different aspects: protection of the environment, stress, intensity of use, social impacts, development control, management, planning, critical ecosystems, customer satisfaction, locals' satisfaction, the contribution of tourism to the local economy.)

- Implement management strategies designed to direct tourism to achieve the stated objectives;
- Monitor the performance of the business tourism sector by tracking the evolution of established indicators;
- Assess the effectiveness of selected management strategies that influence tourism development, aiming at the development of the proposed indicators;
- Develop policies governing the tourism sector to ensure monitoring and performance assessment.

At international level, strategies must respond to requirements of tourism development objectives, the rationale of achieving development plans has its roots in the operating mechanism and evolution imperfections of the market economy:

- Lack of market information, which can be overcome with a plan, which is a regular information system and medium and long term forecasting.
- Inability of market mechanisms in resource allocation and optimal adjustment of economic structures to the balanced development of tourism activity. Conscious nature of business, the production of actual travel, consumption often comes in conflict with how to adjust the various business processes.
- The requirement to change travel agents' behavior in appropriate economic and social requirements of sustainable economic development, which involves moving from business organization to obtain an immediate profit to the principle that the profit reason should be more compatible with environmental quality requirements.
- The impure and imperfect nature of competition. The tendency of integration of holiday organizers, concentrating on different areas of business components, makes pure and perfect competition a mere wish in tourism, like in all modern sectors of the economy.
- The requirement for economic and social planning is a must, just like internationalization, the globalization of economic and social life, the unprecedented expansion of international tourism.

## **5. Conclusions**

Given the importance of economic, social and political development of tourism, the overall contribution to the development of a region, the requirement for development, implementation and promotion of tourism development strategies seems obvious, not only nationally but also regionally. One aspect that should be taken into account in developing such strategies is that the principles of sustainable development, aiming at the development of tourism while respecting the requirements for protecting the natural environment, target the specific objectives of each area or region.

Nationally, it is essential that tourism should develop strategies and features that meet the requirements of the developing country and its regions. To develop a regional tourism strategy it is necessary to take into account the current situation of Romanian tourism, as well as anticipated future developments, to design and develop tourist offers for European Union prospects. This involves the integration of several strands, including: regional development, education, culture, cooperation. It should be noted also that achieving a sustainable tourist market has become an urgent necessity, because only such a market can generate investment in the sectors most profitable investment that will give them the development of the whole region concerned.

Concerning sustainable development internationally, it is obvious that economic development, broadening exchanges of any kind between the countries of the world, globalization of world economy, reducing trade barriers, stimulating investment in tourism, state policies to encourage it, progress of transport technology are factors favoring tourist movement. On the other hand, diversification of spending the holidays, relief to the tourists, raising quality of life and general level of education and culture have made tourism to become the most important form of leisure. In addition, modern man feels more acutely the need to leave the country within the borders of nationality and to have contact with other places, cultures and customs.

We believe that sustainable tourism development strategy must consider the conservation of natural and human tourism resources in order to continue their future use, raising the living standards in the areas where tourism development is achieved, promoting both the local population, as especially by tourists, the idea of conservation

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