

TOURISM AND SERVICES FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**Prof. Mirela Mazilu Ph. D
University of Craiova
Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
Craiova, Romania**

Abstract: : In the market economy, maintaining the competitiveness¹ requires continuous creativity and innovation in order to develop more sophisticated, more refined, more individually nuanced new products and services. The creativity imposes the tourist company managers to regularly reassess the dimensions of the market segments on which they are positioned, to carefully analyse the products and services, in order to eliminate from their offers those products and services or procedures whose profitability is quickly decreasing.

Unlike the product quality, service quality is more difficult to define, to judge or express in quantitative terms, as the service has few physical dimensions such as performance, operational characteristics and maintenance costs, which could be used to compare or measure.

Due to the non-separable feature of the production and the consumption of services, quality should be defined both based on the process of service provision and the actual results expressed by consumer satisfaction. To obtain a differential advantage, providers should improve the quality tracking the overcoming of the consumer's expectations in the perception of quality.

JEL classification: A19, F18, N50, Q01, Q56

Key words: critical; quality, services, tourism, creativity, efficiency

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism represents through its content and role a phenomenon characteristic of the present civilization, a major component of the economic and social interest that polarizes the interest of a growing number of countries.

The role of tourism in the national economy of various countries is particularly important given the complexity of this phenomenon, the scope of activities necessary for its development, maintenance and expansion.

In this tourist universe, the power of the consumer of tourism products continues to rise, so the quality is one of the first requirements. Starting from this idea we have prepared this article on "Tourism and services in the sustainable development perspective".

The tendencies of continuous change with major impact upon tourism are economic, social or related to the life style, the tourism being integrating part of our

¹ Melinda Căndea, Felicia Aurelia Stăncioiu, Mirela Mazilu, Roxana Cristina Marinescu, The Tourist Destination-the Competitive Tourist Unit on the Future market of Tourism, published in Proceedings of the 2nd WSEAS International Conference on CULTURAL HERITAGE and TOURISM (CUHT'10), ISBN: 978-960-474-103-8, ISSN: 1790-2769, Rhodes Island, Greece, July, 22-24, 2009, pg. 101-107, ISI

society. It is important for the tourism sector to evaluate these changes in their very outset, namely the implications upon tourism of Romania's adhering to EU.

2. OBJECTIVES

Although it was not a specific topic within Romania's adhering negotiations to the EU (ended in December 2004), the negotiation chapters with a major impact upon tourism's development were: transportation, environment protection, social and regional policy, and others.

Among the most significant implications of Romania's adhering to EU that concern the tourism in Romania, there are:

- the growth in number of the foreign tourists coming from the European Union and visiting Romania, not spectacularly nor suddenly, the explication being that the population of the old member states still prefers "the old destinations" (Spain, Italy, France, etc.);
- the growing competition both between destinations and tour operators as well, which will determine the competition between any Romanian tourism destination and the ones of the EU;
- the rising quality of the tourism services and staff;
- the tourists will become aware of their rights as costumers, that being a direct result of applying the European legislation in the field of tourism but also of the justified growth in tourists' exigencies towards the received services;
- the environment protection and lasting development will condition tourism's development and became a major imperative to assure the viability of any tourist arrangements;
- the access to the financings offered by the European Union will facilitate tourism's development and infrastructure in areas with tourist potential in Romania.
- another implication of Romania's adhering to EU, direct reflected upon the Romanian tourism, is making the tourist marketing a priority both for the central authority (National Authority in Tourism) and for the tourist destinations, and furthermore for each tour operator.

Knowing the fact that the image is playing a very important role in coming to a decision regarding choosing a holiday destination (the connection between holiday reasons and image being evident), there it is time for a quality and more aggressive marketing to convince the potential tourists of the European Union's countries.

- tourism development at the regional level – within the context of the decentralization / regionalization of the competences in tourism, one of the economic sectors of Romania that needs "more action"!

3. METHODOLOGY

Globalization, the proliferation of new destination, the new technologies has changed the competitive environment of the European countries. Nowadays, the most powerful instrument in the tourist promotion is represented by the image of a country or region or a tourist product. If we concentrate upon the international dimension, the strategies of image construction or tourist promotion are: the creation of new tourist images, the re-positioning of a traditional tourist destination, the creation of an

awareness degree within a competitive framework, the creation process of the brand (the brand which covers the national/regional

The activity of economic operators from the services industry (for instance, a hotel chain, a restaurant, a transportation company, a tourist company) differs in many ways from the activities enrolled in industrial factories which produce different goods. Thus, the profile, the performances, the organizational structure, the perception of the quality inside the industries performers of services will differ in many ways from those industries which produce different goods.

In the strict meaning of the quality features, some specialists have identified the following dimensions of service quality: 1. durability, 2. the ability to respond, 3. competence, 4. access, 5. communication, 6. credibility, 7. security, 8. understanding / knowledge of the client, 9. tangibility.

Then, the authors have resorted to six characteristics of the quality of services: 1. tangibility, 2. durability, 3. the ability to respond, 4. assurance, 5. empathy, 6. reevaluating the services which haven't satisfied the customer.

The meaning of these features can vary considerably, according to the nature of the services and to their users, so that, in the evaluation of service quality, the share assigned to different features depend on the space and time coordinates of each service. The ISO 9004-2 standard recommends the clear definition of the requests regarding the services, using the terms of an observable feature, offered by the client and these definitions might be evaluated by the customer. Meanwhile, the definition of the processes correspondent to the service is necessary, using some features which are not always observable by the client, but which influence directly the performance of the service [7].

For this purpose, the standard suggests the consideration of the following features of services:

- facilities (installations and equipments), capacity, the staff and the materials;
- the waiting time, the duration of the service performance, the duration of the processes;
- the hygiene, the security and the durability;
- the reaction ability, the accessibility, the courtesy, the comfort, the aesthetics of the environment, the competence, the safety in function, the precision, the technical level, the credibility, the efficient communication.

The quality control is a part of the implementation of the process of performing services. This includes:

- measurement and verification of the key activities of this process in order to avoid the appearance of unwanted tendencies and dissatisfaction of the client;
- the self control of the staff responsible with the performance of services considered as a part of the process measurement;
- the final evaluation of the interface with the client, realized by the supplier, in order to keep the image of the quality of the supplied service.

The tourist services is represented as a sum of activities which have as object the satisfaction of the tourist's needs during the period he/she travels or connected to the tourist. A part of the activities which offer content to the tourist performance aims at satisfying the regular, daily needs (rest, food); others represent specific features of tourism and of particular forms of tourism manifestation.

Through its nature, the tourist service must assure conditions to restore the ability to work, simultaneously with the pleasant and educational pastime; also, it has to be conceived so that, after its completion, the individual should get more information, knowledge, and even new abilities. Only in this case one can speak about the content of the tourist performance of services in accordance with the requests of the modern époque, with the exigency of the contemporary tourism. In the actual conditions of our country, engaged in the new development coordinates, such an orientation of the service offered to the people gives tourism the feature of an important instrument for achieving the quality of life.

In the contemporary period, the continuous process of enriching the content of tourist performance with new types of activities is noticed – specific processes of Romanian tourism – as an expression of reception and adaptability to the changes appeared in the structure of needs and the growth of the role in the formation and the education of people.

The development and the quality of tourist services are dependent, firstly, of the existence of a technical and material basis, with proper endowment, which can offer the tourist the best conditions, and which can fulfil other functions as well, depending on the case. Secondly, the services are influenced by the endowment with the specific staff of the accommodation places, of the food places, of the treatment facilities and for fun activities, and for the level of qualification of works, for the organization of the works in the territorial units. In this context, the insufficient spaces for accommodation and for food, their improper equipment, the inconsistency with the level of the comfort offered and the exigency of the tourists, as well as the small number of workers or their poor qualifications, influence in a negative manner the quality of the service and, through this, the size of tourist traffic and the possibility of revaluation of the patrimony.

If we accept the idea that in the beginning of the third millennium the assurance of good quality services becomes a test for the Romanian tourism, then a priority becomes the human resources problem. Of course, the quality of the technical and material basis of tourism is indispensable to the achievement of this objective, but only the competence, the education and the passion of the personnel who performs these services give the whole measure of the quality of the tourist product.

The tourist service performed for the clients are a combination of two components – a quantity component, with a material feature, and it can be evaluated objectively, and a qualitative component, about behaviour.

The quantity component is easier to define, to measure, to compare, to observe. The establishing elements are: the technical equipment, the food, the work methods, the number of the personnel, the information. What the client wants is not a function procedure.

The behaviour component is often neglected by the hotel personnel. Even in the case of training courses, the work method and the daily tasks are emphasized.

The service cannot be appreciated favourably when there is a bad quantity component. Meanwhile, the quantity component alone cannot give but a neutral impression to the customer. For instance, the favourable commentaries about a certain clean restaurant or about a certain quick service are very rare; on the contrary, a very slow service or a stained table or a dirty one ends with complaints from the client.

Still, when there is a good level of the behaviour component, some inefficiencies of the quantity component can be overlooked. A proper professional

behaviour, an honest smile and special attention, for instance, can balance the failure to fulfil the quantity component. Thus, in the relation between the client and the staff, the staff's behaviour, its attitude, its way of work and react represent the essential criteria of appreciating the quality of services, these are elements which generate pleasure and satisfaction of the client.

The evaluation performed by the client constitutes the absolute and final measure of the quality of the service. The client's reaction can be immediate or delayed and retroactive. The evaluation of the service by the client is often reduced to a subjective evaluation. The clients rarely communicate, spontaneously, their appreciation regarding the service quality.

Usually, the dissatisfied clients stop using or acquiring the service, failing to announce some proper collective measures. The limitation to the clients' complaints, for the measurement of their satisfaction, can lead to wrong conclusions.

The satisfaction of the client must be compatible with the standards and the professional ethics specific to each organization. The tourist companies must establish a manner of evaluation and of permanent measurement of the clients' satisfaction. Within these evaluations the positive and negative reactions must be identified as well as their result in future activities of the organization.

The introduction of a management system for the quality services of the hotels in Romania has as purpose the improvement of the service quality performed in hotel units in order to raise the level of satisfaction in clients, as well as the possibility of using this symbol for publicity and the recognition at a national and international level.

The objective of the system for certification of the quality services of hotel in Romania is to put in practice a new set of regulations regarding the performed services in hotel units from Romania for:

- the endowment of the hotels with a new evaluation system, both internal and external, which can act as an efficient instrument of management, to guarantee the quality of services.
- The constitution of a basis for the continuous action, through adapting the management system to the new needs, expectations and requests of the clients.

Being no exception to the saying "the ad is the soul of commerce"; the tourist product sells and buys easier if it benefits of a proper publicity. This task belongs to the professionals in the field, to the researchers and to the professional stakeholders.

These are the persons who have a complex set of actions to perform among which we state:

- The request that the role of tourism should be acknowledged in politics;
- the reintroduction of the word tourism in the new article 15.2 from the new Constitution of Europe;
- the creation and the fortification of mechanisms against the eventual threats for tourism from the side of the Community's politics and from the measures adopted in other sectors and fields;
- the improvement of the safety measures and the security measures for the tourist destinations and in the transportation sector;
- the enhancing of the role of the Consultative Committee in Tourism and to continue the organization of the European Tourism Forum in

order to promote a better interface in the tourist industry and among the groups of stakeholders;

- the special attention to the implementation of the Satellite Account in Tourism in order to provide a correct evaluation of the importance of tourism in the general economy and to solicit assistance for the new countries in which the CST is not introduced;

- the intensification of the accessibility in order to make the tourism available for everyone (different social groups, unemployed, old people, disabled people etc.);

- the creation of a common set of tourism indicators durable within the Agenda 21st for the European Tourism which includes the economic indicators, of the environment, social and institutions indicators, so that they can evaluate and monitor the development process with the purpose of encouraging the durability and the competition of European tourism;

- the creation of an open network of research, of dissemination of information and the transfer of the most adequate knowledge, as well as of the best technologies used in the durable tourism;

- the facilitation of the usage of information technology as an important means of developing the tourism sector regarding the management systems of quality, the applications from marketing and distribution, the facilities and the intensification of tourism.

The criteria for adhering to the European Union, the growth of the competition on a national and international scale, but mostly the growth of the clients' exigency, makes the operators from the hotels sector to use new instruments for marketing and management.

To support the operators from this sector, the Ministry of Transportation, of Construction and Tourism through the National Authority for Tourism considered necessary the editing of the brochure "The Q-Model Mark for Good Practices of Implementation and Certification of the Quality Services in Hotels from Romania". This brochure is addressed to all tourism operators and has as purpose obtaining a final feed-back from the hotel operators, in order to elaborate the conditions and the criteria of certification the quality of the services in hotels and for the awarding of the Q mark.

5. CONCLUSIONS

A basic rule for the quality existence and perennially of the tourism destinations in Romania is to remain competitive. The actions done in this purpose should be considered as part of the process to create a sustainable character, fact which represents one of the most important competing advantages. So, in order to assure its competitiveness, viability and prosperity on long term, the tourism destinations should emphasise more the complete integration of the preoccupations regarding the sustainability within the decision making process.

A prerequisite for the existence and continuity of the quality of the tourist destinations in Romania is to remain competitive. The actions taken in this respect should be considered as part of establishing a sustainable feature, which is one of the most important competitive advantages. Therefore, in order to ensure competitiveness, sustainability and long-term prosperity, tourist destinations should place more emphasis

on the full integration of sustainability concerns in the decision-making and the management practices and their instruments.

The European Commission has asked all the Member States, citizens, economic agents, social partners and all "key players" in tourism to focus and concert their efforts behind this strategy of increasing the quality of tourism services, to achieve a major change, mandatory for a sustainable tourism in all its components.

REFERENCES

1. Ionciță, M. *The Economy of Services*, Uranus Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000
2. Minciu, R. *The Economy of Tourism*, Uranus Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000.
3. Niță, I., Niță, C. *The Tourist Market of Romania*, Ecran Magazin Publishing House, Brașov, 2000.
4. Mazilu M. *Tourist Geography*, Didactică și Pedagogică Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007
5. Mazilu M. „Le tourisme roumain dans le contexte du tourisme européen”, Ed. Universitaria, Craiova, 2007
6. **Mazilu M.**, *A New Challenge in the Current Economic Stabilization*, in ISI Scientific Proceedings of the 10th WSEAS International Conference of Recent Advances in Mathematics and Computers i Business and Economics MCBE '09, Published by WSEAS Press. www.wseas.org. ISBN: 978-960-474-063-5, ISSN: 1790-5109, Prague, Czech Republic, 23-25 March, 2009, pg.286-292
7. **Mazilu M.**, *A durable Tourism means performance of tourist services*, article published in Vol. Of the International Conference: the Inovation – Direct Foreign Investments – European Challanges and Opportunities, at the **Institute of National Economy**, Universitară Publishing House ISBN: 978-973-749-576-1, Bucharest, pg. 153-157, 2008
8. Căndea M., Stăncioiu F., **Mazilu M.**, Marinescu R. *The Tourist Destination-the Competitive Tourist Unit on the Future market of Tourism*, published in Proceedings of the 2nd WSEAS International Conference on CULTURAL HERITAGE and TOURISM (CUHT'10), ISBN:978-960-474-103-8, ISSN: 1790-2769, Rhodos Island, Greece, July, 22-24, 2009, pg. 101-107
9. Pârgaru I., **Mazilu M.**, Stăncioiu F. *Tourism – „Energy Source” for the Sustainable Development*, published in International Metallurgy vol. XIV, no. 8, 2009, Special Issue ISSN 1582-2214, ranked ISI, pg. 64-68, FMR Publishing House, www.metalurgia.ro <http://scientific.thomson.com/cgi-bin/jrnlst/jlresults.cgi>
10. Olaru, M *Quality Management*, 2nd edition, Economică Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999
11. Simion D., Tobă D. *Perspectives of the evolution of Romanian financial market in the context of global financial market*, Analele Universității din Craiova, Seria Științe Economice, Anul XXXVI, Nr.36, **2008**
12. Snak,O., Baron, P., Neacșu, N *Tourism Economy*, Expert Publishing House, Bucharest, 2001.
13. Snak, O., *Services and Quality Management*, Romanian Academy of Management, Bucharest, 2000
14. * * * National Institute of Statistics-2006-2009
15. * * * National Committee of Prognosis-2008

