

THE EVOLUTION OF NEW TYPES OF TOURISM IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: During the past decades, more and more governments have admitted the importance of tourism as catalyst of economic and social development.

Therefore tourism has been praised for its rapid and sustained development, although not even its' most optimistic advocates couldn't foresee such growth and resistance during global economic recession periods, when tourism has maintained or even strengthened its position.

After a period during which has had a fluctuating evolution, influenced by the general economic, social and political situation, Romanian tourism seems to have taken an ascendant trajectory during the past years. Supporting this statement is the WTTC report "Romania – The impact of travel and tourism on jobs and the economy" which presents optimistic forecasts regarding Romanian tourism.

Moreover, the growth of some new, modern types of tourism in our country such as business tourism, rural tourism, urban tourism, etc., sustain the idea of a positive trend in the evolution of Romanian tourism. These new types of tourism have recorded real growth during the past few years and the premises for their development strengthen the idea of tourism becoming an important sector of the national economy.

Due to changes occurred within travel motivation patterns as well as mutations in the tourist consumer behavior a series of new tourism types has been crystallized – business tourism, urban tourism with its main component-cultural tourism, rural tourism, adventure tourism, cruises.

Business tourism

Business tourism – general remarks

Business tourism refers to travel due to work related purposes that is official, commercial or other travels, to participations in different events organized by economic organizations or administrative units for their representatives [3].

Business tourism is extremely dynamic, due to the development of international transactions and the amplitude of globalization.

WTTC appreciates that business tourism generated in 2005 at world level 652.9 billion US\$, with a real growth rate of 4.6%.

Taking into account the content of the business tourism, one may speak of:

- general business tourism,
- meetings,
- fairs and exhibitions and
- incentives [3].

Of all this forms, the meeting component is characterized by a strong expansion tendency, although 2006 marked a slight decrease in the number of meetings (8871),

held in 212 countries and 1521 cities. The year 2006 shows a 20% decrease measured against the record year 2000, but the forecast for 2007 are very optimistic.

Table 1

Market share for continents -meetings organized in 2006

Continent	Market share (%)
Europe	59
America (North and South)	18,5
Asia	15,3
Africa	4,5
Australia and Pacific	2,6

Source: www.uia.org

The table shows that the most meetings took place in Europe, the number of the meetings organized in Europe standing for more than half of the world total.

The main 10 countries in which meetings are organized are: USA, France, Germany, Netherlands, Austria, Spain, Great Britain, Finland, Italy, Singapore, and the main meeting organizing cities include: Paris, Vienna, Singapore, Brussels, Geneva, Helsinki, Barcelona, London, Amsterdam, New York [12].

The evolution and perspectives of business tourism in Romania

In Romania a growth of business tourism was recorded during recent years, in 2004 there were recorded 8478311 tourists and 383830 tourists who traveled for business reasons, representing 4.52% of the total number of tourists, and in 2005, 3.98% of the tourists traveled for business purposes, which is a number of 309863 tourists.

The most important destinations for business tourism in Romania are Bucharest, the capital city, the big cities in Transylvania and Banat, and Constanta, where the most high quality hotels are. Moreover, it is expected that 2007 and 2008 consolidate the growth of business tourism in Romania, after its integration within the European Union.

The premises of business tourism development in Romania refer to the generous material base, which allows improvement and modernizations, well trained personnel in view of specific business tourism events (translators, IT personnel), lower costs than in other European countries, the success of several events organized in Romania which were strongly promoted, generating a positive perception of Romania as international destination, the fact that Romania is a economically and politically safe destination, the growth of investors' interest in Romania etc.

Surely there are also factors that deter the development of business tourism, especially the general infrastructure, the transport network, the unequal geographic distribution of the accommodation base, the small number of 3-5 stars hotels, the lack of specialized personnel in the organization and planning of business tourism events, the impossibility to organize larger events, incurring the presence of more than 2000 participants.

New hotel projects are to be developed in Timisoara, Arad, Oradea, Cluj, Sibiu, Alba-Iulia, Iasi, Constanta, in balneal resorts and the Danube Delta, as well as in Bucharest. In Bucharest in 2005 a concentration of investment in building or modernization of 3 star hotels was recorded, although a growing interest for 4 star

hotels is obvious. This evolution is imposed by the increasing demand which will continue to grow, especially after the European Union integration, phenomenon present in all the other European Union countries after their integration [10].

Annually in Romania there are organized more than 800 events, of which 40% have as beneficiary foreign companies or organizations. Most of these events (600) are conferences, seminars or product launches and there are also 100 exhibitions organized every year. The capital city, Bucharest is by far the most attractive location, both for tourism and for the investors, being the organizing city of 75-80% of the total events [10].

An increasingly sought after alternative is event organization in the rural environment, contributing to the growth and accentuating the development tendency of the rural tourism.

This alternative is preferred mostly for teambuilding programs, for small groups of maximum 50 persons, offering the possibility of specific programs and activities development, in a more intimate environment and it fits the specific and characteristics of rural tourism (participation in certain activities within the rural farm, consummation of traditional products etc.).

Rural tourism

Rural tourism – concept, peculiarities and development

The concept of rural tourism is very generous and broader than initially thought. It encompasses a series of activities and objectives, of which some may be considered traditionally as pertaining to the notion of “rural” more than others and develops in a variety of environments which may be considered, in the same manner, more or less rural [8].

In its broader sense rural tourism refers to tourism in rural environment, as economic factor for rural development, resulting from services offered to clients in view of satisfying their needs [7].

Although rural tourism is not a new concept, the one which has been affirming since the 70's is different due to space, characteristics and holiday contents [3].

The premises for the rapid development of rural tourism during the recent years include the growth of tourist mobility, the need to escape to nature, to leave behind busy and polluted urban areas.

In its most pure form, rural tourism is characterized by a series of elements [6]:

- Is located in rural areas;
- Is built on the traits specific to rural areas – small size enterprises, open spaces, direct contact with nature, traditions, traditional practices and society;
- Buildings and rural establishments – generally small sized;
- Diversity, due to the complexity and variety of environments, economy, history and location.

For vacations spent in rural spaces two notions are used – rural tourism and agrotourism, notions that merge up to a point, but there are also differentiating elements [3]. Therefore, rural tourism is a broader notion, referring to all activities occasioned by spending a certain period of time in rural environment, while agrotourism involves more strict conditions for vacations, taking into account aspects relating to economic effects on the rural environment [3].

Thus agrotourism is considered to be a complex form including the following essential traits:

- Tourism activity – itself – in rural areas (accommodation, tourism circulation, services etc.), therefore an activity able to valorize the accommodation surplus within the rural farm, ready and specially set to receive guests, considered to be tourism offer;
- Economic activities – within the rural farm with reference to agricultural works, integration and commercialization of agriculture etc. [7].

Of great importance are, in this context, the tourist villages, which in Romania stand for a unique tourism product. Rural establishments of interest for tourism are present and have developed on most varied relief forms, from the Black Sea seaside and the Danube Delta to the mountain area, and are, function of their characteristics, sightseeing and climatic (Fundata, Șirnea – Rucăr Bran, Tismana –Gorj, Brădet – Argeș, Botiza –Maramureș, Vama Veche, 2 Mai – Constanța); balneal villages (Zizin, Covasna, Bala-Mehedinți, Oglinzi și Bălățești, Coștiui – Maramureș, Călăcea –Timiș); winter sports villages (Fundata, Gărina – Caraș), or nautical (Murighiol, Mila 23); fishing and hunting villages (Crișan, Sfântu Gheorghe, Murighiol- Delta Dunării, Ciocănești-Suceava); pastoral villages (Jina, Vaideeni, Prislop); scientific attractions villages (Andrieșeni- Vrancea, Cireșu- Mehedinți, Bosanci și Sadova- Suceava); historic monuments villages (Sucevița, Putna, Dragomirna, Agapia, Văratec - Moldova, Aninoasa, Cotmeana, Cozia, Horezu, Polovraci, Tismana – Subcarpații Getici, Hărman, Prejmer, Biertan, Feldioara, Cristian – sudul Transilvaniei); ethno-folkloric villages (Curtișoara –Gorj, Avram Iancu-Alba, Rășinari –Sibiu, Vama- Suceava); artistic and cottage industry villages (Oboga, Margina, Corund, Humulești, Săcel, Săpânța) [1].

At present the importance of rural tourism development is sustained by economic arguments (allows the development of rural areas, the valorization of the natural potential and accommodation structures), social (a better knowledge over rural areas and from a more personal perspective, relaxation, recreation, rest) and ecological arguments (rural tourism development does not involve environment invasions nor special infrastructure).

Rural tourism, through its peculiarities allows harmonization of tourism, sustainable development and environment protection requirements

Rural tourism in Romania – premises and tendencies

Rural tourism in Romania has recorded important growth during the past years, both in terms of quality and quantity, by the expansion of accommodation structures in rural areas, due to private investors and financing through SAPARD funds. This is confirmed by the presence of numerous institutions involved in the issues involving rural tourism, having stimulative role in its promotion. These institutions are present at international level, but also in our country: ANTREC, member of EUROGITES, FRDM, The Romanian Agency for Agrotourism, the Operation Romanian Villages, ADEPT and the Association for Ecotourism.

The number of beds in rural and agrotourism chalets reached the level of 16848 beds in March 2005. They were assigned to 1926 tourist and agrotourist boarding houses. Rural tourist boarding houses have recorded an amazing evolution, with doubled figures during the past 5 years (400 in 2000, 956 in 2005).

The premises for rural tourism development in Romania include the wide natural potential, diverse and varied cuisine, low prices, hospitality, unpolluted or little polluted natural environment, wide range of antropic objectives, with many of them included in the UNESCO patrimony, accessibility of tourist objectives, favorable climate, traditions, cultural and folkloric events, feasts, festivals, fairs, all over the country,

institutions that regulate and facilitate the development of rural tourism, product quality control system.

Unfortunately, beside these positive elements for the sustainable development of rural tourism, there is a series of factors that may stop the evolution of this type of tourism in Romania – the insufficient knowledge and application of the concept of sustainable development and their consequences, the lack of a performing system for collecting waste, the lack of awareness of the necessity for environment preservation, little or no preoccupation for preservation of natural and antropic patrimony, as well as its insufficient promotion both internally and externally, a little developed and inefficient network of tourist information centers, insufficient funding for rural tourism development, little diversification as far as the tourism offer is concerned.

It is also necessary to reinvigorate specific tourism types by exploiting the spaelological potential, the rich flora and fauna, as well as adventure tourism and active holidays.

To the end of rural tourism development it is necessary to pay more attention to its promotion, by initiating specific programs, by drawing attention to rural Romania as keeper of unique and picturesque traditions, through a rich and fascinating history, not only through the legend of Dracula. The importance of the promotional activity is obvious, given the necessity of including Romanian tourism offer in the catalogues of the main tour-operators.

The issue of the sub-utilization of marketing principals in the area of rural tourism is nevertheless an international reality, because of the underestimation of the benefits it may bring, but also because of the lack of resources, both financial and human, as far as marketing specialists are concerned.

With rural tourism, maybe more obvious than in the case of other types of tourism, marketing may be able to bring balance between market and product, that is consumer satisfaction and destination development [6].

Other types of modern tourism

Urban tourism refers to spending holidays in cities for visitation and for a variety of activities: visits to relatives and friends, participation in various social and cultural events, shopping, etc.

It is an extremely dynamic type of tourism, due to the increase in people mobility, to the general tendency to fragment holidays, to transports evolution, the emphasize on globalization, but also due to the expansion of related types of tourism: shopping tourism, business tourism etc.

The evolution of urban tourism has determined the increase of competition between cities and regions to attract investors and tourists. Therefore, if economic development has been for a long time one of the priorities of cities and nations, only during the last decade have some of the cities passed from a rather narrow optic towards economic development to a wide range of strategies to attract tourism [2].

Urban travel have developed in our country during the past years, the most eloquent example being the capital city, which has peculiarities and attractions that had transformed other cities in city break destinations. Accommodation both as number of beds and quality of service, as well the increase of low cost air fairs are factors that favor this type of tourism to develop.

Naturally, other cities in Romania may attract important numbers of tourists given the anthropic potential as well as the presence of opportunities such as the statute of Sibiu as European Cultural Capital in 2007.

For the development of this type of tourism a better promotional activity of cities as tourism destinations, infrastructure and access ways and also regional airports development, in order to allow a better valorization of cities through tourism, are necessary.

Many visits to urban centers have as motivation cultural tourism.

Cultural tourism is traveling for tourism purposes involving spending at least one night outside the regular residence for reasons related to cultural discovery [5].

Cultural tourism grows faster than the other types of tourism and at a greater rate than global tourism [11].

The cultural and historic potential of Romania, rich and varied with more than 680 attractions encompassed in a both national and international interest patrimony, with many of them under aegis of UNESCO, represents a real premises for the development of cultural tourism in Romania.

The ethnographic and folkloric repertory, represented by specific architecture, ancient handcraft, clothes, decorations art as well as numerous festivals, celebrations, fairs and museum exhibitions, is another unique element of interest to the end of cultural tourism valorization.

Cultural tourism development is needed not just for superior valorization of specific objectives and therefore creation of a positive country image as tourism destination for this type of tourism, but also for a series of implicit advantages: independence as far as succession of seasons is concerned, leading to decrement of tourism seasonality, the possibility of developing regions otherwise little valorized through tourism, unique image.

Aspects that deter cultural tourism from development refer to the general issues that Romanian tourism is confronting with: poor guide training, insufficient education as far as national cultural patrimony and its importance are concerned, inappropriate infrastructure, lack of parking spaces and investment necessary for tourism objectives rehabilitation and preservation, insufficient tourist information centers, inadequate promotional activity or even the lack of it in some cases.

Another modern type of tourism refers to cruises. This product has lost its elitist statute and today is being offered at large scale by tour operators [9].

At this point in Romania the network of ship accommodation is rather modest, 9 in 2005 and only 4 more than were recorded in 2000.

The Danube cruises are mentioned in the Master Plan as strategic directions for development of Romanian tourism and are considered that the standards of shore facilities do not measure up to those of the other countries on the Danube course. To the end of improving the experience delivered to tourists it is intended to launch actions in the field of marina taxes coordination with other countries, shore facilities development and improvement, reception and land access.

Adventure tourism is another type of modern tourism. It resembles nature tourism through a series of similarities, but there are different at core. Adventure tourism focuses on activities developed in natural areas. It involves physical challenge, education and contact with nature and may take three forms: at small scale, with many peculiarities of ecotourism (bird watching, scuba diving), at medium scale, orientated towards sports (canoe and rafting), at large scale, with mass tourism aspect (safari) [4].

Both mountain and hydrographic potential allow the evolution of this type of tourism, still little developed in Romania. The success it has reported in other countries may be a strong incentive to promote the natural conditions and relief elements suitable for adventure tourism in Romania.

Conclusion

Therefore the growth recorded by a series of modern types of tourism in our country, such as business tourism, rural tourism, urban tourism sustain the idea of a positive trend of the Romanian tourism evolution.

To support this statement are also the forecasts from the WTTC report, “Romania – The impact of travel and tourism on jobs and the economy” and the statistic data that confirm a growth of both inbound and international tourism during the past years, real growth, although insufficient if we consider the rich and extremely valuable natural and antropic tourism potential of Romania. Beside the little valorization and promotion of the potential, there are other elements such as: the ageing of the accommodation structures, the poor quality of tourism services, the weak offer as far as entertainment is concerned, inappropriate infrastructure, which determine the lack of competitiveness for Romania as tourism destination measured against other tourism destinations and tourists’ demands.

In view of reinvigorating Romanian tourism and to be able to fight the increasingly strong competition at international level, a series of strategic, solid and coherent measures were elaborated, which draw the main development courses – a better valorization of natural and antropic resources through efficient promotion, modernization of tourist accommodation structures, development and modernization of general infrastructure, quality improvement, development and diversification of delivered services, paying a special attention to professional training and human resources motivation for the personnel involved in the production and delivery of tourism products, the necessity to a new approach of Romania’s image as tourism destination, in order to place it in a more favorable light, to draw the attention of potential tourists to its numerous natural and antropic attractions on Romanian territory.

This ensemble of strategic approaches focus the transformation of Romanian tourism weaknesses, the superior valorization of its strengths, of the elements that sustain a favorable evolution of tourism in Romania, bearing in mind the background offered by the European Union integration in 2007 and the availability of structural instruments that may ensure the resources necessary to implement measures meant to turn tourism sector into a proper catalyst for the whole economy.

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