Abstract

Tourism is considered a rapidly growing phenomenon and it has become one of the largest industries in the world and its impact is extremely varied. On one hand, it plays a significant role in the socio-economic development and also, in some cases, it can contribute to a more detailed understanding of cultural area, trying to raise awareness of local communities through respect for cultural diversity and lifestyle.

On the other hand, the accent is focused on trying to minimum the negative effects and maximize the positive effects of tourism. Environmental security issues, and the more private, responsible tourism, are part of the latest issues on the European academic debate as a result of the opening of last decades to analyze the long-term consequences of reflexive created in modernity.

Responsible tourism development meets the requirements of tourists and areas that receive them in the spirit of conservation and improvement opportunities ahead.

Responsible tourism has been developed in all over the world and it offers a balanced and constitutes a viable solution for maintaining, protecting and putting the worth of our inheritance defining the major problems who facing the tourism industry and suggests possible tourism initiatives to help solve these problems.

Keywords: environment, destructive actions, sustainable tourism, tourism planning, resources

1. Protection and conservation of the environment, objective requirement for tourism development

Like any other industry that wishes to be competitive and prosperous, tourism uses a certain “raw material” meant to satisfy the quality requirements to meet this challenge. For all tourism providers, the “raw material” of this industry is the environment. Thus, keeping a high level of quality for the natural resources is the most important requirement for perpetuation and continuous development of tourism consumption.
The quality of the environment is affected, in general, by two categories of essential factors: objective factors that result from the manifestation of bad natural phenomenon and subjective factors, caused by human activities. Among the many activities through which man can contribute to environment destruction are tourism activities, done irrationally and uncontrolled, in territory. However, unlike the harmful results for the environment that other human activities may have (eg. Industrial activities) whose effects can in the best case scenario be limited, tourism has his own contribution, significant, not only for the ceasing of natural degradation, caused by activities, but also for the protection and conservation of the environment, through the adoption of a certain set of efficient regulations.

The relief, the hydrographic network, the landscape, balneary natural resources, natural monuments etc. to which we add the anthropological resources as monuments of art and architecture, the archeological and historical sites and so on are all components of the environment and form the resources for the offer of touristic attractions, encouraging for the development of many tourism forms: from backpacking, comfort and relaxation, to health and cultural tourism etc. The more varied and complex these resources are, and especially unaltered and unaffected by destructive activities, the more powerful their attraction is, generating diverse activities which correspond to different touristic needs.

Therefore, the tourism-environment relationship is of particular importance, environmental protection and conservation represent an important condition for the progress and development of tourism. Any destructive intervention or change of its primary properties might harm the tourism potential, by reducing or canceling its resources and ecological balance, and could jeopardize furthermore the health or even the mere existence of future generations.

This point was emphasized repeatedly in meetings dedicated to protecting and preserving the environment such as: Conference of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1967 from Spindlesy Mlyn - Czechoslovakia, international symposia on the topic of protection nature, organized in Cluj-Napoca (1968), Arles (1971) and Copenhagen (1973), United Nations environmental Conference in Stockholm (1972), Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Helsinki (1977), World Conference Tourism in Manila (1986) etc.

Since 1980, after the publication of “global environmental strategy” by the IUCN, many countries began to cooperate to satisfy requirements in this area. Thus, in 1987, “World Commission on Environment and Development” was founded, whose original strategy was developed globally and subsequently focused on new bases, national administrations at different levels of government. Development occurring in viable resource management domain has been accepted as a logical way of achieving the desire for conservation and also development of the environment.
A new stage for the environment, according to the vision of this strategy, is of great relevance in all countries, principally in Western Europe. Environment, considered alongside socio-economic environment and cultural phenomena, has certain restrictions regarding tourism development. But modern tourism demonstrates that human activities in the field, begin to modify or “manipulate” the environment both positively and negatively, and the consequences are not easily predictable. Uncontrolled tourism can contribute to environmental destruction and thus to its self-destruction. Therefore, Swiss Professor J. Krippendorf pointed out: “If we lose, then we reconstruct capital in other areas of the economy, the same thing does not happen in tourism, where the basic substance - landscape and land - once lost, is irretrievably lost”

It is more and more obvious that the perpetuation of a tourism that considers legitimate to ignore the environment is impossible to remain valid on a long term.

2. Aspects of environmental degradation caused by tourism

Destructive actions of tourist activities occur mainly because of the misuse of the environment for the purpose of recreation and leisure, along with brutal human intervention on the landscape and the natural resources. These harmful practices occur mainly in highly attractive areas, located in populated areas or in close proximity to large urban agglomerations. Also, the absence of regulations on visitor behavior, followed by a monitoring of the touristic areas or objectives, encourages activities that affect the environment and endanger the integrity and conservation of touristic objectives. Such cases are found more frequently in the following situations:

a. Touristic areas or objectives that are outside marked and specially designed trails, which attract many visitors, mainly during weekends, and where there is an uncontrolled tourist flow. The damage inflicted is deep and can often be irreversible. Some examples are: the destruction of vegetation and flora, of trees and especially of seedlings, the destruction of natural sowing, the detachment of rocks, poaching, etc., which ultimately results in preventing the regeneration of plants, the movement - terrain offset, disturbing animal specific habitats and generally fauna, causing even species extinction. It is also important to note the flora species extinction caused by improper collection of flora, especially of plants declared natural monuments, and also the lack of tourists understanding of the serious implications that uncontrolled actions can have on environmental factors. In this situation there are a series of species protected by law and which are endangered, such as edelweiss, garofita de munte (Dianthus tenuifolius) with its variety of Garofita de Piatra Craiului etc.

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2 Krippendorf J.: Les devoreurs de paysages, Ed. 24 Heures, Lausanne, 197
Uncontrolled tourist flow in natural or anthropogenic sights causes, most often, irreversible destruction of some of the elements that make them tourist attractions, and which also provide intrinsic value, sometimes with unique character.

Intensive visiting of historical, architectural and art monuments in poor conditions (lighting by candles, lack of technical equipment for ventilation or pollution etc.) led to the degradation of valuable frescoes in monasteries, paintings from historical and art monuments, the destruction of karst formations from caves etc.

Here we can also take into account the lack of precise demarcation of camping areas in touristic areas (or along paths). Stopping for picnics or installation of tents in highly attractive areas for tourists inevitably causes the degradation of the landscape and of other components of the environment as a result of soil compaction and particularly because of random residual traces left by tourists. Such situations usually occur in areas for tourism and recreation purpose, around urban centers and especially on mountain meadows, near the huts, on the banks of rivers or lakes etc.

b. Environmental pollution has grown along with the penetration of automobile tourism in areas until recently inaccessible to this mode of transport. Deviating from routes designed for access, tourists take side roads, stopping in picturesque meadows and damaging the lawns, the shrubs and the flora generally by crushing it or by exhaust, oil spills, etc.

The harmful effect of automobile tourism is felt through the increased circulation in spa areas. In the absence of access restrictions in these cities, of parking areas, automobile tourism affects air quality or alters the treatment factors, negatively influencing specific spa treatments.

c. Misconception about the exploitation of natural resources, especially natural cure factors affecting the tourism potential by exploiting its unscientific and irrational and inadequate achievement of objectives for tourist investment, which is reflected by:

- oversized resorts in terms of capacity and receiving treatment compared with potential capacity for a rational use of resources;
- breach of general principles of protection and exploitation of mineral spas, especially thermo-mineral water, such as reserves against deposits limit approved mineral spas, works according to the geological surveys and special projects, avoid exploitation fields to exhaustion, protect and prevent other actions that may lead to the degradation factor treatment (eg therapeutic mud), health insurance and hydro resources perimeters against pollutants etc.

d. Unregulated development of tourist destinations, particularly resorts, defect characterized by:

- poor design of nature tourism investment objectives;
- establish tourist sites inappropriate for the touristic material;
unaesthetic constructions, not adapted to ethnographical characteristics
traditional architectural and natural area;

**too many touristic** constructions in the area, etc..

All these actions lead to **overburdening the area** with touristic installations,
distressing the ecological balance, leading to the urbanization of the resorts.

e. **Poor facilities for visiting caves** - highly attractive tourist objectives,
exeuted without observing specific technique. The effects were the degradation,
in whole or in part, of these caves, such as **Muierii** (Parang Mountains), **Ialomiței**
(Bucegi Mountains) etc.

3. **The concept of sustainable development in tourism**

A landmark event regarding the concept of sustainable development was
the UN report “Our Common Future” published in 1987, which raised the
issue of ecological development and the relationship between rationalization
and development of production and consumership\(^3\).

This report issued for the first time a **definition of sustainable development** as
**that form of development that meets the needs of present generations without**
**compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs**.

In recent years the tourism industry also adopted the concept of “sustainable
development”, already used in other sectors. In tourism, the concept was stated by
IUCN as\(^4\):

“Sustainable development is a process that takes place without destroying or
depleting resources, ensuring development. Resources must be exploited at a rate
identical to their renewal, giving up the service when resources regenerate very slowy,
to replace it with one with greater power of regeneration. All resources must
be exploited in such a way as to bring benefit to future generations as well.”

**There are three major principles of sustainable development:**

- **Environmental sustainability**, insuring a supportable development
  while maintaining all essential ecological processes, especially the
  diversity of biological resources;

- **Social and cultural sustainability**, which guarantees favorable economic
development in society, consistent with the culture and values of the
existing culture and civilization, preserving community identity;

- **Economic sustainability**, with a role in ensuring efficient economic
development; resources are managed so they would exist in the future as

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\(^4\) Simona Tamara Bran Florica, Avantajele dezvoltării unui turism durabil, Tribuna Economică, nr. 35/1998, pag. 23
well. In other words, the economic sustainability of tourism is defined as a development model which guarantees:

- **to improve** the quality of life in human settlements that receive tourists;
- **the possibility** to provide top quality visitor experiences;
- **to maintain** environmental quality, which is essential for visitors and hosts.

From the point of view of environmental protection, *the advantage of promoting sustainable tourism* lies in the following aspects:

- **Sustainable tourism** promotes understanding the effects of tourism on the natural, cultural and human environment;
- it **ensures** the planning and zoning of the territory, allowing tourism development to be adapted to the carrying capacity of ecosystems;
- it **directs** the realization of amenities and recreational facilities, which can be beneficial for the local population too and can thus contribute funds to preservation of archaeological sites, historic buildings and artifacts;
- **Favors** cost-effective use of land with low agricultural yields;
- it **respects** and **ensures** environmental protection requirements, proving the importance of natural resources, cultural and historical, to increase economic and social wellbeing of local communities.

The **Global Conference on Business and Environment** held in Vancouver (Canada) in 1992, experts from over 60 countries have presented the major changes occurring in the tourism industry in the last decade.

These changes were aimed at all aspects that can address the tourism industry, namely:

**a. Policies, legislation and regulations:**
- **Creating** institutions and framework for implementing sustainable tourism;
- **Ensuring** the conservation and protection of basic tourism resources;
- **Mobilizing** sectors of the tourism industry to carry out sustainable tourism in line with environmental requirements;
- **Establishing** a legal framework to support travel agents, regional and local authorities, for correcting the tourists’ attitudes towards the environment.

**b. Research and technology:**
- **To identify** the basic natural resources, with touristic characteristics;
- **To identify** cultural resources, with touristic characteristics;
- **To establish** future demand in tourism and comparing it to supply capacities to secure it;
Protection and Conservation of Tourism Potential…

- **to create** databases and monitoring through indicators highlighting new opportunities and support new planning decisions and development of the tourism industry in terms of protecting the environment;
- **to use** advanced technologies to design a tourism responsive to environmental problems, applying architectural, engineering, construction and endowments, environmentally safe solutions and specific to the areas;
- **to provide** technical and practical management of tourist traffic to protect the ecological balance and avoiding environmental degradation.

c. **Economically and financially:**
- **to include** environmental costs in revenues levied for tourist activities; the polluter should pay certain fees related to the forms of pollution, and thus contribute indirectly to environmental conservation;
- **to prepare** reports on the degree of implementation of the proposed projects (international, national, regional), of actions and changes related to adapting to environmental requirements of the tourism industry;
- **to use** the influence of the domestic and international market for the identification of new tourism markets, complying with environmental requirements and implementing joint partnerships to apply the new concept of ecotourism - a support for sustainable tourism;
- **obtaining** benefits from environmental marketing, developing and selling tourism products compatible with their value.

d. **In communication and training:**
- an **open attitude** among employees of tourism businesses and local people towards environmental issues;
- **developing** employee handbooks for the tourism industry, standards for environmental credit, to mitigate impacts;
- **influencing** tourism demand and travel motivations, by increasing supply and providing better information for tourists, applying ethical codes;
- **evaluating** past positive results, to establish new sustainable development proposals, by transmission of projects and positive experiences through national and international bodies.

e. **Other aspects:**
- **practicing** an active education about protection in other sectors too, which benefit from natural resources and cultural tourism industry; providing understanding for environmental issues;
- **establishing** collaborative relationships with other sectors involved in environmental protection (forestry, agriculture, regional planning etc.).
- **creating** models and projects to support the sustainable development of tourism, presenting the application models and possibilities.
4. The main actions to protect and conserve the environment and tourism potential

The protection and preservation of the tourist potential and the environment is emerging as a separate activity with specific problems which require the collaboration of experts in various fields. This can have a satisfactory efficiency only by ensuring an ongoing and appropriate legal and administrative framework, to impose administrative organization, the existence of economic resources, efficient legislative support and civic education activities.

Internationally, countries with experience in tourism adopt a national plan to protect touristic resources based on preserving their own touristic resources. In view of the development of sustainable tourism, they considered three main objectives:

- **economic** - essential in identifying, harnessing and increasing exploitation of tourism resources;
- **social** particularly creating a permanent population, increasing the degree of labor force occupation, supporting the practice of some traditional occupations and attracting the population towards tourism;
- **ecological** - important to avoid environmental degradation, pollution and ensure a balanced and long-term exploitation of tourism resources.

In accordance with these requirements, it is necessary to develop and adopt national tourism development plans designed to allow the conjugation of experience and key economic positions: public administration, organizations, associations and professional organizations, social workers, specialists in research Profile etc.

Tourism development plans which are based on long-term global estimates, in accordance with external market trends and concrete plans made in the medium term (four to five years) or short (one to three years), developed for regions, areas or forms of tourism, are based on European standards regarding touristic resource exploitation, and developing and upgrading of tourism services.

Developing estimates and plans for tourism development is the main support strategy for achieving sustainable tourism which includes among others:

- **conservation** of natural and anthropic resources in order to continue the use in the next period;
- **raising** living standards of local communities;
- **better knowledge and awareness** of both the local population and visitors about the idea of environmental conservation.

Tourism planning is a form of control of the future planning strategy related to the environment. Environmental planning involves monitoring and analyzing all aspects of the environment, in order to determine the most appropriate development and land use models.

Key estimates and development plans at the national level provide guidance, information and assessment of future prospects. Through the direct support

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of the state, the overall framework for resource protection, determining the exploitation or achieving outstanding investment can be estimated.

Medium and short term plans are beneficial especially for the of support local and regional development.

Basically, regarding the tourism potential of Romania, the main actions aimed at protecting and preserving the environment and tourism resources are reflected in the adoption of the following measures:

- rational, **scientific exploitation** of tourism resources so that their exploitation rate should not exceed their recycling and recovery rate and the intensity of direct or indirect relations with the environment in tourism must not exceed their carrying capacity;
- **resource exploitation** in tourism is to be solved in the context of the exploitation of all natural resources and environmental protection, based on studies of territorial planning, scientific management plan components, rational and efficient planning - the main instrument of local governing bodies;
- **planning and proper organization** at superior levels as well of the areas, trails and touristic objectives;
- rational touristic **organization** and **exploitation** of national parks and nature reserves, ensuring their protection. Similarly it will lead to arranging for visiting and exploitation of caves, the special objectives designed to enrich and diversify the Romanian touristic offer of new tourism products;
- **proper organization of mountain areas** for future development of mountain tourism by localizing all attractive landscapes and all ski areas, designed to provide the basis for the future design of tourist facilities (trails, signage, accessibility conditions in parts difficult, spatial of panoramic view points, equipment for winter sports, mountain huts and refuges, cable transport systems, etc..) under the conservation and replanting of forests;
- **making touristic arrangements** in areas, towns and tourist routes, in order to provide tourist equipment for a proper and environmentally competitive tourism;
- **the development of environmental awareness** among the population and the feeling of love and respect for nature in historical sites and of monuments of art and architecture created over time. This can be achieved through environmental and tourism potential education, which is to be done at national level by instilling an attitude of respect and responsible behavior towards natural resources.

**Environmental education** for the conservation of nature and tourism potential should be permanent, and begin as early as **childhood** and be strengthened in **educational**
institutions of all kinds and grades. Subsequently, it can improve through the media within the circles of “friends of nature”, through various specialized publications or by guides and companions, during trips, etc.

By analyzing all aspects of the environment, regarding tourism potential, it can be established that the protection and preservation of it is made through a concept in the overall economic development of the country, located at the same level as overall economic development issues.

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