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**EDUCATION, TRAINING OR INFORMATION?**Ph.D. Alexandra Crina Chiriac <sup>1</sup>**Abstract**

*We live in a society where each individual is the sum of the choices made during its existence, especially in terms of education. Education is the main factor influencing individual and collective behavior, whether we talk about institutionalized education or personal behavior as education.*

*Talking about education in tourism development, there are to be considered two components: education for ones promoting or working in the tourism field and, on the other side, the ones benefiting from the tourism offer, actually the holiday consumer. Education cannot be considered a segment unilaterally, if we want to talk about responsible tourism, tourist inclusion in education is a must.*

*As is defined in the main literature, responsible tourism is an industry that wants to have a minimal impact on the environment and local culture while contributing to the conservation of local ecosystems. Thus, understanding the culture, way of life or thinking of the locals is also a priority and a moral obligation coming from the tourists regarding the information suggested by advertising and focusing on a few tourist attractions, offering a false image of the destination. From this point of view, responsible tourism is not a specific form of tourism, but a different approach of planning and managing tourism phenomenon.*

*Currently, tourists' preference is oriented towards programs with a high component of social and environmental responsibility with visible effects in terms of tourism resources conservation.*

**Keywords:** *education, tourist behavior, responsible tourism, tourism development*

**JEL Classification:** I25, M31, Q50

**1. Introducing the concept of responsible tourism**

Society we live in, work, act, train us in a cult managed by a consumption rate. Most of the time we make choices that do not belong to us, but are influenced by information that we come in contact with and which we receive from various sources. Very few decisions belong to us, many incidental factors compel us to adopt “conjuncture” decisions, regardless the fact that it is the purchase of goods, changing a job or spending time whether it is weekend or even a vacation.

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Tourism as a social activity has seen a rapid expansion in recent years, becoming global phenomena. As a result of advanced technology and improved communications industries, tourism has become one of the industries with the highest growth rates. Mass tourism as a form of tourism is manifested more strongly on domestic and international tourism market, means not only the movement of people from the place of residence to another with a purpose other than profit but also the impact on local traditions and communities, and influencing the lifestyle of the locals.

Unfortunately some tourist destinations generate more problems than benefits. Poor tourism planning and tourist infrastructure at large scale tend to alter the landscape, affect wildlife and even destroy the identity of the place. Too many visitors at the wrong place and time cause an imbalance difficult to restore. However, properly managed and planned tourism can generate positive benefits in protected areas and local communities to offset the negative effects.

Based on this consideration, traveling with a component of social and environmental responsibility and with increased economic impact in local communities (responsible tourism) began to be promoted in many travel agencies.

Advantages of promoting responsible tourism results in minimal impact on the environment and local culture, by generating income and jobs for local community members and increased contribution to the conservation of local ecosystems.

In 2002, Cape Town Declaration adopted by the International Conference on Responsible Tourism Destinations, defining and structuring the course of action and stakeholders to develop and implement responsible tourism. According to the Declaration, the most important principles of responsible tourism are (ICRT, 2002):

1. The minimization of negative economic, environmental and social impacts of tourism
2. Generate increased economic benefits for local people and enhances the quality of life of local communities and their working conditions
3. Involvement of local people in decisions affecting their lives and future development of the area
4. The positive contribution to local natural and cultural heritage
5. Provides more enjoyable tourists' experiences through better connection between them and the local realities and facilitates understanding by tourists of cultural, social and local environment.
6. Provides equal access for people with disabilities without discrimination of any kind.
7. Is culturally sensitive, facilitates respect between tourists and hosts, contributing to local pride and confidence.

Considering the above, it can be concluded that responsible tourism is not only a summation of the principles of manifesting but a mix between them and specific request expressed by tourists. Basically we can talk about tourism awareness

education that involves two aspects: education in tourism and consumer education or tourist education.

## **2. Education in tourism versus tourist education**

Nowadays it is clear that tourism forms as in early days are unthinkable. If Thomas Cook was a revolutionary in the development of tourism trips and managed to impose tourism as mass phenomena, organizing actions involving numerous tourists does nothing but destroying tourism resources and make impossible tourism act to be repeated in the same conditions.

Tourism development along with diversification of tourism demand, determined tourism scientifically organization, staff training gaining a greater importance. Alongside institutionalized training system has become almost a necessity the tourist education regarding awareness of resources conservation, by reusing them in tourism process and in the preserving of elements of specificity and originality of each destination.

### **Education in Tourism**

In Romania, education in this field is academic and vocational. The law governing the education system is the National Education Law, LEN1/05.01.2011. According to Article 2 of the Law, "The law is promoting a vision focused on values, creativity, cognitive, volitional capacities and capabilities action, fundamental knowledge and also knowledge, skills and abilities of direct utility in the profession and society." (www.anc.gov.ro, 2011)

Higher education and tourism services in Romania have increased at a considerably rate in recent years, mainly due to the liberalization of the education sector but also due to the growing potential of tourism activity. Unfortunately, in time a higher priority was given to quantity or to the number of graduates compared to the real needs of industry, the main consequence resulting in low employability of graduates of this specialty. In addition, one of the findings belonging to the market players relates to the fact that academic education offer is not connected to market needs, graduates demonstrating a lack of practical knowledge and a poor knowledge of the field in which they chose to operate, which requiring a change in the contribution determination of subjects studied to the development of responsible tourism in the future.

Tourism students already face difficulties in finding companies which conduct their internship, which is a mandatory part of university curricula. This restricts their access to the specific information of a real working environment, the possibility to apply theoretical knowledge in practice, familiarity with a professional work environment. Under these conditions, expectations from both sides are decreasing, on one hand young people are not preferred for employment due to lack of experience, on the other graduates have very little information about the area in which they will operate and therefore seek to aim at better paid and where experience is less important for employment.

At the same time, tourism is the sector with the highest staff turnover, marked by a pronounced seasonality. For this reason, a staff responsible qualified is hard to keep and often there is a lack of investment coming from employers in training their staff.

In the adult training, expansion of tourism programs in response to the diversification of existing occupations in COR resulted in a lack of uniformity in offered programs, which led to confusion among employers in the subjects studied (i.e. programs offer) even if they are based on occupational or professional standards. Although the main feature of these training programs is internship, (2/3 of the program is allocated to an internship) graduates may also encounter difficulties in the exercise of accumulated knowledge.

Whether we talk about university or vocational courses, both degrees has become devalued in the evaluation. This was possible largely because of the existence of vocational programs along with the university. Also the dilemma of training versus learning remains and may appear due to inherent problems existing in the tourism industry, where “training is not seen as an important contributor to competitiveness and profitability, and secondly, some barriers to enter the market are generated by specialized qualifications which are not a requirement to be employed, and thirdly, managers tourism industry, which not all have higher education tend not to appreciate the educational value ‘(Peacock et Ladkin, 2002)

At the same time, „exercising the mind” rather than looking after diploma is preferred. The school model, (at no matter what level is applied) that privileges memory as a storehouse of knowledge does not form people who think but that just repeats.

The main role of those working in tourism, regardless of the approach (tourism, hospitality, restaurants) is to inform fair and responsible the potential customers that come into contact. Starting from the premise that the main purpose of the tourist offer, tourist products, and holidays is meeting the needs of tourists, visitors, there is necessary a constant process of adaptation to customer requirements. At the same time, there should be bearded in mind and anticipate consumer needs for tourism, or creating new needs. Knowing the consumer proves to be a difficult process because they can express their wants and needs in a certain way but act totally opposite or may not even know their true motivations that lead to purchase or to respond to factors changing their buying decision. In turn, motivations, which are closely related to education and occupation, age and individual personality, manner of expression generate a demand and consumption.

### **Tourist education**

Promotion and development of responsible tourism involves wise, responsible, educated tourists. Unfortunately, very few have the time and willingness to learn

and also to choose responsibly, seeking the leisure experience, not just a refuge from everyday life.

If tourism workers have a duty to promote responsible tourism using present offer, to practice responsible tourism belongs to the tourist. From this perspective, the study of consumer behavior is a necessity which aims to identify individual reactions to tourism product offerings. Behavior occurs in a broader social context, so it is necessary to examine the role and influence of other factors have on him. In the consumer behavior literature is divided into two main components namely purchasing behavior and consumer behavior. (Olteanu,V. 2005)

There are two basic elements to be taken into account in determining marketing strategies: values and norms specific to each nation.( Blackwell et all, 2006) Rules are regulations of behavior observed by a majority or at least a general consensus on how to act every individual and cultural and social values are those that are found in most people who belong to a group. Culture is adaptive, evolve over time, therefore any product or service should be linked to new values or changed if it does not correspond. Another feature of consumer culture is global spread of brands and consumer practices. Although brands are global, population and consumption remain local. So, inside the consumption process local or traditional elements are mixed with the foreign ones, creating a combined consumption (*creolized consumption*). One of the reasons why individuals experience this type of consumption is that it enables to test other values without sacrificing their own. (Hendrickson,C.,1996)

In this context, when the offer is very less heterogeneous, and the main purpose of travel agencies is to ensure their existence, the question that arises is who is responsible for tourism education?

Tourism education can be equated to the tourist capacity to customize their own travel programs with quality criteria not just price. But if we consider the bidder, tourism education is driven primarily by communicating with the customer, the quality of the information provided in relation to the services provided.

Depending on availability he or she has in discovering new places and experiencing new activities, the tourist is the main actor in achieving his own tourism education. Obtaining specific information, identifying sources, communicating with others, openness to new destinations and experiencing creativity are the main means of self-education.

In terms of involvement in relation with tourists who can contribute in making tourist education there are travel agents, hoteliers, restorers and last but not least, to some extent, creators of opinion.

Travel agencies are the main providers of tour packages, structured by various forms of tourism based on demand expressed by tourists. Regardless the destination or travel motivation, activities resulting pursues an intensive use of natural tourism heritage highlighted by means of public services. In this context tourist offer should

take into account the destination capitalization at local, regional or national level while preserving tourism resources. Tourists information provided through brochures, leaflets, internet, media ads help educate travel consumers. The most important education method remain the directly communication with tourists, here intervening the travel agent, the person with tourism education. As is well known, tourist expectations can differ greatly from what is expected at the destination, therefore a proper communication is designed to prepare tourist for destination with all its necessary: local resources, natural and anthropological traditions, customs, lifestyle of the locals etc. In this way the holiday destination will not simply be an output of the daily routine, but the tourist will be aware to actively participate in local community.

Hoteliers and this includes all those who provide accommodation, have quite an important contribution in achieving responsible tourist education. In addition to the mandatory information and assistance provided to those who come into contact with tourists in a close familiar environment are owners of boarding houses. The presence of tourists in a confined space can generate involvement in various activities generating respect for local and traditional values, a higher level of understanding of the local community and the desire to preserve the authentic spiritual heritage resource to be reused in another holiday.

*Restorers* contribute to tourist education by forming a “gastronomic education”. Romanian cuisine, which contains specific items (both dishes and ingredients) can generate only a sufficient basis for the development of specific tourism programs. Destinations where gastronomic traditions are kept (Maramures, Danube Delta, Bukovina, Transylvania) offers a variety of other tourist resources with each unique value, generating a high-impact on practicing responsible tourism. (Eg., In Maramures there is Mocănița train, transport is often combined with a traditional Romanian lunch).

*Creators of opinion* represented mainly by those who have blogs, reporters, have an important role in tourist education. Unfortunately not always the means used to achieve the proposed articles or reports may be influenced by personal opinion. Also here can be highlighted discussion boards that give a more homogeneous opinion of the subject, opinions, though divided, come from more people who are directly related to the overall topic and can form a more realistic view.

Certainly the list of “educators” does not end here. But for sure the best educators are even tourists themselves. Once for them, using the experience gained, and second for those whom they advise (relatives, friends, neighbors), that the information submitted is in the best guarantee that responsible tourism is not only a duty but also an experience that can be repeated at any another destination.

## Conclusions

Understanding the culture, way of life or thinking of the locals is also a priority and a moral obligation on the part of tourists regarding the information suggested

by advertising and focusing on a few attractions, offering sometimes a false picture of the destination.

Today, holiday consumers are the ones that affect the direction that is going to change the industry. Increased travel experience, flexibility and a stronger independent nature are the main elements that create a demand oriented towards better quality of services. If we take into account the structure of the new consumers, it reflects a multitude of elements which manifests itself in tourist consumers' behavior and demographic changes that have occurred in recent years, a modified lifestyle, leisure being segmented over several holidays a year, and requiring different approaches in terms of tourism offer. Changing preferences for holiday destination has generated demand for trips in nature but also for those pursuing sustainable exploitation of tourism resources. In recent years, the tourism niche with its most practiced (tourism for health, sports tourism, cultural tourism, theme parks) has become an important industry, reflecting the tourism diversification and personalization in ensuring sustainability of the tourism product and practicing responsible tourism.

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