

# Management in Romanian Tourism with the Involvement of the Local Community

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**Abstract:** *Nowadays, the local community is one of the most important issues in the literature of the tourism field, both of its involvement and participation in management decisions concerning tourism destination, creation and development. In the paper, the author brings to light the issue's importance for specialists and future employees, employers and decision makers in the tourism field. The methodology is based on a mix approach, by using qualitative methods which suppose to discuss the literature in the field and to analyze the web sites promoting the Moldova area as a tourism destination and the governmental and non-governmental organizations connected to tourism in the mentioned area. The results are interpreted in the light of the management activities which suppose taking into consideration the interest in participation and forms of involvement of local community members in the tourism development and the national cultural influences on this kind of decisions.*

**Keywords:** *tourism; local community; involvement; tourism management; stakeholders.*

## I. Introduction

Tourism is currently one of the most attractive industries in terms of its contribution to the countries' gross domestic product growth, added gross value in the economy, improvement of the export indicators, and of those related to employment rate and gross capital investment. Thus, tourism may represent a chance for developing countries and least developed ones to achieve gross domestic product growth's targets, to improve the balance of payments and exports from international trade, to reduce unemployment, especially among young people, a better use of local resources by a continuously-expanding industry, and an improvement of the quality of life in general.<sup>1</sup>

On this background, with the expansion of tourism activities in many areas / regions around the world, there is a need for a multi-stakeholder approach to produce a redirection of forms of tourism and ways in which these activities are conducted, towards ethical coordinates. These lead to a sustainable tourism where all parties are involved and benefit from the development of industry, and resource efficiency increases.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the local

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<sup>1</sup> Tătărușanu, M., “Local Community Involvement In Tourism Development,” *Management Intercultural* 37 (2016): 435-440.

<sup>2</sup> World Tourism Organization, *The need for multi-stakeholder cooperation to enhance responsible tourism underlined at the 3rd International Congress on Ethics and Tourism*, 11 May 2017, available at <http://media.unwto.org/press-release/2017-05-11/need-multi-stakeholder-cooperation-enhance-responsible-tourism-underlined-3> (last time accessed: March 21, 2018).

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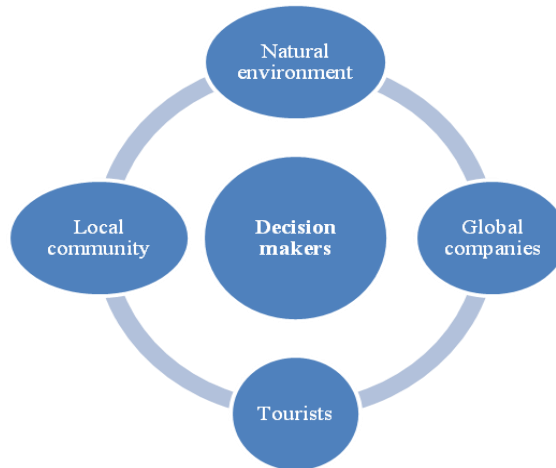
community is perceived as an important actor in the field of tourism. The contribution requested from various stakeholders is taken into account in the tourism management activities carried out for certain areas. The cooperation is considered essentially to increase the ways for satisfying clients' demands, but also of the local community's ones, a reciprocal relationship having this dual role.

## II. Stakeholders in the tourism field

The management of a touristic destination involves taking into account the relationship among different actors involved in a touristic destination<sup>3</sup>. Thus, it is necessary to take into account all the involved stakeholders: tourism companies, local community, tourists and natural environment.

According to the United Nations methodology – World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)<sup>4</sup>, the tourism companies included in specific activities are transporters, travel agencies and tour operators, accommodation and entertainment companies, banks, merchants, general and tourism infrastructure providers (governmental structures in particular, or private ones), sanitary services, other companies providing goods classified as uncharacteristic to tourism, but consumed by tourists in a higher or lower proportion.

In this framework, it is necessary to separate the elements of local community by the other participant companies at local specific tourism market. That happens because the latter ones are often beneficiaries or, on the contrary, losers, as a result of the influence and the activity of larger global companies, but also of tourists, as main customers of the final product. Figure 1 presents the main tourism stakeholders at the level of a destination.



**Fig. 1. Stakeholders from the tourism field. Source: the author**

<sup>3</sup> Negruța, L., Coroș, M.M., "Destination management organization' (DMOS') roles and performance – Literature Review," in *Proceedings of the 2nd International Scientific Conference S.AMRO 2016, News, challenges and trends in management of knowledge-based organizations* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Tehnica, 2016), 267-275.

<sup>4</sup> UNWTO, 2010. *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008*, New York, 2010, available at: [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/Seriesm/SeriesM\\_83rev1e.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/Seriesm/SeriesM_83rev1e.pdf) (last time accessed: March 21, 2018).

**The local community** is defined as a group of individuals who live or work in the same geographical area, having certain shared cultures and common interest,<sup>5</sup> or as being represented by groups with a common identity that may be involved in a number of aspects of their daily life, often having traditional rights on the natural resources of the area which they live in, and a strong cultural, economic and spiritual relationship with that area.<sup>6</sup>

According to the scheme above it includes: general and touristic local transport companies, companies providing accommodation for guests / tourists, catering companies, companies / organizations / local groups providing entertainment services, booking / travel agents, tour operators, local people and their representatives. The way they can be evaluated as part of local community refers to the property criterion, belonging to people from local population, as their work contributes to creating multiplication effects at the level of the concerning area.

**Multinational / global companies** refer to those companies that provide the same types of services, in competition with or complementary to those offered by the local community, in the same or other areas, where local communities don't benefit of experience or advantages to make them available: promotion and information channels of tourists, access to large booking companies, hotel and restaurants chains, entertainment (organizing international competitions, etc.). They are beneficiaries of the area's touristic potential and are of major importance in the value chain, as they are the main messengers of the community at national and especially international level, and their activity contributes essentially to the diversification of supply of tourism products, promotion among potential customers, creation and sharing knowledge in the field, engaging other local business actors by outsourcing some services, purchasing local products, hiring local workforce.

**The government** is, according to the author, a separate actor, as it influences the activities of other participants in tourism, directly and indirectly, through the instruments it has at its disposal in a budgetary form (general policy in the field of banking - interest, health, education, wages, etc.), fiscal form (tax reductions for investments and activities in the field of tourism etc.) and financial form (direct investment in the area as general and touristic infrastructure objectives, schools and universities for the training of employees in this field, general policy in banking - interest, health, education, etc.). It is also a beneficiary of the results generated by tourism activity in the area, depending on the aimed objectives (economic, social, cultural ones, etc.).

**Tourists** are customers for the local community and global companies, the purchased products being a combination of all the elements provided by the other relevant market players. Their contribution is generated by a whole system and rarely individually, as the overall experience is significant and assessed as such by the consumers.

Each of the participants in the tourism sector wants to maximize the impact they will get from doing business, but customers / tourists are at the heart of everyone's concerns to generate the effects they all expect.

Until recently, in literature, discussions in the tourism sector have centered on such an idea, starting from the premise that meeting customer needs is the source of the expected benefits on a competitive market. Ulteriorly, it has raised the idea of the objectives pursued by governments through tourism development policies, concretized in increasing the employment rate in a certain area (social objectives), equilibrating the balance of payments

<sup>5</sup> Aref F, Gill SS, Farshid A., "Tourism development in local communities: As a community development approach," *Journal of American Science* 6 (2010): 155 –161.

<sup>6</sup> Scherl LM, Edwards S., "Tourism, indigenous and local communities and protected areas in developing nations," in *Tourism and Protected Areas: Benefits beyond Boundaries*, ed. R Bushell, PFJ Eagles (Wallingford: CABI International, 2007).

and growth of exports (financial targets), and improvement of some economic growth indicators (as the GDP of the country) in international tourism. Tourists were the most important stakeholders, a key factor in ensuring success in the tourism sector of a country / areas / destinations.

However, at present, a broad discussion has been launched regarding local communities as main tourism potential providers for a number of well-developed tourism forms: mountain tourism, seaside tourism, spa tourism, historical and cultural tourism, agritourism, rural tourism and adventure tourism. These are forms of tourism that rely on the already existing potential in a given area / region / city, whether natural or anthropic ones, created for tourism purposes or having a different initial destination. The local community owns and contributes to the creation of touristic products that are particularly attractive to customers, but it doesn't always benefit of the outcomes obtained from such activities.

**The natural environment** is an important element in the tourism activity, an exploitable resource which various forms of tourism are based on, both old and modern ones (spa tourism, mountain tourism, seaside tourism, cruise ship tourism, rural tourism, bird watching etc.). Its preservation is extremely important as it is the basis of the existence of tourism in the concerned area. As defined above, it belongs to the local community, a property that should bring benefits to it, in return for its usage by companies with businesses in local tourism.

### **III. Study on the management of touristic destination by the involvement of local community**

In this paper, the approach of local community in the management process is based on the idea of the relationship between the management regarding the development of tourism in a certain area (touristic destination) – and the local community, as an essential stakeholder in tourism business, that uses the resources they possess, through the acceptance and involvement of the community from the concerned touristic area. Thus, the management decisions of the involved companies in touristic activities should take into consideration the interests and desires of a party which is mostly often affected directly, but also indirectly. In this context, one question arises: to what extent local communities are involved, and their interests are taken into account in tourism business operations but also by decision-makers regarding the creation and development of a destination? A series of studies show that local community participation can take place at various stages, especially in the tourist planning phase (...), being closely related to the perception of its members about the benefits of tourism development in that area (. ..). The participation forms are analyzed based on the distribution of power within the groups<sup>7</sup> and the ways to stimulate the involvement of community members in the activities implied by the management of touristic destination.<sup>8</sup>

In order to identify the main aspects of local community - management relationship for the tourism development of a destination, the present paper proposes a qualitative approach of an area under a continuous development in this field, over the last decade, by analyzing the tourism sites. An area that has been promoted intensively and where numerous tourism investments were made is the North-East Region, including Bucovina, Iasi, Neamt as tourism destinations. In this analysis, the information was processed looking for a series of words meaningful for the chosen theme, namely: "community," "involvement," "participation," "development," "effects," "benefits," "tourist." The frequency of their occurrence in each

<sup>7</sup> Amstein (1971) quoted in Tonsun, C., "Expected nature of community participation in tourism development" *Tourism Management* 27 (2004): 493-504.

<sup>8</sup> Tonsun, C., "Expected nature of community participation in tourism development" *Tourism Management* 27 (2004): 493-504.

document / site and the context in which they appear were calculated, in order to identify their benefits, effects and meaning for the local community.

Thus, the main results indicate that, often, the terms of local community and even local are not present in promotional activities and the documents launched by national bodies and organizations, being included in plans at most in local development projects. The popularization of the types of activities carried out at destination refers very rarely to “involvement”, “development”, “sustainable development” or “benefits” / “local actors / companies as beneficiaries”. It can be argued that, on the sites that promote the mentioned touristic destinations, the decision makers consider a-priori that the benefits of increasing the number of tourists in that area will also materialize directly for the local population, even if there is no mention regarding the area / the field of interest. In addition, the participation of local community is made up of the used labor resources, the firms providing products and services for tourists, the possible development of local infrastructure, image and future tourism growth. The highest occurrence frequency is found for the concept of “tourist / tourists”, which indicates the importance given to the clients of the companies, those who consume the final touristic product, the almost exclusively targeted stakeholders. The fact that the idea of “information” is present in most of the analyzed sites / documents indicates, in our view, the focus on clients (tourists) but it’s also related to the aim they were created for - to attract tourists to the promoted destinations. It supports the above-mentioned hypothesis that the main target for decision-makers is to increase the number of customers. The local community is the one that will benefit of the development of tourism in that area, even if it is not mentioned as a partner, therefore as a stakeholder, which contributes to the achievement of the aimed objectives.

From the analysis of the obtained information, we find out that the involvement of local community in the decisions regarding the tourism activity in the studied area is made through the local representatives, appointed in the local and county councils. They set the development priorities of the area, allocate the existing resources (financial, non-financial ones), are concerned with the touristic promotion of the area among the tourists and the interested companies, are concerned with maintaining and improving the natural and anthropic potential of the area through various specific measures, inviting the local population to make available the resources they have (traditions, customs, local gastronomy, etc.) in order to create attractive touristic packages for the clients.

Another aspect worthy of attention is the lack of concerns about the local community in terms of concrete effects of the touristic development of the area, probably due to the novelty of approaches in literature and in the Romanian practice.

The obtained results are measured by indicators that concern rather the number of clients or the total expenditure of tourists, which provides few and reduced utility information in assessing the effects on local economy and, even less, on the local population.

In the management activities of the touristic destination, from tourism planning to controlling the implementation of plans, it is required the involvement of local community members, through the local appointed representatives, non-governmental organizations, companies owned and administered by their members, and who provide touristic products or parts of the final touristic product. A management model is represented in Figure 2, by involving all stakeholders from the tourism field and their interests.



**Fig. 2. The relationship: Management – local community – tourism development within a destination. Source: the author**

## Conclusions

In tourism literature, a today topic of major interest is the one that concerns local communities, the effects of specific activities on their lives in multiple aspects (economic, social ones) and ways of involving and participation in tourism development, in the concerned area. They are regarded as a source of anthropogenic and natural resources that they provide to interested stakeholders in tourism business development, and their role should be quantified and rewarded as such.

The study carried out in this paper materialized in a qualitative analysis of the information get from the Internet, namely the tourism specialty websites and the decision-makers' documents (government, via line ministries and regional development agencies). It identified if local communities were involved in tourism's development decisions within the North-East Region, in what form, which was their role in this process, and if the effects brought by the development of tourism activities were identified and quantified, thus to be assigned to these concrete objective activities that took into account their interests and requirements. The results indicate a low degree of local community involvement in the management of touristic destinations from the specified area, due to the novelty of approaches in the literature and Romanian practice in this topic, but also to the specific centralism of management decisions in Romania.

In the management activities of touristic destination, we believe that the decision-makers should have the interests and requirements of local community as their starting point, so that to release appropriate objectives for those areas, on the basis of which to create the conditions for the participation of community, generating the enrichment of the natural and anthropic potential of the destination, by their contribution. Thus, as Andereck also shows in her

studies, informing local community members and their training create the premises for a more efficient participation and lead to better results on long term.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Andereck, K. L., Valentine, K. M., Anshell, M., Knopf, R. K., Vogt, C., “Residents’ s perceptions on tourism community impact,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 32 (2005): 1073.