

An Analysis of Tourism Competitiveness in Romania

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Abstract: *Tourism, an economic and social phenomenon of great complexity, implies providing a wide range of services and products by a variety of public and private sector economic agents, characterized by various interests, roles and responsibilities. This competitiveness analysis in tourism is an analytical framework based on the data provided by the World Travel and Tourism Council (W.T.T.C.) within the "Competitiveness Monitor – 2016" which does the followings: provides a record of policy indicators and developments affecting the tourism and travel industry; compares national statistics, government policies and commitments; highlights the importance for the tourism industry of strategic planning and the need to be included in government policies and decisions.*

This research highlighted Romania's competitive advantages, which revealed key forms of tourism: rural tourism, ecotourism and adventure tourism, tourist circuits or cultural tourism, tourism health care, city-break tourism, whose development and promotion may strengthen Romania's image as an attractive destination on the international tourist market.

Creating quality products and services is crucial in order to have Romania aligned with European development requirements, as well as in order to increase its attractiveness and competitiveness as a tourist destination.

Keywords: *tourism management, competitiveness, sustainable development*

I. Introduction

Tourism involves the experimentation of the patrimony elements both tangible and intangible (material) of a territory. Heritage is an identifier and feature that differentiates a particular area, a particular community. A tourist destination is that geographic location with an attractive, communicative and receptive tourist offer that meets the tourist needs of the tourist product. The natural and immaterial heritage of a tourist destination is a competitive advantage of the area and its recognition and its inclusion in the development of new markets and tourist products is the key to creating a stimulating economic environment for local communities with real and harmonious benefits connected to environmental protection.

The specificity of tourist activities deriving from the operation not with pure services, but with associations of elements of different character, the tourism product representing the organic unit of the effects of the patrimony, goods and services. Each component has

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its own specific features, operating mechanisms and a wide variety of forms of expression or concretization. All this contributes to the permanent variety and responsibility of the activity of managers in the sphere of tourism.¹

The diversity of tourism activities, their interdependence and the links between them and other branches of the national economy, coupled with the variety of tourist motivations, have made tourism a real industry with an ever increasing role. Thus, the necessity of a scientific analysis of the management of the tourism company is fully justified. In the conditions of a more intense competition, the management of the tourism company, namely the leading, administration and organization of the tourism companies, acquires major valences in the promotion and efficiency of tourism activity, by providing a coherent set of concepts, principles, methods and managerial techniques, whose knowledge and practical implementation contributes to the viability and development of the tourism companies, and implicitly to their profitability. In other words, tourism management is a vector in optimizing the relations of the tourism companies with the external social and economic environment, in promoting the efficiency of tourism, by energizing and enhancing the resources of each tourism company.

Knowing the particularities of the tourism activity is of great importance to the tourism manager by giving him the possibility to take the most appropriate decisions for increasing the satisfaction of the tourists and implicitly for increasing the efficiency of the tourist activity, taking into account the assumption of social responsibility and sustainable development. Starting from the dominant characteristics of tourism, it is necessary to dimension it from the foresight stage to the stage of realization, while studying the three-dimensional evolutions at the macronomic, meso-economic and microeconomic level, of the tourist phenomenon.

In the tourist business, the management process is characterized by a series of specific features, among which complexity and dynamism: requires the manager to adopt and implement unique and unique solutions. Under these circumstances, the decisions taken in the management of the tourist company present a higher percentage of risk due to the following characteristics of the tourist product:

- the existence of wider alternatives for the purchase of tourism products compared to the material products;
- the need for the consumer to travel to the tourist services provider;
- due to the intangible nature of the tourist product, there is a much higher probability than in the case of material products that tourists purchase products that are inconsistent with their expectations;
- the possibility for the consumer of tourist products to satisfy his / her own needs;
- consumption of the tourist product is most often lacking in guarantees;
- the impossibility of separating the consumer service provider;
- the tourist service depends in most cases on a certain tourist landscape;
- in terms of material products, tourism products are much more heterogeneous;
- the impossibility of storing tourist products.

The management relationships are the result of the interaction of the participants in the management processes and are defined as "the relationships established between the components of a system and between them and the components of other systems in the process of forecasting, organizing, coordinating, training and controlling - assessing the

¹ Nistoreanu P., Ghereș Marinela, *Turism rural – Tratat* (Bucharest: Ed. C. H. Beck, 2010).

firm's activities."² Leading methods can be categorized according to many criteria - scope, target, etc. - but the most used in tourism company management are the following:

- *Project Management* (MPP): within a tourism company, it can be adopted in special situations: creation and promotion of a specific tourist product, business process, bankruptcy, research and development, etc.³
- *Objectives Management* (MPO) is based on the trinomial of objectives - results - rewards/sanctions and consists in precisely establishing the objectives (fundamental, derivative, specific and individual) to the level of the persons responsible for their execution, which will be sanctioned or rewarded according to the level of achievement of fixed objectives.⁴
- *Product management* consists in creating the product or product group leader in the organizational structure, having the unitary responsibility of organizing, coordinating and controlling all the successive activities involved in the product or group of products, from the time it was conceived until it is removed from production⁵.
- *Exceptions Management* (MPE) as a simplified management system.⁶
- *Budget management* consists of establishing budgets for each department of the organization in order to assess how each of them contributes to the realization of the total profit or loss, revenues and expenses necessary to carry out the activity, and to follow the ceilings set at the circulation and character costs administrative or technical (in the case of an accommodation unit, maintenance, current and capital repairs, investments), research, consultancy etc.;
- *Diagnostic management* is based on the SWOT analysis;
- *Decision-making management*: in tourism, it is used in the development and promotion of new tourism products in the strategy of capitalizing a region, tourist resorts, launching or expanding a travel agency or building a hotel.⁷
- *Dashboard management* is a set of current information, presented in a synoptic, predefined form, referring to the main outcomes of the activity and to the main factors that make its efficient development possible. Through the "scoreboard", managers are fully and quickly informed about the activity of the travel agency in order to make an optimal decision.

An important role in the planning of tourism is the tourism arrangement, which is in fact a fundamental development strategy of the tourist offer. Tourist accommodation can be regarded as a process of scientific planning of the tourist space but also as a result of the relations that develop between the tourist market area and the receptive area.⁸

The main objectives of a tourism development strategy should be to:

- highlighting the tourism potential of each region;
- sizing the supply against potential demand

² Niculescu O., *Management strategic*, 3rd edition (Bucharest: Ed. Economică, 2006).

³ Glăvan V., Nicula V., Copetchi M., *Agencia de turism. Înfăințare. Management. Activități. Operații* (Bucharest: Pro Universitaria, 2011).

⁴ Gamble P., Tapp A., Marsella A., Stone M., *Revoluția în marketing, o abordare radicală pentru o afacere de succes* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2008).

⁵ Russu C., *Management strategic* (Bucharest: Editura All Beck, 1999).

⁶ Ibidem, 3.

⁷ Nicula, V., "Managementul turismului în România," *Contribuții la conturarea unui model românesc de management*, vol. 2, ed. Petrescu I. (Bucharest: Ed. Expert, 2014), 298-358.

⁸ Glăvan V., *Turism rural. Agroturism. Turism durabil. Ecoturism* (Bucharest: Ed. Economică, 2003).

- attracting as many tourists as possible, without exceeding the physical or psychological reception capacity;
- the development of various forms of tourism in order to reduce seasonality and extend the tourist season;
- ensuring a balanced development of tourist areas;
- preserving and improving the environment in the conditions of sustainable tourism development.

The approach of some aspects of tourism management must be done through the general management perspective, identifying the particularities of tourism, on the one hand, highlighting indicators on the basis of which it is possible to evaluate the economic and social efficiency of the activity of tourism companies and the set of management methods and techniques through their emergence proved to be effective, on the other hand.

Romanian legislation provides an appropriate long-term development framework for tourism activity, correlated with the strategic documents: National Tourism Master Plan, Ecotourism Development Strategy and Spa Tourism Development Strategy. The programs implemented by NTA aim at raising the quality of tourism services and linking them with current EU tourism recommendations (*Europe 2020 Strategy - Madrid Declaration, Lisbon Treaty*).

II. The management of Romanian tourism in the systemic and procedural approach. The current situation of Romanian tourism

Tourism has experienced uninterrupted growth over time, despite temporary/occasional economic shocks, demonstrating resistance and adaptability of the sector. International arrivals have increased at a rate of 4% a year or more for the seventh consecutive year starting in 2010. In 2012, arrivals of foreign tourists exceeded for the first time in a year the figure of 1 billion people. In 2016, this figure exceeded 1.2 billion people, with 306 million more arrivals, compared to 930 million in the pre-2008/10 crisis.

The overall results for 2016 were in line with the UNWTO forecast at the beginning of 2016, indicating an increase of 3.5% to 4.5% for the whole of 2016. The growth rate is slightly more moderate than the achieved level in 2015 (4.5%), but is consistent with the UNWTO's long-term projections of 3.8% per year for 2010-2020. Overall, the 28 EU countries (EU-28) recorded a strong increase in foreign tourists' arrivals of over 4%, to almost 500 million people, accounting for 40% of the world total and exceeding the world average of the increase.

Within the European Union, the five emerging economies (Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, Romania and Croatia) have increased somewhat by a rate of 6%. The 23 developed economies, as well as the 19 euro area countries, approached the 4% rate of the group as a whole, a steady growth rate considering the maturity of most destinations.

Globally, the last decade has been marked by an acceleration in the dynamics of the tourist market, the emergence and development of new concepts that are already accepted as undeniable trends in the future of tourism. Although the complexity of preferences, the high level of information of the modern tourist and the diversity of offers have positively influenced these dynamics, the tourism industry is currently confronted with the changes brought about by the new circumstances of the global economy and the new geostrategic and security context.

- Changes in consumer habits: the modern tourist has evolved towards a sophisticated consumer interested in practicing niche tourism, with Romania having the advantage of bringing together almost all forms of tourism and their complementary offers on

its territory.

- In the context of the global competition between destinations, Romania needs to accelerate the growth of the quality of tourism services to meet the growing demands.
- The development of information and promotion technology tools: the biggest impact on this industry has come from digital marketing in recent years, which has fundamentally changed destination marketing. Interactive travel is the key target segment for many sectors and destinations around the world because of their attitude, income level and interest in the places they visit.

In 2015, in Romania, by reporting the number of arrivals (8.44 million registered tourists) to the total budget (5.82 million USD) of the National Tourism Authority (allocated from the state budget in 2014), there is an amount average of \$ 0.7 spend. In the same year, this indicator recorded close values in Poland and Bulgaria (0.8 USD / tourist) and much higher in Hungary (1.5 USD / tourist), Austria (2.0 USD / tourist), Croatia (2, USD 8 / tourist), Czech Republic (3.1 USD / tourist), Greece (3.7 USD / tourist) and Turkey (4.6 USD / tourist), per official data provided by World Bank and World Tourism Organization.

Analyzing comparatively these data, it results that Romania (with the smallest percentage of 0.7 USD / tourist) had the lowest budget allocated to tourism, relative to the total number of arrivals.

The most important travel agencies in Romania are presented in the follow table.

Table 1. The financial data of the tourism agencies between 2014 and 2015. Source: Ministry of Finance, 2016⁹

	Tourism agency	Turnover/net sales	Net profit/loss	Turnover/net sales	Net profit/loss
		2014		2015	
1	Grupul de firme EURlines***	297 mil. RON (66,7 mil. EUR)	2,1 mil. RON (472.000 EUR)	440,7 mil. RON	3,7 mil. RON
2	Christian Tour	213 mil. RON (47,8 mil. EUR)	2,3 mil. RON (516.000 EUR)	246 mil. RON (55,34 mil. EUR)	3,5 mil. RON (787.000 EUR)
3	Happy Tour (part of Happy Tour Group)	168 mil. RON (37,7 mil. EUR)	los: 1,5 mil. RON (337.000 EUR)	194 mil. RON (43,64 mil. EUR)	los: 5,5 mil. RON (1,23 mil. EUR)
4	Paravion Tour (part of Happy Tour Group)	77 mil. RON (17,3 mil. EUR)	los: 2,5 mil. RON (561.000 EUR)	193 mil. RON (43,41 mil. EUR)	Pierdere: 1,1 mil. RON (247.000 EUR)
5	Vola.ro*	122 mil. RON (27,4 mil. EUR)	892.857 RON (200.000 EUR)	188,8 milioane RON (42,47 mil. EUR)	-----
6	Perfect Tour	226,7 mil. RON (51 mil. EUR)	1,1 mil. RON (247.000 EUR)	179 mil. RON (40,26 mil. EUR)	los: 1,33 mil. RON (300.000 EUR)

⁹ The financial data of Vola.ro are not currently available on the website of the Ministry of Public Finance. The turnover mentioned in the table was provided by the travel agency.

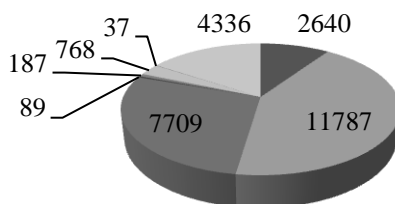
	Tourism agency	Turnover/net sales	Net profit/loss	Turnover/net sales	Net profit/loss
		2014		2015	
7	New Concept Travel	-	-	137 mil. RON (30,8 mil. EUR)	3,8 mil. RON (854.000 EUR)
8	Hotclair	-	-	86 mil. RON (19 mil. EUR)	1,2 mil. RON (270.000 EUR)
9	Business Travel Turism	68 mil. RON (15,2 mil. EUR)	4 mil. RON (900.000 EUR)	73 mil. RON (16,4 mil. EUR)	5 mil. RON (1,12 mil. EUR)
10	Cocktail Holidays (Prompt Service Travel)	66 mil. RON (15 mil. EUR)	92.506 RON (20.000 EUR)	68 mil. RON (15,28 mil. EUR)	104.357 RON (23.447 EUR)
11	Mareca	-	-	66,3 mil. RON (14,91 mil. EUR)	768.634 RON (172.850 EUR)
12	Paralela 45	26 mil. RON (5,8 mil EUR)	1,8 milioane RON (404.000 EUR)	29 mil. RON (6,52 mil. EUR)	2,6 mil. RON (585.000 EUR)
13	Prestige Tours (part of Happy Tour Group)	45,7 mil. RON (10 mi. EUR)	los: 2 mil. RON (449.000 EUR)	23,9 mil. RON (5,37 mi. EUR)	los: 1,39 mil. RON (312.000 EUR)
14	Aerotravel	-	-	23 mil. RON (5,17 mil. EUR)	584.000 RON (131.000 EUR)
15	Eximtur	175 mil. RON (39 mil. EUR)	1,1 mil. RON (247.000 EUR)	15,7 mil. RON **(3,53 mil. EUR)	1,2 mil. RON (270.000 EUR)

The values in euro were calculated for an average rate of exchange of 4,4450 RON/EUR in 2015. Europa

Therefore, we can say that the management method reflects how the agency's material, financial and human resources are used to achieve the objectives envisaged by the leader. Tourism companies are usually small and medium-sized enterprises where the management coordination is very present and important and is achieved through bilateral discussions with the employees, hence the conclusion that good coordination in such a firm depends very much on the quality of communication¹⁰. Most of the time, in the tourism agencies with 2-3 employees or in the case of low-capacity hostels (up to 8 rooms), the decisions are exclusive to the manager of the respective unit. In the case of larger companies, however, information and data, important components of the informational system of managers and inferior hierarchical leaders, can also be obtained by other means, ie through short sessions, bilateral meetings, emails etc. In fulfilling the coordination function in a tourism company, the manager should consider the following: using motivation at all stages of the managerial process; the rational staggering of individual tasks, duties and responsibilities; permanent training of staff (according to the provisions of the Order of the President of ANT no.

¹⁰ Glăvan V., Nicula V., Copetchi M., *Agencia de turism*, 2011.

65/2013, it is established the obligation of the different categories of personnel to undertake training courses in the field: receptionists, managers in the tourism activity, etc.).¹¹



- Travel agencies licensed
- Classified tourist accommodation structures with accommodation functions
- Classified tourist reception structures with public catering functions
- Certified tourist resorts, from which
- Approved ski slopes
- Approved mountain hiking trails
- Accredited National Centers for Information and Promotion
- Guides that are certified as a travel guide

Fig. 1. Touristic Romanian statistical data (number of...)

Source: www.insse.ro, May 2017

The tourism sector in Romania has been affected by the absence of a general policy of guiding and guiding the sector. A Master Plan for Tourism Development in Romania was drafted over ten years ago; however, to the great frustration of the stakeholders in the tourism sector, its recommendations have never been implemented. In recent years, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and several non-governmental organizations and donor agencies including USAID, GTZ and CHF International have provided technical assistance for a number of separate projects (such as at the level of the National Tourism Authority (ANT) website development, market research, local consultancy, setting up tourist information centers). Although the tourism sector has undoubtedly benefited most of this assistance, the isolated implementation of these measures, without being integrated into a general strategic plan, seems to generate partial results.

In this scenario, the Government of Romania has determined that a Tourism Master Plan is urgently needed to lay the foundations for implementing a sustainable approach to tourism development in Romania. The aim of the Master Plan is to identify the vulnerabilities in Romania's tourism industry and to draw strategic directions on how it can be restructured and where resources can be provided, and how it can be regenerated to compete effectively on The world market, as well as the transformation of Romania into a high-quality tourist destination, on the basis of its natural and cultural heritage, which corresponds to the European Union standards regarding the supply of products and services.

¹¹ Nicula,V., "Managementul turismului în România," *Contribuții la conturarea unui model românesc de management*, vol. 2, ed. Petrescu I. (Bucharest: Ed. Expert, 2014), 298- 358.

The immediate objective is to formulate a general policy framework for the sustainable development and management of the tourism industry in terms of natural and cultural resources and to present this objective in the form of a Master Plan of long-term tourism development covering the period 2007-2026. This plan is an umbrella policy that includes different plans and strategies, described to optimize the sector's contribution to the national economy. It is anticipated that the Romanian population will benefit from the development of tourism by: increasing foreign exchange earnings; bringing the Romanian economy and society to the existing level in the countries of the EU; increasing the quality of life; increasing and encouraging investments in all adjacent areas of tourism; stimulating job creation; stimulating development; strengthening the enhancement and preservation of cultural heritage; contribution to the development and conservation of material and natural resources throughout the country; distribute the benefits of tourism in all regions of Romania.

The Master Plan for the Development of National Tourism provided for the establishment of a national tourism organization (NTO) to operate in a public-private partnership. This organization involves both the public and private environments in promoting tourism and providing industry assistance as well as making the right marketing. The leadership of this organization includes representatives of tourism associations, local authorities, as well as non-governmental organizations.

The national strategy that will result will have established priorities in a general way that are known by specialists and are represented by: cultural circuits, business tourism, the Danube Delta, cities like Sibiu and Braşov, SPA tourism and agritourism.

The World Tourism Organization has criticized the current slogan of Romanian tourism because it does not communicate the essence of Romania to potential visitors. They were surprised to see that their country expectations were far exceeded. The challenge facing Romanian tourism is to show the world before the tourists arrive in the country, how many beautiful things and experiences can offer. The purpose of the Master Plan is to identify the vulnerable points of tourism in Romania, and then to develop restructuring programs by establishing funding resources and creating a tourism market that can compete effectively on the global market. The implementation of the strategic objective of the governance Program requires rapid and sustainable recovery, paying special attention to the place of tourism in the national economy so that it becomes a priority sector through the concentrated action of the legislative, governmental and local public administration bodies.

The overall strategic objective of tourism development is to create a tourist destination on a competitive international level, to the value of tourism resources available to Romania, a rapid and sustainable recovery and to impose this area as a priority economic activity within the national economic system. For this purpose, concerted action is required of the legislative, governmental and local public administration bodies.

The regional tourism development strategy proposes a new and innovative approach to the idea of capitalizing on the tourism potential of each region, respectively highlighting the benefits and benefits that can be achieved through an integrated vision of tourism development at each region level, that expresses the added value that may result, and the promotion of connections that can be created between different points of interest located throughout the region. Thus, this priority is a fundamental component that will ensure the tourist development of the regions in the current programming period 2014-2020. We underline the importance of the role played by local and regional authorities in the sustainable management of tourist destinations. Local and regional authorities' initiatives as well as European regional networks are emblematic for the development of sustainable tourism models and it is essential to make the most of their experience and knowledge by promoting local and regional cooperation throughout the European Union.

In the Development Regions, a number of regional and local brands can be identified and introduced to integrate into European brands, with a focus on preserving national identity. The potential impact of certain structural problems on European tourism destinations such as climate change or water and energy shortages are issues that can only be overcome if sustainability is promoted much more strongly in the tourism strategies of the affected regions.

Challenges such as demographic change in Europe, the diversification of tourism supply, or the increasing impact of information and communication technologies are elements that should be explored in collaboration with regional and local authorities.

In this context, given that both the tourism infrastructure and the existing tourism potential are not used to the full capacity, it is necessary to develop, diversify and promote the tourist offer, while also aiming to improve the performance of the companies operating in the field of tourism, by increasing the quality of services and by effectively promoting the tourism product, stimulating and supporting private companies that prove viable through their activities in this field.

Supporting tourism investments that promote traditional cuisine specific to various areas or initiatives to capitalize on local resources for tourism can also be topics for future projects and even financial support for traditional handicraft and craftsmanship activities. In this respect, a special opportunity is represented by the project "Sibiu - European gastronomic region in 2019".

The challenges faced by the tourism sector at a regional level demonstrate how important it is to anticipate change and respond in time to the ever-growing competition in this ever evolving sector.

As tourism businesses are mainly SMEs, it would be appropriate to promote their development by setting up clusters. Aid to increase productivity, competitiveness, training and quality can play an equally important role. In this respect, it is recommended to create tools to support tourism SMEs, especially with regard to all aspects of training their staff. The important role of the tourism sector in job creation and the fact that much of it is intended for young people, allowing them to use a range of skills that are very useful in their professional development, should not be neglected. The impact of the strategy on the region's innovation capacity can be found in:

- valorisation and development of regional cultural heritage, with particular impact on cultural tourism and creative industries;
- analyzing the social and cultural impact of technologies, especially communication; developing new management methods, marketing and entrepreneurial development for organizational competitiveness;
- the possibility of developing a trademark (geographical indication) through which products and services made within the destination are marketed;
- creating demand for a wide range of goods and services subsequently acquired by tourists and travel companies, including goods and services produced by other economic sectors (trade, construction, transport, food, clothing and footwear, small and craft industries);
- the creation of innovative tourism products at the destination level through close cooperation between the stakeholders (tourists, owners of tourist accommodation structures, local community, etc.), in which all the tourist opportunities offered by the destination will be capitalized
- investing in business tourism and not only will allow each development region to use the benefits of tourism potential and cultural heritage in identifying and consolidating its own identity in order to improve its competitive advantage in

high added value sectors and quality and higher cognitive content in both traditional markets and new markets in training;

- investments in transport infrastructure will make it possible to capitalize on the benefits offered by the existing tourism potential, thus leading to the development of tourism-related sectors.
- much of the knowledge gained in the tourism sector is directly transferable to other economic activities.

Sustainable tourism management in tourism is focused on objectives that highlight the need to take into account cost and benefit analysis not only in the microeconomic but also in the macroeconomic dimension.

The need for sustainable development according to the National Strategy for sustainable development 2013-2020-2030 starts from the observation that at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, after a prolonged and traumatic transition to pluralistic democracy and market economy, Romania still has to recover considerable gaps vis-à-vis the other EU Member States, simultaneously with the appropriation and implementation of the principles and practices of sustainable development in the context of globalization.

The vision of the Ministry of Tourism is to turn Romania up to 2021 into a competitive tourist destination, so that visitors / tourists want to spend as much time on the territory and return. This will have the direct effect of increasing employment and long-term sustainable development of the sector, thus contributing to a larger extent in the growth of gross domestic product.

Increasing the competitiveness of Romanian tourist destinations must be based on principles of specialization of strategic planning processes, adapted to each stage of development (launch, growth / development, maturity or even decline and re-launch) of the tourist destination.

Given the economic and social importance of tourist destinations and the impact on their natural and cultural heritage, there is a need for effective cooperation between all the structures involved in the vast field of tourism. Strategic planning has to be done within a public-private partnership, because while the public sector provides the general framework for the proper development of tourism activities, the private sector is the one that actually attracts the tourist by guaranteeing their satisfaction through the offers integrated services and quality services.

The mission of the Ministry of Tourism is to develop a coherent and dynamic system consisting of rules and regulations of public and central tourism authorities in partnership with the private sector in order to achieve an attractive tourist destination that meets the demands of the tourist services consumer the consolidation of Romania's position as a "must see" tourist destination, recognized for its diverse natural and cultural heritage, by 2021, which can be capitalized throughout the year, resulting in an increase in the contribution of the tourism industry to gross domestic product.

Taking into account the continuous dynamics and the changes in the structure of the tourists' requirements, by transforming the competitive advantages (rich and unaltered natural resources, as well as unique cultural heritage) into authentic internationally recognized experiences, it is necessary to stimulate, by specific means, the trend upward movement of tourism.

III. Competitiveness analysis in tourism

The analysis of tourism competitiveness is based on a series of 14 business-environment indices; safety and security; health and hygiene; HR; access I.C.T. (internet, telephony,

electricity); prioritizing the field of "Travel and Tourism"; international openness (regional bilateral air service agreements); competitive prices; medium sustainability; air transport infrastructure; road and port infrastructure; tourism services infrastructure; Natural Resources; cultural resources - whose value on a scale of 1 to 7 shows the performance of each country. Value 1 represents the lowest value of the index and the highest value 7. The data sources for these indicators are largely represented by development indicators developed by the World Bank, but also by the United Nations and the World Travel and Tourism Council.

In the analysis of competitiveness in tourism, nine countries close to Romania were considered as reference countries, which are competitors, per the key tourism form: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Greece and Turkey. The global analysis refers to the comparison of the analysed countries, in terms of the values of the 14 indices.

Romania's competitiveness in the field of tourism compared to its competitors in the current year is as follows:

- Towards Austria, Romania is more competitive in the field of competitive prices;
- Towards Bulgaria, Romania is more competitive in the fields of Safety and Security and International Openness;
- Towards Croatia, Romania is more competitive in the Business Environment and Competitive Prices;
- Towards Hungary, Romania is more competitive in the field of Natural Resources; Business environment; Safety and Security;
- Towards the Czech Republic, Romania is more competitive in the field of Natural Resources;
- Towards Slovakia, Romania is more competitive in the fields of Business Environment, Safety and Security, Air Transport and Cultural Resources;
- Towards Poland, Romania is more competitive in the fields of Tourist Services and Safety and Security;
- Towards Greece, Romania is more competitive in the Business Environment, Safety and Security environment;
- Towards Turkey, Romania is more competitive in the areas of Safety and Security, Health and Hygiene, Business Environment.

The National Authority for Tourism carried out an impact study in two calendar periods (2014 and 2015) to assess the effectiveness of the marketing mix used and of the promotion campaigns promoted in the tourism brand launched in 2010 on the following tourist markets: Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Austria and Romania.

The conclusions of this study were as follows:

- Regarding spontaneous notoriety, the study revealed a figure of 0.2%, which shows that Romania is still an unknown holiday destination for most foreign tourists. Thus, we note the urgent need to communicate brand values and to promote our country as a tourist destination on foreign markets, which is difficult to achieve if Romania does not benefit from European funds for tourism promotion in the current financial year 2014-2020, thus being strictly limited to the national budget. Italy ranks first in the top spot of spontaneous tourist destinations (31%), followed by the US. (27%), France (25%) and Spain (24%).
- About the notoriety of communication, the study revealed that, for Romania, it is higher in Austria and Italy. US remains, by far, the country with the most notorious communication. The top 10 countries for which foreign tourists have seen / heard /

heard promotional messages as tourist destinations in the last 12 months are filled in by Canada, Italy, France, Greece, Mexico, Spain, Croatia, Ireland and Germany. The main channel through which tourists were exposed to promotional messages was the Internet (54%), followed by television (52%) and print (34%). The main messages that have been retained following the visualization of the advertisement have highlighted the beauty of Romania and the existence of the historical and cultural places to be visited.

- Regarding Romania's recommendation index as a holiday destination, there is still room for improvement, given that only 24% of tourists would recommend Romania as a holiday destination to friends or relatives, of whom Italians are more inclined to recommend Romania as a holiday destination (47%).
- Concerning the intention to consider Romania as a possible holiday destination in the future, it has been revealed that 3% of the tourists from the 6 source markets intend to visit Romania. Most of them are from the UK, Italy and France. A percentage of 7% of potential tourists in the 6 markets say they have traveled at least once in Romania. The percentage of those already in Romania is higher for Austria, Germany and Italy. We note that of the tourists who have already visited Romania, more than two thirds (61%) say they would return to Romania for another holiday. Regarding the destinations visited, only 1% of tourists have been in Romania in the last 3 years.
- In terms of spontaneous associations with key values (nature, culture, authenticity), the participants in the study spontaneously and spontaneously associate Romania, first of all with the nature, landscapes, culture and hospitality of the locals. The percentage of tourists associating Romania with nature and landscapes is up 10% compared to the previous wave, reaching up to 31%. This percentage is followed by that of the local / authentic culture of 24%.
- As far as Romania's image is concerned, our country continues to perform best, compared to other countries, on the following key areas: landscapes and nature, cultural and historical sites, architecture, authentic local culture and lifestyle.
- In terms of tourism objectives and products in Romania, there is a favorable evolution of the attractiveness of Black Sea shores, Carpathian Mountains, natural springs and health / spa centers. We mention that the Black Sea coast is still among the tourists' preferences, being followed by the Castle of Count Dracula and the rural landscapes. As far as tourist products are concerned, foreign tourists are primarily interested in circuits, river cruises and beach holidays.
- In terms of Romania's performance regarding the criteria for choosing tourist destinations, the study shows that we perform best, compared to other countries, on the key attributes: nature, cultural places and authentic culture.

With the in-depth market research for the Romanian Brand and Marketing Study, Romania's competitive advantages have been highlighted, which have revealed key forms of tourism: rural tourism, ecotourism and adventure tourism, tourist circuits or cultural tourism, tourism health care, city-break tourism, whose development and promotion can lead to the strengthening of the attractive tourist destination on the international tourist market.

At the same time, the analysis of recent trends and consumption preferences of the targeted consumers also requires the development of new forms of tourism: business tourism - covering the entire period of the year, thus ensuring the permanence and

sustainability of jobs and seaside tourism - sunbathing and the beach is one of the main reasons for RONsure travel.

SWOT analysis of tourist offer:

- Unspoiled and almost virgin nature; rich fauna and flora, with unique species and ecosystems in Europe, exceptional hunting fund;
- The diversity of natural and anthropic tourism resources, harmoniously distributed throughout the country, which promotes the development and development of all forms of tourism;
- The geographical diversity of Romania given by the Carpathian Mountains, which stretches over 800 kilometres and is characterized by a wide variety of landscapes (glacial, karst, structural and volcanic);
- Natural factors and mineral resources recommended in complex balneal treatment. A wide variety of mineral waters, 1/3 of Europe's thermal waters;
- The existence of a functional network of protected natural areas of national and community interest;
- Temperate-continental climate favourable to tourism practice 365 days;
- Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, the largest wetland reserve in Europe, considered to be the most spectacular Delta on the continent;
- Rich speleological potential with over 12,500 caves (*Romania's Territorial Development Strategy 2014-MDRAP*);
- The natural potential of the ski area;
- Unique cultural environment in the world, 36 cultural, material and immaterial goods, as well as a natural good being listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List;
- General stability of Romania at economic, social level;
- Touristic attractions: Maramureș, Bucovina, medieval towns in southern Transylvania (Brasov, Sibiu, Sighișoara) and their surroundings, Valea Prahovei, Bucharest, Seaside, Danube Delta;
- Variety of folklore and inherited traditions, well preserved and still practiced in the everyday life of communities, reflected in the diversity of folklore manifestations throughout the year and in all major tourist areas;
- Diversity of bio-food products at affordable prices;
- Traditional cuisine and regional specialties;
- Hospitality specific to the Romanian people;
- High-speed Internet, country-wide accessibility at very low prices;
- Support by the central authority for promotion at international tourism fairs;
- Areas with tourism potential that have preserved the multicultural / multi-ethnic character;
- Investments in the construction, rehabilitation, modernization of hotel and food tourism infrastructure, made with European non-reimbursable funds in the period 2007 - 2013;
- Applying low VAT rates in the tourism sector.

Weaknesses

- Poor valorisation of the natural, historical and cultural potential in terms of tourism;
- Non-correlation of the activities of the central and / or local stakeholders;
- Insufficient exposure of Romania's tourist destination and implicitly of the country brand on the targeted tourist markets, having as a direct consequence the insufficient

demand from the international tourists and the poor presence in the catalogs of the foreign tour operators;

- Poor availability of tourist information about the tourist destination Romania both for the planning of the trip and during it;
- Lack of integrated implementation of strategies at local and county level (policies, plans, actions);
- The infrastructure of roads and poor roads, the small number of km of built highway, the old infrastructure of the Romanian railways;
- The state of degradation of the historical and cultural heritage;
- The reduced number of caves, given the speleological potential;
- Insufficiently developed tourist transport on the Danube;
- Spa treatment centers with physically and morally used equipment;
- No motivating gain levels for attracting / retaining skilled labor;
- Seasonal fluctuations motivated by the lack of promotion of the fact that Romania is a tourist destination 365 days;
- Reduced use of legends and myths in promoting tourist objectives;
- Lack of RONSure activities (areas);
- Lack of an integrated offer of business tourism;
- Qualified, certified and patented staff, insufficient;
- Overcoming the tourist offer;
- Existence of "black" tourism

Opportunities

- The unsightly image of entries in some cities, certain routes and access routes;
- Existence of many tourism information and promotion centers in the rural area (financed by NRDP 2007-2013), which do not work.
- Existence of programs such as "Sibiu - European gastronomic region in 2019" or "Timișoara - European cultural capital in 2021", Destinations of excellence, etc.
- Increased demand for spa and spa resorts;
- Growing interest in business tourism - MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Congresses & Events);
- Development of nostalgic / multicultural tourism;
- Increasing attractiveness of rural tourism;
- Existence of projects that make tourism assets of the national cultural and historical heritage and of the architecture, respectively of the anthropic potential;
- Initiation and support of the development of new mountain resorts for practicing winter sports;
- Increasing tourism demand for niche tourism, found on Romanian territory;
- Evolution of the online communication channel;
- Trends in the evolution of tourism offer quality;
- Increasing the number of airlines operating in Romania, resulting in the interconnection of the cities in our country with more and more destinations in Europe;
- Completion of the national network of tourist information centers.

Threats

- Maintaining the non-unitary nature of this industry;
- Exclusion of the development of the tourism sector from national priorities;
- Increasing the degree of degradation of the architectural patrimony;
- Insufficiently well-developed organizational culture of executives and managers in the hospitality industry;
- Run aggressive communication campaigns of competitive countries, which benefit from budgets that ensure a visible presence in the target and opportunity markets;
- Not adapting to the evolution of the concept of Sharing Economy.

The demand in European key markets continues to grow within the United States, favoured by emerging economies, positive movements in the foreign exchange market, low fuel prices, and continued marketing campaigns to expand the tourist season.

Romania's main source markets recorded significant increases in 2016, as opposed to 2015, confirming its importance as markets generating foreign tourists, in some cases rising above average. There have been no major changes in the ranking of priority markets, but only a rearrangement of these, especially in terms of market shares. Also noteworthy are the market shares of the 10 countries designated as priority markets. Germany, followed by Israel and Italy, is ranked first in terms of the number of tourists arriving in Romania in 2016.

Romania is a suitable tourist destination for tourists from these countries, eager to spend their holidays at the beach, for nature lovers, as well as for people who are looking for health tourism and for those who want to discover the country life, culture, nature, authenticity. The price-quality ratio, the local architectural and cultural heritage are also appreciated.

The main forms of tourism preferred by foreign tourists in Romania are: cultural tourism, health, seaside and business tourism, active nature and tourism, city breaks, cultural circuits - the vast majority of these circuits include Bucovina monasteries and wooden churches Maramures (the major interest for UNESCO heritage in our country, but also for the Danube Delta is constantly increasing).

Romania can generate and deliver authentic and diverse experiences, with the potential, from this perspective, to become a particularly attractive destination for tourists who prefer the originality and the unusual, less explored places in the middle of traditional communities. From this point of view, Romania's tourist offer is an eclectic one, based on special gastronomic experiences, unique accommodation structures (traditional houses, mansions, mountain huts), wildlife and local charm.

Surprises, ingenuity, adventures, spontaneity all relate to the local value of the tourist offer. Recognized, assumed and managed, our authenticity becomes a concrete value for Romania's image and a reason for pride for the developers of tourist offerings.

These three main characteristics of Romania's image are real characteristics of contemporary Romanian society, which become reasons to believe - points of support for positioning.

Improving the quality of tourism services must be a continuous process, which includes: setting objectives, developing strategies, implementing criteria and professional standards for managers and employees, monitoring and permanent evaluation, developing conditions and criteria for quantifying the quality of tourism services for granting the "RoQ" brand within the public partnership, the integration of the Sharing Economy concept (translated in Romanian by the term "collaborative economy") involves sharing and sharing resources -

cars, expertise, accommodation, skills, etc. by connecting and collaboration between network members to maximize the benefits that each of the parties can get.

IV. Conclusions

Tourism management aims at a new balance between the stakes of environmental preservation, economic growth and social equity. Sustainable tourism management is focused on objectives that highlight the need for cost and benefit analysis not only in the microeconomic dimension but also in the macroeconomic dimension. In sustainable development, tourism has a key role to play, contributing with a high share to the revival and recovery of Romania. The raising of the tourist product from the established values to those corresponding to the standards and preferences of the tourists implies the initiation and promotion of actions that include, on the one hand, the development of education processes and the formation of a mentality adequate to the current type of development and, on the other hand, to enhance sustainable development in tourist reception regions.

Knowing the particularities of the tourism activity is of great importance to the tourism manager by giving him the possibility to take the most appropriate decisions for increasing the satisfaction of the tourists and implicitly for increasing the efficiency of the tourist activity, taking into account the assumption of social responsibility and sustainable development.

By adopting the optimal decisions in the design and realization of the tourism activities, it is intended to train the human resources in order to increase the profitability of the company. Romania's tourism potential is appreciated as promising, but in its evolution towards success, Romanian tourism must adopt a global mentality and take into account international competition. Achieving the performance and efficient performance of the tourism business requires identification and capitalization of the opportunities offered by the environment, the business environment and the tourist market.

Romania needs an improvement in the techniques of selling the products and services in the tourism field, individually or in the destination coupled with intense promotion and updating to the needs and wishes of the modern tourist.

Greater attention should be paid to the interests of the tourism industry in individual policy areas such as labor and social affairs, transport, consumer protection, education, culture, construction and urban development as well as taxation, a conclusion which strengthens the idea of the interdependence of tourism with the other branches of the national economy, but also the need to recognize the strategic importance of this sector.

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