

The Tourism Activities of Romania in The Context of Sustainable Development Necessity

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Abstract—Landscape diversity, plus the special value of the anthropic tourism potential, create for Romania a significant opportunity for development in the current and future global economic environment. The article attempts to outline a series of coordinates which currently runs the Romanian tourism industry and identify its future development directions, based on application of modern management principles. They must be consistent with local, regional and national characteristics, but to be correlated as well with international tourism trends.

Keywords— tourism trends, Romania, tourism activities, sustainable development

I. INTRODUCTION

CURRENT tourism trends practiced worldwide show the increasing of the role of consumer in the evolution of this industry, the sector operators continuously focusing on improving services and providing new experiences to tourists more or less demanding.

To help travel agencies, airlines, field service bidders in general, specialists have tried to distinguish the new demands of tourists. A study performed by FutureBrand pointed out, besides the leading brands of the country, technologies and offers developed in order to meet clients.

In the current economic downturn, Romanian tourism faces a number of difficulties. The weight of mass tourism has declined as a result of the reduced overall standard of living of the population, leading to abandonment of tourism organized by the population segment with low income. The average length of stay was reduced due to increased tourism demand for short holidays performed in mountain resorts and for weekend activities less expensive.

In order to achieve a tourist activity to help the future development of Romania, and that to become again one of the major destinations of European and world tourism, is needed to stimulate the management of all actions necessary to create, strengthen, promote and build sustainable the Romanian tourism offer.

In the conditions of tourists number growth, the practice of the sustainable tourism become a priority of the contemporary world. The modification of environment characteristics like a result of natural catastrophes and a destructive human

activities can have repercussions on the quality of the tourist's

potential.

II. THE ROMANIAN TOURISM IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL TRENDS

COUNTRY Brand Index 2008, the brand evaluation system of the country, proposed by FutureBrand, has identified the following tourism trends:

A. Changing tourist preferences for the type of landscape

Strengths of traditional tourism are overshadowed by new vogue destinations. For instance, Africa, Asia and the Middle East, were part of higher growth rates than the global average demand.

One of the reasons for travel in exotic or demanding areas is the desire of tourists to seek authentic experiences, for example, visiting places where poverty reigns, polluted places, communities that offer the visitor a different perspective on world.

B. Specialized tourism development

Niche tourism started to take an increasing scale, acting on the tourism market in various forms, such us:

- increasing travels undertaken by women compared to men;
- increasing development of tourism practiced by pensioners, particularly of U.S.A., Canada and Japan, traveling with their grandchildren;
- carrying an increased range of "precious tourism", manifested by visiting places or species protected by law or in danger of extinction, before they can be irretrievably damaged by conducting trips in order to admire the seals and polar bears, by participating in expeditions in the rainforest, etc..;
- spontaneous tourism, determined by the need of escape from daily stress and the evolution of online tourism, remarking the increasing number of passengers that choose trips becoming shorter each year, with reservations made only shortly before departure;
- ecumenical tourism enjoys a growing attention from believers of various religions, being favored by different types of actions such as organizing religious pilgrimages, the launch of airlines for different types of believers, like the one launched by Vatican for Catholic pilgrims.

C. *Upgrading air transport for luxury tourism*

Many airline companies have developed following the applications received in this regard, more diversified flight options and more flight classes, with specialized services for luxury tourism. It is First Class and Business Class, but also higher sections, new and improved, in planes owned by the industry leaders such as Singapore Airlines and Emirates Airlines. It also offers greater flexibility to the luxury traveler, an increased availability of regional flights by the appearance of air taxis [1].

The practice of sustainable tourism fits more like a priority in the contemporary world. Tourism not only creates jobs and intercultural relations nationally and internationally. In its sphere of activity are included - or should be - the knowledge processes of its effects on people, nature and cultural heritage. This may refer, on the one hand, to environmental degradation through polluting activities (transportation, irrational consumption of natural and anthropic resources, inadequate preparation of tourist itineraries, inappropriate behaviour in terms of quality of tourism service providers in relation to international standards and tariffs etc.), and secondly the cultural and material benefits that tourism can bring to society. Essential condition for sustainable development of tourism phenomenon in a certain area is the application of quality management for conserving the natural and anthropic environment introduced within this area of activity [2].

Knowledge of functional and dysfunctional coordinates of the Romanian tourism industry in the contemporary period will allow us to identify optimal management strategies that lead to its development. Although tourism in Romania has lagged behind neighboring countries such as Hungary or Bulgaria, has yet prospects to become competitive by valuing the tremendous tourism potential available, currently unexploited. The contribution of the travel and tourism industry to the GDP of Romania was in the year 2007 of 2,1 %, which means 7,9 billion Euros.

The experts estimate that up to 2017 it will grow in nominal terms at 2,9% from GDP (22,5 billion Euros). According to a report of World Travel and Tourism Council, Romania comes on the 57 place worldwide regarding the travel and tourism industry and it classifies on the 157 place, of 176 countries, concerning the criteria of relative contribution of tourism to national economy, says the WTTC report [3].

This report records the fact that road conditions are the biggest impediments to tourism development, given that most foreign tourists arrive in Romania by land. Due to poor infrastructure, Romania comes on the 76 place in the world top of competitiveness in tourism, between Azerbaidjan and El Salvador, according to a study of World Economic Forum [4].

III. THE ROMANIAN TOURISM POTENTIAL AND ITS VALORIFICATINON

A. *Attractiveness of tourism resources*

Romania's tourist attractions give this country one of the most diversified tourism products worldwide, as a consequence of twinning the natural resources it holds, the unique biodiversity of flora and fauna in Europe, with the anthropic resources.

The attractive landscape, both from the Carpathian mountain area (Figure 1) and sub-Carpathian, hills and plateau (Figure 2), shows a large favorability for developing ecotourism, rural tourism and agrotourism, sports and recreational tourism, thematic tourism like "The Road of Wine", thanks to a great potential for a very good Romanian wine (Figure 3).

We mention the existence on the Romanian territory of a third of natural springs from Europe, tourist attractiveness of 117 locations being defined by the presence of natural therapeutic factors – mineral, thermal, salty waters, sapropelic mud, etc., used in Spas.

In addition to these there is the attractiveness of Delta Dunării biosphere and the seasonal seaside offer, coastline extend on a length of 245 km, between the Chilia branch in the north and the border with Bulgaria in the south, between which runs the chain of resorts that borders in the west part of the Black Sea. Cultural heritage completes the Romanian tourism offer, with the 30 of monuments included in UNESCO World Heritage List, including wooden churches from Maramures, churches painted from Moldavia and Dacian citadels from Orastie Mountains, the fortified churches from Transylvania etc.. There stand also over 6,600 historical monuments of national importance and over 670 museums, traditional folk culture, cultural events represented in various forms, national and international shows and festivals, etc. [5].

Romania can count on its natural and cultural resources, on the improvement of the accommodation conditions and services, and last but not least on the modernization of the infrastructure to facilitate the access to the tourist potential areas, but also on the activity of internal and international presentation of the tourist potential [6].

B. *Particularities of tourism activities evolution in Romania*

Based on data provided by the National Institute of Statistics, in the period between 2006 - 2008, the turnover for enterprises with main activity as tourism services, provided for the population, has been steadily increasing [7].

It is noted that throughout the tourism activities, the average growth rate of turnover was higher in 2008 compared to 2007, with 28,2 %, compared with that reported in 2007 compared to 2006. This is due to increasing weekend tourism, which exploits the facilities offered by hotels, campsites and other accommodations good for a short stay. Tourism and tourist assistance agencies have an important contribution in the evolution of turnover, whose average growth rate was in 2008 compared to 2007 of 43,05 %, as well as cultural, sports and entertainment activities and shows, with 39,63 % (Table 1).

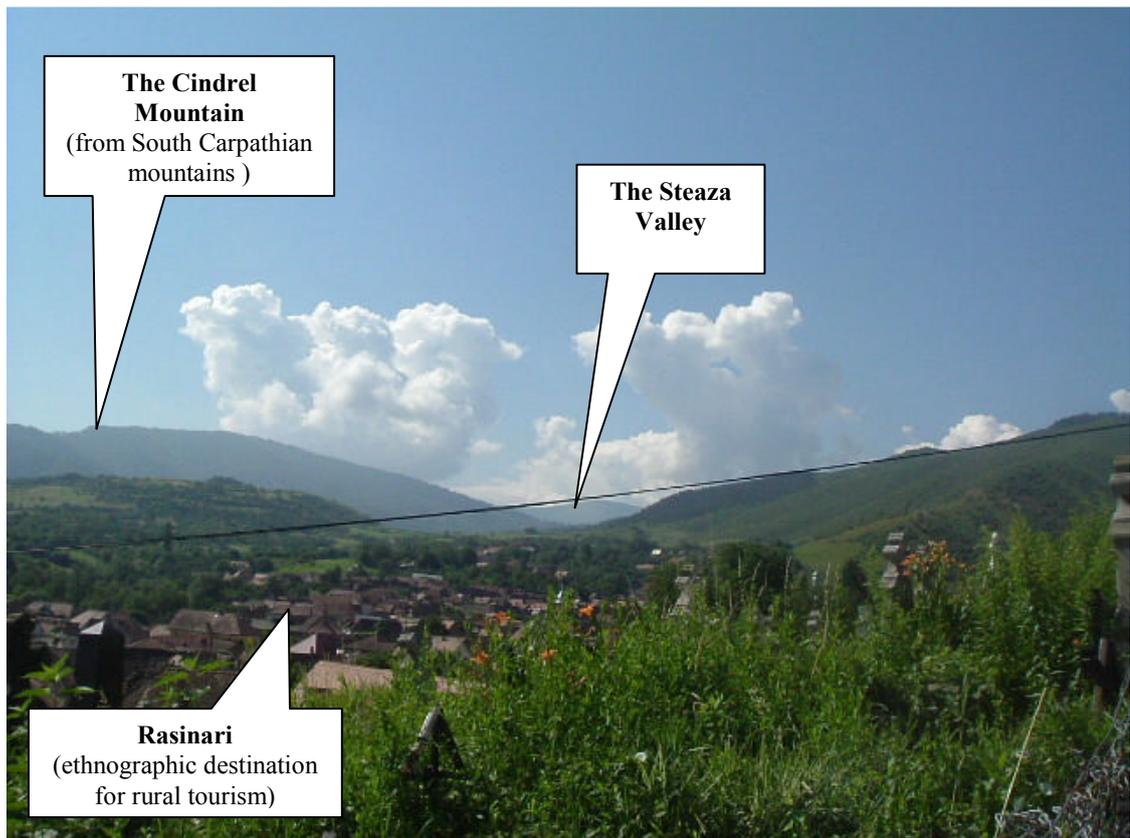


Fig. 1. The attractive landscape of the Carpathian mountains
(Source: V. Gherasim, 2010)



Fig. 2. Touristic rural area of Cisnadioara (in the South of Transylvania Plateau)
(Source: V. Gherasim, 2010)

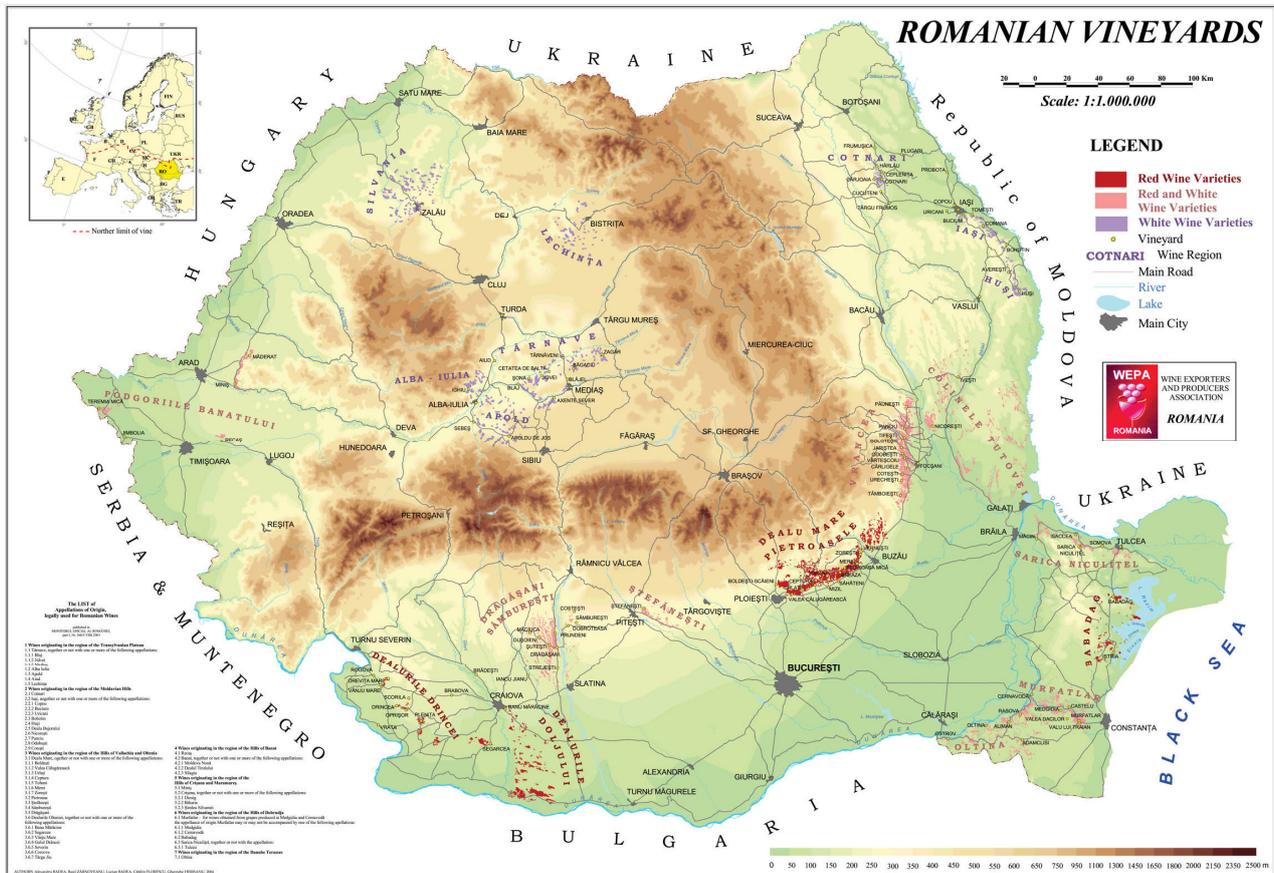


Fig. 3. The map of Romanian Vineyards
(Source: A. Badea, B. Zarnoveanu, L. Badea, C. Florescu, G. Herisanu, 2004)

It is noticed a decrease in the rate of growth of turnover of period 2007 - 2008 against 2006 - 2007 in the following sectors of activity: restaurants (from 30,94 % to 27,97 %, which is a difference of 2,97 %); railway transport (from 16,21 % to 0,66 %, that a rate 15,55 % less) water transport (from 26,16 % to 25,76 %, with a reduced rate 0,4 %).

Regarding the distribution of turnover for enterprises with main activity in tourism, by ownership, we point out that, overall, the largest share is hold by the private majority, who represented 84,13% in 2006, to the state majority devolving only 15,87 %.

In the year 2007, following the expansion of private capital, especially in the hotel investment areas and land transport activities, there was found a division of tourism turnover in proportion of 86,16 % for the private majority ownership and only 13,84 % for the state majority ownership. In 2008, there is a deeper distinction between the private majority, which represents 88,42 % and the state majority, of 11,58 %.

The activity of travel agencies in Romania, materialized in domestic tourist actions, recorded a decline between the years 2004 and 2008, reducing the number of tourists from 1429 to 1313 thousand people, respectively 8,11 % the number of touristsdays decreased by 11,95 %, and the average length of stay was reduced from 7,0 to 6,7 days.

This is because of the weekend tourism increasing, to the disadvantage of that one of longer duration, as a consequence mainly of dwindling budgets allocated by tourists for holidays and trips, taking into account the economic and financial crisis in recent years.

By processing data provided by the National Institute of Statistics, we found that the number of tourists who used the services of travel agencies during the above-mentioned period, respectively in the year 2008, in relation to 2004, has registered a certain dynamics about valuing the tourist destinations [8].

It's about:

a) *mountainous area*, with an overall reduction with 27,99 %, in which a significant reduction, of 36,36 %, is noted in case of accommodation units in villages located in this area and walking trails along the mountains, but also those located in Romanian mountain towns, the reduction recorded being 25,26 %. In the perimeter of cities in the mountainous area, the value of index tourists-days was in the year 2008 with 28,76 % less than 2004, registering a decrease in the average stay duration from 4,4 to 4,2 days. Accommodation units in mountain villages and mountains tourist routes recorded in the year 2008 relative to 2004, a reduction with 29,84 % of the index tourists-days. But they have benefited from an increase of the average stay duration from 4,8 to 5,3 days due to the enlargement preferences of tourists for mountain tourism, ecotourism, rural tourism and agrotourism, sports tourism, etc.;

b) *coastal area*, with a reduction in the number of tourists who have used the services of tourist agencies with 9,32 % in the year 2008 compared to the year 2004, recording at the same time an increase in the index touristsdays with 0,10 %, but also a reduction of the index of the average stay duration from 7,3 to 6,5 days;

c) *area of Spa resorts*, where the number of beneficiaries of services offered by tourist agencies diminished in the year 2008 compared to 2004 with 9,14 % the number of days-tourist diminished with 12,76 % and the average stay duration declined from 13,4 to 12,9 days.;

d) *historical areas* are recording a reduction in the year 2008 compared to 2004, of this category of tourists, with 34,42 % and a decrease in the index days-tourist with 51,53 % and the duration of stay from 2,7 to 2,0 days;

e) *areas of religious pilgrimage, river cruises, various circuits* have been recorded an increase of the number of tourists in the year 2008 compared to 2004, with 80 %. The index days-tourist has recorded an increase of 73,52 % in the first case of those mentioned above, noticing a reduction of the average stay duration from 2,3 to 1,7 days; with 58,77% in the second case, that of river cruises, where there is noticed the decrease of the average stay duration from 3,0 to 1,1 days; in the third case, that of different circuits, can be recorded an increase both in the number of days-tourist, with 87,12 % and the stay duration, from 2,5 to 4,1 days, which outlines the consumer trend in cultural tourism, highlighting the rich Romanian tourist heritage.

In the year 2008, based on data processing provided by National Institute of Statistics, domestic travels of residents for vacations and business were 9 716 392.

Of all these, the highest proportion, respectively 94,58% were carried out on their own and only a percentage 5,42 % is the result of journeys made by specialized units. It is about: tourist agencies (2,72 %); Trade Union (0,99 %); Pension Office, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection (0,54 %); other means, represented by professional, cultural and religious associations, etc. (1,17 %).

There is developing a form of unorganized tourism, manifested through the direct connection between tourist and

accommodation unit from the mountains area, which is motivated, on the one hand, on the tourists tend to save a large sum of the expenditure budget, and on the other hand, the existence of an advanced level of communication, especially by Internet connection, which favors a direct promotion of facilities offered by the tourist structures of accommodation and online bookings made by tourists.

Tabel 1. Evolution of turnover in the tourism business in Romania

Activity CANE	Ra 1 (%)	Ra 2 (%)
Total	22,89	31,80
Hotels	18,38	22,5
Campings	41,89	80,50
Restaurants	30,94	27,97
Bars, canteens, etc.	6,63	25,58
Travel touristic agencies	31,18	43,05
Art activities and shows	12,85	41,28
Museum, zoos, etc.	26,53	29,83
Recreative activities	36,94	39,63
Other tourism activities	11,73	22,07
Rail transport	16,21	0,66
Land transport	19,44	32,50
Water transport	26,16	25,76
Air transport	42,84	20,12

Legend: Ra 1 – average growth rate in 2007 compared to 2006; Ra 2 – average growth rate in 2008 compared to 2007
(Source of data processed: "Statistical Yearbook of Romania", National Institute of Statistics, 2009)

This trend of tourism development in Romania is confirmed as well by the results of analyzing the distribution modality of journeys realized by Romanian residents in our country on tourist destinations. We have identified as their preference for mountain areas, the percentage of 25,50 %; 14,46 % is the tourism demand for the coastal area; 2,60 % for area of Spa resorts; 0,39 % for the Danube Delta; 0,08 % various circuits and 56,97 % other areas. In all those tourist destinations it is noted that self-organized trips predominate at the expense of those made through tourist agencies, trade unions, etc. [9].

Movement of foreign tourists in Romania, has also an interesting dynamic in the period under study. It is noted that the total number of arrivals of foreign visitors to Romania increased in 2008 compared to 2004 with 25,52 %.

A comparison of the two years reveals a similar distribution of the number of foreign tourist arrivals by countries of origin, meaning that Europeans share predominates, both in 2004, with a percentage of 95,54 % and 2008 with 94,91 %. Based on data processing provided by the National Statistics Institute, there is an increase with 66,33 % of the number of Bulgarian tourists, with 49,18 % of the French, with 43,29 % of the Germans, with 61,01 % of the Greeks, with 46,65 % of the Italians, etc.. During the same period there is noted a reduction in Hungarian tourists in proportion of 33,48 % and

tourists from Serbia and Montenegro, with 19,56 %. With regard to extra-European countries, they recorded an upward dynamic in the period between 2004 and 2008, an increase of 33,33 % tourists arrived from Africa, with 27,22 % of American tourists, with 39,73 % of Asian tourists and with 56,25 % of tourists from Australia and Oceania [10].

IV. SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT – A NECESSITY OF ROMANIAN TOURISM

THE dimension and complexity of the resources potential has an important contribution in the development of the touristic areas. The beauty of these places, the purity of the air, of the waters, of montane zones from the north of The Carpathians, as well as plentiful cultural and the religious existing patrimony, has a rich touristic potential, which can be compared to another touristic famous zones from the country.

But the problem of the Romanian tourism is that all types of programs offered by this country face stiff competition on Western European markets, while competing destinations offer a wide range of facilities for all categories of tourists. The Romanian services offer are inferior to those of competing destinations such as Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece and Cyprus [11].

The lasting tourism has in view the assurance of the quality of all the factors involved in the functionality of the touristic system. This desire may be achieved within Romanian tourism habitat through an appropriate and efficient administration and exploitation of the touristic potential, through the avoidance of overstraining the infrastructure and of the touristic pollution, through the preservation of the etno-folklore character of the area etc.

Sustainable tourism is a simply sustainable development achieved through tourism and it takes a long-term view.

Just as sustainable development assumes continued economic growth, so sustainable tourism assumes continued tourism growth. Sustainable tourism is not a marketing idea to attract new markets, it is a strategic term to describe a specific approach to the development of tourism. Sustainable tourism aims to take all impacts, positive and negative, into account. All tourism has the potential to be more sustainable.

Sustainable tourism has 3 fundamental coordinates with the following characteristics: a) **economic prosperity** – long term competitive and prosperous tourism businesses; quality employment opportunities, fair pay and conditions for all employees; b) **social equity and cohesion** – tourism that improves the quality of life of local communities; community involvement in tourism planning and management; safe, satisfying and fulfilling visitor experiences; c) **environmental and cultural protection** – reduced pollution and degradation of the global and local environment; tourism that maintains and strengthens biodiversity; tourism that maintains and enriches the unique and diverse culture. Promoting the concept of sustainable tourism means: promoting this type of tourism concept and its principles at the local, regional and national level, for nature conservation; promoting the natural and traditional values that respect nature, as tourism attractions;

encouraging tour operators to use local services etc. This tourism encourages going back to natural products in every aspect of life [12].

The tourism development, from the point of view of sustainable development, requires the addressing and the application of principles and methods that form the basis of completing and using a set of indicators. The system of indicators that must be combined in a complete set has been reviewed by the OECD Forum and it has been presented in Figure 4. [13].

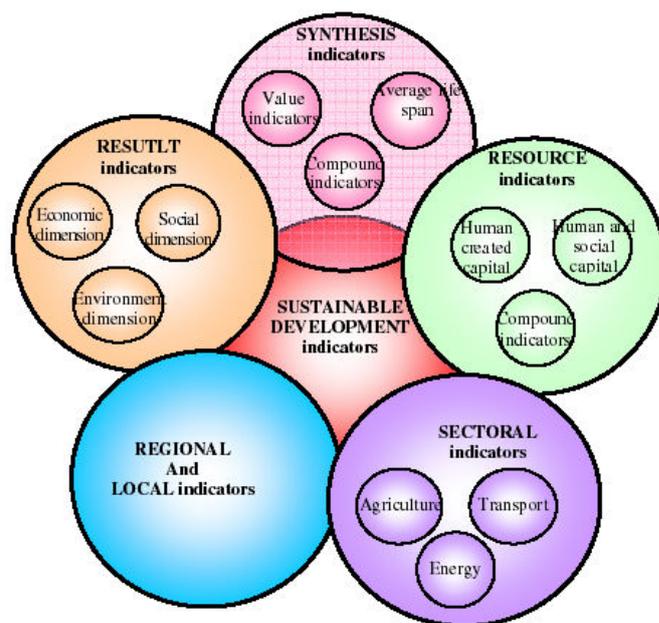


Fig. 4. The sustainable development indicators
(Source: D. Simion, M. Mazilu, M. Patrutescu, R. Ispas, 2010, p. 57)

The solution for previously problems reported is to compile a **coherent management plan**, covering the planning of tourism in Romania in the long term, irrespective of political interests. A first step towards this plan is to mobilize all experts in the field to the actual inventory of natural and human tourist potential, the current state of their knowledge and updating database. In this context, particularly important in tourism activity is the quality of services.

The touristic phenomenon represents a permanent source of potential actions which can bring about lacks of balance within the geographic landscape, having negative consequences on the touristic resources. An example is the landscape of Romanian beach at the end of the season in Costinesti (Figure 5).

To develop a sustainable and effective management plan, it is necessary to create and constant surveillance of the implementation of quality standards to the level of tourism services provided by the resident and foreign population.



Fig. 5. Visual and environmental pollution of a Romanian beach – Costinesti
(Sources: T. Manning, Available: http://www.usaid.gov/our_work)

For a sustainable reevaluation of tourism resources and their protection, a legal and administrative frame regarding the organization and the deployment of the tourism activity in Romania, development, approval and maintenance of ski slopes for leisure activities and of the mountain routes, the use of the Black Sea tourist beach has been developed the criteria for the certification and the definition of the tourist areas, where the environmental issues is a priority condition, have been completed.

The main actions we propose in this regard are: continuous professional training of human resources, which is involved in tourism activity; prospection of potential tourism demand, namely the exploration of the motivation that could stimulate the tourist tide between the area of residence and the place of destination; monitoring feedback from tourists, through statistical analysis performed on representative samples and use their suggestions to improve the quality of future tourism services; exploration of national and international tourist market evolution, depending on specific indicators, to identify trends in tourism and addressing the best ways and means to develop tourism activities in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

Indicators of sustainability are necessary because the decision-makers need to know some issues like: how their

actions can affect the assets and values of the destination; how external factors can affect their interests; how tourism in particular interacts with users of the destination and its assets; how can reduce future risks to the ecological, socio-cultural and economic functions of regions (destinations) and to enhance overall sustainability [14]. Figure 6 presents a case study for Black Sea Coast which were identified the indicators of sustainable development for tourism destination for these coastal zones.

The tourism has been marked with new valences by the coordinates of the sustainable tourism, a new type which is adequate to the this modern age. The indicator's system can be the measurement of the interaction between the protection of the natural resources, the economic development and the satisfaction of the needs customers-tourists. The conservation of the patrimony's wealth and diversity is an important purpose of the sustainable tourism, by protecting the traditions and the expression forms of the links in the area of the consolidation of the population's cultural identity and the stimulation of the associative life. It requires the development of a certain management strategy on types of tourism activities, namely: the activity management of tourist agencies; accommodation services management; recreation services management; cure and spa treatments services management; cultural

and

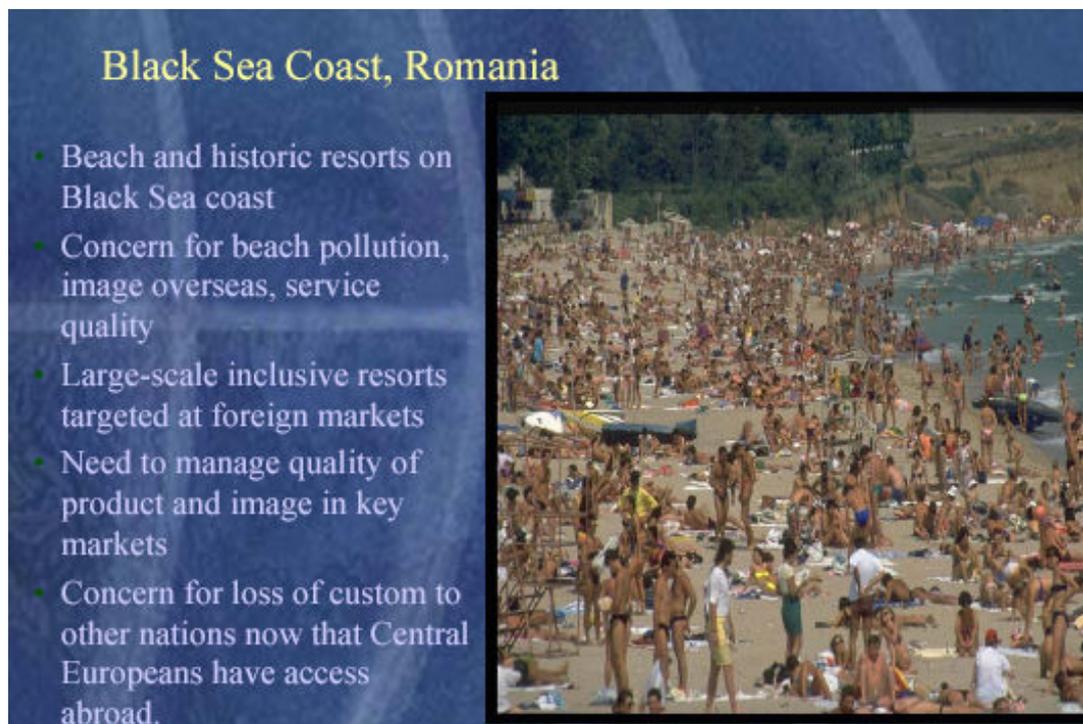


Fig. 6. Indicators of sustainable development for tourism destination situated in coastal zones. Case study: Black Sea Coast (Sources: T. Manning, Available: http://www.usaid.gov/our_work)

entertainment services management; tourism promotion services management, etc..

Quality management in current tourism is at the beginning, but its implementation would benefit the development of this domain. The possibility of obtaining irredeemable financial assistance to implement the system creates an opportunity in this regard and may increase the performance and standards of activities prevailing within the tourism industry.

Tourism, like any field of activity, in order to develop effectively, it needs an appropriate organizational framework resulting from the implementation of a modern management, including measures, methods, specific social and technoeconomic techniques. This framework needs to consider the following requirements of competitiveness: to know why is in competition, can develop strategic processes that bring together different visions and strategies of actors within it, can mobilize resources and capacities and can develop new ones, to be able to connect to networks of knowledge production, to can easily modify the structure and nature of institutions [15].

These five elements, defining the competitiveness of a region, should be incorporated into regional development policies in the context of knowledge-based society and an economy based on intensive and effective use of intellectual capital.

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