

DURABLE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract:

Tourism is a factor in the degradation and pollution of the environment and of the touristic potential, either by tourist direct pressure on the landscape, flora and fauna or other touristic objectives which can be partially or wholly deteriorated. This can happen due to a misconception about capitalizing and equipping some areas or touristic objectives. That is why promoting some forms of durable development is necessary, as they are based on ecosystems and on the touristic environmental capacity.

Key words: *durable development, ecotourism, environment, touristic potential, raw materials*

JEL classification: *L83, O13*

Introduction

Tourism relies on the environment as its raw material, the object and activity field of touristic industry. Its components are touristic resources that enable the development of different forms of tourism: leisure tourism, cultural tourism, spa tourism, seaside tourism, etc.

Pollution and degradation of touristic resources and of the environment is the consequence of three groups of factors: natural factors related to economic development and which are important in capitalizing touristic resources. Natural factors (soil erosion, earthquakes, flood etc) have degraded or destroyed a lot of touristic resources. Diverse economic factors constitute important sources of pollution and degradation of the environment, as well as the general framework of touristic resources development: air, soil and water pollution, phonic pollution and degradation of landscape, deforestation around resorts. As far as the third group of factors is concerned, tourism, as a space and touristic resources consumer participates implicitly in the degradation and pollution of the environment and of the touristic potential, by direct pressure of tourists on landscape, flora and fauna and of other touristic objectives that can deteriorated by capitalizing on an area. The development of tourism worldwide, the destructive action of tourists on tourist resources present an increasing intensity every year, especially in the areas or tourist objectives where there is tourist concentration and where there are no amenities for practicing different forms of tourism.

Uncontrolled tourist circulation in parks, resorts, forests leads to their degradation, extinction of flora, destruction of the environment, of the therapeutic values: bioclimate, aerosols, air purity, lakes. The intensification of traffic and lack of parking spaces, phonic pollution alter the air quality, the therapy phenomenon, which accentuated if resorts are close to heavy traffic. Both negative phenomena have an

intensity and destructive action which is increased at the weekend when “tourist pressure” grows.

Degradation of the environment and tourist potential can be combined with unsystematic development of cities, projects and investment objectives, setting inadequate touristic material resources, ugly buildings, inadequate architectural ethnographic or natural specificity of the tourist area, which can affect the ecological equilibrium of a territory.

Concept and principles of durable development of tourism

The concept of durable development designates the totality of forms and methods of socio-economic development which represent equilibrium between socio-economic systems and natural capital. The most common definition of durable development is given by the Worldwide Commission for Environment and Development (WCED) in the report “Our common future” or Report Brundtland: "durable development is the development which follows the satisfaction of needs at present without compromising the possibility for future generation to satisfy their needs". Durable development attempts to find a theoretical framework to make decisions in any situation, related to the environment, economy or social environment.

Durable development in tourism appeared at the beginning of the 1990s. Durable tourism is different from mass tourism as it is an alternative based on:

- minimizing the impact of touristic activity on environment to obtain ecological durability;
- minimizing the negative impact of touristic activity on local community and its members to obtain social durability;
- minimizing the negative impact on culture, traditions and customs to obtain cultural durability.

Durable tourism is a positive approach to reduce tensions created by the complexity of interactions between touristic industry, tourists, natural environment, local communities as hosts, and it also implies natural, historical and cultural resource preservation to be exploited in the future. Durable tourism implies a development which has little impact on the environment and the quality of the environment can be maintained or improved, the high level of satisfaction is maintained and benefits are known for all societies. Durable development satisfies tourist needs and the host regions' needs and protects and raises chances and opportunities for the future. Durable tourism covers forms and activities in hospitality industry, including mass tourism, cultural tourism, business tourism, rural tourism, cruise tourism, religious tourism, sports tourism. The orientation process towards durability must be coordinated nationally by governmental factors and it is sustained locally. Durable development implies permanence which means that durable tourism supposes optimal use of resources (including biological diversity), minimizing the negative economic, and social, cultural and ecological impact, maximizing benefits of local communities, national economies and preservation of nature.

The aim of the durable development of tourism must be should be subordinated to national and regional plans for economic and social development. The actions may cover economic aims (raising incomes, diversifying and integrated activities, controlling development), social aims (reducing poverty, inequality, even distribution of income, protection of patrimony, and implication of local communities) or ecological aims (protecting ecotourism functions, preserving and using durable diversity). Some specialists speak about durable development of tourism rather than durable tourism, the former refers to all aspects of development, the latter to aspects of tourism, such as air transport.

Respecting, promoting durable development principles is a means to protect, preserve and capitalize on cultural historical and architectural potential. In less developed countries, promoting a region as a tourist destination is the expected effect on the rise and development of economy.

The development of tourism is the consequence of social-economical factors. It stimulates other economic areas such as: industry, agriculture, constructions, transport, commerce, hotels, catering, souvenirs and handcraft.

It is vital that society becomes aware of the issues related to the progressive development of the environment and its implications on human race and come up with solutions.

Durable development aims at avoiding disasters, as natural resources are limited and the absorption power. The concept presupposes performances on three levels:

- economic – raising the degree of exploitation of resources;
- ecologic – recycling, avoiding environmental degradation;
- social – increasing the number of jobs, practicing tourism as physical and mental regeneration.

The difficulty to accept this concept in Romanian tourism consists in mentioning the operational elements adapted to the present transition period.

In order to realize durable development, the following objectives are set:

- increasing goods and services intensity;
- reducing consumption of materials and energy;
- eliminating pollution;
- increasing recycling;
- maximizing utility of renewable resources.

The strategy to realize durable tourism presupposes:

- respect and care towards human habitat;
- increasing the living standard, preserving bio-ecosystem on Earth and biodiversity;
- reducing the exploitation of resources and protecting the capacity to sustain life on Earth
- changing individual attitude ;
- the possibility that communities preserve the environment.

Durable development is a concept which is supposed to solve contemporary problems, such as: degradation of the environment, losing trust in institutions, uncontrolled extension of cities, job insecurity, inflation, unemployment, poverty and other financial economic geopolitical crisis. Durable development of tourism is very important as this sector depends on tourist attraction and activities in nature, on historical and cultural heritage of touristic destinations.

The majority of tourists visit attractive areas which are functional, clean, unpolluted, and that is why environmental quality must be maintained and improved.

As specified in Development Program of touristic products (Monitorul Oficial 192/2009) – durable development is based on the following principles:

- establishing ecologic limits, standards and regulations to reduce unjustified consumption
- redistributing economic activity and re-allocation of resources to satisfy needs and increase economic growth ;
- maintaining an optimal level of population;
- preserving basic resources and natural values;
- legal access to resources and increasing efforts to use them rationally;
- establishing a minimum rate of exploitation and consumption of resources;
- community control, the role of local community in making decisions for local development;

- ensuring the management of resources.

From the perspective of durable development, landscape organization may be an intervention that makes an agreement between human, individual, social needs with resources and real potential of the natural environment, technological level and financial resources. The development of tourism must be planned so that local communities should benefit from the socio-economic advantages created by tourism.

Interaction of tourist activity with the environment

The quality of the environment is affected by two groups of factors: objective factors, resulting from unfavorable natural phenomena and subjective factors caused by human activities. Unlike negative results for the environment, tourism may have a contribution which can stop the degradation of the environment by adopting specific and efficient regulations.

The relief, hydrographic network, landscape, natural spa resources, natural monuments archeological sites, historic sites, etc are all components of the environment and are part of the touristic offer. If these resources are varied and complex, unaltered and unaffected by destructive actions, there is a lot of tourist motivation. Thus, the relationship tourism-environment protects the environment and preserves it and it also represents the primordial condition to develop tourism. Any intervention to modify prime properties brings prejudices to tourist potential and ecological equilibrium.

This relationship was highlighted in 1967 at the Conference of the International Union for Environment protection - Czechoslovakia, in 1968 at international symposiums to preserve nature in Cluj-Napoca, at the Conference of UN for protection of the environment in Stockholm, in 1972, in 1991, in Canada, Conference in Rio in 1992, in 1996 in Germany. In 1987, the „Worldwide Commission for Environmental protection and development” was set up, with a main strategy towards governmental administrations. A new level in this strategy has a special relevance especially in Western Europe. Modern tourism demonstrates that human activities manipulate the environment both positively and negatively and consequences are not easy to predict. J. Krippendorf underlined that: *“If we can lose and then reform the capital in other sectors of economy, this is not a valid action in tourism where landscape and land are irremediably lost”*.

It is obvious that we can no longer ignore the environment. Tourism and the environment are in harmony when tourism has certain benefits or some negative effects, such as:

- tourism contributes to a loss or deterioration of identity, cultural values due to standardization, loss of authenticity, adapting traditions to tourist requirements;
- tourist demand for art objects and commodities during festivals influences local population and changes mentality and moral values;
- sacred objects and places as seen as goods on sale and are no longer respected;
- to satisfy tourists who want to see familiar facilities, tourist destinations risk standardization.

In general, tourists are to blame for environmental pollution and damages. Many damages come from uncontrolled tourism. This situation happens when the number of tourists in an area is over the capacity to support it. In rare cases nature is not degraded by tourists.

Modalities to prevent degradation of the environment as far as tourist circulation is concerned:

- limiting tourist access in certain areas around architectural monuments and art monuments;
- accompanying tourist groups by specialized staff, especially in caves
- establishing differentiated prices according to times, days and weekends.

Many degradations can be controlled, stopped and prevented through plans of development of tourist activity. Thus, negative influences on the environment can be reduced. National authorities together with local authorities can control the way touristic activity develops and can adopt regulations to limit constructions, to set up parks and natural reservations, to limit the number of tourists.

Environmental protection and touristic patrimony is influenced by raising awareness about nature, historical monuments art and architectural monuments, in order to educate the population on environment and tourist potential.

Conclusions

Due to the fact that the component elements of tourist potential represent essential factors that motivate tourist, the tourist industry should have the greatest implication in protecting the environment. The strong dependency of tourism on the environment is a great influence on tourist activity and the degree of satisfaction of tourists.

The relationship between tourism and environment is mutual: environment, be it natural, cultural, social, represents the element of travel, the motivation of tourists, the so-called raw material of tourist activity. A clean unaltered environment cannot exist without durable tourism.

The analysis of negative and positive effects of tourism on environment implies limiting the tourist potential. The development or visit level may lead to deteriorating the environment by: activities, means of transport, length of stay etc, areas and objectives must be managed so that there is an optimal number of visitors and the concept of “durable development“ is the answer.

In tourism there must be efficient organizations both in the public sector and in the private one and there must be a legislation that should protect the environment. There should also be standards for tourist facilities. For every tourist activity there should be a strategy for financing and communities should be involved in developing tourism using specific means and actions.

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