

EVOLUTIONS AND TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ROMANIAN SEASIDE TOURISM AFTER ROMANIA'S INTEGRATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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ABSTRACT: *Romanian seaside tourism is not yet well developed and depends mostly on domestic tourists. To increase the international tourism flows on the seaside our country has to make big investments to modernize the existing touristic structures with functions of accommodation, to develop touristic structures of entertainment, to create special events for the decrease of seasonality, to diversify the touristic supply and not last, to increase the global quality of touristic services. In this development process, we need to take into account the European and international evolutions and trends in tourism.*

KEY WORDS: *evolution, Romanian seaside, seaside tourism, touristic supply, tourists, world tourism, European Union, index of competitiveness, seaside tourism development*

1. WORLD TOURISM TRENDS

The main trends registered currently in the area of world tourism, which will grow in the perspective of the years 2020, regarding the touristic supply and demand were identified in special studies of the World Tourism Organisation. Among most significant aspects, can be mentioned [2]:

- an increasing number of tourists who want to satisfy their hobby and their special interests, based on nature, historic places, economic activities and professional interests;
- ethnic tourism, represented of people who want to visit the places they or their ancestors were born, is developing; a special side is represented by the religious tourism;
- the demand for new destinations is growing, with profitable effects for the development of new zones or for the improvement and expand of existing ones;
- the concernment about maintaining or improving the state of health increases and, in this way, stimulates the development of the balnear resorts and centres of

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balnear treatments; hotels from resorts have to respond to these demands, comprising facilitations and units for gymnastics, fitness, another treatments and procedures, breeding tourists' interest;

- a tendency of increasing the number of short vacations; this fact permitting the development of several touristic destinations, and for the satisfaction of the demand, the occasion to offer facilitations and activities for tourists in all seasons;
- an increasing number of third age persons who are active and want to travel, without any decrease in number of middle age persons or young population; at the same time, the handicapped persons travel a lot and this fact causes the adaptation of services and utilities for this segment of clientele;
- tourists become more sophisticated and expects attractions of good quality, appropriate utilities and services and the best ratio between tariffs and quality in their travels;
- travels for business, congress, conferences, reunions are developing, bringing benefits to organizers; the persons who participate in such events are in the same time and "vacational" tourists, who want to know the zone they visit;
- the increasing number of tourists concerned about the problems of natural and social environment; due to this fact many destinations are preoccupied to adopt development programs and want to encourage the tourism of good quality, which avoids the environmental and social problems, optimizing the economic benefits;
- the oldest touristic resorts are restructured and modernised in order to satisfy the present expectations of tourists, the process being managed with many precaution;
- tourism use much more the modern technology for booking or marketing services; in the last period the internet has become a very important mean of information and marketing.

For Europe the specialists forecast that tourism will be influenced by certain factors in the next decades as:

1. European industry of tourism will face the increasing competition from the region and out of region. The factors which compete to this situation are: political factors, social and demographic changes, economic and financial competition, technological innovations, promotional activities of competitor regions and others. In the same time, a series of goods and services compete with tourism in order to ocupate the leisure of potential tourists, creating another form of competitive pressure.
2. Extension of spending free time supply in the residential zones (for instance, the thematic or recreational parks, clubs of health, cultural events and sportive ones) will lead to shorter holidays and to holidays spend near home.
3. Introduction of euro as common currency for many European countries will cause the growth of travels inside Europe.
4. Non-regulation in the air transport caused an afflux of new airlines, with low cost on pan-European races that increase the number of rest travels.

Romanian tourism is due to outface both opportunities and risks involved by our country's integration in the European Union, and his development has to respect the global trends in this sector of activity, taking into account the factors of influence.

2. COMPETITIVENESS INDEX IN EUROPEAN TOURISM

Tourism represents for Romania the economic sector which has a valuable potential of development, still not sufficient exploited and which can become a source of attraction for investors and foreign tourists. This fact becomes heavier due to strong competition from neighbour countries (Hungary, Bulgaria and Croatia) and because of problems concerning the competitiveness of Romanian tourism. Romania has the lowest value of competitiveness index (58.91) comparatively with Hungary (78.44), Czech Republic (74.47), Bulgaria (68.57), Croatia (68.04), Poland (66.03) and Slovakia (62.84), as it is mentioned in the National Authority of Tourism' project of strategy over the period 2007-2013 [6].

The competitiveness index of a country's touristic industry was obtained through the calculation of arithmetic average of the following indexes: price, infrastructure, environment, technology, human funds and social problems. The data sources for these indicators are the development indicators created by World Bank, and the reports of United Nations Organisation and The World Tourism and Travel Council.

In the National Development Plan 2007-2013 of Romania, that aims to reduce the disparities between our country and the European Union, a special attention is given to the sustainable development of tourism, through cooperation between regions and relationship development of the investments in tourism - investments concerning the adaptation of utilities network that provides general services, respectively those which deal with used waters and garbage management, pollution, remake the sceneries, enter in the touristic circuit of the protected areas, preservation of natural resources and their rehabilitation, protection of the coast zone, regularization of rivers and lakes, protection of beaches - elements that represents the foundation of sustainable development of tourism.

In this plan it is mentioned also the fact that the seaside tourism does not turn to good account the touristic potential of the Romanian seaside of Black Sea. Delayed privatisation (Neptun, the second resort of the Romanian seaside has been privatised in the period 2002-2003), old capacities of touristic accommodation, the absence of investments in touristic structures of entertainment, the lack of touristic zonal politics in order to reduce the seasonality and the absence of qualified personnel are only several reasons which decreased the competitiveness of Romanian seaside tourism on the external markets and conduced to the loss of big tour-operators, as: TUI, Neckerman, Thomas Cook and others.

3. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF ROMANIAN TOURISM

In his development strategy of Romanian tourism, created in 2006, National Authority for Tourism proposes many strategic directions, actions and procedures for the development of Romanian seaside tourism, in order to integrate this on the touristic world market. First, the development of tourism supposes the development of general infrastructure (the achievement of freeways, the modernization of railway transport, of the airport Mihail Kogălniceanu and others).

Secondly, it is necessary the diversification of touristic supply through:

consolidation and development of the traditional forms of tourism - rest and entertainment, water treatment; promotion of other forms of tourism: itinerant tourism, cultural tourism, religious tourism, rural tourism, business and reunions tourism, specialized tourism (horsemanship, scientifically, etc.); diversification of the entertainment supply (nautical, cruises, sinking, underwater picture, sports, pools etc.).

Thirdly, the Romanian seaside tourism can recover his place on the external market through the growth of general attractiveness of the resorts and that means: the modernization of every base of treatments from the seaside resorts, breed the quality of touristic services (training yearly the employees) in the touristic structures with function of accommodation, respectively in food structures; the modernization of hotels which have treatment bases and their endowment with systems of heating for the enlargement of the period of operation; the elimination of the old equipments and endowments of entertainment and their replacement with modern equipments.

Fourthly, the development of tourism involves the growth of services quality offered by seaside beaches, which can be realized by respecting the Blue Flag criteria.

Fifthly, the development of Romanian tourism means the protection of natural and human created environment, especially coast environment which is most exposed to degradation by natural and human factors.

Sixthly, the integration in European and international programs for Black Sea and in the development politics of tourism in the basin of Black Sea represents another strategic aim for the development of seaside tourism.

Not last, the accentuation of touristic supply promotion, the development of training and inform the population concerning the relation between tourism and environment and the necessity of environment protection represent important strategic directions of action for the launch of Romanian tourism from the Black Sea zone on world market.

The privatization of touristic structures with accommodation function from the Romanian seaside represents one of the important solutions for the lift of qualitative level of touristic services and to attract bigger flows of Romanian and foreign tourists.

In our country, tourism privatization began later, in the conditions in which the privatization strategy was created in 1997. Romanian tourism was privatized through following methods: sale of actives, sale of shares, creation of mixed societies and tenancy of administration. Unfortunately, the methods used, without measures of encouragement and stimulation of the operators from services sector have not produced the expected results, and, on the background of economic general decline, they determined the physical degradation of the existing material base and the disqualification of quality and variety of services [1].

In the year 2001, Tourism Ministry took over the decision of privatize the tourism commercial societies from Authority for Privatization and Administration of State Interests. The program of privatization launched in 2001 has been intensifying in the next years, attracting many investors.

Analysing the situation of the touristic structures with functions of accommodation of the Romanian seaside over the period 2002-2006, presented in table 1, we notice the fact that the whole private property dominates and it has been growing from one year to other.

Table 1. The evolution of the structures of touristic reception with functions of accommodation on property forms on the seaside over the period 2002-2006

- Number of touristic structures-

Year	Total	Property form					
		Whole state	Major state	Major private	Whole private	Cooperative	Public
2002	811	50	123	115	452	14	57
2003	863	54	78	57	607	14	53
2004	897	86	56	12	668	15	60
2005	970	82	62	11	739	14	62
2006	989	77	62	11	763	14	62

Source: Processing statistical data offered by Statistics Office Constanța

4. PROPOSALS FOR SEASIDE PRIVATIZATION

One of the obstacles which stood in the path of Romanian seaside privatization is the seasonal character of the littoral tourism. Tourism seasonality in the Black Sea zone represents a problem for investors, because the investment is profitable only if the structure of accommodation is functioning permanently, practicing in off-peak season business tourism, cultural tourism, treatment tourism, entertainment tourism. For this purpose, the investors have to increase the quantum of the investments, to elaborate projects of hotels' modernization for the period of off-season and to access structural funds. The Environment and Sustainable Development Ministry encourages the owners of hotels to invest in their modernization through the granting of ecologic labels. Obtaining these eco-labels supposes investments (for instance, endowments such as: the light with motional sensors on halls and in elevators beat of washstands with photocells, detergents without phosphates and others), that are paid off quickly through the reduced consumptions of resources and the ecologic material utilization.

A solution for efficient privatization of the seaside could be the adoption of Bulgarian model, the investors buying not only the hotel, but also the restaurant and other facilities, so that to offer complete touristic services to tourists. In Bulgaria, tourism privatization began earlier than in Romania, respectively in 1993. The big advantage of Bulgarian investors was the association with the best German tour-operators, TUI and NECKERMAN, which offered money for investments, either for the modernization of existing hotels, or for the build of new hotels, according to German's projects. The modernized touristic infrastructure, services of high quality and convenient prices attracted many foreign tourists, among which tourists from Romania. The Romanian tourist became exacting regarding services quality and prefers to allocate the same amount of his money even less on the Bulgarian seaside.

Another solution for the Romanian seaside is the affiliation of many hotels to a hotel chain of international notoriety. This opportunity means financial funds for investments, continuous modernization and the guarantee of high quality. On seaside there is just three hotels included in hotel chain: Hotel "Ibis" of three stars from the chain "Accor Hotels", destined to vacation in summer and to business in winter; Hotel "Riu Fantasy Beach" of four stars from the hotel chain "RIU", specialized in seaside hotels and Hotel "Best Western Savoy" from the chain "Best Western". Although the

tariffs of accommodation are higher, these hotels offer the system "all-inclusive" that all Romanian tourists and foreigners want. These hotels example incorporated in strong international hotel chains must followed by other hotel's owners from the Romanian seaside, because only in this way these hotels will be known in the whole world and will attract many foreign tourists.

Analysing the structure of international tourism flows on main countries of origin, statistical data place Germany on first place, holding the major part from all foreign tourists accommodated on seaside. In 2006 Germany accounted for 20.5% of total number of foreign tourists. Italy ranked second with 8.1%, followed by Russian Federation (7.2%), France (6.6%) and Norway (4.7%).

In the last years there is a dramatic reduction of tourists' number from northern countries, but also those from the other emittent countries. Therefore there is the necessity of an aggressive policy to promote the Romanian seaside, to modernise the material structure of each littoral resort, to finalise the privatization process of the seaside, to diversify touristic supply, to reduce seasonality, to train permanently the force of labour employee in tourism and to rise the qualitative level of touristic services for the regainment of international traditional markets and for the attraction of many foreign tourists flows.

All these conjugated efforts have to create a touristic destination competitive on European and international level, turning to good account the touristic resources of the Romanian seaside of Black Sea.

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