

THE POTENTIAL AND CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

When talking about the concepts of tourism potential and heritage tourism, tourism professionals are using different terminologies and concepts, both in form and content. The tourism potential of a given space is defined as "all natural components, cultural-historical, socio-demographic, technical and economic, scientifically recognized, quantitatively, qualitatively, proven through practice and showing the possibilities for tourism and give specific functionality for tourism, to the extent that it provides natural tourism resources, whose recovery amid technical and tourist facilities in the context of protecting the environment, can cause a tourism activity, allowing its entry into the tourist circuit."¹ In other words, a territory is important in terms of tourism to the extent that can provide, by exploiting tourism resources in the context of protecting the natural environment and can develop a tourist activity, giving its option to enter into a travel circuit. Regarding to identify and establish scientific data about some components of tourism potential, this paper shows that it is necessary to use interdisciplinary research and tourism resources can be fructified only after experts in the field have given their consent. Components of tourism potential, both natural and anthropogenic ones are considered by some experts as attractions and tourist resources. The two terms, their contents differ from each other. While "tourist attraction" is the affective component of the tourist potential, "tourist resource" refers more to the economic aspect of it.

Keywords: *romanian tourism potential, sustainable tourism, tourism components, tourism forms, tourism resources*

Regarding the concept of tourism potential, some researchers posed it as "all elements of the natural and social history, which can be exploited to a certain stage"², while others are watching it from the perspective of natural component defining it as "all the possibilities, capacity and conditions including material reserves, which provides the natural geographical landscape for any form of tourist activity"³. Specialists in tourism, render the notion of tourism potential through heritage tourism. After some specialists, representing tourism fund, are all natural and cultural resources that include elements of nature tourism, tourists offer, and forms the basis for a specific area, tourist region destination, while others substitute the term of tourism potential to heritage tourism, which comprises the elements of technical utilities and travel order. In our opinion, the correct term would be tourism potential with its two components, natural tourism resources and anthropogenic tourism resources. The tourism potential with its natural component contains all tourism resources, in their totality, with the natural field, through its elements, relief, climate, hydrography, flora, fauna, and represents a certain tourist value and functionality given from the touristic point of view of a territory. The tourism potential with its anthropogenic component, includes cultural, historical, economic, social and demographic aspects, wick through their value may be of interest for tourists.

The two components of tourism potential, the natural and human factor, represent a major role in the evolution and development of tourism. They can develop tourist activities with the following characteristics:

- beautiful landscapes, no matter where they are situated, in various forms of relief;

¹ Glăvan, V, "Tourism geography", Foundation of Romania of Tomorrow Publishing House, Bucharest 2005:52

² Posea, Gr & Popescu, N, "Papers of National Colloquium of tourism geography", Academy Publishing House, Bucharest 1969:84

³ Grigore, M, "Natural tourist potential of tourism", Bucharest University Publishing House, Bucharest 1974:33

- curative and therapeutic quality of natural causes;
- presence of natural conditions that can give birth to some specific forms of tourism;
- the importance of cognitive and educational aspect of the tourist objectives;

The tourism potential is the tourism offer of an area, of a region with basic equipment, the food and industrial products used in tourist consumption, infrastructure, manpower and marketing of tourism activities, which in the end they all constitute the heritage or the tourism offer. The tourist offer -natural resources, cultural-historical sights, economic and technical equipment- is the raw material in tourism activity, materialized by the existence of numerous tourism products made by those working in tourism, through service benefits.

In terms of functionality and tourist valorisation of elements of the natural components of tourism, in the opinion of Grigore Posea, it can be distinguished the following:

- active natural tourism potential, which assume immediate advantage of certain components;
- available natural potential, which covers some inaccessible landscapes and slopes that can be arranged for skiing;

Depending on the number of items involved in the tourist circuit, it can be an absolute tourist potential, with the use of tourism resources involving the specific area parameters, and relatively tourism potential that involves partial capitalization of tourism components. In the tourism activity there are resources with inexhaustible potential and resources with limited potential. It would be recommended that any tourist planning to take into account the specifics tourism resources of that area, their operating volume and therefore the use of tourist areas must be based on ecological, social and economic indicators.

1. ROMANIAN TOURISM POTENTIAL

1.1. Natural tourism potential

The natural tourism potential is the one who retained through ages without being too much influenced by human activities. Romania's geographical position is dominated by three components, the Carpathians, the Danube and Black Sea, from where it has its status of Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic country. Natural tourism potential, given the value and contents, has a series of visitor attractions suitable for those who love nature, on the other hand it can be exploited in tourism activities in the form of so-called "raw material", entering the composition of tourism products that lead to the existence of tourism forms. The tourism potential and natural tourism resources are the natural environment components of Romania, relief, climate, flora and fauna, underground and surface water. These resources are very important for all the activity that takes place within the tourism, ensuring primary bid needed in this area. Natural resources contribute to the development of tourism activities in the light of specific components:

- physical and geographical elements are valuable through the landscape that they offer through pleasing appearance that gives the conditions for recreational amenities;
- therapeutic value of certain components of the natural tourism potential;
- support for developing certain tourist activities, resulting in the emergence of tourism forms with a particular specificity;

The components of tourist natural resources found in romanian physical-geographical landscape are:

- Relief with all its forms
 - meadows and plains;
 - hills and plateaus;
 - mountains;
 - geological phenomena;
 - forms with bizarre characteristics of relief;

- Climate
 - season air and water temperature;
 - forms of precipitation;
 - the number of sunny days;
- Water
 - drinking and mineral groundwater;
 - surface water, rivers, lakes, ponds;
 - the Danube;
 - the Black Sea;
- Flora
 - flora with different levels of relief;
 - specific vegetation;
 - flora reserves;
- Fauna
 - livestock and poultry;
 - fishing;
 - scientific and fauna reserves;

1.2. The relief - a main component of romanian tourism potential

Romania's relief is rich and varied, an important tourist potential, both in landscape value and from the perspective of numerous access opportunities, providing the framework for the many tourist activities, as well for the tourism development. All of this contributes to a pleasant and attractive environment for tourism activities .

From the tourist point of view, romanian relief presents some general features:

- Alpine and subalpine areas are located at heights between 1,800 and 2,000 meters. The alpine landscape with its large and rich pastures, where it originated the romanian shepherding that is related to a number of popular customs and traditions, then the highlands of Parang, Godeanu, Sureanu, Lotru, Bucegi, Rodna. Supalpine zones with caves existence, the glacial cirques and valleys, barren peaks specific to Fagaras mountain, which has the largest glacial relief of 127 square kilometers, with 175 glacial cirques and 50 glacial valleys. Also in this special charmed area, there are numerous lakes formed on the bottom of glacial cirques, in Retezat are 58 glacial lakes, in Fagaras- 30, Parang- 28.

Alpine and subalpine areas presents a great tourist attraction, through the variety of landscape, the altitude, the fauna, flora and the water. These features have made from romanian Carpathians an important mountain tourism. Mountaineering has become an increasingly popular sport for many tourists, especially in the Carpathians, where there are also climbing centers in cities like Sibiu, Brasov and Busteni. They were established over 1,000 routes with varying difficulty climbing, both for the summer and winter, most numerous being in Bucegi-256, Piatra Craiului-218, Retezat-71, Apuseni-69. (Glăvan 2005)

- Low and medium mountain area includes the existence of coniferous forests, deciduous with beautiful and varied landscapes. These landscape aspects are given with the differentiation of the rocks structure, the valleys, varying altitudes, numerous rivers, lakes, springs, diverse flora and fauna. The existence of settlements in picturesque valleys with a ethno-folkloric variety, situated in Maramures County, Vrancea County, Barsa, Dorna, and numerous historical and art monuments. The existence of conglomerates in various moutain massifs, after the action of some external agents like wind, frost, water, have given rise to various strange shapes, but with a great attraction for tourists, such as different "towers", "sphinxes", "mushrooms".

- Specific hilly and plateau landscape represents a significant tourism potential. There are many hills and valleys alternating with depressions, the existence of numerous deciduous forests, vineyards and orchards, pastures, meadows, rich mineral water. The relief of Dobrogea has a much greater diversity in terms of karsts, caves, and from the residual perspective with dark and rocky knolls that refreshes the North Dobrogea landscape .

In the composition of this landscape it makes its appearance a hilly landscape, characteristic to industrial extraction and processing, polluting the environment and reducing the tourism activity significantly. The landscapes of hills and plateaus presents many geological phenomena that are attractive for tourists. We recall in this regard the "Extinguished fires" in Vrancea County, the "Mud volcanoes" from Buzau County, Salt Mountain from Slănic, which were declared as natural monuments.

Plain landscape is manifested by little exploited tourist potential, given that it has many elements with special charm. Thus the existence of poplar and willow meadows, other river existing forms, pits with freshwater and saltwater, constitutes a priceless treasure in terms of tourism.

Danube's Delta and Meadow scenery presents a great originality both in terms of landscape, fauna and flora and in terms of habitat area. All these have created the Danube Delta one of the most important tourist areas in the country. Delta villages, most covered with thatched, painted in bright blue with fishing-related occupations and reed harvesting, rich fauna and the existence of many species of birds and animals, give a special touch to this area.

Black Sea's existence poses through salted water, beach, spa resources, breeze, the nearby existence of historic and cultural objectives, through water sports and so on. Along the Romanian seaside, there are numerous resorts that are offering tourists conditions for rest, recreation, spa treatment, sports and cultural entertainment -Mamaia, Eforie Nord, Techirghiol, Costinești, Mangalia, Năvodari-.

2. CLIMATE AND HYDROGRAPHIC TOURISM POTENTIAL

Climatic conditions are defined as tourism potential which gives a pleasant and attractive conditions for tourist activities. They have an important role as a natural factor in the climate cure. We are dealing with three types of bio-climates, exciting-applicant specific to plains and coastal areas, sedative-indifferent present in the hills and plateau areas and tonic-stimulant that belongs to mountainous areas. These types of bio-climates provide optimal conditions that meet the different tastes and requirements of tourists. For those who love mountain sports, they can do it both in the summer and winter, practicing specific mountain area sports, and for those who admire the beach, the sea water, the breeze, the water sports, holidays can be spent at sea.

The hydrographic potential leads to the existence and variety of water resources, minerals, rivers, natural water mirrors that are used for leisure travel -Lake Snagov, Ciucaș, Lake Siutgol- or for spa tourism -Bear Lake, Salt Lake and Lake Techirghiol-. The river water is used for tourism -fishing, rafting- and inland waters are used for fishing and boat rides. Black Sea's water qualities, salinity and fine sand is used in heliotherapy.

2.1. Flora and fauna - the basis of tourism activities development

Flora and vegetation completes the natural tourist attractions in different geographical areas. Sometimes fitogeographical potential is essential for tourism activities, such as scientific reserves, national and dendrology parks. Forested areas around the settlements have a great importance for the tourism, both by landscape and by their role in social life, because they provide conditions for rest, leisure and recreation. These forests are protected by law and the environment is not affected. Phytogeographic landscapes are found in the meadows, alpine meadows, in water meadows and ponds, marshes and delta. These monuments of nature require a duty to tourists, in order to protect and care for them. Fauna is a natural potential through its hunting and aesthetic interest. The animals represent particular interest for those who are enthusiasts of hunting trophies, these being found in mountain areas and in other plain, hills, meadows and Delta areas. Some of these animals are protected by law, their hunting being prohibited. As presented, each component of the geographical framework has a specific ability for tourism potential, these components come together in a harmonious way, leading to the complex creation of a tourism potential. As a result, the tourism forms in a given territory are distinct and varied. Romania's tourist areas predominate in the mountains and the Black Sea but also in other forms of relief.

2.2. Natural healing factors that are found in Romania

In Romania there is a great richness and variety of factors that create conditions for spa tourism development. Given the importance of these factors in health tourism, they can be structured into: mineral and thermo therapeutic muds, natural gas emanations, mines, mud, ionization, climatic factors, herbs. The mineral waters are an important source of natural cure and are an inexhaustible source. They are found mainly in mountainous areas, especially in the mountain chain of volcanic origin -Oas, Calimani, Harghita- and in the nearby hills, plateaus and plains. Romanian territory has many types of mineral waters: oligomineral, alkaline, sulfur, iodine, ferruginous, sodium chloride, arsenic, carbonated, sulfur, radioactive. They have a wide variety in terms of their physico-chemical composition, degree of mineralization and temperature.

- Carbonated water, with at least one gram per liter of carbon dioxide are used for ground or water for internal cleaning, are to be found at Borsec, Lipova, Buziaș, Biborțeni, Tusnad.
- Alkaline waters, with at least one gram / liter of sodium bicarbonate are used for internal treatment, are at Bodoc, Poiana Negri, Zizin.
- Oligo waters with less than one gram / liter carbon dioxide and other solutes, are at Felix, Calan, Călăcea and are used in external treatment,
- Alkaline-earth waters, having more than one milligram / liter of solute are used in internal treatment and are found at Lipova, Tinca, Citrus.
- Ferruginous waters, with more than 10 mg / iron liter, are used for internal treatment. They are found in Tușnad, Lipova, Vâlcele, Buzoiaș.
- Chlorine waters, with sodium chloride over 1 gram / liter, used in internal treatment at Herculane, Ocna Sibiu, or external treatment at Sovata, Ocnele, Ocna Mures, Sibiu Ocna.
- Arsenic waters have 0.7 milligrams / liter of arsenic. They are found in Covasna and Saru Dornei.
- Iodine waters with a concentration of 1 mg / liter iodine are used in internal and external cures. Are to be found at Olanesti, Călimănești, Cozia, Bazna, Govora, Slănic Moldova.
- Sulfated waters are found in Amara, Vața de Jos. In these waters sulfur is under his oxidized form.
- Radioactive waters containing uranium salt are to be found at Herculane, Sangeorz Bai and the resort.

Specific to Romania is the fact that we meet springs that have a different chemical composition and concentration on a smaller perimeter, which leads to the possibility of simultaneous treatment of several diseases for the same person. As a result, in the main resorts in Romania -Călimănești, Herculane, Vatra Dornei, Felix- a person can be treated both in the basic water profile but also other related diseases. Some of the lake waters have an important role in the therapeutic field, due to their composition of sodium chlorate with an average mineralization of 30-80 g / l. Most important lakes for health tourism are the ones in Romanian Plain, Salt Lake, Lake Amara, then Techirghiol from the sea coast. Common salt lakes are in Ocna Mures, Ocna Șugatag, Slănic, Sovata. These lakes are important for both their saltwater and for their heliothermic appearance. The sludge from these lakes are very important as well in work spas. The water of these salt lakes is used for treating conditions such as rheumatism, nervous system, gynecological diseases. Romania also has natural factors which are based on gas emanations for therapeutic purposes. In this regard we mention carbon dioxide fumes that are used as natural pits or artificial pits. Such pits are found at Tusnad, Covasna, Citrus, Buziaș. The carbonic gas from these baths is used in treating heart disease and the musculoskeletal system. Sulfurous emanations are found at Sugas Bai and Harghita.

3. ANTHROPIC TOURISM POTENTIAL

Romania is preserving some historical relics, monuments of architecture and art, a huge cultural heritage, all these developments demonstrate the evolution and continuity of the romanian people in this region. This material and spiritual fund is one of the components of the tourist offer and tourist image of Romania seen from outside its borders.

3.1. Cultural - historical tourism resources

These tourist resources refers to the history and culture of human society on the territory of Romania over time.

The historical vestiges, on the romanian territory have their own traits, the population used them and many of them are kept in museums or sites. Historic vestiges are represented by trace materials, tools, weapons, coins, castles, churches, monasteries, monuments, spiritual cave paintings, writings, drawings, documents. From ancient times we mention cults as Gumelnița, Hamangia, Boian, Cucuteni, then the culture of Thracian-Geto-Dacian, dacian fortresses from Orastie Mountains, traces of roman civilization from Porolissum settlement, bridge Apolodor from Drobeta, Adamclisi monument. Romania has many monuments from the medieval age, such as: fortresses in Sighisoara, fortresses and fortified church from Biertan, fortresses of Moldova, fortress of Targoviste city, the Hunii Iazilor castle, the fortress of Dăbâca, the fortress of Stefan cel Mare and the White Fortress. From modern and contemporary era we mention historical writings, literary, ethno folk, palaces and other monumental buildings, museums. Among these buildings we mention the Culture Palace from Iasi, Saligni bridge, Mărășești monument, the Peles Castle, the History Museum of Romania, Museum of Art of Romania, Village Museum, Romanian Peasant Museum, the wooden churches from the north and numerous memorial houses. A basic element of the romanian tourism is the rich ethno folk treasure, represented by farmhouses, furniture, tools, fabrics, pottery, museums, fairs with folk, folk events, festivals, carnivals.

3.2. The tourism potential related to technical and economic activity

These objectives were developed over time with economic goals and with time have become a tourist attraction by the size and beauty of their architecture.

Tourist and economic objectives can be divided into several groups, such as:

- Engineering and technical objectives that include bridges and viaducts, tunnels and subways, towers and lighthouses, canals and aqueducts, dams and anthropic lakes;
- Economic objectives, political and scientific comprising fairs, exhibitions, shopping centers, banking and financial centers;
- Economic diversified objectives in the field of industry, agriculture, forestry setups, dendrological parks;
- Recreational facilities: parks, water parks, clubs, casinos, zoos and botanical gardens;

All these activities and objectives are important for the tourism activity through their value, through their size, their architecture, their historical importance, cultural and scientific, aesthetics and through their degree of conservation.

Bridges and viaducts are part of engineering creation and are specific to rail and car traffic, which greatly evolved over time and are true architectural works. In this direction we mention the remains of the bridge over the Danube from Drobeta Turnu Severin, the work of the architect Apollodorus of Damascus and monumental construction from Cernavoda, the Saligny bridge. Viaducts, through their construction are true artworks and they are a great interest for tourists. The tunnels are spread mostly in mountainous areas, traveling through rocky areas, especially the rail lines. The longest tunnel in Romania is on the Ostra-Lesul Ursului track, with a length of 6 km. Metros are crossing areas from big cities and have many stations with spectacular architecture, where are located shops and bookstores.

The water channels are objects of hydratechnical nature, having an important economic role and tourist attraction. On water channels tourists can practice boat rides, various water sports and leisure activities.

Alongside these economic and tourist targets there are other tourist attractions, such as botanical and zoological gardens, studs and forest management, dendrological parks, fairs and exhibitions. The tourism potential is given by the population growth, urban population growth, structural changes on professional orientation, level of culture and civilization of the population.

By age categories, young people have an important role in increasing tourism traffic, having more free time, feeling the need of training, knowledge, entertainment. Also lately, elderly people and older ones are playing an important role in increasing the tourists number.

From the socio-professional point of view, those with secondary and higher education level are participating the most in tourist activities, especially at various winter, summer sports and cruises.

The population is the one who gives labor force in tourism through the various specializations and qualifications, which is increasing lately in most areas of the country through many tourist objectives. The population is a dynamic component in the development of tourism quality benefits, regarding to qualifications, to the existence of some skills, psychosocial skills. Human settlements, urban and rural represents for tourism the place of origin of tourists and also tourist objectives.

The urban environment is an important factor in tourism demand because the population number is large, showing an increased atmosphere pollution with a stressful way of life, with substantial population income. Cities, because of the numerous tourist objectives, of the technical and economic facilities, opportunities for accommodation, meals and entertainment, become strong objectives for tourism development. Among some of the greatest cities of the Romania, we mention: Bucharest, Cluj Napoca, Iasi, Sibiu, Brasov, Constanta.

Rural areas have less capacity to become a tourist center, but may receive a large number of tourists where specific tourism conditions are met, developing true tourist villages. Many romanian villages still keep the traditional habits and customs, have a rich folklore, art or historical monuments, and have a beautiful natural setting. There are villages that have furnished homes, aiming at tourism activities and becoming a true brand of romanian rural tourism. Such villages are: folk-ethnographic villages Săpânța, Bogdana, Novaci, Humulești, folk art villages, Sibiu, Valcea, Bucovina, Maramures villages with climatic and landscape conditions such as villages Rucar-Bran, then fishing and hunting villages, Crisan from Danube Delta and Botiza from Maramures.

CONCLUSION

Related to the capitalization of tourism resources and the development of tourism activities, are addressed notions as "types of tourism"" and "forms of tourism concepts", notions whith different content. Thereby, the tourism types represent those forms of manifestation regarding tourism motivations, also an generally expression of the tourism phenomenon. There are several interpretations regarding the "types of tourism" notion. A more accurate interpretation of the phrase "types of tourism" is showing the true motive of tourism demand, which may be under the following forms: leisure, sports, medical, research, business, meetings. It can be distinguished four main types of tourism activities: leisure and holidays tourism, cultural and educational tourism, a tourism that contributes to the preservation of health and business tourism. They correspond to an plurality of tourism forms. The "forms of tourism" are those terms and circumstances of tourism used on the tourism potential and the possibilities from technically and economically point of view in terms of capitalization, also the changes that are happening in the tourist requirements at some time. Tourism activities meet a special development and an increasing participation of people in tourism activities, existing also a large diversification in terms of tourist motivations.

This paper has been financially supported within the project entitled "Horizon 2020 -Doctoral and Postdoctoral Studies: Promoting the National Interest through Excellence, Competitiveness and Responsibility in the Field of Romanian Fundamental and Applied Scientific Research", contract

number POSDRU/159/1.5/S/140106. This project is co-financed by European Social Fund through Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013. Investing in people!

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