

ANALYSIS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM (ST) IN ROMANIA

Cristina BURGHELEA

Hyperion University of Bucharest, Romania,
crystachy@yahoo.com

Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to give a brief discussion on the development of sustainable tourism in Romania. To support the research carried out I will systematically identify and showcase comparative indicators of sustainable tourism, both quantitative and qualitative. The EU's vision on these categories is as well of great interest.

Among the main objectives of the work there are identifying the concept of sustainable tourism, stating the criteria that it must achieve, and summarizing the institutions and researchers concerned with this issue.

The obvious connection between tourism and the environment has a particular significance, which is why the protection and preservation of the environment means a primordial condition of progress and development of tourism.

The present relationship holds a two-way degree of complexity: the natural environment through its components (basic resources of tourism), the second direction being represented by the tourism activity that has a double influence, both positive and negative on the environment by changing its components.

Romanian tourism industry has an increasing contribution to economic growth and is one of the best opportunities to create income and jobs for our country. However, tourism development cannot be taken as granted.

Continuous increase in the number of travel destinations and improving the quality of existing ones puts great pressure on those responsible for Romanian destinations to find better ways to compete in the tourist market and, moreover, to achieve this in a sustainable manner. Sustainable development of tourism derives from the existence of negative impact over the environment, culture and the traditional way of life of the Romanians.

Keywords: *Sustainable tourism, sustainable development, quantitative and qualitative indicators, economic impact.*

JEL Classification: *Q56; L83.*

Introduction

In the literature, sustainable tourism (ST), sustainable development through tourism, principles of sustainable development in tourism and tourism development in the field of sustainable tourism, are most often treated as different names given for the same phenomenon, becoming increasingly interesting for scientists and practitioners of tourism in different countries. This is the result of the fact that ST (at least declaratively - at institutional level) is considered to be the most desired form of tourism development in some reception areas, especially those that have kept best their natural and cultural authenticity.

This research goes from the general level to the particular one.

Methods that underlie this research are analysis, synthesis, comparison and mathematical-statistical processing, as well as instruments such as structural, economic and statistical analysis.

This argument is based on the analysis of the theme addressed by the Romanian literature, supplemented by approaches of foreign literature as well as institutions and researchers preoccupied by this topic.

The research is supported by the study conducted in 2014 by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) on the economic impact in order to assess and quantify the contribution of tourism and travel in Romania.

1. Considerations on Sustainable Tourism (St)

The ST concept refers to the broad spectrum of sustainable development, which emphasizes the need for rational management of the natural resources.

Tourism Sustainability is a quite complex concept, because of its latent, multidimensional and relative nature.

Some of the criteria that ST must achieve may be highlighted as follows:

- ✓ Sustainability objectives should be defined and coordinated by an effective management system.
- ✓ Tourism should bring the greatest possible social and economic benefits for local communities, as well as any negative effects on them should be minimized.
- ✓ The cultural heritage of settlements must be respected and opportunities should be taken into account so that its integrity and wealth can be enhanced (Vasile et al., 2013).
- ✓ Impact on the global environment and local pollution and depletion of natural resources should be minimized and there should be support for conservation of local landscapes and biodiversity.

The need to measure sustainable tourism can be supported by the succession of reports provided by the United Nations (Millennium Project, Millenium Ecosystem Assessment, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) which coincide in their diagnosis with some of the reasons why the last two decades has been difficult progress towards sustainability. The permanence of the main reasons for the lack of sustainability in the world is also recognized in the literature (Bass, 2007) such as:

- Economic growth is still an indisputable principle, regardless of the rights and welfare of people and the environment load limits.
- The environmental benefits and costs are externalized.
- The poor are marginalized and social injustice is ignored.
- Current models of government are not designed to internalize environmental factors, to confront social injustice or develop economic models that converge in sustainable development.

Sustainable Performance measurement and monitoring their results will enable local authorities to:

- Obtain better data for decision making policy choices;
- Establish an intelligent approach to tourism planning;
- Identify areas needing improvement;
- Prioritize action projects;
- Effectively manage risks;
- Create performance benchmarks.

2. Institutions And Researchers Concerned With This Topic

The concepts of tourism development on the principles of sustainable development began to appear in the international literature on a larger scale in the mid 1980s, however, be noted that, as early as 1965 W. Hetzer formulated the definition of the so-called responsible tourism, which was actually very close to these principles (Blamey, 2001, quoted in Kowalczyk, 2010).

Debates over new ways of tourism development occurred when the concept of the so-called alternative tourism emerged (Nieżgoda, 2006). J. Krippendorfer, which published in the *Annals of Tourism Research* 1986 the article entitled "Tourism in the System of Industrial Society" is considered to be the author of the definition above. As the name suggests, it appeared in opposition to the so-called mass tourism, which was seen by its supporters as the so-called "bad choice". Alternative tourism, often identified with small-scale tourism and treated as the "good choice" was meant to oppose the "bad choice" (Clarke, 1997; Lanfa, Graburn, 1992; Weaver, 2001).

It should be noted that the quite rich literature regarding ST specifically focuses on descriptive presentation of its various aspects, with

particular emphasis on the idea, the origins and evolution of the phenomenon and terminological issues related to it. The authors pay particular attention to the discovery of the relationship between ST (as a form of tourism development) and certain types of tourism (as forms of tourist movement). At the same time, there should be marked a few skeptical voices, concerning in particular the role assigned to ST - as a remedy for all the problems of contemporary tourism. Also, it seems that, taking into account scientific publications related to ST released so far, works dedicated to theoretical aspects of ST tend to be in the minority.

One of the major publications referring strictly to existing sustainable development worldwide is the report entitled "Our Common Future", which contained a summary of the work of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the so called Brundtland Commission). This fundamental document that is still valid implies that sustainable development seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability to fulfill future needs and aspirations.

3. Theory and Indicators Supporting the Existence of Sustainable Tourism

The study reveals that there are a number of factors that influence the actual selection of indicators working in a particular destination or business, namely: political relevance, type of approach on sustainability which is adopted (e.g., weak or strong, minimalist or global), measurable, financial and other resource constraints, stakeholder interests, the level of public support, politics, etc. (Aceleanu and Serban, 2009).

An interesting analysis reveals that while the selection process should result from the definition of sustainability adopted, creating the set of indicators may actually serve at its turn to adjusting this definition.

Therefore, in literature we found evidence that some authors have attempted to develop indicators and provide theories and methodologies for sustainable tourism.

Miller (2001) focused on the development of indicators measuring the sustainability of tourism. Along with other studies dealing with the physical and human matters, the noted author provides information on several indicators showing all aspects of sustainability, environmental issues (physical and human), employment, financial leaks or issues regarding customer satisfaction.

Ko (2005) gives us another option of creating a comprehensive methodology to assess sustainable tourism. Following a review of existing literature, the author argues that "systemic sustainability assessment methods are presently not used in tourism" (Ko 2005: 4). He believes that most studies on sustainable development of tourism are descriptive, based

on qualitative and subjective data in their conclusions, without a rigorous methodology for assessing aspects of environmental sustainability of tourism.

As a result of finding these shortcomings, the author develops a conceptual framework for assessing the sustainability of tourism based on eight dimensions that relate strictly to political, economic, socio – cultural aspects, as well as those related to production or those related to the impact on the environment but also the quality of ecosystems, biodiversity and environmental policies. Each dimension is presented and evaluated based on quantitative and qualitative indicators that are scaled and grouped for assessing the sustainability of tourist destinations.

3.1. Quantitative indicators

a. Raw data: *number of tourists visiting a site / year / month, volume of waste generated.*

b. Indicators: *number of tourists on local residents.*

c. Percentage: *% of qualified staff, percentage change in the number of visitors, spending.*

3.2. Qualitative indicators

a. Categories of indicators: *level of protection.*

b. Regulation indicators: *the existence of a tourism management plan, yes / no.*

c. Nominal indicators: *eco-labels, certifications*

d. Indices based on opinion: *satisfaction of tourists or locals.*

Monitoring tourism and not only requires time and resources, and therefore the selection of indicators to be used can create any difficulties or problems.

Feasibility criteria can be stated as follows:

- *Relevance to the problem (who uses and how?);*
- *Data availability (ability to collect and process);*
- *Reliability of the information;*
- *Users' intelligibility;*
- *Comparability over time and across jurisdictions or regions.*

4. Contribution of Travel & Tourism on Economic Impact in Romania

This study is based on the 2014 annual research report, provided by the World Travel & Tourism Council - WTCC.

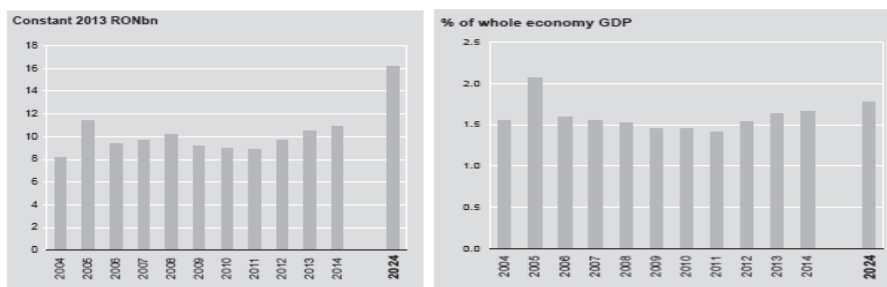
It seems that the forecast regarding involved indicators is very good and in a continuous growth. I mention that all values are set to be constant prices and exchange rates in the year 2013.

The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP

The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP reflects "internal" tourism and travel expenses (total expenditure in a given country in tourism and travel by residents and non-residents for business and leisure) and "individual" government spending - Government spending on travel and tourism services directly related to visitors, such as cultural expenditure (e.g. museums) or recreational (e.g. national parks).

This contribution was calculated to be consistent with the output, expressed in national accounting, of characteristic tourism sectors such as hotels, airlines, airports, travel agents, and leisure and recreational services that deal directly with tourists. The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP is calculated from the total domestic expenditure "clearing out" purchases made by various sectors of tourism.

In 2013 it has reached a value of 10.5 billion RON (1.6% of total GDP) and it managed to grow as forecasted by 3.7% in 2014, and will continue to grow by 4.0% per year between 2014-2024, in 2024 it is estimated to reach a value of 16.2 billion RON (1.8% of total GDP) - see Figure 1.



(Source: WTTC, 2014)

Figure 1. The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP

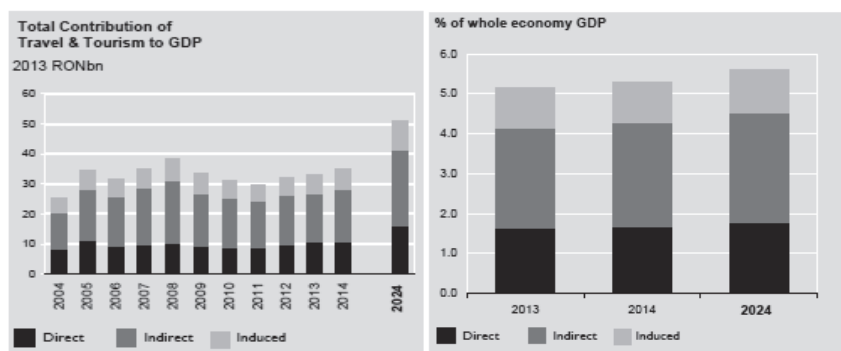
The total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP

The total contribution of Travel & Tourism includes the "broader impact" (i.e. indirect and induced impacts) on the economy. "Indirect" Contribution includes GDP and jobs supported by:

- ✓ Investments travel and tourism which is an important aspect spent both current activity and the future, which include investment activity and the acquisition of new aircraft and construction of new hotels.
- ✓ "Collective" Government spending that helps travel and tourism activity in several different ways on behalf of "community at large" - for example, marketing and promotion of tourism, aviation administration, security services, security services, tourist area , cleaning the tourist resort area, etc.;

- ✓ Domestic markets of goods and services in sectors that deal directly with tourists - including the purchase of catering and cleaning hotels, fuel and catering services to airlines and IT services to travel agencies .

The total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was 33.1 bn RON (5.1% of GDP) in 2013, and as expected in 2014 increased by 5.4%, and will increase by 3.8% per year, in 2024 it is expected to reach 50.8 bn RON (5.6% of GDP) (see Figure 2).



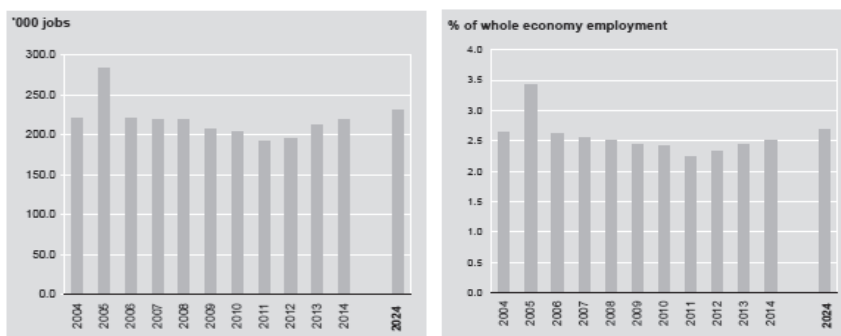
(Source: WTTC, 2014)

Figure 2. The total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP

The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to employment

In 2013, travel and tourism directly supported 212,500 jobs (2.4% of total employment). This has resulted in an increase of 3.2% in 2014 and continues to increase annually by 0.5% and is expected in 2024 to reach a value of 231,000 jobs (2.7% of total employment) (see Figure 3).

This contribution includes employment by hotels, travel agencies, airlines and other passenger services (excluding commuter services). We can also add activities of restaurant and leisure industry directly supported by tourists.

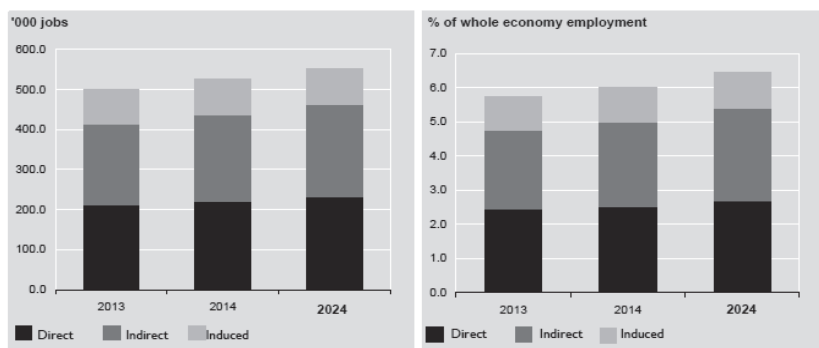


(Source: WTTC, 2014)

Figure 3. The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to employment

The total contribution of Travel & Tourism to employment

In 2013, the total contribution of travel and tourism to employment, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry was 5.7% of total employment (500,500 jobs). This led to an increase by 5.3% in 2014, i.e. 527,000 jobs, with an annual increase of 0.5%, which should reach 553,000 jobs in 2024 (6.5% of the total) (see Figure 4).

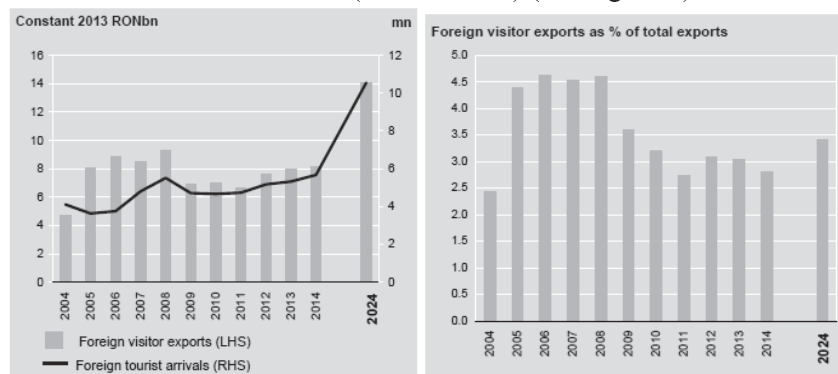


(Source: WTTC, 2014)

Figure 4. The total contribution of Travel & Tourism to employment

Visitor exports

Visitor Exports generated in 2013 a value of 8.0 bln RON (3.0% of total exports). This led to an increase of 1.4% in 2014 and will continue to grow by 5.7% per year from 2014 to 2024, which means that in 2024 it will reach the value of 14.1 bln RON (3,4% of total) (see Figure 5).



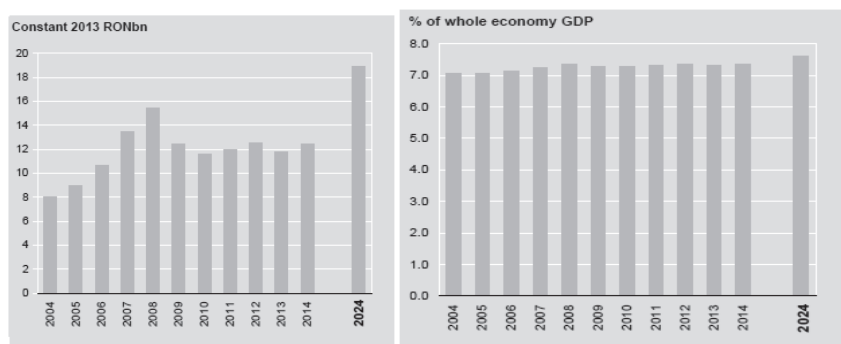
(Source: WTTC, 2014)

Figure 5. Visitor exports

Investments

In 2013, investments in tourism and travel have registered a value of 11.8 bln RON or 7.3% of total investments. In 2014 they increased by 5.3% and according to the forecast they are going to continue increasing over the next decade by 4.3% per year to reach in 2024 a value of 18.9 bln RON (7.6% of total) (see Figure 6).

The share of Travel & Tourism in total national investment will increase from 7.4% in 2014 to 7.6% in 2024.



(Source: WTTC, 2014)

Figure 6. Visitor exports

From the above showcased values we can highlight the relative importance of the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP. A global top (consisting of 184 countries) reflects the fact that Romania was ranked 60th in 2013 (in absolute value). Also in 2013, according to the relative size of the contribution to GDP, the country ranked 154th. According to forecasts made in 2014, Romania has registered a strong growth peaking at 68th place. According to estimates of the period 2014-2024, our country will be able to obtain a long term increase in order to reach the 115th place out of the 184 countries ranked.

Conclusions

Due to the rapid expansion of the tourism sector, traditional and emerging tourism destinations are facing increasing pressure on the natural, cultural and socio-economic environments. There is now recognition that uncontrolled growth of tourism aims at short-term benefits which often can lead to negative effects, damaging the environment and societies, and destroying the basis on which it is built and thrives on tourism. When tourism is planned, developed and managed using sustainable criteria, its

benefits can be spread through society and the natural and cultural environment.

Host societies gradually became aware of the problems of unsustainable tourism, and sustainability concerns are increasingly being addressed in national tourism, regional and local level, policies, strategies and plans. In addition, more and more tourists are now eager for higher environmental standards in the supply of tourist services and a greater commitment to local communities and economies.

Each tourist destination offers certain data and information that can serve as indicators where their relevance to sustainability issues is well understood. Indicators most commonly used and well understood are those related to economic issues, such as tourism revenues and expenditures, tourism baseline data and statistics, as well as tourist arrivals, overnight stays, accommodation capacities etc.

These data are conventionally used to measure the success of the tourism industry, but are also essential information for a range of sustainability issues that are related to tourism numbers and the level of stress on resources.

In addition to supporting tourism planning and monitoring processes, indicators are also important tools of communication.

Indicators can provide the necessary information to support their active involvement and commitment to the urgent and inescapable responsibility of managers in the public and private tourism so as to achieve a more sustainable tourism sector and contribute strongly to sustainable development and poverty reduction, two of the major challenges of our contemporary societies.

Studying the literature reveals that there is still no universal agreement on a list of indicators to compare levels of sustainability in various tourist destinations. This is partly due to the multivariate nature of sustainability, along with the difficulty of aggregating the considerable amount of information needed.

Tourism Sustainability is a concept quite complex, because of its latent, multidimensional and relative nature.

As a final conclusion whatever models are followed or indicators used, the need to estimate and forecast of tourism activity is and will continue to be a vital asset in the implementation of strategic decisions for the existence of sustainable tourism development.

Research limitations on the approach to the analysis of sustainable tourism in Romania

1. The use of ST indicators (STI) creates many difficulties resulting mainly from multiple interpretation of the concept of sustainable development and due to the extension of the concept of ST. To these

difficulties is added the absence of a strong academic background, which is the result of incompatibilities between need and academic goals versus politics, which most often are the ones that cause the need for indicators.

2. When an indicator describes a specific control process (not only numerical information), its scope is strictly related to the process. González et al. (2004) believe that the approaches proposed so far allowed only very partial comparisons (variable to variable or indicator to indicator) because they do not introduce any global homogeneous composite form to implement them in different territories or economies. In addition, most proposals were focused on building indicators to assess separately one or more of the various dimensions of sustainability, but there has been little progress in the design of indicators that integrates its four dimensions (Pulido and Sánchez, 2007).

It is imperative that over time there should be a culture of continuous cultivation and education in the spirit of ecotourism and sustainable tourism which can be achieved by developing environmental awareness of the population, twinned with feelings of love and respect for nature, historic sites, monuments of art and architecture.

Supporting the idea mentioned above can be achieved by implementing the measures related to "the inestimable value of the environment" and the tourism potential of communities developing and becoming aware of the beneficial development in the spirit of ecotourism.

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