TOURISM AND DURABLE DEVELOPMENT
ROMANIAN TOURISM IN THE YEAR OF THE UNION CENTENNIAL

Mirela MAZILU, Roxana MARINESCU, Sabina-Roxana GHEORGHEICI

Abstract: The touristic market in Romania, in the year of the Great Union Centennial celebration, at the turn of 100 years, a tourist destination with very important cultural and historical valences, has honoured by participating in the Romanian Tourism Fair (22-25 March, 2018 - Bucharest 2018), with the slogan: “Romania - explore the Carpathian Garden”. It was organised around the central concept of the Great Union, so the Romanian stand took on a stylized form of the Third Gate of the Alba Iulia Fortress (fig.1). The gate is the symbol of strong historical, easily identifiable and recognizable links, which sends the message of the national unity, but also, from the tourist point of view, proposes new destinations for the promotion of cultural tourism. Of course, like any Romanian, passionate about tourism, the country, we encourage this slogan, this idea forgotten even by us, the Romanians, the national unity, which has made us lose so many things, both material and especially spiritual by its very lack... Perhaps we have woken up, perhaps in the jubilation of the union celebration, we will know, we will become aware of the historical connection not only with the Alba Iulia fortress, but also with Sarmisegetusa Regia, Sighisoara with Rasnov, the Deva fortress, etc. Let us not forget that we are morally indebted to the Dobrogea fortresses, the cultural attractiveness, acknowledged by UNESCO, such as the Sighisoara fortress, the castles, the monuments, the wooden churches, the towers (“cule”), the Brancusi sculptures, the Romanian culture personalities, etc.

Keywords: statistics, slogan, cultural tourism, centennial, union, attractiveness, sustainable tourism.
Introduction

Unfortunately, Romania has persisted for years, although warned by “n factors”, in the same mistake: the authorities continue to stimulate consumption to the detriment of exports and investments, hence the results that amaze Gulliver-like statistics...

In the current context of fierce competition in any field, of course tourism is no exception! In this situation, in the Romanian tourism, competitiveness has never been fruitful because it has not existed. It has been a chaotic, non-stop, profit-making run, to the detriment of ensuring a sustainable development of the own business.

Destinations have developed either chaotically or in a controlled manner (especially those on the Romanian seaside), meanwhile the motivation of the tourists and the interest for quality in everything that means the structure of a destination have evolved, they have been refined, so that the destination is currently found in the mandatory situation of the interest for competitiveness, as an insurance factor, in a permanently adjustable perspective by those who dare to tackle the good development of the destination, for a competitive development.
This paper wants to be an alarm signal for the managers of many tourist destinations in Romania, who, unfortunately, have not understood the competitiveness and the imperative of applying appropriate contextual, political, economic, cultural strategies according to the tourist market. The tourists' customs, the forms of tourism, the quality of service, and often the touristic products have undergone considerable changes over the last few years, unfortunately not for the good.

The recent economic crisis that emerges in 2018 will also lead to new forms of behaviour in terms of destination choices (depending on budget, price, accessibility, etc.), but also to new types of tourism activity, the tourist destinations multiplying exponentially, but not always under the sign of quality.

Although we would like Romanians to return more to the gorgeous places of Romania, unfortunately, the poor quality of the touristic infrastructure (especially the lack of motorways, which “steal the tourist's time to and from the destination”, decreasing his/her impetus....), adding poor quality services, poorly prepared human resources in tourism...

That is why we are no longer surprised by either the massive movements of Romanians to foreign destinations or by the big amounts of money spent on foreign fields...
In spite of these sums spent in other destinations outside Romania, the Romanian tourism in 2017 recorded increases, the number of tourists doubled, 12.3 million tourists visiting Romania, with a high percentage, not surprisingly, of European tourists -74.7%, and 86.2% overall from the European Union.
We could not develop, maintain a competitive tourism market without being able to launch new innovative tourism products, rethinking the product, according to its positioning “now and in the future” on a dynamic market, constantly testing the product, correcting any errors by continuously requesting feedback, following the steps in Figure 4:

Fig. 4. Steps in creating innovative tourism products


In sustainable development, tourism plays an essential role in contributing to the economic revival and redeployment of Romania. The raising of the tourist product from its values to the standards and preferences of foreign tourists implies the continuous and aggressive initiation and promotion of some actions, on the one hand, implies education processes and the formation of a mentality adequate to the current type of sustainable development, and, on the other hand, it implies the enhancement of
sustainable development in the tourist reception regions. Given the location in the European area of Romania, the tourism products to be implemented and transposed into the specifics of the sustainable tourism development are:

a) the tourist products made by the tourist himself, starting from the constitutive elements of the holiday he/she is planning, for example;

b) touristic products developed by the receiving environment, e.g. agro-tourism boarding houses offering accommodation and meals, as well as the possibility of practicing fishing, equitation, hiking, etc.;

c) touristic products developed by a professional in the tourism field, e.g. holidays organized by travel agencies;

d) the unique touristic product of Romania, the cultural one, the natural one, the historical one, in which combinations of services occur: for example, scientific tourism (discovering hidden secrets from the heart of Romania, where there are over 500 tunnels built under our country, owning 7 energy points from the 15 best known in the world, where tourists come especially to load with energy, or we mention the tourism carried out in the Iron Gates National Park, which has become a protected area and proposed to be included in the UNESCO List) offering hiking, leisure or adventure tourism.

*Fig.5. The marketing mix in the launch of the innovative touristic product on the tourism market*
Fig. 6. The 5 steps to creating a competitive destination (authors)
Conclusions

In shaping and especially in managing a tourist destination such as ROMANIA, it is difficult to make speculative predictions, especially when the infrastructure, the tourism laws, the politics and nature do not help you to fight the touristic seasonality. I mean the weather, the sudden changes in the Vortex of March 2018, the bad weather conditions and the landslides following torrential rains in September 2014, which affected the people's lives and the road infrastructure, isolating over 5,000 people, destroying 900 households and, unfortunately, even leading to the death of two people, in one of my most beloved touristic destinations: the Danube Gorge.

The good news of the Union Centennial Celebration is a heavenly gift for hotel owners. Almost 9 months before the National Day, Alba Iulia no longer has rooms available. All have been booked since the end of last year, without the possibility to find free places in nearby localities either. The fortress of the Great Union has gradually become one of the most sought-after touristic destinations in Transylvania, the taxes bringing huge revenues to the local budget.

Romania, at the Union Centennial, becomes, in terms of tourism, of its sustainable development, of the Danube Strategy, both regionally and competitively at a cross-border-international level, a permanent attraction point, a touristic destination that can compete with the other Danube river countries! Especially, there are tourists who want to discover new places, to get into new, wild, less accessible places, and, as a general trend, to enjoy special travel experiences. I can say that 2017 was a good year in tourism (because we barely finished it) as I feel that people, Romanian tourists, are more optimistic - so they plan their holidays and the associated expenses in a more confident and more responsible manner.

If we manage to offer our clients a special and unique experience from the time of the offer until the actual time of the holiday and continuing with the follow-up after the tourists' return, and the preparation of the new trips, we will surely have a 2018 better than 2017 in Romania, managing to transform Romania and to give it in 2019 what it gives us for free with gratitude!

Perhaps we must remember to learn to be united, not just survivors in a country rich in touristic attractions, to recognize and to honour our Romanian geniuses, because we all know: consciousness is like a geyser, an icon of the Romanian people, which gathers us from wherever we are tourists, because the call of the Romanian blood wins!
References:


NOTES ON THE AUTHORS

Mirela Elena MAZILU, Univ. Professor, PhD.Habil. Affiliation: Faculty of Geography, University of Craiova, Romania E-mail address: mirelamazilu2004@yahoo.com Brief professional biography: Bachelor Degree in geography from the Faculty of Geography, the University of Bucharest, Bucharest city, Romania in 1984 and PhD Degree in geography from the Faculty of Geography, University of Bucharest, Bucharest city, Romania in 1995. She attended the West University of Timișoara – Center of Excellency Jean Monnet, School of high European comparative studies between 2004 and 2006 and the International summer school „Media and Intercultural Dialogue”, organized under the patronage of the International Management Science Institute – Bruxelles in 2006. Became professor in 2009 and now is PhD professor of the University of Craiova, Romania. Has many national and international researches, over 15 books published as a single author; university manuals; over 150 articles published in the volumes of the national and international Congresses, symposiums and seminars and also in prestigious magazines with CNCSIS range and over 150 participations to scientific events. Also, is affiliated to over 30 International Research Associations and published over 30 articles in international magazines in different fields such as: European integrations, ecology, environment protection, tourism etc.

Roxana – Cristina MARINESCU, Univ. Associate Prof., PhD. Affiliation: Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, University of Craiova, Romania E-mail address: roxanaseverineanu@yahoo.com Essential qualifications: PhD in quality management in tourism, master in Diagnosis Analysis and Business Evaluation, licensed in tourism – services, certified accouter, tourism certificate, and certified translator for English. Over 25 studies and articles published in economic journals, over 15 participations to national and international conferences. Member of professional organizations on tourism and accounting.

Sabina GHEORGHECI, PhD. E-mail address: sabibi_sabra@yahoo.com