

ECOTOURISM MANAGEMENT IN ACCOMODATION STRUCTURES

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The contribution of tourism services to life quality refers to three important aspects: the consumption of tourism services, the connection between tourism services, leisure time and the environment.

The relation between the tourism services and the environment is both protective and damaging. As long as the economic interest is growing and the lack of interest in applying sustainable development is accentuated, the reduction of the negative impact on the environment becomes an important issue.

Keywords: life quality, environmental management, sustainable tourism

Clasificare JEL: L83

With time passage and enhancing economic activities, threats that until now were seen at a more or less local scale began to be perceived as danger to the whole planet. With the exception of environmental factors that are related to the entire planet, environmental problems take various issues very different from country to country, depending on the degree of development. Highly developed countries are faced today with problems related to waste reduction and recycling, reducing energy consumption and lack of open areas.

Currently all these difficulties with devastating environmental impact are already under the attention of political, economical, governmental and non-governmental factors (environmental organizations, NGOs, etc.) and sometimes even in public attention.

Ecology defines a stream of thinking, a movement, that promotes respect for the natural equilibrium and environmental protection ahead of the injuries from our industrial society. These injuries consist of any factor from the urban or industrial life which is a trouble, an injury, a danger to health or to the environment.

On the other hand, the concept of environment should not be confused with that of nature, which is earlier and has a different content. The concept of environment is system like; it is a complex system, but unitary, the unit consists of a large number of elements and links, with a capacity of self adjust and the most active factor is the human communities.

Environment is a mix of natural elements and dynamic correlated between them. These items can be grouped into three categories:

- a.primary components – physical background, lifeless;
- b.derived components - developed on the account of primary, representing biotic environment;
- c.anthropogenic components - man entered through conscious activity.

Making a bridge between the environment and the tourism and travel industry, industry whose business has a strong impact on the environment, a study can be undertaken from which to result actions taken in the hotel world through a pro-ecologic management and at the same time pro-quality management.

And from a social point of view, due to industrial development, to computerization, increasing living standards, began to be felt pressures from socio-economic environment over the economy. Thus, firstly, their own employees have requested for improving the quality of their life, while talking about hotel industry, we cannot bring into question the quality of life of communities where the hotel units operate. In this sense for raising the quality of life, there should be monitored and controlled raising the quality of touristic products and services. There have been established a number of public and private organisms, there have been drawn up quality standards and there have been developed international programs. But all this do not have the

expected value or fail to reach their purpose if hotel units managers are not aware of the importance and in the same time of the weight that the environmental side has in achieving the objectives of quality for products and services supplied to the final consumer. The share of these components in increasing the average life of the hotel unit is extremely high.

The new management politics in ecotourism must combine the forms of tourism management with the environmental management to build a sustainable development and promotion of tourism. Each economic unit in tourism must create their own policies for pro-active protection of the environment. Corporate policies, those of hotel chains and restaurants cannot not take into account the location of the unit of accommodation or food, the climate, the specific operating conditions, legal constraints in terms of environmental policies in the country. If these policies are missing, corporations have a moral duty to introduce them. Policy of each unit should be based on actual demand of consumers touristic services, on customer involvement in the implementation of these concepts - as active and conscious part - along with the unit staff. Thus you have an ongoing education for staff and for customers.

Any accommodation unit, regardless of position, size, grading, in order to offer services compatible with environmental requirements, must conduct its own analysis on compliance ecological indexes which are given by:

- health and safety of staff and clients, which relate to losses relating to lost time per million hours worked, environmental and hygiene training conducted for staff and the code of conduct for tourist customers;
- noise, producing an important discomfort that requires setting the maximum allowable and the average level in the working sectors of the hotel and of the location;
- air emissions of specific pollutants, compared with the allowable levels, the number of irregularities reported quarterly and annual number of complaints related to air quality from the tourists but also from local inhabitants;
- waste waters resulting from the everyday cleaning and general cleaning of accommodation structures - pH, quantity of substances used in the hygiene process and are found in sewage (detergents, disinfecting agents, etc.) with reporting the excedances to the rules allowed, the number of sewage discharge conducted per day; losses due to deterioration in the supply / exhaust, possibility of waste water recycling;
- waste from industrial or household that is required for knowledge as a percentage of total product used; the percentage of waste recycled, the amount of waste sent daily and annually to be evacuated (one possibility is to reduce the quantity of single use tableware and other disposable objects);
- energy - by establishing the sources used, the proportion of alternative sources - solar, in particular for heating, wind; specific consumptions for each room, common areas, lift etc;
- use of toxic substances for hygiene raise the problem of the types of detergents used, insecticides in the form of aerosols, the derating poisons for disposal of other unwanted species of flora or fauna;
- indoor facilities - the materials used for furniture (it is preferred the use wood instead of chipboard that is containing aldehyde formaldehyde), for tapestry (decorative textile items are favored from cotton, rayon blended with wool and not those of propylene, which is derived from porous products petroleum) and for construction (there is a trend to expand the use of porous materials, which provides better thermal insulation, and a good circulation of air);
- transports are key elements in the movement of tourists and the supply of tourist structures, purchase of machinery should consider a small degree of pollution and fuel economy, use of unleaded petrol, use of catalytic convectors, low braking coefficient, the

use in construction of recycled or recyclable materials, reduction of unnecessary travel, the use of collective transport in major tourist areas;

- biodiversity reported by number and value of flora and fauna species in the area of the accommodation unit, degree of forest conservation areas, enforcement of new forest plantations for ecological restoration of natural landscapes, the preservation of areas with natural grass vegetation.

Thus, in Romania in 2007 were launched several environmental programs, including the program entitled "Sustainable Tourism Development" financed by the Government of Switzerland through the State Secretariat for Economic Cooperation and implemented by UNIDO - Industrial Development Organization for the United Nations, in collaboration with the Ministry for Small and Medium Enterprises, Commerce, Tourism and Liberal Professions. The program will run for a period of two years and will be implemented in Bucharest and in Prahova Valley with a budget of 650,000 Euros.

The aim of this project is to create a practical tool, applicable in hotel industry in Romania to ensure access to an area more competitive and this way access to international markets. The project will implement the following activities: organization and conduct of training sessions on methodology of Clean Production (CP) and Social Responsibility (CSR), the initial assessment of the Clean Production and Social Responsibility towards the benchmarks in at least 25 hotels selected for the demonstration; evaluating Clean Production (CP) and social responsibility (CSR) in companies / hotels - including staff training; identify options to improve CP / CSR and the formulation of agreed management measures, implementing approved measures plans and monitoring the results; organizing branch and national level seminars to quantify the results.

Sustainable tourism can only survive through environmental protection. The program of UNIDO is helping Romanian hotels to implement a good management of resources and thus decrease the current expenditure, and contribute to maintaining at the best possible state the environment. In addition, once the recommendations were made and tested on the original sample of hotels, there was taken into account the introduction of these recommendations among the mandatory criteria required to be followed to obtain the certificate of classification of tourist accommodation structures in Romania.

Under this program there have been selected a number of 15 hotels that will be involved in the project for the first year of deployment, following that during 2009-2010 another 10 hotels would be selected. To be noted that there will be involved into the project only hotels that have at least a number of 60 beds and a restaurant.

However the concerned ministry has not yet published any selected units so far (April 2009).

ROMANIAN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM – LAW PROPOSALS

1. SYSTEM "acorn" of environmental quality provision of tourism services

The encoded system (ACORN) determining the ecological quality of tourism provision, *proposed* by the Environmental Association TURISMVERDE with the primarily aim the NATURAL ENVIRONMENT HEALTH, and implicitly HUMAN health and the default beneficiary and / or service provider of a RURAL TOURISM + ECOTOURISM + AGROTURISM = = GREEN TOURISM = Romanian concept of sustainable tourism development.

Tourist extra-urban structures displaying the symbol – 1 acorn - are those structures that provide tourist services in the areas of environmental measurements, as without pollution and, most important aspect, not negatively interact with the environment; also they allocate at least 1% of revenue for the planting trees and shrubs.

Tourist extra-urban structures displaying the symbol –2 acorns - are those structures that provide tourism services who are located in areas with no pollution, do not pollute the environment, have implemented programs to reduce consumption, provide food services with the menu based on products organic certified and who allocate at least 2% of revenue for planting trees and shrubs.

Tourist extra-urban structures displaying the symbol – 3 acorns - are tourist accommodation structure located in areas without pollution, are not sources of pollution to the environment, have implemented programs to reduce the water flow at most 20 l/min, train tourists on the environment protection rules, collecting sorted waste, use 50% economic bulbs, use organic detergents, provide food services with the menu based on products organic certified and who allocate at least 3% of revenue for planting trees and shrubs.

Tourist extra-urban structures that display the symbol – 4 acorns - are those tourism structures that use ecological sources of producing "green" energy in the proportion of min 10%, have implemented programs to reduce the water flow at most 15 l/min, use economic bulbs up to 75%, train tourists on the environment, their waste is collected selectively (organic, glass, paper, plastic), use organic detergents, use only environmentally friendly means of transport in the programs organized for tourists and allocate at least 4 % of revenue for planting trees and shrubs.

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he extra-urban structures displaying the symbol – 5 acorns- are those tourism structures of ecological excellence in which more than half of energy needs is product based on green energy, use organic detergents, have implemented programs to reduce the water flow at 10 l / min, train tourists based on programs organized by the rules of environmental protection, collect their sorted waste (organic, glass, paper, plastic), use economic in a bulbs rate of 100% and use only environmentally friendly means of transport in programs organized for tourists, and allocate at least 5% of revenues for planting trees and shrubs.⁹⁷

2. The second draft law on granting operators of tourism businesses that have ecological accommodation units benefits of utility pricing to consumers as private persons

The draft law provides several features for tourism companies who are developing or have a business with ecological specific. One of the provisions contained in the draft legislation is in correlation costs with the utilities, so that the economic agent would benefit of the same rates as private persons.

In the legislative proposal regarding the establishment of mechanisms for promoting economic development and ecological tourism, was provided that authorized individuals, family associations and companies that operate eco-tourism to take advantage of certain incentives, including exemption from income tax or profit, as appropriate, for a period of ten years, with the accommodation capacity of up to 40 rooms including.

In exchange for this exemption, beneficiaries are required to use those amounts of money to the replacement of classical lighting with unconventional systems, for the thermal insulation of buildings, the purchase of nonpolluting vehicles, and the purchase of solar panels or heat pumps.

In this context there should be stressed that Romania has the highest number of eco-hostels in South-Eastern Europe and occupancy of them in 2009 will increase by up to 30% compared with 2008⁹⁸. The most popular eco-hostels in Romania are in the area Retezat, Piatra Craiului, Bucovina and Sibiu. Traditional rural destinations are the most requested ecological tourist packages. Cost of a vacancy in such a hostel rises to 400 - 500 Euros and includes a number of programs that are based on specific activities.

3. Other programs funded from the budget of the Ministry of Tourism, up to the funds limit approved for this destination for 2009, approved by the state Budget Law are: "The annual tourism product developments program" and „The annual marketing and promotion of Romanian tourism program”.

The annual tourist products development program

⁹⁷ Ecological Association TURISMVERDE

⁹⁸ Romanian Ecotourism Association

While those programs are not directly involved in environmental programs of the resort ministry, they aimed to support domestic tourism in order to improve the tourist movement in parallel with the conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

Aimed objectives are related to:

- The establishment of partnerships, for development and planning the strategic framework at national level for tourism development, including: creating a system of institutionalized cooperation between specialists from tourism and from urban planning, participation and approval of promoting the National Territory Development Planning - Section VIII, for areas with tourist resources, among specialists and the local authorities and the methodology for the analysis of tourist potential of the territory;
- Improving the quality of the training programs for the tourism staff from hotels and restaurants;
- Improving the quality of tourism services in Romania;
- Development of forms, products and important tourist destinations in Romania, through short visits to Bucharest, cruises on the Danube and the Danube delta, mountain tourism, health tourism, seaside tourism and cultural tourism;
- Organizing international partnerships, with a role in increasing the visibility of tourist destinations in Romania;
- Restructuring the information system in tourism;
- Actions for sustainable development of tourism;
- Consultancy services for improving legal and institutional framework in accordance with good practices at EU level;
- The acquisition of documentary materials;
- Carrying out investment programs in public-private partnership between the Ministry of Tourism and local authorities at the county level or the administrative territorial unit;
- Creation of specialized studies (for pre-feasibility and feasibility, implementing technical projects, etc.) and the allocation of funds for investment in tourism infrastructure, in partnership with local authorities;
- Developing field legislation (by the common order of the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Regional Development and Housing, to approve the methodology for analyzing the potential of tourism planning of the territory, updating and finalizing legislation of the ski area).

Annual marketing and promoting program

This program seeks to promote the most important destinations and types of tourism in Romania, on the internal market and on major tourist markets abroad. Activities relate to:

- developing marketing studies;
- marketing activities through the Internet and other electronic means (eg: portal for tourism information);
- participation in expositional tourism events in the country and abroad, on foreign markets of interest;
- organization of educational and informational visits in the country;
- organization / collaboration in organizing events and missions, in the country and abroad, with a role in increasing tourist movement in Romania or the impact of increasing Romania notoriety as a tourist destination;
- a.- Activities for promotion and advertising through airlines operating flights to destinations in Romania and through the main airports which operate international flights from / to Romania;
- b.- Activities to promote, through catalogs advertising inserts that promote tourism, on the targeted markets of interest, for the tourist destination "Romania", tourism packages and products for tourism services in Romania;
- c.- Purchase of materials of the type: guidebooks about Romania, maps, albums, catalogs, picture, photos, books about specific tourism etc;

- d.- Promoting activities through radio-TV stations, which have travel programs;
- e.- Actions for general advertising to advertise products and tourist destinations in Romania;
- f.- Making promotion of the type printed, audio-video, with tourism specific;
- g.- Creating the national tourism brand and promote it.

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