

STRATEGIES TO INCREASE COMPETITIVENESS OF BALNEARY TOURISM ON ROMANIAN BLACK SEA SIDE

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Definition of strategies that are adequate to Romanian balneary tourism and implicitly, to seaside balneary tourism needs a good understanding of balneary touristic potential, of the actual degree of capitalization as well as of economic, social and political context that influences the evolution of Romanian tourism at large and the balneary tourism in particular. The main objective of development strategies for balneary tourism is to consider Romania a successful balneary touristic destination by means of identification of market needs and setting of quality products and services, as well as optimization of market potential.

Key words: balneary tourism, development strategies, quality products, balneary touristic products .

Jel classification: L8 – Industry studies: Services; L83 - Tourism

1.Introduction

Analysis and study of the weak points of Romanian tourism indicate clearly the necessary actions to raise the bid of the industry of balneary tourism and to support it reach its objectives and up-to-date framework. These actions may be summarized such as: institutional structures of the public sector that takes advantage of professional personnel and appropriate resources should work in partnership with private sector associations, a research of markets, segments, clients and communication channels, full planning of balneary tourism that can lead to modernization, development and presentation of balneary touristic products to meet the need of demands and expectations of market, also education and training with a view to provide the balneary tourism industry at every level with proficient skillful personnel that is client-oriented, a marketing with the goal to establish Romania as touristic destination in general and one of balneary tourism in particular.

Among several opportunities of Romanian balneary tourism development and implicitly of seaside tourism there are: increased attention that our country has drawn beginning with 2007 after Romanian has adhered to European Union on every field – especially that of politics and economy – from European countries, especially of the highly developed ones, that can lead to more important investments in Romanian balneary tourism or to external financing; predictable increase of the standard of living in our country, as a premise of an enhanced touristic demand, socio-cultural affinities with numerous European countries: Hungary, Ukraine, Germany, Austria, France, Spain, Italy, fact that would help to promote Romanian tourism there.

At the same time, we need to take into consideration the strong competition on European market of balneary tourism in countries like Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Austria, and even Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland; a rather slow implementation of modern managerial practice within Romanian tourism as well as in most of the economic fields, that is an aspect that takes time until completion; poor contribution of local communities to the development of tourism because of lack of experience and a very strong centralized approach during the communist era.

Generally, Romanian supply of balneary tourism is rather little known of foreign touristic operators, because of insufficient promotion on target markets (Great Britain, Germany, The Netherlands, Denmark, Norway etc.). In addition, foreign touristic operators are a bit reluctant to Romanian tourism supply because of lack of appropriate infrastructure, general and touristic, lack of modern subsidies that are common elsewhere abroad, poor cooperation with Romanian operators to provide hotel accommodation in balneary resorts during Christmas and New Year holidays, lack of investment that are meant to modernize material structures within tourism, lack of modern training of personnel in hotels and restaurants that can meet the new demands of international tourism, price continuous variation and also a general impression of Romanian “poverty” that has been exaggerated in European mass-media lately.

2. Development strategies of balneary tourism on Romanian Black Sea side

Taking the above into consideration, we may say that development strategies of balneary tourism should be achieved at both macroeconomic and microeconomic level.

As for the macroeconomic level, development strategies of balneary tourism require an integrative frame of Romanian balneary tourism that is materialized in a global strategy of development that is to be conceived at the national level by a higher capitalization of exceptional touristic potential of our country. Yet, presently, Romania does not have a national strategy of touristic development. Tourism National Authority has made a contract with the National Institute of Tourism Research and Development to conduct a study on “The Strategy for Balneary Tourism” that is not yet finalized.

Specific objective of the strategy for balneary tourism has to be the development, modernization and diversification of Romanian touristic balneary supply according to modifications of both intern touristic demand and international demand of balneary tourism. Consequently, the policy and development strategy of balneary tourism has to establish the principles and conditions that are necessary to improve competition as follows:

- development of touristic balneary product is to ensure a higher capitalization of the natural cure factors and upgrade its quality;
- touristic demand stimulation with a view to develop and adapt balneary touristic supply within a program of development and promotion of balneary touristic product;
- infrastructure modernization and development is to be set a basic condition of intern market of balneary tourism and its entrance on foreign competitive market;
- development of training and touristic research that are necessary to provide quality and diversity for balneary touristic supply and tracking of market trends in due time in order to adjust intern market in its progress;
- improvement of general economic climate;
- organization and expansion of development by coordination of capitalization and preservation of environment elements as basic components of present and future touristic supply;
- improvement of general frame of sector operation within market economy based on competition.

Completion of strategic objectives of balneary tourism should consider steps regarding as follows:

- modernization and development of balneary touristic supply that is competitive on touristic market;
- improvement and development of marketing activity and promotion of balneary tourism;
- integration of Romanian tourism and implicitly of balneary tourism, among European and world tendencies by setting of an efficient simplified legislative frame of the field that is congruent with international legislation;
- setting of a competitive business environment and of fiscal regime to encourage increase of export, investments, infrastructure and new job opportunities.

Balneary tourism represents for Romania an economic sector with a valuable potential of development that is not yet fully capitalized. Romania’s advantage in the development of balneary tourism is provided by the presence of balneary natural resources of great diversity and fine display in territory that facilitate an entire range of balneary treatments and confers a high potential for Romania to develop complex touristic balneary products and increase the total number of tourists.

As concerns modernization and development of Romanian balneary touristic product, the natural component is very important (for its capitalization) and also the quality and functionality of balneary touristic subsidies and compliance of European standards as concerns the quality of touristic services and their correlation with tariffs required by entrepreneurs, the target being the competitiveness of balneary touristic supply.

Completion of strategic objectives is a vast and complex endeavor that requires organizational, material and financial efforts oriented as follows:

- reorganization of supply and product according to demand requirements and major trends – especially from abroad – and those of international standards;
- rehabilitation of infrastructure that is necessary to exploit mineral resources (mineral water springs, therapeutic mud) within modern resorts;
- re-engineering of existing treatment bases, modernization and increase of the comfort level of accommodation structures, expansion of specific and general entertainment subsidies;
- orientation of product and balneary services supply towards Romania’s traditional extern markets and accession to new markets as well;
- elimination of all defects and negative aspects due to general political environment before 1990;
- re-thinking of promotion policy, that is an exchange of “image” promotion for a “product” promotion, where Romanian products with tradition among foreign tourists are emphasized;
- expansion of treatment touristic supply for underprivileged social categories of population;
- reconsideration of local balneary resorts along with their modernization and development;
- permanent programs, such as “A Week of Vacation in a Balneary Resort” and “The Balneary Decade” promoted by the Syndicalist Organization of Balneary Tourism in Romania, that are programs destined to all tourists’ categories, in order to capitalize available rooms in balneary resorts during 1st of October – 15th of December;
- an increased quality of touristic constructions and development of touristic capacity within areas where touristic demand is larger than specific supply, elaboration of zonal projects of modernization of general and touristic infrastructure in order to overcome existing difficulties of balneary tourism;
- improvement of highway, railway and air access to modern balneary resorts;

- development of balneary tourism in the context of durability, taking into consideration for all the objectives, plans and development actions the following: environment preservation in all touristic areas, development plans of construction in compliance with applicable legislation on the environment, urbanism and territory development and with the laws on tourism that concern optimization and preservation of the environment in the area of balneary resorts;
- increased standard of basic balneary services and of the complementary ones in accordance with the level of comfort and tariffs;
- diversification and development of entertainment means in Romanian balneary resorts;
- installation of special laboratories/ offices for natural treatments of Romanian tradition;
- construction of pools with thermal/ mineral water within spa centers;
- development of touristic routes for jogging and hitchhiking in resort area, parks and their proximity;
- modernization means of capitalization of natural cure factors, their accessibility and maintenance;
- construction of structures for cultural events organization, both in the open and inside – exhibitions, concerts, festivals etc.

3.Conclusions

The above-presented objectives determine national strategies of promotion and development of Romanian balneary tourism that can be considered as marketing programs. State policy has an active role of decision at the macroeconomic level, considering issues of touristic policy a matter of country economic policy and, by means of its central institutions, it has an influence on the development and promotion strategies of tourism.

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