FORMS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM SUITABLE TO APUSENI MOUNTAINS, ROMANIA

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Abstract: *Sustainable tourism is the result of the melange between tourism and sustainable tourism. The concept has evolved during the last decades of the twentieth century, in international conferences, summits etc. organized by the World Tourism Organization, the United Nations and other international organizations where it was defined, characterized and criticized. Unfortunately, the concept was not able to overcome its theoretical conceptualization and it did not reach practitioners of the tourism industry. Sustainable tourism has several forms which are actually practiced by tourists all over the world: ecotourism, backpacking, rural tourism, nature-based tourism, pro-poor tourism, volunteer tourism etc. In the present paper, we have focused on an area in Apuseni Mountains, Romania. We tried to identify the forms of sustainable tourism most suitable for this area considering: natural resources, socio-economical development, protected areas, gastronomic traditions etc. After considering all these we have selected three forms: ecotourism, volunteer tourism and slow tourism, which could have the highest impact in promoting this area, and actually all the Apuseni Mountains as an important destination for sustainable tourism. The arguments for ecotourism are based on the numerous natural tourism resources> caves, gorges, forests and wildlife. Volunteers are needed especially in conservation and English language course. For slow tourism, there are numerous trails for walking and biking. Also there are several foods, mainly based on milk and wild berries that should be promoted and sold under the slow food brand. The shortcomings of the research are the lack of quantitative and qualitative results, as there is no information regarding the number of tourists which visit the area during each year. Also, it is hard to compare the benefits of sustainable tourism with those of mass tourism, due to the lack of references. So it is harder to argue for sustainable tourism and its forms to the detriment of mass tourism.*

1. Introduction

Sustainable tourism – as a new form of tourism, both in terms of suppliers and tourists - is, to some extent, a way to counter the negative effects that tourism may have on a destination. Sustainable tourism has emerged in response to the negative impact more and more visible that was generated by the tourism industry in the destination - regions. So, sustainable tourism has emerged as a reactive concept that tries to eliminate the negative impact and increase the positive impact that tourism activities can have.
Since the early 90s, the concept of sustainable tourism has begun to be increasingly used in academic and to a lesser extent among entrepreneurs in tourism. Although some similar forms of the concept were used earlier - the concept of "sanfter Tourismus" described by Krippendorf, we believe that the starting point for sustainable tourism was the publication of the first issue of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism in 1993 (Weaver, 2006: 10; Hunter, 2002:3; Dodds and Butler, 2009:43).
This new form of practicing tourism involved firms or small entrepreneurs, focused mainly

on supporting the community, preserving the environment and protecting local culture. One of the most important personalities of this alternative tourism, David Weaver (1998: 31), considers that "the main difference between the old and the new forms of tourism is the shift of the focus from the wellbeing of the tourist to the wellbeing of the host community".

At that time, the concept was highly debated; being received with hostility by the tourism industry, dissatisfied by putting any limits to growth and which considered it an "ivory tower" that had no connection with the market. Sustainable tourism was also considered "intellectually arrogant, expensive, elitist and unnecessarily" (Lane, 2009:20).

This attitude was not confined to the tourism industry. Governments and local authorities had not taken the concept seriously, the classical model of tourism bringing them numerous benefits. Conventional mass tourism generated employment and wealth transfer from developed countries to developing ones. Mass - media had not paid much attention to the concept of sustainable tourism, noting that it is much easier to denigrate, but to explain it. In academic circles, researchers found that sustainable tourism was "an impossible dream" (Lane, 2009: 21). This was best explained by Wheeler (in Miller and Twining-Ward, 2005: 32): "on the one hand we have the problems of mass tourism, which is growing steadily and uncontrolled. And what is our response? The development of small-scale, slow and controlled tourism. It is simply impossible! "

Like sustainable development, sustainable tourism was the central or secondary theme of conferences or international meetings, during which industry experts discussed the concept, but most important is that it focused world attention on sustainable tourism.

What we can notice more recently, is that tourism is drawing more and more attention from the international community and numerous projects are trying to implement sustainable tourism in different regions of the world. What raise some questions are the results of these projects and the tourism industry's ability to replicate them in other regions. We can also notice some redundant proposals and advice given by the international institutions, with largely the same concepts, but lacking the coercive instruments that oblige the application of these proposals. Scheyvens (2007: 134) has an acid point of view, which states that "any action by the UNWTO, besides promotion is just dust in the eyes of public opinion."

There are numerous definitions of sustainable tourism or sustainable development of tourism, and we believe that this multitude of definitions is just a sign of a lack of global consensus.

Hunter (2002: 4) considers that although the concept of sustainable tourism derived from sustainable development, sometimes is considered independent and separate from other sectors of the economy. Some authors (Hunter, 2002:5, Swarbroke, 1999:18) consider that "tourism development must provide economic benefits to all stakeholders, provided they do not adversely affect the resources available for future generations". Weaver (2006:10) defines sustainable tourism as "a wise form of exploitation of resources in order to preserve them for the long term."

According to another definition, sustainable tourism is "all forms of tourism (conventional or alternative) that are compatible with and contribute to sustainable development" (Liu, 2003: 461). In the context of this definition, development and growth do not necessarily imply being essentially a process by which specific social and economic objectives are achieved. Achieving these goals may involve stabilization, growth, reduction, or even disappearance of products, existing companies or industries.

From the perspective of the World Tourism Organization, sustainable tourism is defined as "tourism that takes into account the economic, social and environmental present and future, and focuses on the needs of the visitors, industry, environment and local community." (UNWTO, 2015)

We can say that, although there is no uniform definition of sustainable tourism, there are some common points achieved by each definition: benefits for the whole community,

protecting natural resources and the environment, reducing negative impact etc. Thus, sustainable tourism should harmonize and balance three elements: economic, social and environmental.

There are many voices who say that sustainable tourism is a form of tourism which runs counter to mass tourism, which is addressed to a relatively narrow niche of people interested in the negative impact that tourism can have. This is an extremely dangerous perspective. It must be much clearer that sustainable tourism, defined as tourism that is based on sustainable development principles, has a fundamental objective: tourism as a whole must be sustainable. The term should reflect a condition of tourism and not only its form. Mass tourism, properly organized and controlled, can and must become sustainable.

Sustainable tourism has been criticized, especially for the highly theoretical nature and lack of actual achievements. But there are still examples of successful companies that have put into practice the theoretical principles of sustainable tourism. Currently there are numerous approaches of the tourism industry in terms of business sustainability. Lane (2009: 22-23) identified the main reasons for the slow implementation of sustainable tourism principles, which is determined by many "actors": the tourism industry, authorities, the market, and tourists.

Therefore, we consider necessary the development of several forms of tourism, under the umbrella of sustainable tourism, which will represent the connection between theory and practice by attracting a growing number of practitioners. The forms of tourism on which we focused are: ecotourism, volunteer tourism and slow tourism.

2. Research methodology

The main objective of this research is to identify forms of sustainable tourism, that are suitable for Apuseni Mountains. To achieve this overall objective we established several secondary endpoints that support our research:
1. Identification of forms of sustainable tourism;
2. Define and characterize the forms identified in point 1;
3. Presenting some arguments for each form of sustainable tourism from thepoint of view of the selected region – Apuseni Mountains;
4. Identify the main shortcomings and challenges of these complex forms of tourism.
To achieve these objectives we walked several steps in our research:
1. Review of the bibliography on sustainable tourism;
2. Selecting forms of sustainable tourism;
3. Field research in the area.

In the first stage we have covered a substantial bibliography, Romanian and foreign to identify specific forms of sustainable tourism. We lectured scientific books and articles written in the period 1970 - 2010, by leading authors in the field of sustainable tourism: Weaver, Fennel, Lane, materials / studies / projects undertaken by international organizations such as UNWTO, UNEP, Greenpeace. The whole bibliographic material helped us to get a clearer picture on sustainable tourism and its contemporary forms.

In the second phase we selected three from the multitude of existing forms of tourism few, which we considered the most feasible and which have the most important potential for development. The criteria for our selection were: No overlap (eg nature tourism and ecotourism); accuracy, avoiding general (e.g.: rural tourism); forecasted impact to be as high as possible.

Based on these criteria we closed out the following forms of tourism: ecotourism, volunteer tourism and slow tourism. In the last stage we went through several routes in the area for gathering information for each of the three forms of tourism selected in the second stage.

3. Findings and discussions

In 1987, Ceballos-Lascurain offered the first definition of ecotourism (in Luck 2002: 361): "ecological tourism or ecotourism is that form of tourism that involves travelling to a virgin and uncontaminated natural habitat, in order to study and admire enjoy the scenery, flora, fauna and cultural resources existing in that area."

Ceballos-Lascurain considered ecotourism a philosophical concept, that requires planning based on strict rules. He suggested that ecotourists have an enormous amount of information about the natural and cultural resources they visit and are involved in the conservation and protection of resources. Also, Ceballos-Lascurain identified a number of differences between people who practice mass tourism and ecotourism in terms of the use of natural resource. Both tourists are interested in natural resources, but mass tourism practitioners have a passive role in the relationship with nature, practicing activities such as water sports, running and cycling. Ecotourists, on the other hand, are drawn to natural resources and try not to abuse them, practicing photography, botanical studies and observing wildlife (in Diamantis, 1999: 96). We can deduce that from the perspective of Ceballos-Lascurain, ecotourism is essentially passive and must be practiced in protected areas, thus having a positive impact on the environment.

Ziffer (in Diamantidis, 1999:98) has a different perspective on ecotourism: "Ecotourism is a form of tourism primarily inspired by the natural history of the area, including existing indigenous cultures. Ecotourists visit underdeveloped regions, in a spirit of appreciation, participation and sensitivity. Ecotourists use without consuming natural resources and contribute directly, through labour or money to the conservation and welfare of the visited region."

In turn, the International Ecotourism Society gives us a different definition of ecotourism: "responsible travel in natural areas, which protect the environment and increase the well-being of local people" (TIES 2006).

As can be seen from the above definitions we conclude that ecotourism is a form of tourism practiced in the natural environment that oscillates between passive and active tourists about the conservation and protection of nature.

Laarman and Durst (in Orams, 2001: 28) described in 1987 the hard and soft dimensions of ecotourists. The terms of hard and soft cover both the interest of ecotourists in the natural resources of a destination and the physical effort they are willing to do. A hard ecotourist is willing, or even wants, to benefit from reduced travel comfort under difficult conditions in the wild to truly experience nature. By comparison, a soft ecotourist has a casual interest in natural resources and wishes to experience it at a superficial level within a relatively short time.

The ecotourism market is quite difficult to assess in figures, due to confusion arising even in the definition. According to some authors (Diamantis, 1999: 29), the segment of tourists visiting natural resources and wildlife generates between 20 and 40% of total tourism receipts.

Volunteer tourism is defined by Weaver (2002:45) as "a framework where tourists are involved in voluntary work in social or environmental protection, without receiving financial remuneration". Wearing believes that volunteer tourism is aimed at people who "want, for various reasons, to volunteer in an organized way and to spend their holidays helping a community, restoring a natural habitat or participating in research on society or the environment" (in Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009:334).

In general, volunteer tourism is a chance for destination regions that will benefit from the help of volunteers, but also for tourists who will enjoy the results of their work. A distinct feature of this type of tourism is related to the association with religious and environmental NGOs, localized in the regions of origin of tourists.

Another difference between mass tourism and volunteer tourism is the benefits. In the case of the first, the benefit is calculated as the number of tourists arriving or total

receipts, which will be felt, to some extent, by local people. Volunteer tourism generates direct benefits for local people: construction or renovation of houses, medical or educational services (Weaver, 2002: 45-46). Because of this, sometimes volunteers are not perceived as tourists by the host community or themselves (McGehee and Andereck, 2009:47).

Volunteer tourism focuses mainly on two areas: improving living conditions in destination community and protecting the environment.

One of the most important organizations in volunteering is Habitat for Humanity, founded in 1976 by Millard and Linda Fuller. Habitat for Humanity is a Christian non-profit organization that aims to build houses and shelters in the poorer regions of the world. Their projects are carried out on all continents, in 90 countries and 3,000 communities (http://www.habitat.org/eurasia/learn_about_habitat/who_we_are.aspx accessed on 03.11.2015).

Volunteer tourism takes lately a new form: volunteer tourism for justice. It reflects "active partnerships to combat injustice of any kind and is based on the idea that we need partnerships to overthrow the imbalance of power present in many places in the world" (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009: 337). This global resistance movement crystallized because of the many cases of social injustice, economic and environmental, resulting from globalization and capitalism. Visible results of this tourism are demonstrations - some extremely violent - taking place at all the international meetings with economic issues: WTO conferences, the World Economic Forum, G20 meetings etc.

Although it is hard to criticize this form of tourism, due to the extremely noble motivation, there are authors who consider that some non-profit organizations involved in volunteer tourism behave like companies and are increasingly more interested in public image and lobby at the expense of the initial focus (Holmes et al. 2010: 257; Weaver, 2002:47). There are even authors who raise questions about the motivation of tourists. We cannot be sure whether such a stay will be motivated by empathy and altruism or simply, improving personal image and a CV (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009:335; Coghlan and Fennel 2009: 377-378).

Slow tourism originated in the slow food movement, which arose in 1986 at the initiative of Carlo Petrini. He established the Arcigola organization to protest to the opening of the first McDonald's restaurant in Rome (Myhrvold et al., 2011: 23). The slow food movement has emerged as the antithesis to fast food, representing an intersection of ecology, gastronomy, ethics and pleasure. The movement opposes the standardization of taste and culture and unregulated corporate power in the food industry and agriculture. The Movement promotes a return to cooking, to avoid the "curse" of fast food restaurants, using local ingredients and information about the food we eat.

The principles and philosophy of slow food are easily adapted to tourism. The central idea of slow tourism is to achieve qualitative experiences, reduced in number, at the expense of volume / high number of holidays, where the emphasis is on quantity (Heitmann et al., 2011:117).

Similar to ecotourism, slow tourism has been defined in many ways. From the perspective of Dickinson (2009:2) slow tourism consists of "holidays involving shorter trips and longer stays in which air transport is not used, but other forms of transport become part of the experience."

Heitmann et al. (2011: 117-118) believes that slow tourism "is characterized by the joy of discovery, study, sharing and holiday slowdown which will create opportunities to interact and establish links with local people and places at a deeper level."

Lumsdon and McGrath (2011:265) believe that essentially slow tourism means "driving a shorter distance and enriching experience, both on the road and the destination."

Slow tourism is based on deceleration at the expense of speed, so the trip becomes a relaxing time, not a stressful interlude between home and the destination (Gardner, 2009:10-11).

Slow tourism can be considered a return to the past pilgrimages and Grand Tour, which largely respected the principles of this form of sustainable tourism (Dickinson et al., 2011:282).

Activities during the holidays are not much different from the other forms of tourism, but the key features - immersion and slowing - are central to the philosophy of slow, requiring more integration, research and spending more time in a particular environment, to form stronger memories. However, not all attractions have been designed to provide such experiences and many of them are forced into a quick tour (fast), because of the popularity and the pressure that a large volume of tourists generates (Heitmann, 2011: 118- 119).

From the economic point of view, slow tourism strategy is based on slow growth by reducing capital flight at the expense of rapid growth based solely on the number of tourists arriving. This will increase efficiency by improving the quality of tourism. This focus on quality will increase the resilience to external shocks (Timms and Conway, 2011:13).

Since slow tourism promotes the use of other means of transport than air (road or water), we can ask some questions about the solutions for countries or regions located at significant distance from tourist generating markets (the Caribbean, Maldives etc.).

For ecotourism, there are many natural resources in the Auseni Mountains: caves, mountain peaks with lookout points, gorges, etc. and there are marked trails for tourists.

Given the fact that much of the area is part of the protected area Apuseni Natural Park, ecotourism seems the most important form of tourism that can be practiced here.

For the volunteer tourism the area offers two types of opportunities: English language training and environmental protection. While schools teach foreign languages in the villages, we consider that the increasing the knowledge of Enlish them by young people, and not only could provide numerous benefits:
- Increasing the capacity of communication with foreign tourists;
- Better promotion of foreign specialized sites or social networks
- Access to information about tourism, sustainable development, food etc.

The second component of volunteering - environmental protection - is necessary because many parts of the mountains need cleaning / sanitizing. Also, the banks of the rivers that flow in the area are in an advanced state of decay due mainly to the lack of a waste collection system.

For slow tourism, we must open the discussion regarding the culinary traditions and culture in the area. Food is generally based on cow and sheep milk, but there also: berries (blueberries, cranberries and raspberries) and mushrooms. These raw materials will have to underpin the development of products to be marketed under the brand Slow Food.

The next step will be to combine food with the quiet and isolated regions of the area for it to become an important destination for slow tourism in Romania.

4. Conclusions

Sustainable tourism, or rather its implementation modalities in turn have some shortcomings, which have as their main source the inability to change of both the demand and the supply of tourism.

In the future, for sustainable tourism to become truly a way / philosophy to practice all forms of mass tourism it requires the involvement of many actors. First, the academic community must: engage and collaborate with the tourism industry; investigate issues of governance and regulation; investigate and to look for new solutions to promote sustainable tourism; investigate the role of the media in forming opinions; use ideas developed by the social sciences to explore decision making and social trends. (Lane, 2009: 28)

Also, researchers must find the language and how to explain their results to the public,

because they represent the tourism demand and they are the ones that generate the negative impact that we talked about in the article.

Secondly, the tourism industry has a very important role. Although there are numerous examples of measures taken by hoteliers (use of energy saving bulbs, change of towels only on request, using shampoos and soaps that do not contain chemicals) full and proper implementation of the principles of sustainable tourism is only just beginning. One of the biggest problems of the tourism industry is that it's convinced that changes in technology and management can solve any problems. Lane (2009: 29) believes that although changes and technological discoveries may help solve some problems, for long-term solution a change in lifestyle is needed, using new sales techniques and the development of new products. A new system of values is needed in the management of the tourism industry.

Thirdly, tourism demand is the need to react to the findings of researchers. Unfortunately, this step will be extremely difficult, considering the growing number of tourists from emerging countries (especially China) who want to enjoy leisure time, as tourists from developed countries did for five decades.

Regarding Apuseni Mountains, in order to implement sustainable tourism forms some investments are needed. Although we consider that the total costs are not very high, it takes initiative for these investments to materialize.

In terms of ecotourism, it is needed to create 2-3 camping areas (flat land for tents). They should be placed on the secondary roads that cross the area. The equipments that we consider necessary for these camping areas are: Utilities (showers, lavatories), spaces for cooking, fire places, information points on the resources in the area and luggage storage spaces.

For volunteer tourism companies which offer such packages should be contacted, in order to attract a steady stream of volunteers in the area.

For slow tourism, the first step should be to create a convivium - a local association, which will involve the local community and it will identify the specific goods they can produce in the area: jams, syrups, etc that can be branded with the slow food label.

5. Acknowledgements

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