THE INCONSISTENCY AND THE IMPERATIVE CHANGE IN ROMANIAN TOURISM

MIRELA MAZILU *

ABSTRACT: The inconsistency and even the lack of a strategy in tourism, the lack of promotion for Romania abroad, and the expensive and poor services are some of the problems which managers present within the “Private Government” meeting on tourism have identified as needing immediate rehabilitation for the re-launching of the market in Romania. Motto: “Give me the peace to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the ones I can, and the wisdom to be able to distinguish among them.” - Marcus Aurelius.

KEY WORDS: Romanian tourism, current situation, expected results

The inconsistency and even the lack of a strategy in tourism, the lack of promotion for Romania abroad, and the expensive and poor services are some of the problems which managers present within the “Private Government” meeting on tourism have identified as needing immediate rehabilitation for the re-launching of the market in Romania. But, unfortunately, without a “strategy nothing happens. We suffer from inconsistency, because, each time when ministers change, what was started before, it was changed”, declared Nicolae Demetriade, the former owner of Happy Tour, the biggest travel agency at a local level and the president of World Travel. The change and the inconsistency of a plan for the re-launching of tourism are observed by more and more actors involved in the development of tourism.

We talk about tourism as we have talked about agriculture for 15 years as being a priority, but we have to admit, tourism has never been a priority either for the central, local authorities or for the governments. If we take a look at the political platforms of the parties, we will always see three lines about tourism. There is a strategy, but it is not applied.

According to the representatives in tourism, the re-founding of the former National Agency for Tourism (ONT) on a structured based on the partnership between the public and the private and the adoption of the Master Plan for tourism as a law of tourism would ensure the maintenance and the application of the strategy on a long

* Prof., Ph.D., University of Craiova, University Centre of Drobeta Turnu Severin, Romania, mirelamazilu2004@yahoo.com
term, regardless of the political affiliation of the Government. “I have said even since then that the Master Plan which all of us have elaborated for two years will remain somewhere in a drawer, if it was not turned into a law of tourism. This agency of tourism should lobby for it and change this Master Plan into a law of tourism, because it is the only way in which it can be implemented, and a law survives the electoral cycles. As long as it is voted in Parliament, we understand that all the parties involved have agreed to it, so, any government would there be, this medium and long term Master Plan would be continued, and we need this continuity.”

The re-launching of tourism in Romania and the attraction of a larger number of foreign tourists would bring supplementary benefits, in the opinion of many tourism managers, but with many and necessary changes.

According to the National Institute of Statistics (INS), 45.5% of the number of arrivals and 29.9% of the tourists spending the night within the tourist accommodation structures, from January to September 2007, were recorded in Bucharest and in the county residence cities, except Tulcea. On a second place, there are the treatment resorts with 25.5% tourists spending the night and 10.6% arrivals, followed by the seaside resorts, except for Constanta, with 24.1% tourists spending the night and 14.2% arrivals, and the mountain resorts with 10.2% tourists spending the night and 13.9% arrivals. For example, Bucharest and the county residencies represented, in the first months of 2008, 45.5% of arrivals in the tourist accommodation structures, on the second place being the other resorts and tourist circuits (14.7%), followed by the seaside area (14.2%), the mountain resorts (13.9%), the treatment resorts (10.6%) and the Danube Delta (1.1%).

The total of the arrivals recorded in the tourist accommodation structures within the first nine months of the year was of 5418.2 thousands, rising with 12.6% in comparison with the similar period of 2007.

The Romanian tourists’ arrivals in the tourist accommodation units represented 77.3% of the total number of arrivals, while the foreign tourists represented 22.7% of the total number of arrivals, almost equal proportions with the ones from the period January-September 2007, as shown by an INS statement.

According to the Institute’s data, the increasing percentages were recorded in all types of tourist accommodation structures, except for inns, pupils’ camps and the tourist halting places.

The number of tourists spending the night recorded within this period in the accommodation structures was of 16472.2 thousands, 8.7% more than in the first nine months of 2007.

The Romanian tourists spending the night in the accommodation structures represented 82.5% from the total number of tourists spending the night, while the foreign tourists represented 17.5% from this total number.

Significant risings of the number of tourists spending the night in the accommodation structures were recorded in the following types: tourist houses, hostels, youth hotels, urban tourist hostels, rural tourist hostels.

At the same time, INS states that there were recorded reductions in comparison with the similar period of the previous year in pupils’ camps, camping facilities and bungalows.
The index of net use of the accommodation places was 37.1% on the total structures for the period January-September 2007, increasing with 2.8% in comparison with the corresponding period of the previous year. The high indexes of the accommodation unit usage for the first nine months of 2007 were recorded in the cruise ships accommodations (90.9%) and hotels (44.5%).

The arrivals of foreign tourists in Romania, recorded at the customs checkpoints, were of 5738.2 thousands for the period January-September, increasing with 27.3% in comparison with the corresponding period of the previous year.

The majority of the foreign visitors comes from countries situated in Europe (90.4%). 61.7% of the foreign visitors total in Romania come from the countries of the European Union.

The departures of Romanian visitors abroad, recorded at the customs checkpoints, were 8458.6 thousands in the first nine months of the year, increasing with 23.6% as opposed to the corresponding period of the previous year. The means of road transportation were preferred by the Romanian visitors for travelling abroad (80.1% of the total number of departures).

In September 2007, as opposed to September 2006, the arrivals as well as the number of tourists spending the night in the accommodation structures recorded an increase with 11.4% and 7.2%.

The management of change represents the way in which we have to approach the process of change so that this should have the best results.

Change is a continuous process, and many changes take place without our intervention (the wear, the aging etc.). There are defined changes, which can be achieved or not, from various reasons.

In order to understand the change, we must understand the factors that influence it. Generally, there are 6 categories of factors which produce changes at the level of tourism policies: workforce, technology, the political world, the social trends, the competition, the economic “shocks”.

The change is a process which needs the involvement of all the employees and its assumption.

The underestimation of the human potential, of the creativity and of the competencies of the employees can turn out to be an impediment for change.

What are the stages of the change process?

Generically speaking, the stages are the following:

- the establishment of the purposes and of the expected results in tourism after the change;
- the comparison between the current situation and the expected results;
- the definition of the necessary activities for the realisation of the future status;
- the elaboration of the strategy for the administration of the transition.

We must draw the attention towards the fact that the change in tourism needs another strategy than the incremental one (the continuous improvement), because the success from the past can be the greatest obstacle of all sometimes. But, is there a need of foreign investors, of a new strategy and of trained people for this change, but especially for the acceptance of the new and of the sustainable things in Romanian tourism? Or do we wait again for the helpful interventions of the state?
In the study “Critical Issues in Tourism”, the American specialists, as well as other authors, consider that there are 7 main forms of state intervention in tourism: coordination, planning, legislation, investment, stimulation, socialising and protection. Youell Ray states in his study that the national authority’s functions, from an English point of view, would be to: establish, promote, achieve, ease, inform, legislate, finance, consult and classify. All these forms and functions allow a wide range of actions through which the tourist industry can be encouraged, supported and developed, using various tools and specific strategies.

The development of tourism, like any other economic activity, means also uncertainty, especially because of the rapid and profound changes in the business sector. Extremely serious negative consequences can be avoided through a rigorous planning of tourism, but this process is extremely difficult and complex. However, there are many barriers in the achievement of the tourist planning, among which there are the complexity and the diversity of the industry and of the governmental organisations in direct and indirect connection with the tourist activity (for instance, banks, shops etc.), the seasonal character of the tourist activity, the high cost due to the detailed analysis of resources and researches of the market which must be performed, and last but not least the people’s mentality, especially of those in the private sector, who are mainly against the planning.

The most efficient way of planning is through the involvement of the public sector (the government) as well as of the private sector in this process, the democratisation of the planning process facing two major obstacles: the inability of the local organisations to offer a viable model of planning and the impossibility of ensuring a high rate of consultancy for the local community members.

The tourist policy, which should be consistent and imperative, for the Romanian tourism medium and long term revival will have to aim the following priority objectives:

- the reduction of taxation;
- the continuous treatment of the international tourism as an export activity;
- the exemption from taxation of the reinvested profit on a certain period;
- the continuous perfection of the legislation and of the institutional frame in order to harmonise it with the dispositions of the World Organisation of Tourism and with the ones of the European Union;
- the involvement of the state in supporting financially the investments in tourism, especially of those of public interest (infrastructure), as well as in the international and internal promotion;
- the development of the specialised professional education system and of the professional reorientation of the unemployed workforce from the other economic sectors; the constitution of a network of education institutions integrated in the European network of tourism and hotels educational institutions;
- the correlation of the tourism development programs and projects with the regional development programs (transportation, telecommunications, the landscape design etc.);
• the special attention regarding the surveys – a useful tool for the hotels managers in order to maintain and increase the quality of the services.
• The enforcement of quality brands, in order to increase the competitiveness on the tourist market and in order to acknowledge the quality of the tourism services.

In short, the following represent an imperative necessity for Romania:
• To urgent the creation of the “Tourist Brand of Romania”, program for which 20-30 millions of euros are available, its elaboration having started in April of 2008;
• The World Organisation for Tourism has criticised the current slogan of Romanian tourism, because it does not transmit the essence of Romania for its potential visitors. These are surprised by the fact that their expectations about this country have been exceeded. The challenge with which Romanian tourism is struggling is to show the whole world, before they come to our country, how many beautiful things and experiences it can offer. Romania will benefit, until 2013, from European funds of 50 million euros for tourist promotion and information programs, through the Regional Operational Program.
• The purpose of the Master Plan is to identify the vulnerable points of the Romanian tourism, and then to elaborate restructuring plans through the identification of the financial resources and through the formation of a tourist market which can efficiently compete on the world market.
• In the next 10 years, the Romanian tourism will generate services of over 11 billion euros, as it is estimated by the World Council of Tourism. According to the study performed by the Peacock Hotels Company, in the capital of our country new hotel projects with a total of 6200 rooms will be built in the following years. Bucharest is an attractive target and represents a great potential of development in comparison with the other cities in Europe regarding the level of occupation as well as the level of the net tariff obtained, as it is estimated by the World Council of Tourism. The preliminary data reveal that, in 2007, 500 new rooms were inaugurated, in 2008, 2000 were expected to be inaugurated, and by 2011 other 5000.

An important component of planning is the tourist prognosis. This has many types and can consist of three possible scenarios: optimistic, intermediary and pessimistic. Under the name of “Tourism 2020”, OMT has elaborated a long term quantity prognosis for the tourist demand, evaluating its development until 2020. Also, in a report of the National Council of Tourism in France, presented in 2000, there is a prognosis of the macroeconomic tendencies in the evolution of the French tourist offer until 2020.

In conclusion, the change affects any kind of company including the multinational ones. It is a mistake to start from the premise that if one is extremely organised and is already on a high position, one will not be affected. On the contrary, there are more things to do and more often, because it is not difficult to reach the top, but it is harder to keep that place!
REFERENCES:


[3]. Ioncea, M. - The Economy of services, Uranus Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000


[7]. Mazilu, M. - Ecotourism and tourist arrangements, Scrisul Românesc Publishing House, Craiova, 2004


[9]. Mazilu, M.; Marinescu, R. - Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas - Case Study of the Iron Gates Natural Park, Rural Futures Conference, organized by University of Plymouth and School of Geography, 2nd-4th April 2008, Plymouth, the Great Britain, pp.1-7


[14]. Snak, O. - Services and Quality Management, Romanian Academy of Management, Bucharest, 2000

[15]. Stânciulescu, A.F.; Mazilu, M.; Căscu, Șt.C.; Constantinescu, M. - Considerations regarding the strategic thinking in the marketing of the regional identity, article published in „Economica” magazine, year XIV no.4 (December) (56)/2006, ASEM, Chișinău, 2006


[17]. Stânciulescu, G. - The Sustainable Tourism Management in the urban centres, The Economic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2004
