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Sustainable Tourism of Destination, Imperative Triangle Among: Competitiveness, Effective Management and Proper Financing

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1. Introduction

Destination, or the terminus of tourists' holidays, is a complex element linking geography (with all the resources – anthropic and natural – made available to tourists) and tourism (with all the activities that they can carry out and services that they can consume during their stay). The complexity of the destination is that it represents a product and more products at the same time. Services forming the tourist product / products offered in a destination, and that must be differentiated from those offered by competitors, are brand “formative”.

A tourist destination can mean a country, a region within a country, a city, village or resort. Whatever type of destination, the marketing tasks are the same: creating a favorable image of the destination at to the target segments of visitors, the design of instruments to support and disseminate the image and, last but not least, promoting the destination image in areas of origin. These topics will be covered in this article, focusing on the elements that define a tourist destination, the features of a destination, but also the elements that we insist upon in defining a destination image and its competitiveness, which confers a durability surplus.

Tourist destinations with limited financial resources for marketing activities are facing serious difficulties in producing an impact on the tourist market. It is therefore vital for the destination study to adopt a marketing policy such as “want it, get it”, thus directing efforts towards clearly defined targets and using the most effective marketing tools.

2. Defining elements of tourist destination (destination image, destination competitiveness as tourism product, destination value-creating elements, destination identity)

2.1 Destination image

Attitudes, perceptions and images have an important role in the decision to choose a tourist destination. The image is the sum of perceptions and beliefs that people have in relation to

that destination (Stăncioiu et al., 2009). The image of a destination is not necessarily based on prior experience, i.e. a visit to that destination. All tourist destinations have a self-image and the marketer's interest is to clearly distinguish it from other destinations, by defining components, by searching for key elements (Mazilu, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c) to transform it over time into a destination of a sustainable magnitude.

The ability to identify and promote value is the main factor of competitiveness of the society on a long-term. It requires identifying accurately and realistically the areas where there are performance premises and boosting quality development in relation to these areas, to identify individuals who are valued and their areas of excellence followed by channeling towards an education and training in line with their natural inclinations as to harmonize their interests with those of the society.

In conclusion, the competitiveness of a destination (Câdea et al., 2009) is given by the rate at which it manages to exploit the valuable human heritage with which it is naturally equipped. This has two major components: mass education and training and predisposition channeling, creating the conditions for the individual to manifest in that area.

Although economically speaking the concept of competitiveness in tourism defined as "the ability to cope with competition in an effective and profitable manner on the tourist market" incorporates that used in the literature, tourism specific content makes necessary a complex and multidimensional approach of this concept. This is necessary considering some particular aspects of the tourist product.

Firstly, we must emphasize that the multitude of components involved in designing and marketing a tourist product have made the achievement of its competitiveness to be a complex process in whose ensuring contribute: both the competitiveness of destination / resort, and the one made at each type tourist business: direct provider of tourist services: transport, accommodation, food, recreation, treatment, or intermediary: tour operator, travel agency, etc.

To this is added the fact that, from the tourist's point of view, the product covers the complete experience of leaving home and up to the return (Stăncioiu, 2003), being sufficient that weaknesses manifest in a single component for the overall level of competitiveness to be affected. In this context, too, the first step of destination brand is to investigate and analyze the market and to formulate strategic recommendations related to situational factors, purpose and objectives established (Morgan & Pritchard, 2004). Of the factors of "success" on the strategic orientation of a destination, we can mention, among others, adopting a strategic vision, identifying key competitors, awareness / recognition of international competition, prioritizing infrastructure improvements, including the tourism development plan in the national development plan, taking into account the attitude / attitudes, cultural values and lifestyle of residents and, then of non-residents on their (own) city, etc.

This latter factor requires the marketer to carefully and constantly study visitors (including residents) and potential tourists (non-residents) on the image seen by them through the prism of cultural / tourist heritage of the destination as "the easiest and most effective promotion is self-promotion [...] which includes the strengthening of civic consciousness and self-confidence" (Ashworth, 2001: p. 58-70).

The image of a place is mainly “represented by its cultural heritage” (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 2000: p. 417-23) and formed by what is called “the mind or knowledge space” (Go & Van Fenema, 2006: p. 64-78). The cultural identity of a place is represented by its material and immaterial cultural heritage and, since the concepts of “culture” and “identity” cannot be separated, just as the concepts of “society” and “culture” cannot be divided – results the concept of “sociocultural” (Sorokin, 1967), the sociocultural identity of a people constituting, in fact, “its psychology or soul” (adapted from Luca, 2007: pp. 159-171).

Cultural identity of a place is an important part of its identity and therefore in its essence it must not change! In this context, the marketer’s main problem is that, while identity remains and must remain the same over time, its image usually suffers changes. Therefore, the projected image must be realistic (Govers & Go, 2009: p. 190). In some situations, however, the image of a destination can be changed by “forming agents”, such as news and popular culture (Gartner, 2009: p. 191-215) and may give rise to what is called the “a priori” image, one which, stable for a longer period of time, can change / distort even its sociocultural identity.

In general, the image of a destination can be built on a broad set of consumer functional and psychological expectations, on basic or holistic attributes, on common or unique aspects (Govers & Go, 2009, p.191), or on a combination of them. *If that place is wanted to become a successful tourist destination, no matter of the model of tourist development and the proposed timeframe, destination marketing plays a central place, the starting point being represented exactly by the inventory / perception mode of its “tourist heritage”, in the smallest details, marketing audit constituting in this case an integral part of urban marketing.* ¹

Value creating elements - from the perspective of the supplier / provider, transformed throughout the consumption of “a tourist product, viewed from the perspective of the buyer, in elements determined for satisfaction, compose inter alia **the image of a destination**.

The image of a destination is the sum of information and impressions submitted to potential consumers about the population, infrastructure, climate, history, attractions, personal safety, etc.” (Echtner and Brent, 1991) and is formed by perceptions and experiences.

Since the sense of sight is predominant in forming a positive image, the visual perception of a destination can be decomposed, for a deeper understanding of the attributes / variables of differentiation that form the atmosphere / ambience, in an *artistic image* and a *psychological image*. Thus, intangible factors such as good weather, nature / scene, accessibility, turned into tangible elements, that is pleasant environment, relaxing ambience, infrastructure, can create an artistic image favorable to the tourist choosing the destination. Intangible elements such as local culture, the diversity of sports activities, restaurants, cafes, etc., which can increase the value of a destination, turned into tangible elements, namely historical sites, events (cultural events, festivals, etc.) form an environment in which there are “lots of things to do”, and may create a favorable psychological image for the tourist returning to the destination. Transforming these attributes into benefits for the tourist, by which a destination can be differentiated, is held in a positioning strategy.

¹ This paper is an extension of a research made at the level of the tourist destination Romania (for the 8 regions), whose results are presented in the journal „Economie teoretică și aplicată”, starting with volume 2 / 2011.

Besides the differentiating variables “product” and “image”, for a tourist destination other variables are also used (e.g., staff, a variable which can increase or decrease the value of the tourist product offered)².

The destination identity is “the principal means of identification, but also the source of associations made by the consumer, which represent the links between values and brand” (Lindstrom, 2009). In the case of tourist destination, the identity elements are those which are constituted most of the times in attractiveness elements (which add value and / or uniqueness to the destination) and, at the same time, in main motivation for choosing it. The main feature of the selected destinations is their involvement in promoting social, cultural and environmentally sustainable models. The winners of this award are emerging European destinations, little known in the 27 Member States and candidate countries. The EDEN project helps to spread in the Union applied sustainable practices in the chosen destinations and to turn them into successful tourist destinations.

This project is supported by the European Commission, which launched it in 2006 and still plays the central role of coordination. The Commission’s tasks consist in encouraging dialogue between stakeholders, co-financing selection procedures, organizing the awards ceremony (in the first two years, in the European Tourism Forum) and coordinating a comprehensive communication campaign. We have also benefitted from this support, and here I am referring to the area in which I work as President of the Association for the Promotion of Mehedinți County, occupying based on the international selection the fourth place, at a tie score (94) with three of the 32 participants.

Our major gain is outrunning greatly renowned tourist destinations, traditional not only for Romanian tourism, such as: the seaside, Braşov area, the area of Bucovina monasteries, etc. As a direct benefit of this gain is the free promotion at the European level of the European tourist destination: Drobeta-Ponoare-Clisura Dunării in European tourism fairs and other events, in this regard also being visited by foreign journalists who have contributed to the promotion of the above mentioned destination in reviving tourism in the area. The tourist destination is also accompanied by a brief bilingual description and a presentation CD.

A particularly favorable impact on our entire area, considered as an “open door” for future funding, the area enjoying a heavy promotion also at the European Union level, becoming one of the main destinations of foreign tourists coming to Romania. We also had facilitated the participation to three tourism fairs abroad with a customized stand and the participation at the Tourism Fair of Romania in autumn 2008. (economie.hotnews.ro/stiri-eurofonduri-4437193-depresiunea-horezu-premiata-comisia-europeana-**destinatie-excele...**

We must also highlight that often a tourist destination overlaps or is near a local community: a city or rural settlement whose economic, social, cultural life influences more or less tourist activity, being in turn influenced by it.

² Adapted after Stăncioiu A.-F., Pârgaru I., Teodorescu N., Talpaş J., Răducan D. (2008) - „Imaginea și identitatea - instrumente de poziționare în marketingul destinației”, paper presented at the Scientific Communications Session „Cercetare interdisciplinară în turismul românesc în contextul integrării europene”, by the National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism, Ighiu, 2008;

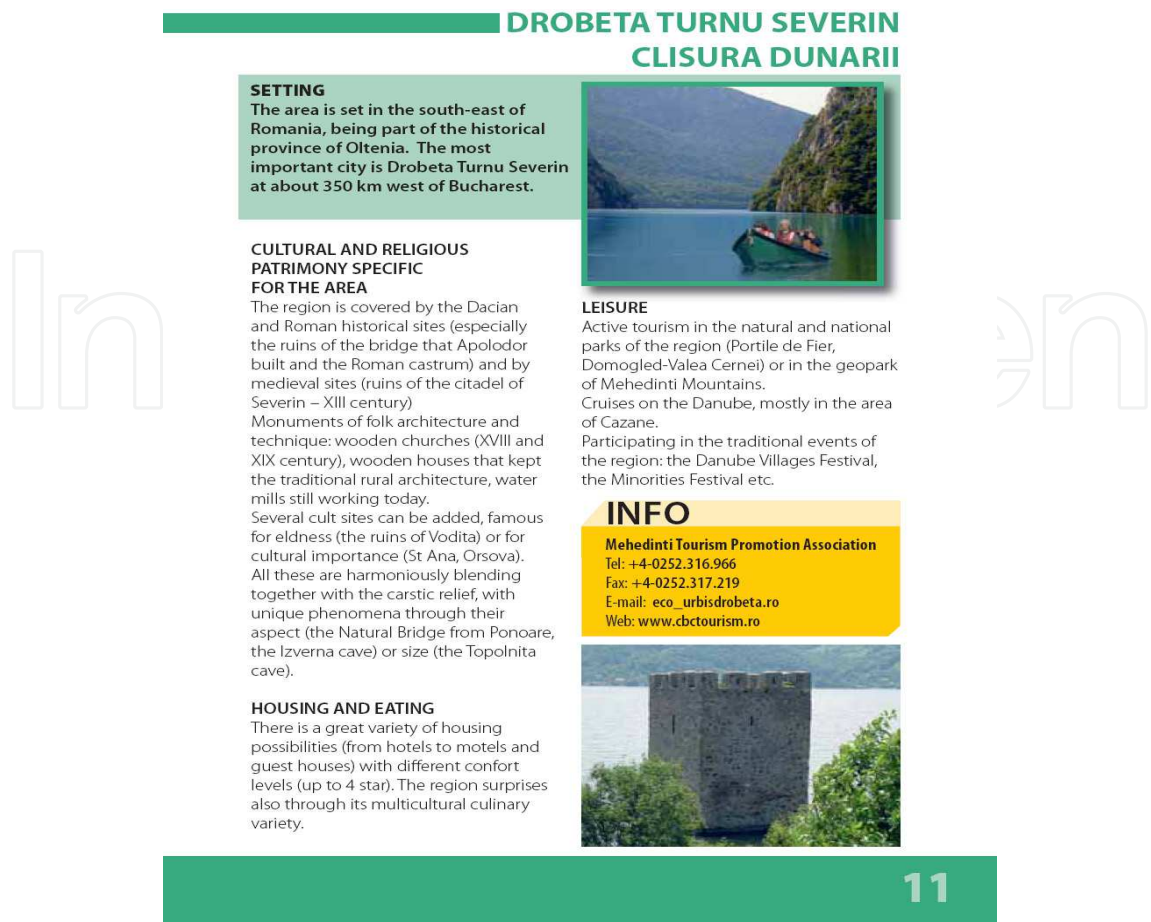


Fig. 1. Drobeta Turnu Severin-Clisura Dunării-European Destination of Excellence

2.2 The competitiveness of a destination as tourism product

Competitiveness in tourism should be treated in the new conditions of globalization of economic life by highlighting the crucial elements that can influence and can become competitive advantages for Romanian tourism. The competitiveness horizon in Romanian tourism is inextricably bound to the elements of strategy adopted by the government through the National Tourism Authority, local administrations, each economic agent, elements which must combine organically with the sustainable development objectives.

All these aspects highlight the large number of determinants that influence the competitiveness of the tourist product.

Therefore, out of theoretical considerations, tackling the competitiveness of the tourist destination and tourist business will be made distinctly, although between the two there is mutual interdependence and interconditioning. A tourist destination cannot be competitive in the absence of competitive tourist businesses, while a tourist business cannot be competitive in an unattractive tourist destination. The crucial elements in ensuring competitiveness of the tourist destination would be schematically represented according to those in figure 2.

The model includes six determiners: the attractions and the tourist resources that the respective destination has; the support factors and other resources; the situational

conditions/determiners; qualifiers; amplifiers; the conditions of the demand; the policy; the planning and the development of the destination; the inventory/the management of the tourist destination.

The attractions and the tourist resources existent at the level of a tourist destination include: the geographic position, the natural and anthropic tourist resources, the organization of some events, the relaxation and animation activities, the tourist equipments, and the commercial network dedicated to the tourists.

The success of a tourist destination is determined by the way in which this one manages to guarantee and at the same time to ensure its visitors, through its entire offer, an experience that can equal or exceed the multiple alternative destinations.

Building a cult for quality in tourism is a difficult process that needs the professional qualification of the personnel and an ethic education for the change of mentalities.

In order to achieve this, an education and motivation program of the staff is necessary divided on groups of professions and especially for the managerial levels, differentiated for those who will directly take part in the creation of a proper quality climate within the team, as well as showing attention, the desire to satisfy the needs, to answer to these needs as well as possible. This means among others: to apply the quality management, to completely involve the personnel of the unit regardless of the job and the qualification, to implement systems of evaluation and rewards, to elaborate rules and to educate the personnel etc.

The success of a tourist company, the effect of its competitiveness (see picture 2) are determined by the process of attraction, winning, satisfaction of the clients' needs, and especially by gaining their loyalty, offering good quality services and products. Following this pattern, the company will record the expected profit, following the effects of cooperation for the achievement of the competitiveness of a tourist.

As a result, ensuring competitiveness of tourist products and services must be based on *quality management*, it being a way to ensure competitiveness and hence business market credibility.

Starting from such an approach, we defined and outlined two concepts that those involved in tourism industry must learn and apply to come to produce market competitive services such as: competitiveness management and marketing in tourism.

Competitiveness in tourism suggests safety, efficiency, quality, high productivity, adaptability, success, modern management, superior products, low costs. A firm's competitive strength lies in competitive advantages and in distinctive competencies they possess relative to other competitors.

The success and more of a travel agency is determined by the process of attracting, gaining, satisfying customer needs, and also by their loyalty, the key to them being the quality of services / products offered; only in this way the company will be able to obtain the expected profit.

The essential objective of quality management is to achieve efficiently and effectively at a maximum level of only those **products that: fully satisfy customer requirements, comply with the society requirements, comply with standards and specifications applied, take**

into account all aspects of consumer and environment protection, are offered to the customers at the price and time agreed with them.

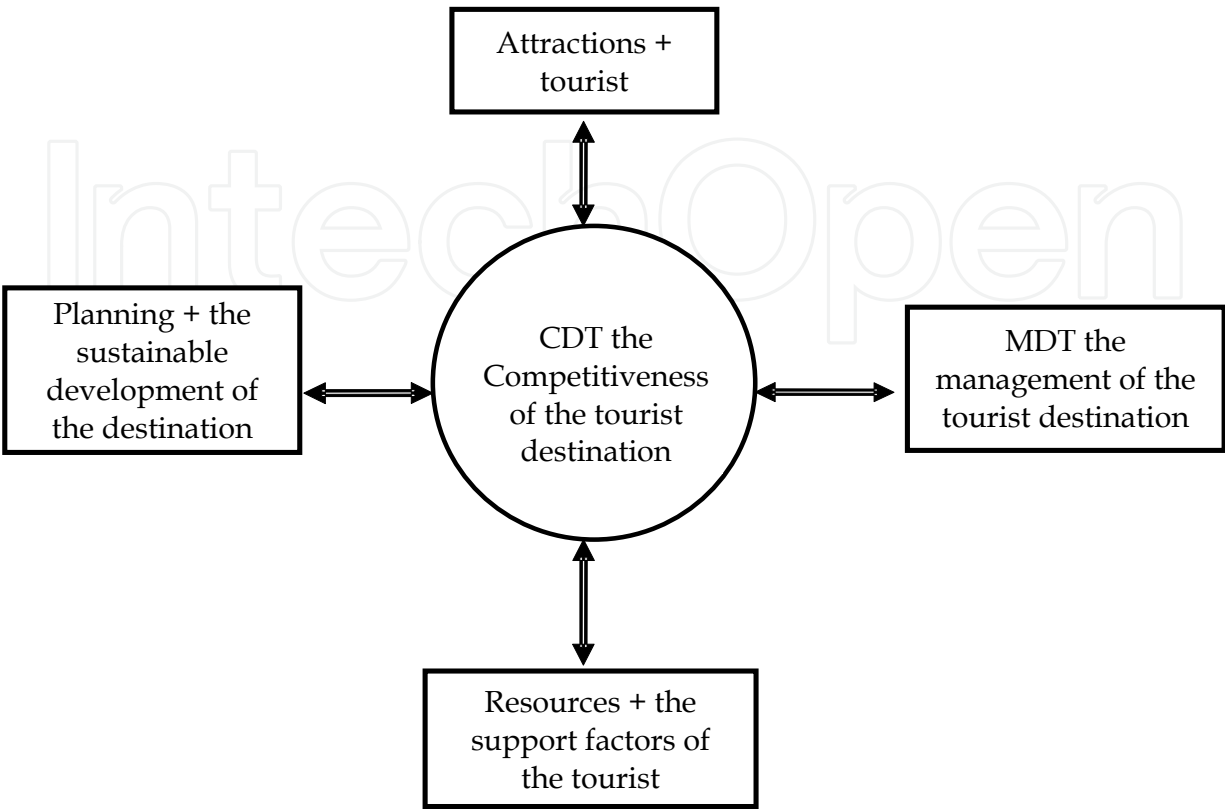


Fig. 2. Determiners in the competitiveness of the tourist destination

Introducing a quality system to benefit all parties involved: the country as a destination, entrepreneurs, consumers and intermediaries.

This includes ensuring a constant level of quality. Therefore quality implementation is achieved by a set of requirements called *standards*, and grouped by type, depending on the area in which they operate: performance standards, service standards, professional reference standards, standards including specifications, standards with operating procedures (operational).

Achieving quality involves not only developing standards and ensuring compliance with them, but quality performance must lead to meeting customer requirements and expectations of quality management.

In this context, the systematic analysis of tourist services / products quality and taking the necessary measures is a priority of utmost importance at the present stage.

Ensuring the competitiveness of tourist products is **the quintessence of the process of achieving competitiveness in tourism**. This is both the result of the competitiveness of providers directly involved in the production of tourism services included in the package, as well as of other determinants that have a bearing on the competitiveness of the tourist destination.

In this sense, marketers have defined the concept of “**product universe**” which summarizes very well these influences. Thus, the tourist product universe is represented by the sum of perceptions that the tourist has concerning the product: visual images: colors, ambience, geographical and physical environment, atmosphere, smells, musical sensations, human relations (with the personnel, other tourists, people), comfort level, etc. (Ambiehl et al., 2002).

A **product / service is competitive** when it has the ability to impose itself on a particular market, to sell in large quantities comparable perhaps with those of similar products or services produced and sold by competitors (Rondelli and Cojocaru, 2005).

As a result, the tourism product design is not confined to the combination of multiple variants of the two categories of elements: tourist resources and services, but also requires a **certain concept about the product**.

The ever-growing demands that tourists have to travel products have imposed a series of attributes that a tourist product must meet for it to be competitive: **satisfaction, accessibility, legitimacy, security and safety, authenticity, transparency, harmony with nature**, in their achievement bringing their contribution alike both competitiveness of each tourist service provider to the tourist destination and other competitiveness determinants of tourist destination (Cândeia et al., 2009).

The differentiation firstly results from the value chain of the destination as tourist business (Fig. 3). As with any product, also in terms of tourist product, the value chain must be analyzed from two perspectives, namely: the business’ value chain and the buyer’s value chain.

From the business’ perspective, the value chain includes the margin value and the value activities, each of which being a potential source of uniqueness. In turn, value activities (classified into primary and support activities) are divided into direct, indirect and quality assurance activities.

The evolution of the concept of quality, from quality assurance to total quality management, has required the use of working methods and procedures in all departments and at all the levels of the tourist product, with the establishment of indicators for all factors “creating satisfaction” (from quality ingredients for making food, respectively the quality of the linen cloth, up to the “quality of the destination”, this also including service provider staff quality).

In other words, the concept of quality, approached from the perspective of the supplier / provider, found in all value-creating elements, is found in the form of the element of satisfaction for the buyer (e.g., degree of comfort - for accommodation, nutrition / taste value - for food, equipment degree, competence, etc. - for the destination as a whole). These, combined with the attractive natural resources, not necessarily unique, and constantly referring to the needs and desires of the market / markets that they wish to aim, lead to the differentiation of the destination with sustainable competitive advantages.

The new concepts on tourism development and a sustainable pattern of destination (Mazilu, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c) must take into account not only the varied and complex relationships between tourism and other regional economic and social phenomena, but must also refer to the phenomenon of tourism itself, as how it will shape in the future.

For Romania, this concept aims to take into account the evolution of social phenomena in the country, the financial crisis effects which under the terms of the market economy will generate the formation of new categories of potential tourists, of new motivations for leisure and consequently the occurrence and development of new tourist demands, new tourist destinations, which assume, under the global economic crisis, new tasks (see table 1)

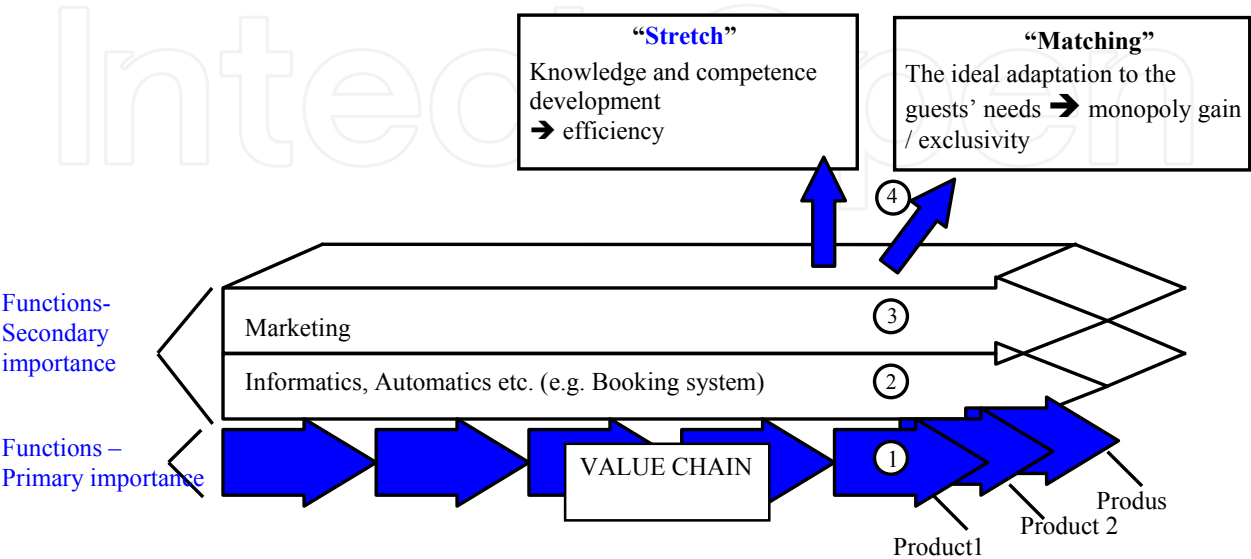


Fig. 3. Destination value chain as tourist business

| Planning | Information | Establishment of tourist offer |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">mission statementorganization | <ul style="list-style-type: none">information for guestsinformation for local peoplesupport for journalists | <ul style="list-style-type: none">concern for guestsamusement for guestscoordination of tourism infrastructureoperation of amusement facilitiescontrol and improvement of product quality |
| Marketing and communications | Sales | Lobby |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">promotionsales promotionPRbrand managementmarket research | <ul style="list-style-type: none">information and reservation systempackages | <ul style="list-style-type: none">tourism awareness among the populationunderstanding of tourism at the level of political authoritiescollaboration in “cooperative” organizations |

Table 1. Tasks of a Sustainable Tourism Destination in the context of competitiveness

Romania’s participation in the international tourism competition, on the continent and in the world, where there is very valuable tourist heritage at the level of European and world markets’ requirements, remains a strong action issue of the government.

The systemic vision of the sustainable development strategy of Romanian tourism in the context of structural adjustment of the entire national economy enforces that tourism has become a priority economic sector in the organic interdependence with other branches and economic and social sectors.

The decisive element in the scientific and decision-making plan is to define a firm, realistic concept on capitalizing heritage and tourism sustainable development objectives. Romanian tourism alignment to these requirements is necessary both because of its characteristic mobility and because of the importance of this sector in Romania’s economic recovery.

3. The destination management (DMO – Destination Management Organization)

The destination management is the coordinated management of all the elements which create a destination.

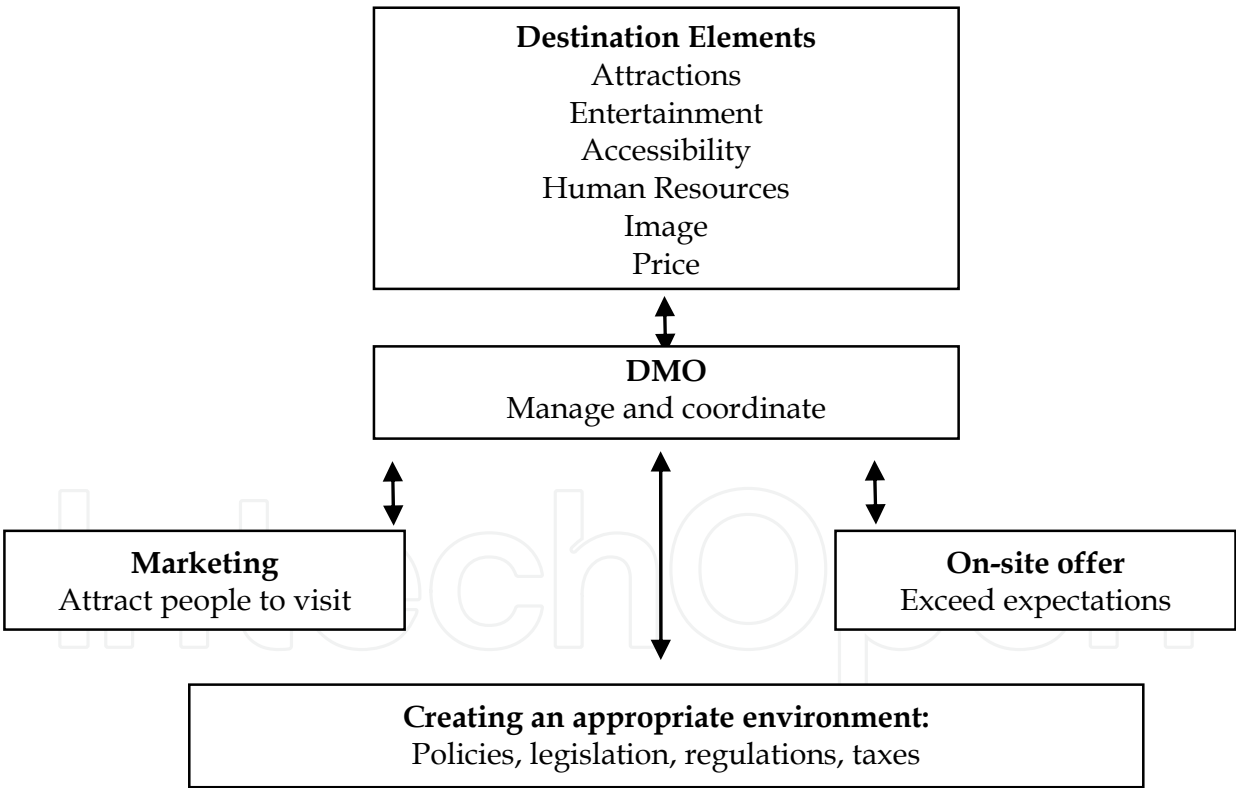


Fig. 4. The organization of the destination management – Stage I

The destination management approaches strategically these entities, sometime very separate, for a better result.

The coordinated management can help to avoid the doubling of the efforts regarding the promotion, the services offered to the visitors, the training, the support for business and the

identification and the management of the problems which have not been solved, complying with the following stages:

The organization of the destination management – Stage I

Synthesizing the models proposed in the studies, a possible model of competitiveness of the tourist destination is presented in picture 5.

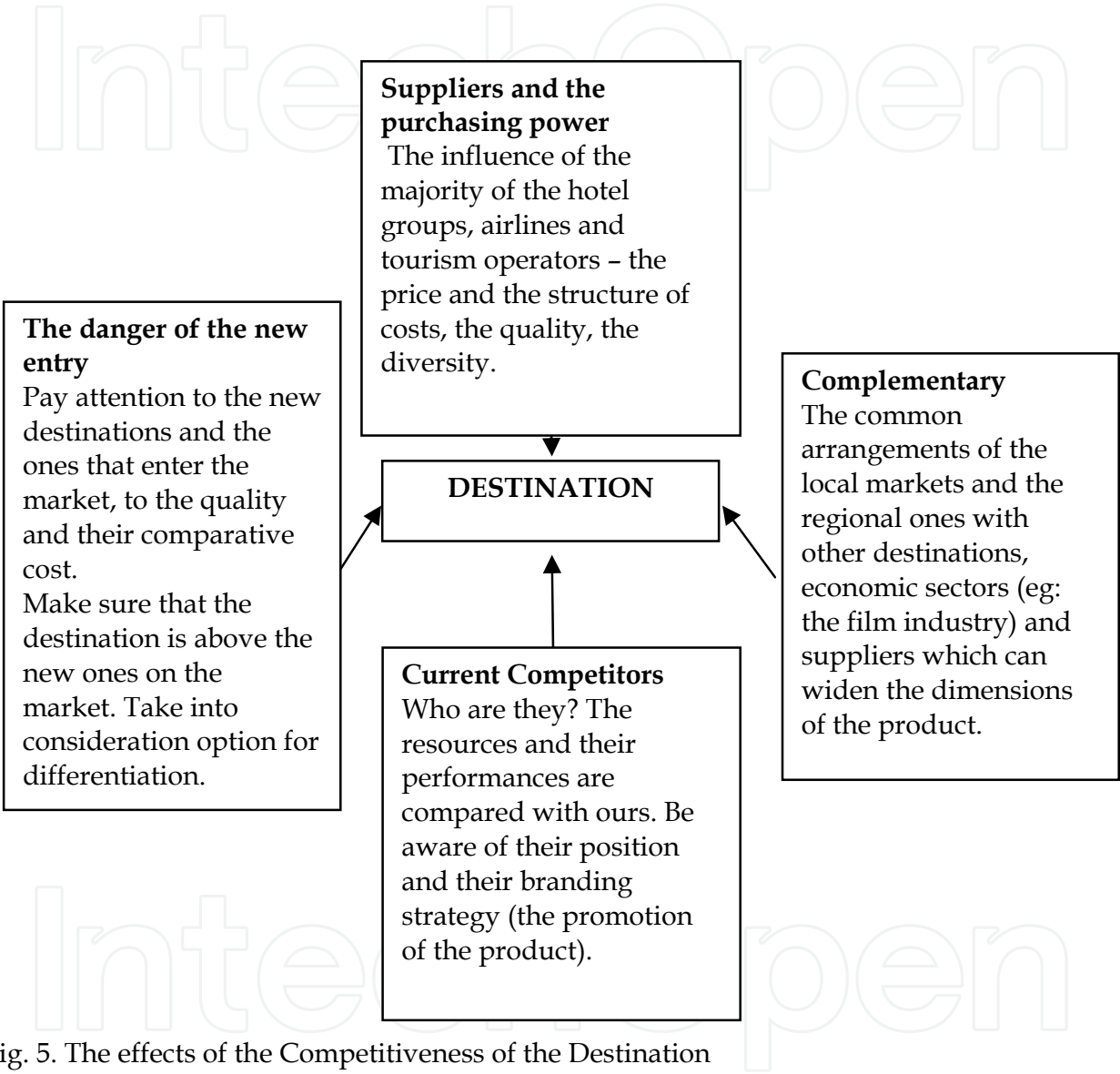


Fig. 5. The effects of the Competitiveness of the Destination

The quality management is defined according to ISO 9000 as being “the assembly of activities of the general function of management which determines the policy in the field of quality, the objectives and the responsibilities, in order to implement them within the system of quality through specific means like: the planning of quality, the control of quality, ensuring the quality and the improvement of quality”.

The essential objective of quality management is the achievement in conditions of maximum efficiency of those products which: entirely satisfy the client’s requests, are in conformity with the requests of the society, with the standards and the applied specifications, take into

account all the aspects regarding the protection of the consumer and of the environment, are offered to the client at the price and the deadline agreed together.

In 2010, Romania has recorded a success: it has climbed up 4 places in the top of the destinations preferred by the tourists from the EU in 2009.

Romania is currently on the 26th place in the ranking of destinations preferred by the tourists from the European Union, according to a recent report Euro-barometer, drawn up by the Gallup polling agency. Last year, Romania was the 30th destination in the preferences of the tourists from the European Union.

According to the statistics drawn up by Gallup in the 27 countries of the European Union, half of the 27000 respondents said that they would leave for holiday in their native country or in another EU country.

Criteria for choosing a destination depend on how it is perceived, namely the image that the consumer has established about it; at the same time, evaluation criteria of the quality of destination are also considered.

4. Sustainable destination management

It is essential for tourism development, especially through the efficient use of space and land planning, as well as through development control and the decisions to invest in infrastructure and services. Ensuring that new tourism development is, in scale and type, appropriate to the needs of the local community and environment, sustainable management can enhance on the long-term the economic performance and competitive positioning of a destination. It requires a supportive framework involving all stakeholders at regional and local levels, and an efficient structure to facilitate partnership and effective leadership.

A basic requirement for the existence and quality continuity of tourist destinations in Romania is to remain competitive. Actions to achieve this should be considered as part of the creation process of a lasting nature, which is one of the most important competitive advantages. Therefore, in order to ensure long-term competitiveness, viability and prosperity, tourist destinations should put more emphasis on full integration of concerns on sustainability in decision-making and in their management practices and tools.

Finally, to achieve a tangible progress, the demand from both leisure market and tourist businesses should send stronger and more consistent signals. Tourists need to be sensitized to be able to develop and strengthen their ability to make choices for sustainable development. Raising awareness with regard to sustainability and ethics can facilitate the emergence of tourist individual responsible attitudes and practices. The growing understanding of consumers in terms of durability could affect tourist destinations to show an interest in this direction and act accordingly, thus increasing their attractiveness, as in Romania's case.

4.1 Tourism development under sustainability

$$\text{Tourism} + \text{sustainable development} = \text{sustainable tourism}$$

At the beginning of this century and millennium, travel and tourism industry worldwide is the most dynamic sector of activity and, at the same time, the most important generator of

jobs. Economically, tourism is at the same time also serving as a source of recovery of national economies of those countries that have significant tourism resources and exploit them properly.

In this context, the main reasons causing the need for tourism development under sustainability, the following aspects are resulting (Mazilu, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c):

- a. Tourist resources being practically inexhaustible, tourism is one of the economic sectors with real prospects of long-term development;
- b. The complex exploitation and utilization of tourist resources accompanied by an effective external market promotion can be a source of increasing foreign exchange earnings, thereby contributing to the balance of external payments;
- c. Tourism is a secure labor market and of redeployment of the dismissed one from other sectors heavily restructured;
- d. Tourism is a means of promoting the image of a country, thus participating in the promotion of exports of goods and services on the world market, both implicitly and explicitly;
- e. Tourism, through its multiplier effect, acts as a dynamic element of the global economic system, generating a specific request for goods and services that involve an increase in their production area, thus contributing to the diversification of the structure of national economy sectors.

One possible response to these challenges would be to apply the concept of **mosaic eco-development** (Mazilu, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2007d), which proposes the implementation of sustainable development principles to smaller areas, following that they be gradually expanded so that, on the long term, to cover the entire national territory. In this view, environmental space should look in its ideal form like a chessboard, in which large pieces of agricultural land should merge with smaller areas allocated to industry, various categories of infrastructure and parks and natural reserves. This complex alternation arises from uneven spatial distribution of natural resources and the application of economic, social and environmental criteria. In this framework, ecology and bio-economy can provide original solutions to territory arrangement so that appropriate environmental areas are allocated to each branch, resulting in a territorially sectoral complementarity.

The resulting complementarity should be addressed not only functionally but also by the rational use of land, by the increasing of employment level and income, by the actual participation in inter-regional exchanges and integration into European structures and flows, by the complementarity with environmental restrictions (Constantin D.L., 2000).

Application of sustainable tourism development projects starts from the design and construction of the material and technical base in order to harmonize with the environment, local community or other sectors of the economy, continuing in the state of tourist activities course.

Seeking a sustainable development model appropriate to each territory, not universally valid and applicable in any territory, we observe analyzing the etymological game but with a lot of sense: Tourism + Sustainable Development = Sustainable Tourism, the insertion of constraints, similarities, differences, which requires an even closer analysis. It is known that each area has its history, its identity, its resources, according to which a form or other of

tourism can develop, imperatively respecting its economic, social and environmental specificities.

In this perspective, the different players “employed” in such an approach are called to establish, in a first phase, a careful diagnosis of the territory, aiming even a decoding of the influences of sustainable development according to the opportunities and threats of each territory. A second phase is the drafting of a sustainable tourism development project of that territory continuously adapted to the local context, the project being “embraced” by as many people living in that territory possible. Last but not least, certain “clauses” of territorial development will have to be respected, progressively putting in place actions aimed at improving public offer, the local tourist product, removing the parasitizing of this sustainable action of other illogical ones (power games, interest games among stakeholders, etc.).

This article, open itself to major scientific reflections, has tried to explain the role and importance of the analytical approach of sustainable development in tourism, in the territory, having the function of restructuring it, rebuilding it and even redeveloping it into a better direction, because sustainable development respects the direction of history being directed towards the future.

There is no single model universally applicable for the sustainable development of tourist destinations (Mazilu, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c). In this perspective, the different players involved in this inseparable binomial: Sustainable Development - Tourism, are required to build in these territories **a specific tourist offer** to meet on the one hand individual or multiple demands, and on the other hand to meet local crisis (economic, political, social, etc.).

Tourism can contribute to sustainable development of territories because the territories themselves are part of an interactive, integrated and responsible relationship with the economic, social and natural environment on which they depend. Certainly, more remains to be done, because the unbalanced and destabilizing effects (see fig. 6) and the resistance to change, unfortunately, still persist, despite the massive involvement of the local community towards sustainable development.

In sustainable development, tourism plays a key role in contributing with a high percentage to Romania’s economic revival and recovery. Raising tourist product from established values to those corresponding to quality standards and preferences (Mazilu et al., 2010) of foreign tourists involves initiating and promoting actions to include, on the one hand, the development of education and training processes of mindsets appropriate to the current type of development, and, on the other hand, increasing sustainable development in tourist reception regions.

4.2 Stabilizing (+) and de-stabilizing (-) effects of tourism on the sustainable development

In global world you must live globally. Or integration is impossible without learning the rules of world tourism, without also learning to follow the code of conduct. One is especially not allowed to ignore that the effect of tourism regards only the future. The present’s sensations are sublimated, memories become past: a past that will determine future actions. Tourism is not only a school about others, but determines how we will live with others, how

we will behave. Our world, one created by tourism producers is a global one, a single ethnic group: the human race in its specificity, item by item for diversity. With a past, a present and hopes. Any mistake can lead to incurable trauma (ARA)³. And this on a mass of people called tourists.

The concept of sustainable development is today environmental. On the other hand it forces us to ask ourselves of the social purpose of our acts and of the future of the planet, taking into account permanently the economic system affected. It, as sustainable development, appears to us as a pioneer to new reflections, new actions, thus dedicating a mindset, even of government, unusual, based on cooperation and negotiation with all stakeholders in the implementation of sustainability in the territory (see fig. 7).

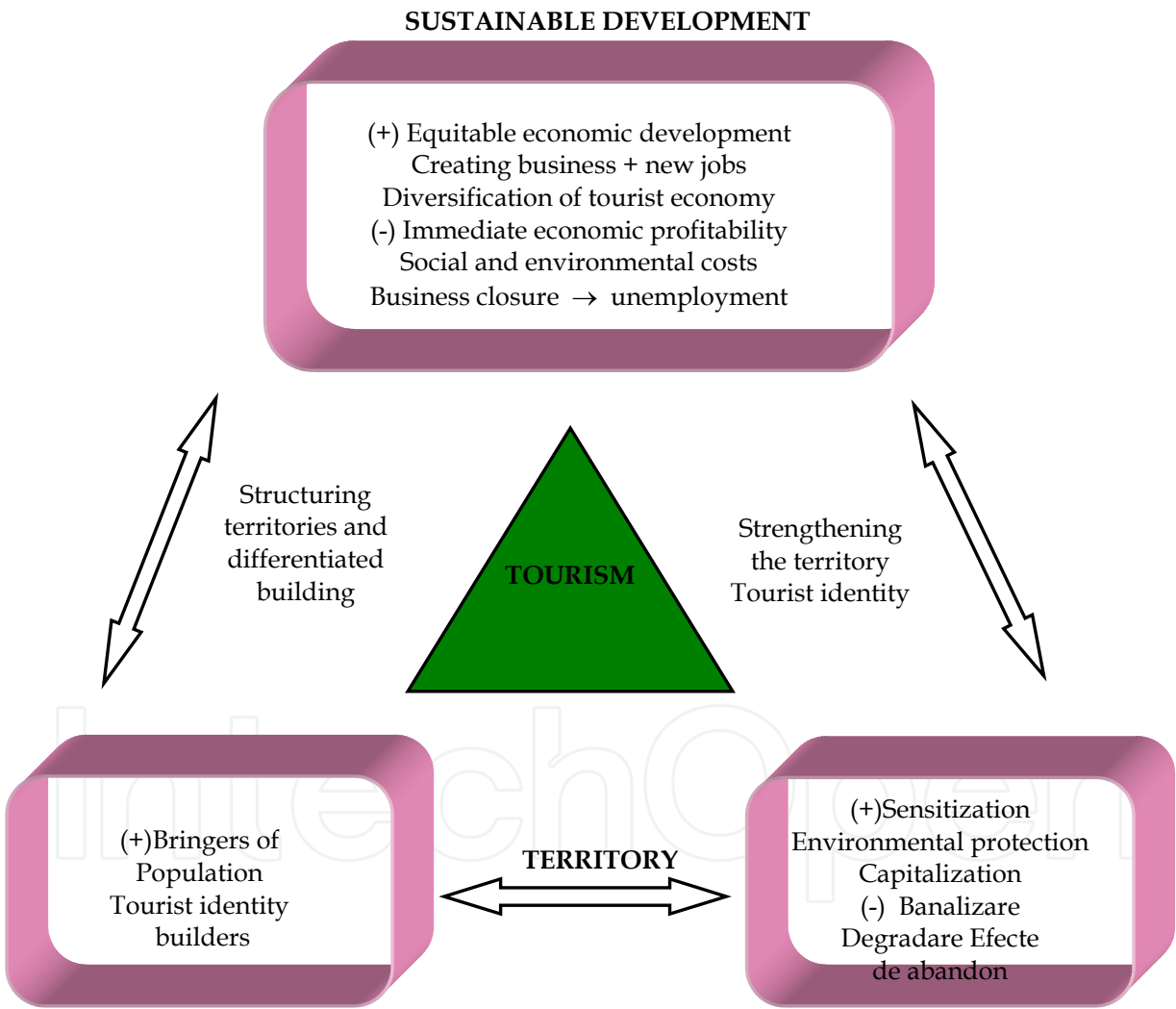


Fig. 6. Stabilizing (+) and destabilizing (-) effects of tourism on sustainable development (Author's adapting after Oliver Bessy – Sport, Loisir, Tourisme et développement durable des territoires, PUS, 2008, Cedex, p. 44)

³ ARA

On the other hand, sustainable development can be revealed to us as an alibi, even a utopia maintained voluntarily by political and economic players, anxious to legitimize and prove their economic logic but also to preserve the economic strength already acquired. We believe that to resolve this situation it would be enough to adapt socio-economic and ecological systems of this globalization “given”: **Sustainable development.**

In fact, this ambivalence reflects perfectly the state of our society harassed back and forth between a dominant liberal model organized around “tourist market” (Cândea et al., 2009) but also to a welcome closeness, regulating in the environmental and human level.

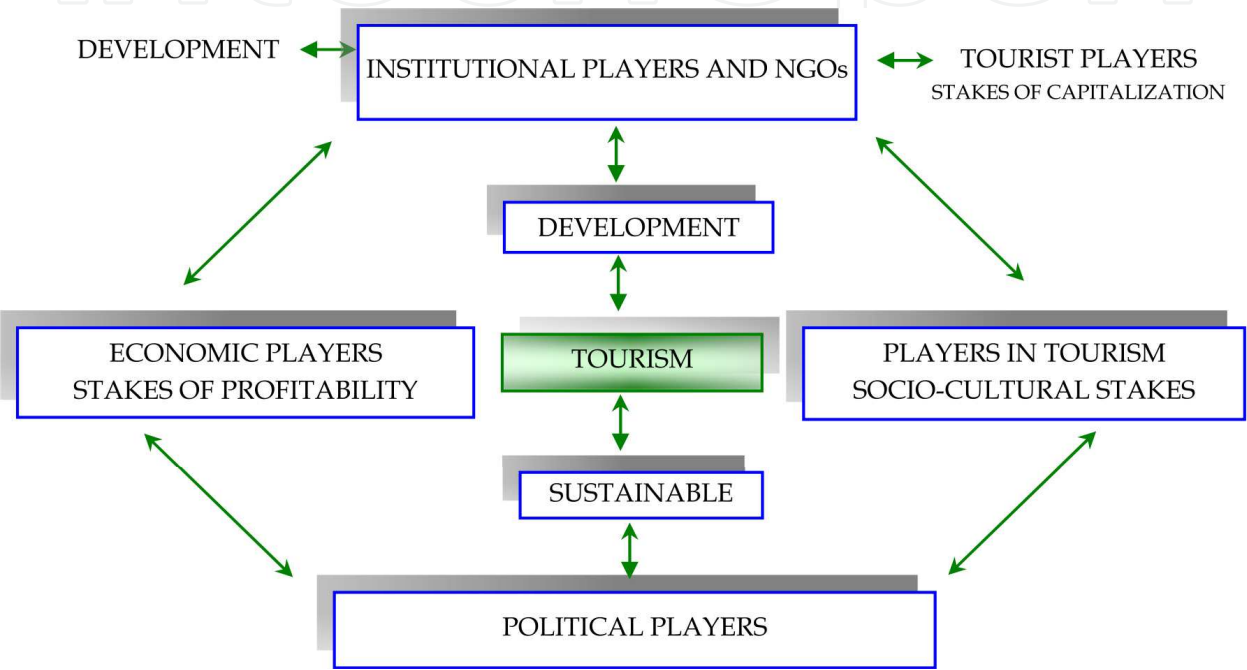


Fig. 7. Foreground stakes of the different local players in the action for sustainable development of tourism (Pârgaru et al., 2009)

Sustainability for tourism as for other industries has three independent aspects: economic, sociocultural and environmental. Sustainable development implies permanence, which means that sustainable tourism requires the optimal use of resources (including biological diversity), minimizing the negative economic, sociocultural and ecological impact, maximizing benefits of local communities, national economies and conservation of nature. As a consequence, sustainability also refers to the management structures needed to meet these goals.

The goal of achieving sustainable tourism should be subordinated to national and regional plans of economic and social development. Actions may cover for economic goals (income growth, diversification and integration of activities, control, development potentiation and zoning), social goals (poverty and income distribution inequality improvement, indigenous sociocultural heritage protection, participation and involvement of local communities) or environmental goals (protection of ecotourisms functions, conservation and sustainable use

of biodiversity). Some experts prefer to speak about sustainable tourism development rather than sustainable tourism, the first referring to all aspects of development, and the second to some aspects and components of tourism – such as long distance air transport that may easily not be sustainable under current technologies, even using the best practices.

We also wish to recall which are **the goals of sustainable tourism**, as they were mentioned by the WTO, in 2005 (acc. to *Making tourism more sustainable, A guide for policy makers*, UNWTO / UNEP, in the Sustainable Tourism Group report, “Action for more sustainable European tourism”, published in February 2007 – Annex 2 of the document cited includes the **12 objectives** to be met by development of sustainable tourism activities in a tourism destination with a protected area title):

- **Economic viability**

To ensure viability and competitiveness of tourism destinations and enterprises so that they are able to continually prosper and provide long term benefits.

- **Local prosperity**

To maximize the contribution of tourism to the prosperity of the host destination, including the proportion of visitor spending which is due to locals.

- **Jobs quality**

To increase the number and quality of jobs created and supported by tourism locally, including salary, working conditions and their availability to all persons without discrimination of gender, race, disability or otherwise.

- **Social equity**

To reach a broad distribution of economic and social benefits in tourism to the recipient community, including opportunities, income and services growth of those less wealthy.

- **Visitor satisfaction**

To provide a safe, satisfactory and complete experience for visitors, which is available to all without discrimination of gender, race, disability, etc.

- **Local control**

Local communities to be involved and empowered in planning and decision making on the management and future development of tourism in their area, in consultation with all stakeholders.

- **Community welfare**

To maintain and enhance quality of life in local communities, including social structures and access to resources, attractions and life support systems, avoiding any form of social degradation or exploitation.

- **Cultural richness**

To respected and put forward historical heritage, authentic culture , local traditions and specificity of host communities.

- **Physical integrity**

To maintain and put forward quality of landscape, both of the urban and rural ones, and to avoid physical and visual degradation of the environment.

- **Biological diversity**

To support preservation of natural areas, habitats and wildlife and to minimize their damaging effects.

- **Resource efficiency**

To minimize the use of scarce resources and non-renewable resources in the development and operation of tourism facilities and services.

- **Environmental purity**

To minimize the effects of air, water and soil pollution and waste production by tourism enterprises and visitors

To be mentioned that, for such requirements, a responsible, judicial tourist is also imperative for their compliance, to observe them, to manage them: better said – a sustainable tourist.

However, sustainable tourists are people taking into account sustainable development pillars when defining the trip's tourist package – i.e. accommodation, transport and activities – and are respectful towards nature, culture, people and destinations.

The traveler must behave respectfully during holidays, as well as in the case of an event related to his profession or at a congress, both for residential tourism and one-day travel.

The stereotypical image of the sustainable traveler is often associated with backpackers. However, this picture is not correct and complete, having nothing to do with the travel manner (individual or group), travel organization (individual organization or organizing by specialized intermediate agents), type of accommodation, type of vehicles and even with the destination itself. The condition is to make conscious choices, taking into account the said principles of sustainability. However, these conscious choices must be visible through the nature of the destination.

To behave respectfully towards other people, culture and environment involves, for example, taking an ethical behavioral conduct, using facilities enjoyed by locals, taking into account local customs, adapting attire where necessary, refusing to buy certain souvenirs that could harm the place. It also means paying a fair price for services. Such behavior could, for example, inspire tour operators to include in their offer sustainable tourism products.

A sustainable traveler is aware that during his trip his conduct has effects in the destination country.

Social implications of a sustainable travel to avoid oversaturated tourist traffic are important especially in areas where cultures substantially differs from the external environment of the area visited.

- Proposals:

Countries with natural and human tourism potential similar in richness and variety with Romania – sometimes not so diversified and focused – have managed to make tourism industry an important factor, in some cases even the most important, of economic growth and general development.

To achieve this target it is necessary to act in the following ways:

- make the institutional reform and create the legal framework for decentralization of management;
- harmonize tourist legislation similar to the EU one;
- support the establishment of professional associations and other NGOs in tourism, open and organize the National Authority for Tourism partnership with them;
- raising the quality of tourist promotion actions by using PHARE funds, supplementing the insufficient budgetary funds (compared to European Union countries) for this area.

Tourist policy on the medium and long term will have to aim the following priority objectives:

- reduce taxation;
- continuing to maintain international tourism as an export activity;
- tax exemption on reinvested profit on a certain period;
- further improvement of the legal and institutional framework for the harmonization with the rules of the World Tourism Organization and the European Union;
- state involvement in financially sustaining investment in tourism, particularly those of public interest (infrastructure), as well as international and domestic tourist promotion;
- development of the specialist professional training system and professional reconversion for dismissed labor force in other economic sectors; setting up a network of tourist education establishments integrated in the European network of hotels and tourist education;
- correlation of programs and tourism development projects with regional development programs (transport, telecommunications, landscaping etc.).
- increased attention to polls – useful tool for hotel managers working to maintain and increase the quality of services rendered.
- imposing quality marks in order to increase competitiveness on the tourism market and tourism service quality recognition.

Sustainable tourism represents tourism that meets the needs of present tourist and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future (<http://www.ecotourism.org>). On the other hand, sustainable tourism is a necessity to apply the principles of sustainable tourism development. The concept of sustainable tourism has become a key ingredient in the nation's tourism strategy (Connel et al, 2009, p.867). First, Sustainable tourism is the ability of a tourist destination to remain competitive (Mazilu et al., 2009), while maintaining environmental quality, despite all problems, to attract visitors for the first time, then following that loyalty to him, to remain unique in terms of cultural and be in a permanent equilibrium with the environment (Nistoreanu, 2009). It is based on the consideration that development must meet the present needs without jeopardizing those of future generations (Nistoreanu, 2005, p.42).

Sustainable development and its derivative sustainable tourism, although intuitively appealing, widely adopted by international organizations and many governments, and enshrined in legislation, are concepts that have been much criticized because of their lack of precision and because of the difficulties that have been experienced with their implementation (Tao & Wall, 2009, p.90).

Sustainable tourism develops the idea of meeting the needs of current tourists and tourism industry while protecting the environment and opportunities for the future needs to achieve the entire economic, social, aesthetic, etc., actors in tourism, while maintaining cultural integrity, environmental, biological diversity and all systems that support life (Stănciulescu, 2004, p.23). Sustainable development plans cover at least three (Ionescu, 2000, p.137):

- Economically, by increasing service and resource recovery;
- Environmentally, by recycling, avoiding environmental degradation, reduction of land removed from agricultural use;
- Social, by increasing employment, practicing traditional population to attract tourism, as measures of physical and political regeneration (Figure 8).

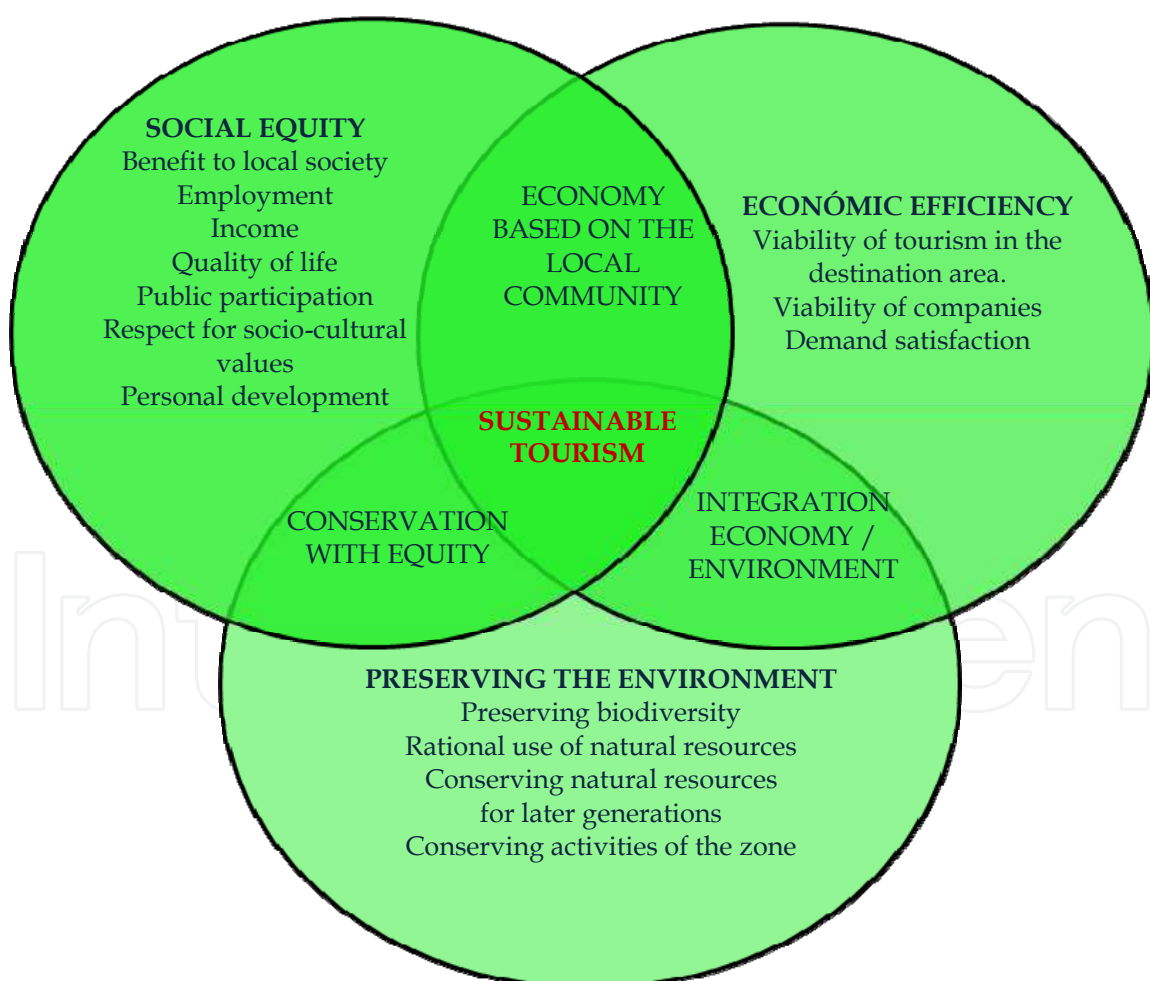


Fig. 8. Sustainable Tourism Model (Source: Sanagustín Fons M.V. Moseñe Fierro J.A., Gómez y Patiño M. – "Rural tourism: A sustainable alternative", 2011, p. 552)

Since **sustainable tourism is an end**, one must understand that any type of development including tourism development gives rise to certain changes in an area. However, these changes should be kept within acceptable limits, so that sustainability is achieved. Sustainable tourism can be best achieved by careful planning, by development and proper management of the tourism sector based on some principles (see Principles of sustainable tourism in World Tourism Organization, WTTC, The Earth Council – Agenda 21, 1995).

Thus, by 2050 the world population today estimated to over 6.5 billion people shall be between 7.7 billion and 11.2 billion. However, the latest average projection is of 9.37 billion people.

Population growth is the main pressure on the environment and it is inexorable.

Tourism industry is seen by its specificity as environmentally tied more than other industries, but its size and presence have created negative physical and social impacts on the environment.

Tourism, like any human activity, participates in degradation and environmental pollution, either by direct pressure of tourists on the landscape or on other tourist attractions, or by the misconception of capitalization of tourist points and attractions. The impact of tourism on the environment is determined by:

- uncontrolled tourist traffic, chaotic in areas or tourist objectives outside marked trails, leading to destruction of vegetation, flora and fauna;
- non-systematized development of settlements reaching up to an excessive urbanization of resorts (Baile Herculane, Baile Felix, Sovata, Bran, etc.), over-sizing of resorts in terms of reception and treatment capacity (Baile Felix, Sovata, Buziaș, Vatra Dorna, Sinaia, Poiana Brasov, etc.)
- changing the physical and chemical parameters of therapeutic resources (Vatra Dornei, Buziaș, Călimănești, Sovata, Ocna Sibiului, etc.) and treatment muds (Techirghiol, Negru and Ursu lakes in Sovata and Săcelu – Gorj);
- lack of rural wastewater treatment plants, ecologic landfills for waste and flood protections;
- strong influence on the aquatic environment in tourist resorts areas on the Romanian coast and the Danube Delta;
- total or partial damage of caves due to their arrangement for visiting, made without complying with scientific techniques of such works Muierii Cave (Parang Mountains), Ialomita Cave (Bucegi Mountains) and Peștera lui Ionel (Bihor Mountains);
- automobile tourism entering tourist resorts (Călimănești-Căciulata, Tuznad, Vatra Dornei, Sinaia, Busteni, Predeal, etc.).

Or, to avoid such “disasters”, which happened in destination areas, I frankly think that we need tourism to integrate the natural, cultural and human environment and respect the fragile balance, characteristic to many tourist destinations.

Consequently, the need for new and professional tourism leadership emerged, to attract more the governments and the private and public sector partners based on **principles** of sustainable development, namely:

- environment has an intrinsic value that is especially large for tourism, that the next generation should benefit from, too;
- tourism must be considered a positive activity with several beneficiaries:
 - environment
 - local communities
 - visitors;
- the relation between environment and tourism can be developed so that environment supports tourist activity in the long run; in turns, tourism is “forced” not to cause due its performance the degradation of the environment;
- the development of the tourism activity must comply with the ecologic, social, economic, cultural features of the geographic space where it is performed;
- the purpose of the tourism development must always be to counterbalance the needs of tourists and the ones of destinations and of their hosts;
- the tourist industry, the governments, the authorities responsible for the environment protection and the international bodies should comply with these principles and work together to implement them.

Polyvalence is quite necessary for the environment and tourism specialists, especially for the ecotourism specialists, due to the fact that futurologists have been using lately the following syntagm: “too much tourism kills tourism”, highlighting the fact that there are “limits” in the process of tourism.

If we do not want tourism to turn from a chance for economy into a risk for the whole community, we should “pace” ourselves.

We can notice the following phases of the development of a sustainable tourism (WTO, 1998):

- the first phase represents the decision to include in the tourist circuit a certain area and to erect the tourist constructions required for those tourist facilities;
- the second phase represents the progressive development of the tourist activity (along the responsibility for the environment protection and the compliance with the sustainable tourism);

During the first phase, if the tourist activities are carefully planned and performed, the environment problems can be solved since the same phase. For this, the selection of the area (of the ecotouristic management) is decisive to avoid the ulterior conflicts in the relation with the environment, such as:

- limitation of the damages brought to the landscape by: position of the resort, organization of transport, architecture, methods used to provide the facilities, etc.
- compliance with the responsibilities of the: local authorities, economic agents, local population (which must be consulted regarding the opportunity of the touristic project; it can oppose to it if it considers that its interest have been neglected.
- assessment of the impact over environment (according to the directives of the European Union), each member state having to introduce in its national legislation provisions regarding the impact of large tourist (or other) projects on the environment.

It is difficult to make a clear distinction between what is positive and negative in tourism development because often the short term impact is positive and the long-term is negative.

Let us consider a very attractive natural area (Iron Gates Natural Park). Tourists come attracted by the natural beauty, the richness of ecosystems, the uniqueness of endemism, but if this wealth is not “really” protected, the environment will degrade and lose its tourist destination attractiveness.

We must not forget that if the natural heritage of an area (even a protected area) attracts tourists, once it is degraded, tourists will leave as quickly, leaving behind a population that must bear the consequences due to the degradation of life environment, natural resources and tourism revenue decline.

An example of sustainable-environmental development of a valued tourist area in the Mehedinti county identity is (and hopefully will remain) **the Iron Gates Natural Park**, which reunites in its geographical area a series of “superlatives” among which:

- The Danube Gorge – the longest gorge in Europe (134 km);
- The largest Natural Park in Romania (115,655 ha);
- The largest hydroenergetic facility in Romania (the Hydropower and Navigation System Iron Gates I)
- The protected area with the greatest ethnic diversity in Romania
- Special geological and geomorphological diversity which may confer the status of outdoor geological museum;
- A high biological diversity – more than 1600 plant taxa (higher plants) and over 5200 fauna taxa;
- High diversity of plant associations, in this area being identified **171 associations**, of which **26 are endemic to Romania** and **21 are of community interest**;
- Presence of wetlands which are important habitats for protected bird species worldwide;
- Traces of human settlements from the Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic – evidence proving the area’s living history: cities, monasteries, churches;
- Historical and architectural buildings, water mills unique as operating system;

A **National Park** is a protected area whose main purpose is the protection and preservation of landscapes created by the harmonious interaction of human activities and nature over time (Law no. 462/2001).

Iron Gates Natural Park objectives are: conservation of landscape features, biodiversity, ethnic and folk traditions and cultural values, development of harmonious relations between nature and society by promoting activities without impact on the environment and international cooperation in biological conserving of the Danube river basin.

Iron Gates Natural Park covers an area of **115,655 ha**. Located in the south-west of Romania, its space belongs to the counties of Caras-Severin and Mehedinti. The Natural Park’ limits are the fairway of the Danube to the south, the river Nera in the west, the watershed directly tributary to the river Danube in the north (partially) and a sinuous line that starts downstream from Gura Văii to Motărăț peak the the east. This nature reserve, adjoining the Ecological Serbian National Park, on the Belgrade-Timoc segment – based on a joint program of cooperation with Serbia – would make in the region an ecological area on a large expanse, with major interest for the three neighboring countries and with economic and social implications very favorable for the Balkans, in the perspective of sustainable development (including tourism) in the EU.

Among the ecotourism activities to be held in the Iron Gates Natural Park the following can be mentioned:

- *mountain tourism* (marked tourist routes - Pemilor route, linking all the villages inhabited by the Czechs in the Iron Gates Park);
- *cruises on the Danube* (departing from Orsova);
- *scientific tourism* (for habitats and species of protected plants and animals);
- *speleology* (in the limestone areas of the Park: Cazanele Dunării, Coronini-Moldova Nouă-Gârnic, Sirinia)
- *birdwatching* (in the wetlands in the west of the Iron Gates Natural Park)
- *sport fishing* (on the Danube - catfish, carp, perch, starlet, etc., and on inner rivers - trout, barbel etc.).
- *traditional festivities and celebrations* (Neda, celebrations of minorities);
- *cuisine* (fish dishes, goat meat, dairy products, vegetables, sweets);
- *Danube water sports* (rowing, canoeing, jet ski);
- *race cycling and mountain biking*;
- *skiing* (on forest roads);
- *cultural sightseeing* (archaeological, religious);
- *visiting water mills* in the valleys Elișeva, Povalina, Camenita;
- *visiting museums and collections* (museums and ethnographic and religious collections)
- *visiting villages populated by Czech and Serbian ethnics*.

The progress of the touristic activities, the second phase of the development of a sustainable tourism represents the active implication of all interested parties (local suppliers of tourist services and local authorities, together with the local population) in actions meant to solve the environment problems using the economic or juridical means to force economic agents to use the environment protection equipment.

Finally, the contribution of tourism to sustainable development is part of a social and political process in progress. It also clearly shows us, on the one hand, the growing importance that tourism registers today, despite the global financial crisis (Mazilu, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c) and, on the other hand, the major stake represented and offered by this form of development – sustainable development – on all territories worldwide.

Given this complexity, but also to give a pragmatic sense to their intervention, communities, especially those at the regional level, have – perforce – entered in a specific process of territorialization of their policies. Each declines, globally or by specific sectoral policies, the priorities over a territory, whose functional area fluctuates from one community to another.

Harmonious development of tourism throughout the territory contributes to economic and social growth and to alleviate imbalances between different areas, constituting an important source of household income increase.

Tourism is a means of developing rural areas, by extending the area of the specific offer and creating jobs in rural areas, other than traditional ones, improving living conditions and increasing income of local people. With respecting and promoting the principles of sustainable development, tourism is a means of protection, conservation and capitalization of the cultural, historical, architectural and folklore potential of countries. By adopting a strategy of sustainable tourism development and enforcing environmental protection

measures, fundamental values of human existence (water, air, flora, fauna, ecosystems, etc.), tourism has at the same time an ecological vocation.

Global trends and priorities change: more than ever, the great challenge for the tourism sector is to remain competitive and sustainable by recognizing that, on the long term, competitiveness depends on sustainability.

It is in the interest of tourism to be active in the issue of sustainable development (Mazilu, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2007d) and to cooperate with other industries in providing resource base quality and its survival.

We must not forget that it is essential that tourism be politically accepted as a priority, without compromising durability. Without support and political commitment to sustainable tourism, tourist programs based on the principles of sustainable development will not be implemented.

After a useful and necessary previous reflection on notional interpretations of the new type of tourism, and clarifying the multi-expressional use “for another type of tourism”, which we use in various names such as: sustainable tourism, responsible tourism, social tourism, joint tourism, integrated tourism, fair tourism, community tourism, etc., the article analyzes the compatibility between tourism and the concept so addressed in literature, that of sustainable development and environment, the various constraints posed by financial return, the requirements of tourist market, gaps in the management of tourism resources and best practices to be established for tourism to become sustainable (Mazilu, 2006).

Since **sustainable tourism represents a goal**, one must understand that any type of development which includes development of tourism gives rise to certain changes in an area. However, these changes should be maintained within acceptable limits, so that sustainability to be achieved. Sustainable tourism can be best achieved through careful planning, development and proper management of the tourism sector based on some principles.

Consequently, there was the need for a new, professional leadership of tourism that attracts governments and private and public sector partners more, based on **principles** of sustainable development, namely:

- the environment has an intrinsic value which is especially great for tourism, which should be enjoyed by future generations;
- tourism must be seen as a positive activity that will benefit:
 - the environment
 - local communities
 - visitors;
- the relationship between environment and tourism can be developed so that the environment sustains long-term tourist activity, tourism, in turn, being “obliged” not to cause environmental degradation through its unfolding.
- development of tourist activity must comply with environmental, social, economic, cultural features of the geographical space it takes place in;
- the goal of tourism development must always be the balance of the needs of tourists with their destinations and hosts;

- tourist industry, governments, authorities responsible for environmental protection and international bodies must respect these principles and work to implement them.

Avoiding the trap of “preconceived ideas” (which often seem to be false) like sustainable development is strictly the “business” of industries that process. Why fake? Because global warming and pollution directly relate to the tourist phenomenon: climate change, for example, have an impact in season changes, so have a direct incidence in the seasonality of the tourist phenomenon, the freeze-thaw phenomena damage, they damage infrastructure, the recent, highly publicized floods in exotic areas of high tourist attraction simply alter tourist experiences in this environment.

- **Sustainable tourism is not and should not be just a “panacea” of governors.** Sustainable tourism concerns everyone from:
 - **various governmental levels:** regulations, landscape protection, legislation, etc.
 - **associations and NGOs in the field of tourism:** sustaining the tourism phenomenon, examples of good practice, environmental protection animation, etc.
 - **industrial objectives** - to adopt new non-polluting practices and environmental protection;
 - **tourists** to know and apply the ethical code of tourists, to be responsible towards the environment and tourist destinations, to highlight their value;
 - **local population:** the need to show hospitality, knowledge of the tourist code, it being involved itself in activities that safeguard and enhance the environment;
 - **up to all components of tourist industry:** from tourist destination, regardless of size, to the types of tourism.
- **Sustainable tourism** seeks not only environmental protection. When we say sustainable development we mean impacts (either environmental or socio-cultural, etc.), and sustainable development requires sustainable management of these impacts. It is a matter of achieving balance and harmony in a spirit of sustainability (even thrive) on the long term.
- **Sustainable tourism is a tourist product** that can be sold to tourists. Sustainable tourism is a way to design, plan and manage sustainably tourism activities. At the same time it requires a change in the style of management, behavior, attitudes and habits.

There are no success “recipes” in the development of a sustainable tourism, but we can take into account several “tracks” of intervention (Baker, M. J. (2008):

- promoting an action plan in partnership with the “key” players in the development of the tourist phenomenon, including the involvement of industry leaders;
- demystifying the meaning of sustainable development;
- communication in sustainable development;
- integration of sustainable development as a factor in the capitalization of the tourist industry and betting on the strong links between quality and sustainable tourism;
- integration of sustainable development into the training of future “managers” of the tourist phenomenon;
- recognition and promotion of successful cases of sustainable development;
- tourism education in the spirit of sustainable development to make the best choices in the development of the tourist act.

4.3 Fields of action of players in sustainable tourism

Based on the principles of the sustainability triangle and on the related fields of action, against which interested players respond, the discussion on sustainable tourism is emerging. The themes belonging to the main domain of sustainable tourism or “sustainable tourism development” can be actually divided into subdomains.

We present a non-exhaustive list of fields of action in figure 8.

All players must complete a specific task to give the force required for sustainable tourism development and for each of them to obtain benefits by keeping an attractive tourist environment that protects at the same time the environment (Pârgaru, 2009).

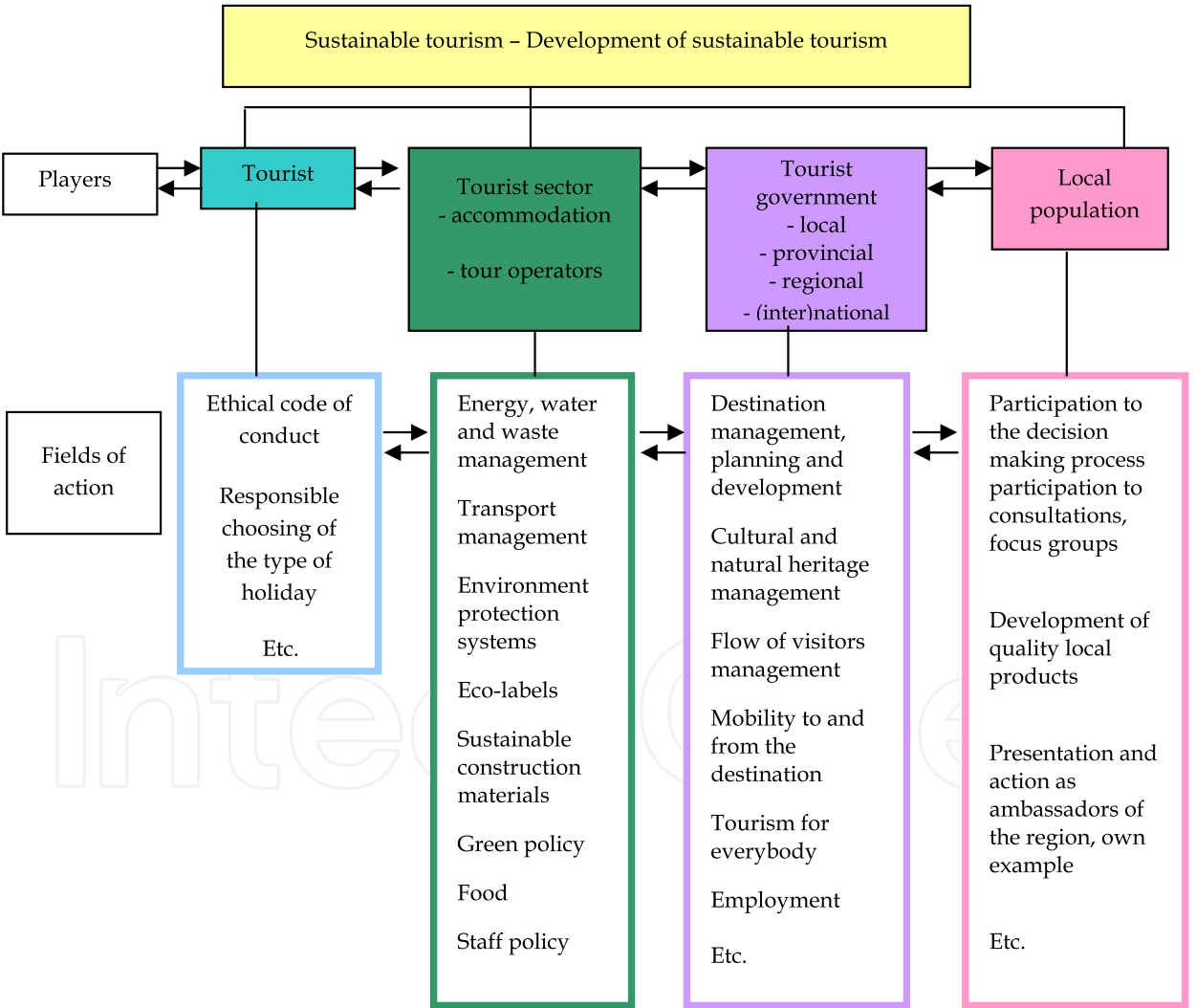


Fig. 9. Fields of action of players in sustainable tourism

Sustainable tourism development requires more and more knowing participation and involvement of all players involved, and a strong political support to ensure broader participation and creating a general consensus in the field of tourism development policy.

Sustainable tourism is the fruit of continuous efforts and requires constant control of desired or undesired effects of this activity, which includes the adoption, whenever appropriate, of preventive measures or that correct certain imbalances.

Tourism experts have decided, therefore, to lean on quality, sustainability and modernization of tourist services. Concretely, they will study the links between competitiveness, skills and information technology in this field, developing suggestions to improve regulation in this sector, focusing on the famous “services” directive. Finally, they will even try to put into place a sustainable development strategy in this so exposed area to polemics.

Local people, tourists, authorities responsible with tourism management and the private sector are the key players. The manner in which they can provide the necessary dynamics to this process depends on their own goals and vision of the outcome, the structure of ownership, their financial means and the influence they exert. We refer to the following activities to ensure sustainable tourism:

- in relation to the implementation of sustainable tourism, tourists pay increased attention to contact with the local population and show a more respectful attitude towards nature, environment and the surrounding areas;
- the tourist sector invests especially in its economic capital, accomplishing in this way especially technical improvements of the natural environment; however, this does not mean little attention paid to human capital (e.g., staff);
- authorities managing tourism have a central, very important role in the management of tourist destination and thus the development of tourist related products, while having the responsibility to promote proportionally the environment, population and economic significance that tourism offers to the region, they must share these resources in all fields;

On the other hand, sustainable development can be revealed to us as an alibi, even a utopia maintained voluntarily by political and economic players, anxious to legitimize and to prove their economic logic but also to preserve the economic strengths already acquired. We believe that to resolve this situation it would be enough to adapt socio-economic and ecological systems of the “given” of globalization: **Sustainable Development.**

4.4 The support capacity of a destination

Support capacity is used in the context of sustainable tourism. It is often proposed as a method for assessing the intensity of tourism development that can be supported by a tourist destination taking into account the economic, environmental and social characteristics of that destination.

- In literature, an interesting definition of this concept was formulated:

- „The maximum number of visitors that can be found in the same time in a tourist destination, without causing adverse effects on the physical, economic and sociocultural aspects of the society / community and without causing a (significant) decrease in the level of visitor satisfaction (Clivaz et al., 2004).
- The last part of the definition, in particular, provides a unique tool for measuring and monitoring the support capacity as visitor satisfaction, among others, is closely linked to the quality of service provided and quality can be measured in a simple way.
 - In destination management, the simple question “how much is too much?” cannot be answered easily. A destination is a dynamic identity that the public sector must constantly adapt according to the possibilities it has and the impulses it reacts to. Choices must be made together with local players, but during this process of choice of responses and reactions to external elements the previous limit of the support capacity may be exceeded. For example, a destination can receive more visitors and, at the same time, provide better living conditions than an appropriate traffic management plan has designed. This traffic plan can be useful both for tourists and locals.
 - Due to the complexity of the development and management policy, the support capacity must evolve from a unique concept (limit of the maximum number of visitors an area can receive at a given time) to information/monitoring system that supports decision making.

Using methods that belong to the spatial sciences and geography, tourism economy, the reception capacity of a territory can be determined, respectively its ecological support capacity in relation to natural and human resources and the space on which it materializes. This renders the number of tourists that can be received, at a given time, on a territory or in a resort, without this tourist flow and related facilities (reception equipment or tourist production) to harm the environment through its degradation or of tourist resources.

Following the development of environmental science, of the increase of the amount of information on economic and social sciences, of the deepening of research in these fields, their connections with the tourist industry have led to the delineation of the following types-support capacity for tourism:

Ecological capacity refers to the establishment of that level of development of structures and tourist activities without strongly affecting the environment through the degradation of its components. This also applies to natural components (air, water, soil, vegetation, and fauna) and the production process and economic recovery, that do not involve special investment costs caused by the degradation of a tourist destination;

Physical capacity has an essential role in determining the saturation level that tourist activities can reach, beyond which environmental issues begin to emerge. The ascending development of tourism, manifested in recent decades raises the question of the emergence of many forms of pollution (coastal, of mountain areas, etc.). Protecting the physical components of the territory is made through investment in technology and by providing high quality level of tourist services;

Social-responsive capacity aims the importance of preserving good relations between hosts (indigenous population) and visitors (tourists). Since the moment that local population finds

that tourist activities also contribute to environmental and cultural degradation, hostile, rejection reactions may arise, also a reduction of the threshold of tolerance being recorded. To avoid such situations, the development of tourist areas or places should take into account the traditional life of the inhabitants, their customs, etc.

Economic capacity highlights the capitalization of all resources present by tourist activities and it represents the capacity to maintain the tourist function of a given area. Operating efficiency is measured by the ratio of costs and benefits, and the share of benefits can be increased by using new technologies. The level of costs is also given by the “qualitative and quantitative value of resources (natural, cultural, labor, general infrastructure, etc.);

Psychological capacity is related to the negative perception of tourists towards the tourist destination, following environmental degradation or poor attitude of the local population.

This concept is attached to supporting tourist motivations for a particular destination and maintaining their own personal satisfaction. Its application is also conditioned by the quality of management activity that can lead, ultimately, to the loyalty of demand.

All these different types of support capacities, in close relation with tourist activities, determine the tangible or intangible limit, measurable or immeasurable, of an area which has or which may be assigned a tourist function.

Although these capacity indicators do not provide a standard formula, due to the fact that some components of the natural or cultural area are difficult to quantify by series of statistical and mathematical data, however, these support concepts give us the measure of the sustainable development of tourism. At the same time, the types of support capacities also indicate the extent to which the impact of level of tourism may have on the environment, allowing the possibility to identify ways to reduce the degradation caused by the movement and tourist activities.

5. Conclusion

Imperative mutations that must be reflected in the policies of post-economic crisis revival in the tourism industry are:

- **The focus should move on general economic development**, rather than uncoordinated and inconsistent measures targeted for tourism industry
- **Promotion of a policy in favor of the tourist**, instead of the priority that is granted today to tour operators and - to a lesser extent - the local tourist accommodation industry
- **Improved communication through more intelligent branding actions and advertising**
- **A networking industry par excellence, Romanian tourism can achieve even more than other areas of a country's economy.**
- **Tourism has been defined as a system in which interdependence is essential and collaboration and cooperation between different organizations within a tourist destination creates the tourist product** (Mazilu, 2009).
- **Under the impact of globalization**, the development of tourism in each country of the world becomes possible only under the conditions of an optimal public-private partnership;

- **There is no real public-private partnership** in the field, and the institutions empowered to create a certain education and behavior to support the sustainable development of the Romanian tourism do not make the necessary efforts;

Basically, in this crisis, Romanian tourism should maintain its accommodation capacity and improve services (Mazilu M.E, 2011). The real benefits will be obtained later. The financial and economic crisis effects are felt globally by all players in the market, regardless of the operating field.

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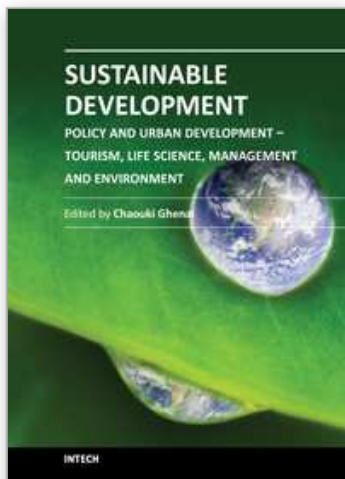
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