

COMPETITIVENESS OF ROMANIAN TOURISM IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract

Competitiveness issue is more present than ever, and must be approached at micro and macro -economic level, as at present, unfortunately, there is a lack of competitiveness of the Romanian products/ services in the internal and external market and consequently of the national economy.

Competitiveness suggests certainty, efficiency, quality, high productivity, adaptability, success, modern management, superior products, low costs. A company's competitive force resides in competitive advantages and distinctive capacities that it possesses in relation with other competitive companies. To consider a company as competitive it is necessary to accomplish a compelling analysis of that company and of its activity background.

Key words: competitiveness, romanian tourism, globalization, international standards, lasting development.

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INTRODUCTION

As a natural condition, competition stands at the basis of selection. The same thing happens in the economic environment, where it generates progress, being only a game with winners and losers, in competitors' perspective. Beneficiaries (buyers, consumers) have only to win as a result of competition. The natural environment is the solely affected by competition's loyal or disloyal character, the effects being positive or negative.

If, micro-economically speaking, competitiveness is generally defined as being the capacity of a micro-economic structure (unity, company, etc.) to gain a market segment or to defend (maintain) it, then macro – economically speaking, competition can be defined as being the capacity of a macro-economic structure to gain or to defend market fragments both at the exterior and at the interior. The validity of this affirmation is supported by the fact that this competitiveness is generated at the micro level, but it is supported and reinforced at the macro level.

In the article “Create wealth, create competitiveness” Mark T. McCord defines competitiveness as being “the creation of wealth”. He shows, speaking of the competitiveness in different countries on the globe, that, “the creation of wealth and accordingly competitiveness is concentrated on the use of human, financial and educational resources as to ensure and maintain a strong foundation on which economics can flourish”. In other words, a rich country cannot automatically be considered competitive, but the one which created its wealth through work, talent and organization, a country that possesses a productive and creative potential that should make it independent from material resources.

The 21st century enterprises are developing their activity in an internal and external competition environment extremely powerful and dynamic.

Confrontation on different markets, as a result of globalization, is especially harsh and competition must be regarded at its real dimensions, without having a too optimistic vision, as only that way one can take all necessary measures to reassure the security and development of the companies, regardless their sector of activity.

COMPETITIVENESS IN TERMS OF GLOBALIZATION OF THE ECONOMIC LIFE

The actual context, marked by the globalization of the phenomena and the more and more wide recognition of the interdependencies, has imposed new game rules: the prosperity of the nations involves competitiveness on the international markets and that of the enterprises involves integration in the chains of the world values.

Accordingly, the issue of competitiveness has become an ardent theme at the level of each economic actor, beginning with that of economic regions and continuing with that of any organization. At the same time, it is also acknowledged an evolution of competitiveness' concept in the sense of passage from static competitiveness, where the competitive advantage was given by the endowment with technical factors, to dynamic competitiveness, whose driving factors are: technical progress, income growth and modern management methods, that made the competitive advantage overcome the economic dimension: the increase of the financial power and the productivity of the country, education, certainty, the quality of life, all these being components of the concept.

As for a company's competitiveness, this represents the company's capacity to win under the conditions of competition on the internal and external market. It is connected to the procurance of goods and services, to the development of some commercial or financial operations, high quality services and low costs compared to competitors, and that provides access, maintenance and consolidation on a certain market, in relation to other similar products and services. Under the conditions of a strong competition on a market, the insurance of the competitiveness represents a primary strategic objective, being a fundamental notion to the strategy and strategic analysis. One cannot reach a competitive activity without an appropriate strategy that involves changes in structures, activities and management.

In 1954, Peter Drucker, one of the important classics of the management, a true pioneer in discovering new trends and especially the actual economic openings, underlined the special importance of a company's strategy, pointing out that this gives the answer to two questions: "What does the business consists of?" and "Which should be the company's object of activity?" Then followed other approaches belonging to some famous specialists in management, and Michael Porter is considered by all probabilities, currently the world specialist in strategies. Using the term *generic strategy*, Porter showed that this consists of "the specificity of fundamental approach for the achievement of the competitive advantage pursued by the company, which provides the context for the actions to do in each functional domain".

Regardless the proportion and the object of activity of the firms, their competitiveness has its origins in the quality of the strategies they adopt and apply. Romanian specialists in management recognize as definition of strategy "the assembly of major long term objectives of the company, primary achievement modalities, together with the allocated resources, in order to obtain the adequate competitive advantage to the mission of the firm". The achievement of the competitive advantage regarding essentially the cost and the quality of the product represents the central purpose in the elaboration of the strategy and the most important criterium for the evaluation of its quality. One strategy that does not aim and ensure the achievement of the competitive advantage is not useful for that company.

Without any doubt, the insurance of the competitiveness at the level of any company must represent a major challenge for managers. But, in order to reach a certain level and after that to increase competitiveness, the manager and his team must keep in mind the fact that the value and the appliance of the strategies do not represent a purpose by itself, but it represents a major managerial instrument for the specialization of the management and the enhancement of the company's performances.

The integration in the competition environment represents one of the most difficult issues a company is confronted with. The foundation of the management on a compelling strategy brings about the facilitation and the amplification of the effectiveness of a company's integration in the complex and dynamic competition environment it is placed in.

Among the arguments that justify this appreciation there would be in the first place its multiplying effect, ***the tourism acting as an actuation element for the entire global economic system***, caused by mutations in quantitative and qualitative plan induced by its development at the level of all branches it is inter-dependent with.

The character of the ***inexhaustible resources*** it valorizes, under the conditions of a ***long term development***, makes tourism represent one of the economic sectors with real long term development perspective.

By its content, ***tourism is also an important factor of long term development***. That is why, this option is perfectly integrated within the present strategy promoted world wide: "Economic strategy for long term development". Thus, in terms of respecting and pro motion of the principle for durable development, tourism can represent a means for the protection, preservation and capitalization of the cultural, historic, folkloric and architectural potential of the country.

By adopting a long term development strategy for tourism and the implementation of some measures for environment protection, of the fundamental values of human existence (water, air, flora, fauna, ecosystems, etc.), ***tourism has at the same time also an ecological vocation***.

The existence of a ***large diversity of tourist resources, both natural*** and anthropic, among which some with an increased level of attractiveness and originality, can ensure under the conditions of the optimal capitalization, a source for increasing the state currency, thus contributing to outweigh the balance of external payments.

At the same time tourism represents an important ***factor for regional development***, ensuring the lowering of the imbalance between separate areas, also representing an important source for the increase of the population incomes, a safe market for the work force and redistribution of that dismissal form other economic restructured sectors.

Not last, we must accentuate the fact that tourism contributes through its effects in the socio-cultural plan to ***the insurance of the life quality*** that represents a very important aspect regarding the fact that, in the present context, competitiveness at nations' level must be considered in more wide sense, which also includes the life quality.

The development of the Romanian tourism and its transformation in a successful sector, according to its potential, require ***the elaboration and especially the practical application of some adequate strategies at macro-economic and micro-economic level***.

The extremely powerful competition manifested on the tourist market and also the exigencies more and more strict that tourists manifest, impose that the general objective, at the sector's strategy level for tourism development, ***to be the increase of the competitiveness of the Romanian tourism***.

Because of the multiple interdependencies between tourism and other economic sectors, this development strategy must be ***correlated with the other sector strategies and with the regional development strategy*** so that the stimulation of the activities of the industries or activities that act as support for tourism to be assured. That assumes on one hand, the understanding of the tourism implications by its participants, and on the other hand, through the applied strategies, there must be ensured the harmonization of all existent categories of interest, that is tourism planning and development to be realized so that it can provide economic and social benefices to all actors directly or indirectly involved in realization of the tourist product. This implies the elaboration of some national and local strategies, and some facilities that should determine the economic agents to implicate in this domain. Common tourist projects are the most profitable for the inhabitants of the Region in this respect.

The construction and development of tourist establishments usually requires a large investment volume. In these conditions, the stimulation of the investments in tourism can be done by the stimulation of an ***active partnership between economic agents and the authorities involved at the national, regional and local level, between private and public sectors***.

At the same time it is necessary to join the management strategies with those of marketing at all levels, so that it can be achieved the maximization of the effects of those strategies.

In the market economy, the maintenance of competitiveness supposes a continuous creativity, innovation in development of new more sophisticated and more refined (personalized) products and services.

The high volume of investments necessary for tourism's developments supposes the promotion of some partnerships, information and support in obtaining structural funds that gives the possibility for financing tourist projects. The government is the one who has an important role in the elaboration of the *development strategies and politics, in facilitating and coordinating the activity of the economic agents involved, and in their integration at national level.*

Central authorities, aside to the attributions in the field of elaboration of tourism strategies and policies developments, of improving the legislative setting, of cooperation with other departments, of developing international relations, promotes forms of partnership with the local authorities and with the regional and national tourist industry. At the same time, they have many instruments for the planning, organization and the performance of the tourist projects, to guide and control them.

In return, the *local and regional authorities have a key role* in promoting the regional politics for economic (including tourist), social and economic developments.

That is why tourist planning, improvement and exploitation must be a part of the long term development strategy of the region, to be registered in city planning documentation and territory settlement that ensures the cohabitation of tourism next to the other socio-economic fields.

At the same time, the regional / local tourist development policy *implies a vertical coordination* between central administration and local / regional authorities, between the state and the public or private tourist enterprises, by establishing some mutual development programs, intermediation of collaboration with organization, investors or foreign financing funds etc.; *a horizontal coordination* of the activity between different localities and regions, institutions, organizations, between public and private sector.

The state can facilitate this coordination by creating the institutional set of rules or by granting some social and economic advantages.

To those, incentive measures for the tourism development in general or some forms of tourism in particular are added, for the institutionalization of some norms, quality systems, participation to the co-financing of some local tourism objectives through Development Fund for Tourism, private international funds, and public funds for investments.

All these represent arguments that sustain the necessity for the elaboration of some realistic, pertinent, flexible strategies that can ensure the increase of competitiveness of Romanian tourism which could represent, in terms of some scientific and durable capitalization, an important factor of economic growth.

The increased volume and complexity of the offer for tourist services have generated the development of some true traveling and tourism industry, which justifies the treatment of tourist phenomenon as a distinctive branch of the national economy in full development, constituting a component of the tertiary sector. Through its nature, tourist phenomenon is particularly complex, with deep social, cultural and economic implications. The intergrowth of its heterogenic components gives birth to unique and original specificity, which does not identify with any of the traditional branches of national economies, thus explaining its treatment in autonomous mode.

The development of tourist industry will be in the future in a permanent correlation with the levels and rhythms of development of the other branches of the national economy.

The new concept regarding tourism development must take into account not only the various and complex relationships between tourism and other economic - social territorial phenomena, but it must refer to the tourist phenomena itself, as it will be outlined in the near future. For Romania, this concept takes into consideration the evolution of social phenomena in the country, which, under the conditions of the market economy, will generate the formation of some new categories of potential tourists, of some new motivations for spending spare time and consequently, the apparition and evolution of some new tourist requests.

1. The growth of competitiveness of the Romanian tourist offer through the capitalization of tourist potential, modernization and development of the technical and material foundation of the tourism in accordance with international standards.

As to achieve such an objective, Romania can appeal to the following ways of achievement: encouraging, supporting and stimulation of foreign capital investments in various sectors of Romanian tourism; modernization of some representative units in the capital, the big cities of the country, Romanian coast and balneary and mountain resorts; elaboration of some feasibility studies and technical and economic documentation regarding accomplishment of new housing unities, nourishment, treatment, entertainment, etc. in the most important tourist areas of the country; development and launching of some offers of schedules and special tourist actions, destined to specific clientele; the promotion of some specific forms of tourism (hunting, equitation), diversification of resources in some tourist destinations (Aqua Magic – the first aquatic fun park in Romania, situated in Mamaia, having a surface of 2 hectares); the elaboration of an optimal system for automatic reservation of the housing places; the designing and the implementation of an adequate informational system to the new requirements in tourism activities, aligned to the international practice, sustained by a corresponding technical endowment of calculation; the restoration and the settlement of some architectural elements for their capitalization through tourism; creation of Romanian hotelier chains and their introduction in international networks of hotelier chains of some of our hotels.

2. Advancement of the organizational structure required for the enhancement of a competitive tourism

The analysis realized in this field emphasized the fact that one can distinguish the following ways for fulfillment: international integration, at the level of central organisms, and of regional unities, through their affiliation to various profile associations and organisms from abroad; privatization of tourism enterprises and growth of their capacities for the capitalization of the local resources, for the promotion and commercialization of their own offers, for the cooperation with companies from the country and from abroad; the application at a large scale of the auctions with local and international participation for the modernization and development of tourism technical and economic foundation; the diversification of collaboration and cooperation forms with companies from the country and from abroad, for the construction and modernization of roads, receiving structures, realization of installations for cable transportation, casinos, night-clubs, fan parks, etc.

3. Diversification and growth of the quality of the tourist services

The research of the experience of the countries with modern tourist activity, underlines the following priorities: diversification of the paid and non-paid services; the increasing preponderance of supplementary services in the total of tourist services, amplification of the services in the domain of the automatic reservation of the housing places; the pursuit of the instauration of a climate of order and discipline in all tourist units to the assurance of some high quality services.

4. The formation of a real image, in Europe and in the world, about Romania as a tourist country

This objective can be realized through the organization of some promotional actions for the re-launching of the Romanian offer on the European market and also on other continents' markets, the improvement of the content and the quality of the advertising messages, the increase of the role and attributions of the tourism centers in foreign countries, diversification of tourist publications edited in more languages with international circulation.

5. Reconsideration of the commercialization action of the Romanian tourist products on the international market

The measures that must be implemented in the achievement of this objective are: the assurance of an elastic system of tariffs and prices depending on the season, climatic conditions, traffic intensity and degree of solicitation; the ampleness of the competences of economic agents in territory in the domain of counteraction on external tourist market and for the fixation of competitive tariffs and prices; the creation of travel agencies on the primary traditional markets and

the tourist offices on other issuer markets; the extension of cooperation in the do main of commercialization of some Romanian tourist products.

6. The development of tourism for the young people

In the purpose of the amplification of the tourist movement of the youth the following objectives were proposed to the strategic policy for the development of youth tourism that were accomplished in direct collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth:

- the growth in youth participation to the internal tourist circulation;
- the extension of program organization for the formation and perfection of the youth in crafts with tourist character (animators, guides for different tourist actions);
- the extension of participation projects of the youth associations, clubs, foundations or any form of organization non-governmental to the congestion and co-management of tourist resources form the long term development perspective;
- the assurance and promotion of the tourist information for youth;
- organization of tourist actions with educational character on inter cultural problems, of the identity of national culture, of tourist and ecologic behavior, moral and religious.

7. The insurance of the new work force adequate to the new programs, requirements and tourist technologies

That is made according to scientific criteria of recruitment, selection, formation and perfection of all tourism workers, the instauration of a system of stimulation and co interest of the tourism personnel, the progress of some formation classes and managerial perfection in tourism, the assurance of a contractual collaboration with specialized foreign organization and firms.

Realization of these *strategic objectives* will determine essential changes in Romanian tourism, with positive effects and very important from economic, social and ecologic point of view. The re-launching process of tourism and of its consecration as primary branch of the economy implies stock-taking and coordination of all premises inside of a realistic development strategy and well-integrated in the reform programs of the Romanian society.

The development of the tourism in Romania must be an objective and a means of economical and social development as a whole, in the context of national politics for development and must follow the present economic context and this cannot b e imagined without a package of measures that should aim:

- The precise definition of the tourist activity's objectives at macro-economic and micro-economic level;
- The assessment some high quality standards through the education of internal consumers of tourist services and through investments in the quality of the technical component of the services provided;
- The increase of the functional and relational quality, through reorientation of the organization's culture and the perfection of the training of the economic agents involved in the tourist offer, especially in market techniques studies, orientation of efforts in internal and external concurrency, in localization of the concurrency and in the conscious use of the environment as part of the investments in tourist activity;
- Judicious assignment of the environment maintenance costs between the providers and consumers of tourist services;
- Creation of a "brand image" for the Romanian tourism by emphasizing the distinctive differences, primarily regarding to the neighboring countries, and by emphasizing Romania's competitive advantages: the variety of relief, advantageous prices, multiculturalism, uniqueness of some reservations and of some cultural and natural monuments under international protection, etc;
- The association of tourist activity with the concerns for the environment protection and with the support for the regeneration of natural resources

The strategic objectives for tourism development are:

- The development of tourist product as to assure the superior value of the conditions and existing factors and increase of its quality and competitiveness.

➤ The organization and structural reform, in the purpose of realization of tourist activities and for creation of the function mechanisms in conformity with the requirements of the market economy, aims the development of the market's forces and reinforcement of the capacity of the providers to enter and to resist on the international competition market, partnership between commercial sector and public sector, as the correlation of the strategies, programs and actions that contribute to the development of tourist sector and the quality of services.

➤ The development of work force in tourism, the necessary instrument for the insurance of a long term competition position.

➤ Improvement and development of marketing and promotion activity has as purpose the creation of a positive and fair image of Romania on the provider market, regain and development of the markets, advancement of mechanisms and instruments in marketing activity, including the financing modality, the involvement of the private sector in coordinate and efficient commercialization of tourist programs.

➤ The integration of the Romanian tourism within the European and world tendencies, including the ones of accommodation of tourist current to and in Romania regarding: the development and promotion of a long term tourism, the harmonization of tourism's specific regulations with legal provisions of the countries in European Union, the insurance and internal maintenance of a safety and security climate for tourists, elimination of the obstacles regarding free movement and internal and external facilitation of tourist circuit, active participation within international organisms and the elaboration of documents for European integration in the line of tourism.

➤ The assurance of protection, security and tourist safety regarding consumers safety and interests, access to adequate information, training of consumers, which aims the Romania recognition as a safe tourist destination that promotes the respect towards consumers and their rights.

➤ The development of legal setting necessary to reach tourism development objectives, to the creation and advancement of its activity mechanism that aims the evaluation of its present level of regulation and assessment of necessities, the harmonization of normative setting with the international legislation, the correlation of the activities and requirements for regulations with the other sectors of action, the promotion of proposals specific to tourism, the control regarding the application of the legislation regarding tourism.

➤ Correlation of the politics in tourism field with the national economic politics, through settlement of legal proposals and of concrete measures that should facilitate tourism development.

These would be broadly the directions of action, the ways of growth and development of the tourist sector at national level. On one hand, tourist companies can achieve all these, through their policy, and strategies that aim, besides an increase of their own competitiveness, also a growth of the sector they act in, but especially through the intervention of the state, through the macro-economic policy correlated with the measures that are undertaken in order to align Romania to the European standards.

As for the tourist companies, when modern tourism becomes more important, a special issue that tourist industry is confronted with more and more is the insurance of high quality services. The quality is the component that weights on the growth of the efficiency of tourist activities and it must be considered by any development strategy at micro-economic level.

CONCLUSIONS

Romania has a huge tourist potential, but not enough exploited. From a tourist point of view, Romania is behind the other close states, like Hungary and Bulgaria even if the Government declared tourism as a main sector. However, the perspectives are hopeful, Romanian tourism having great chances to become competitive. According to the report regarding the perspectives of growth in tourism industry, Romania occupies the seventh place among the 176 countries analyzed by the World Tourism and Traveling Council (WTTC).

Also, most visitors that Romania will have in 2008 will come from Germany, Austria, Italy, SUA and Israel. The inauguration of new hotels and pensions, the amelioration of services, but also a better infrastructure, are the reasons for the attraction of many foreign tourists in 2008, in the opinion of National Association of Travel Agencies (ANAT). Romania received in 2007 approximately eight millions foreign tourists, and 2008 is the year where are expected 15% more tourists, the countries that already have acknowledged being Germany, Austria, Italy, SUA and Israel. The argument for this growth has as justification, according to the same representatives, a better infrastructure, the inauguration of new hotels and pensions, and the amelioration of the quality of services. On the other hand, according to the estimations made by the Patronage Federation in Romanian Tourism (FPTR), the Romanian's interest to travel abroad will not diminish, thus an increase of 30-32% of the number of those that will leave abroad is expected.

The fact that the Romanians would rather spend their vacation abroad, and not in their country, would affect the internal tourism. However, this can be regulated by the improvement of internal offer and housing conditions. Totally, in 2008, an increase in all segments, internal, external, business, travel and charter is expected, and a factor that will contribute will be the improvement of infrastructure, including the airport one.

Another trend for 2008 is the Romanians option for airplane trips, in Romania operating 47 airlines with regular line and nine low-cost companies. Among these, charter flights will register an increase of 25%. Charters have registered last year also a growth, being launched almost 80 charters, and for 2008 it is estimated that their number will reach almost 100. An important tendency is the appearance of charters in other cities of the country, according to the National Association of Travel Agencies (ANAT).

In conclusion, Romania must know how to attract approximately 1,5 billion Europeans to visit it, but it will take a few years until the citizens of European Union will learn to come in our country, having in view that Spain, Turkey and Greece are traditional destinations for them. Moreover, in Romania, the quality/price proportion is most of the times improper and that brings about the dismissal of potential tourists. Sibiu is one of the departure points for external promotion. The city that in 2007 was declared the *European Cultural Capital* represents a first step. According to some specialists, on European market there is a tendency towards the personalized holidays, from standard tourist packages. That is why Romania should integrate in this evolution, by promoting many types of tourism, from the cultural to adventure one.

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