

THE GLOBALIZATION, AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE ROMANIAN ECOTOURISM

Teodor Ion ISBĂȘESCU, Gina FÎNTÎNERU

Faculty of Management, Economical Engineering in Agriculture and Rural Development,
Bucharest, Romania, phone/fax: 00 40 744 6474 10; email: isbasescut@gmail.com

Corresponding author: isbasescut@gmail.com

Abstract

Globalization has become a driving force to many industries in today's world. Tourism was one of these forces of the globalization system. People were brought together by tourism from distinct parts of the world and it is due to tourism that the exchange of information, economics and cultures has been possible. Ecotourism is an alternative way of travelling and discovering other countries that makes more sense at the time being for smaller players.

Key words: ecotourism, globalization strategies, trends

INTRODUCTION

In this time of globalization, the entire world is facing with the challenge of protecting important resources, while at the same time ensuring economic growth. The current era of globalization has seen an increase in the exploitation and degradation of natural resources due, in part, to the opening of markets, an increase in trade and industrialization, and developing countries struggling to improve their standard of living. Much has been written about sustainable development and its use as a possible solution to the challenge of economic growth and environmental protection. One tool that can be used as part of a sustainable development approach to link economic growth with conservation of natural resources is ecotourism.

The nature is getting more and more important as criteria for today's tourist. There was a time when comfort and luxury were extremely important in a tourist's decision-making process, but those criteria have very much changed since then. Today's travelers are willing to give money for the preservation of the social and natural environments they want to visit.

Tourism, one of the fastest growing industries, is being accelerated by globalization. The fast growing transportation industry, the free flow of information over the

internet and different media, and the decreasing costs of communication are all factors supporting the new emerging ecotourism.

However, there is a major paradox: a tourist harms the environment he is searching for, while he discovers it. Main tourism corporations have adopted the way of generic mass tourism for economical reasons.

The practice of ecotourism and sustainable tourism has the potential to assist in conserving natural areas, reducing poverty, empowering women, enhancing education, and improving the health and well being of local communities.

This is considered to be the great challenge of ecotourism to support economic growth and settle the frame for effective environment protection, both natural and social perspectives.

Due to the current tourist market problems, such as the length of the chains and the non-flexible components tourism companies have created, smaller actors will be able to join the ecotourism market. Taking into consideration the necessary measures, those small actors will have the opportunity to create and offer products and services that incorporate the new criteria that are in demand, creating more value for the tourist.

For a successful ecotourism industry is very important to adapt innovative management tools, and help the small actors to get key

tools in order to materialize the opportunities brought to them by this form of tourism. Ecotourism products and solutions could be seen as innovative for the tourism industry. Latest innovation models developed for high technology industries could be adapted by the ecotourism as key success factors for this industry that contains unique characteristics and dynamics.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The importance of the quality criteria for the typical traveler has changed over the last years. One of the main criteria for every tourist is the positive environmental impact. Yearly, more and more tourists are willing to give money for taking advantage of an ISO 14000 drain system or for having their garbage collected, recycled and reused as part of a recycling program.

While people in poor and developing countries are looking for the benefits of modern world, western travelers are now avoiding traveling to over-populated-with-tourist locations, and are beginning to search for simplicity, natural environments and primitive cultures. Local ecotourism actors in countries having good weather conditions, rich biodiversity, beautiful landscapes and authentic culture should consider these elements and develop good quality infrastructures and trips.

Companies acting in tourism have to take into consideration these expectations and demands in order to aspire to a top position in tourism industry. In 2013, tourists expect tour operators, transport companies and local actors to be fully aware of the long-term affects their trips have on the surrounding environment, whether natural or social.

The Germans are one of the first documented cultures to identify this phenomenon. The environment has become a major criterion in the tourist's decision-making process. For the German ecotourism market, relative to the rest of the world, this is very much in its maturity phase. They have achieved this status in the same way that they are one of the leaders of the recycling movement.

An interesting study by the World Tourism Organization in 2002 demonstrated that tourists do not necessarily require their trips to consist uniquely of ecotourism activities. Rather, they see their ideal trips as a compliment to ecotourism activities. Thus, it is an added-value for tourists to know that they are traveling through the Danube Delta in a fuel-efficient boat for example, instead of being forced to take canoes.

This confirms the fact that the general population is more and more orientated towards environmentally friendly trips, and not just a small group of Greenpeace activists. Such a trend will allow for the environment to be gradually included in all facets of tourism, without necessarily replacing what currently exists. This, in turn, will enable the phenomenon reach the tourism industry as a whole, and make a significant impact on the environment [1].

Globalization has become a driving force to many industries in today's world. Tourism industry is one of the fastest growing sectors which has benefited from it. Many developing countries have the opportunity to embrace the integration of culture, technology, politics, and economics as a part of their strategy in attracting tourists to these countries. It is very important to realize that both globalization and tourism feed off each other. In other words, as much as tourism needs globalization to grow as an industry, it is due to tourism that globalization has become such an important aspect of interaction across geographic spaces. Tourism it is considered to be the forerunner of the globalization system. People were brought together by tourism from distinct parts of the world and it is due to tourism that the exchange of information, economics and cultures has been possible.

The globalization system connects political, social, economic and geographic divided parts. It is the force that encourages growth in tourist activities across such divided parts. Through globalization, communication has become much more easily accessible between people.

Globalization is characterized by facilities and easier access to information, which in turn drives tourism as an industry.

Because information is conveniently accessible to tourists via the Internet, they approach traveling with a much more concrete idea of what it is they will get out of this experience. Anyway, the tourism industry must continually keep on going with the changes in a consumer's knowledge about different cultures in the world, and also try hard to offer innovative approaches to touring the world.

There is a paradox within a destination that relies on tourism as a main industry for the country's economy: a tourist destroys what he is searching for, while he discovers it. As Dr. Sheryl Elliot, professor at the George Washington University's School of Tourism Administration has noted, "Finding the right balance is the key for tourism as it is for the overall globalization system. Being able to see tourism through multiple lenses (financial, political, social, environmental, and technical) helps in accomplishing this goal". (Elliot S., 2011)

The biggest problem that the tourism faces is to support economic growth while ensuring the long-term protection of the social and natural environment. Many of the developing countries rely on tourism as main source of income, and job employment making it very important for the economy of the country. So, many developing countries rely on mass tourism to support their economy. However, these countries might make the mistake of overuse their resources in order to maximize the short-term opportunities that tourists can bring, sacrificing the long-term natural environment of their area. Thus, if not well managed, touristic attractions can degenerate into generic commercialized mass tourism sites that lose their attraction and eventually become unpopular.

Ecotourism is a solution to this problem. It allows for tourist activities to take place, while keeping in mind ways to react against the negative impacts of mass tourism. Breaking down the elements of globalization and their effects on tourism, will allow tourist industry to ponder the pro's and con's of the market's evolution and ensure that the popular destinations are subjects of a sustainable development.

Good news is that globalization, by information channels, allows every potential traveler to be aware about today's environmental threats such as global warming and water pollution, making more and more people look for alternative and sustainable travel solutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Romania offers to travelers the opportunity to discover some of the most superb, unexplored scenery in Europe. Tourists have the possibility to explore dense pine and beech forests still teeming with wildlife or watch pelicans in the Danube Delta, or they can try their hand at traditional rural crafts, trace secret passages in rambling Transylvanian castles, or just enjoy a tranquil picnic amid a patchwork of wild flowers.

Hiking is a great way to experience Romania's spectacular flora and fauna. Hiking routes vary from easy day walks in rolling hills to strenuous hikes through high, remote mountains.

Birds watching in one of the top three biodiversity hotspots in the world: the Danube Delta (over 320 bird species) or in remote locations of the Carpathian Mountains where Wallcreepers and Green Woodpeckers can be seen.

Another attraction for tourists experiencing Romanian Ecotourism is to discover tracks left by wildlife in the forest, watch bears from a hide or experience the co-existence between humans and wildlife by visiting a shepherd's camp.

Cycling through rolling hills and traditional villages or trying more strenuous routes, over rough terrain and steep hills, both in lowland and mountain areas, could be also an important attraction for travelers in Romania.

Travelers can appreciate the variety of the landscape when riding from a picturesque village, across attractive farm land still worked by horses, through natural forest, and up into high pastures with an extensive view over unspoiled mountains.

For a taste of rural culture in Romania, travelers can explore medieval villages, try their hand at traditional crafts, observe wild

flowers, wander in the stunning countryside, picnic in the fields - or just relax at the home of a village family and sample wholesome, country fare (with zero food miles!) washed down with home made wine and plum brandy. Tourists passionate about food, they will be intrigued to discover how - along the centuries - Hungarian, Saxon, Turkish and Lipoveni flavors have become interwoven, with local ingenuity, to create the special Romanian dishes of today, specific to each historical region.

Canyons, waterfalls and fast rivers are perfectly suited to water sport activities such as canoeing and white water rafting, while lazy rivers, lakes and reservoirs encourage rafting by traditional wooden raft. The Danube Delta offers opportunities for quiet paddling and canoeing for both skilled and amateur canoeists.

Winter sports fans will enjoy trails in the hills and mountains ranging from short trips for beginners to strenuous routes for fit, experienced ski-mountaineers. Snow-shoe trips are a great way to spot tracks left by animals, while a gentler option is a trip by horse-drawn sleigh. After the cold outdoors, tourists can enjoy the night in a warm guesthouse heated by traditional wood-burning stoves, with good home-cooking and local plum brandy.

CONCLUSIONS

Ecotourism is the new way of traveling and discovering other countries that makes more sense at the time being for smaller actors. Larger and established players are stuck with their rigid organizational structures and will never allocate resources to serious ecotourism projects until the market is large and profitable enough. In other words, large organization such as Tomas Cook and TUI will wait until a profitable infrastructure is in place. While most countries still struggle to find a solution for such an infrastructure that balances economy and ecology, Romania is showing positive change.

The inevitable path large tourism companies will follow is the opportunity for innovative start-ups to successfully launch their new

products, grow the ecotourism market, and leapfrog their established rivals.

Information and communication technologies, the Internet, travel guides and other information-diffusing media are bringing about great knowledge that is significantly stimulating our thirst for world discovery.

Tourism is about balancing the unknown with the known. While people travel to search for what they lack in their own environments, they also travel to find what they already know and could relate to. When images and texts on beautiful natural and social environments pass through our computer screens every day, we become aware and our fear of traveling to the unknown disappears. We no longer need elements from our physical home to feel comfortable when elements from our virtual home are naturally available. This fundamentally explains the accelerated ecotourism market and the new opportunities for new entry local firms.

Romania has a lot of attractions, making it one of the most attractive ecotouristic destinations in Europe. The authenticity and the uniqueness of those attractions create a story which looks forward to be revealed to all tourist visiting Romania.

REFERENCES

- [1] www.ecotourdirectory.com