

Sustainable tourism as an essential factor of economic growth and local development in the sustainable economy

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Abstract: *The sustainable management in the field of the tourism is important because this sector is one of the main sectors which contributes to the economic growth. The purpose of this research is to illustrate the evolution and the positive and negative impact of the tourism on the national economies in Romania, in the European Union and worldwide, related with the environmental, social and cultural aspects. The role of the national States is very important, in order to improve institutions, regulations and financing, to encourage the private economic entities, depending on the national specific, which requires specific economic policy instruments. The quantitative and especially the qualitative methods aim to highlight the importance of the sustainable tourism and of the sustainable management in the tourism sector for a green economy, considering the changes in the economic behavior.*

Keywords: sustainable management, sustainable tourism, green hotels, energy consumption.

JEL Classification: A13, D12, D63, E61, F63, G18, J21, L83, Z32

1. Introduction

Tourism is an important activity because it represents over 10% of total investments in national economies as a world average, an important role being played by the foreign direct investments. The tourism creates income and the income multiplier demonstrates that the amounts obtained directly from tourism are indirectly contributing to the increase of the activities when it is invested in other local activities. In 2020, in the OECD countries, the average contribution of the tourism sector to the GDP was 4.1% and 5.9% to the total employment. In the European Union countries, the share of the tourism in the national GDP was about 10-15%. In 2019, in Romania, the contribution of the tourism to the national GDP was increasing, but it was below the European Union average, being almost 3%.

The income created by the tourism sector stimulates the whole local economy and contributes to the increase of the general welfare and to reduce the poverty. The effect that has the income obtained from tourism is different from one country to another, or from one area to another, depending on the structure of the economic activity and of the behavior of economic subjects who obtain these gains as a result of the tourist activity. The economic subjects can be the households or the hotel owners. Also, tourism is an important sector that determines the growth of the job market, not only directly in tourism (where the largest share have women and young people, who work in small companies), but also indirect jobs, related on the activities of the sustainable, green tourism.

Tour operators must take care of the continuous improvement of water consumption, of the reduction of energy consumption and of the use of renewable energy, of a better land use, of waste reduction, they must protect all the natural resources and the biodiversity, the traditions and culture of the places where there is tourism, to protect the local communities, and the cultural-economic benefits must always be compared with the socio-cultural costs. Tourism operators must prove seriousness, flexibility, communication, cooperation, use of appropriate staff, well trained for this activity and motivated.

Currently the tourism contributes with a significant share to the greenhouse gas emissions, the largest contribution coming from the energy consumption during travel and accommodation. A large part of the energy consumption is currently produced on the basis of the fossil fuels. The energy consumption is expected to increase 2 or 3 times in the next 20 years, given the growing trend in the number of domestic and international tourists. Water consumption in tourism is also more than 50% related to the accommodation activity.

Waste issues concern both the strategies to minimize their production and the possibilities for their processing given that some of them are discharged into nearby waters. The waste problem is greater for American areas than for European ones and the quantity of waste is higher for the tourists who are visiting the relatives and friends than for those who practice the business tourism.

Currently there are areas where tourism affects the traditional way of living, creates cultural issues that are amplified by environmental issues and creates animosity between the locals and the tourists. Green tourism is the tourism that can be maintained over time without affecting the social, economic, cultural and environmental fields. It is different from the ecotourism because

the ecotourism mainly refers to the environmental protection. Green tourism takes into consideration the aspects related to the demand of tourism, the expectations of tourists, but also to the supply of tourism. It is predicted that in 2050 tourism will contribute to the global GDP three times more than at present.

Greening of tourism involves both the development of the private sector, which is predominant in this branch and the strategic planning carried out by the local and the national authorities, improving funding issues, given the very high risks in this area, as well as incentives and aids provided by the State.

Considering the fact that Europe is the world's leading tourist destination, the European Union has emphasized the importance of the tourism in job creation and also the importance of public-private collaboration. Between 2001 and 2014, the European Commission published 7 communications on policy guidelines in tourism, including the EDEN initiative and CALYPSO initiative. In 2009, the NECSTouR platform - an open network of European tourism regions - was created for the exchange of information and innovative solutions in the issues related to the competitive and sustainable tourism. In Romania, concerns in the field of ecotourism were noticed only after the year 2000, which aim to capitalize the natural resources, the ethnographic potential and the traditional crafts.

2. Literature Review

John Swarbrooke, points out in his book "Sustainable Tourism Management" the origins of the sustainable tourism: „ ...we have seen government bodies trying to make use of tourism to help achieve the sustainable development of geographical areas. For example:

- In the USA and the UK, tourism has been used to try to regenerate old industrial cities and provide them with a new direction for the future. This has been seen particularly in places such as Baltimore and Liverpool, for example.

- The use of rural-based tourism to help achieve the sustainability of the rural economies and societies, and compensate for the decline of traditional agriculture. This phenomenon has been seen clearly in the countryside of France, Italy, Spain and Portugal.

- Attempts have been made to utilize tourism as a way to facilitate the sustainable development of economies in the developing world, particularly where as a possible mechanism for achieving the same end are limited. This is illustrated by Cuba, where tourism is being used as an alternative now that Cuba no longer receives aid from the former Soviet Union, and impoverished countries like Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos." (Swarbrooke, 1999)

According to Wikipedia, "Sustainable tourism is the tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impact, addressing the needs of visitors, industry, the environment and host communities.... Sustainable tourists can reduce the impact of tourism in several ways: by learning about the culture, politics and economy of the visited communities, by anticipating and respecting the local cultures, expectations and assumptions, by supporting the integrity of local cultures, by fostering cultural heritage and traditional values of local goods and participation in small and local businesses conserving resources, by looking

for businesses that are environmentally conscious and by using the least possible amount of non-renewable resources" (Wikipedia, 2020)

The "Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism" (Commission of the European Communities, 2007) focuses on the growth and on the diversification of the jobs in the tourism sector, considering the fact that twice as many young people work in tourism as in any other economic sector. Other objectives were - reducing the greenhouse gas emissions, adapting the destinations to the tourism demand, increasing the quality of services, giving more importance to the environment, to the employees and to the local communities. The main actions at the European Union level, established by this document were - mobilizing the actors to obtain and share knowledge, promoting the destinations of excellence, mobilizing the community financial instruments, integrating the sustainability and the competitiveness into the common policies.

In the document *Europa, The World Favorite Tourist Destination - A New Policy Framework For European Tourism* (2010) are highlighted as key actions for the tourism development - stimulating the competitiveness of the tourism sector in Europe, promoting the development of sustainable tourism, strengthening Europe's image and vision set of sustainable and quality destinations, capitalizing at maximum the most of EU financial policies and instruments for the tourism development.

In "An Economic Growth and Job Creation In Maritime And Coastal Tourism" (2014) there are emphasized the important role of the maritime and coastal tourism, which provides over 3 million jobs, generates an important total value added and represents 1/3 of the maritime economy. The potential of this sector is important.

"In Romania, ecotourism programs have a relatively recent history. The first such tourist packages were created around 2000, when a series of initiatives appeared in the area of national or natural parks (Retezat, Piatra Craiului, Vânători Neamț, Apuseni). Remarkable is the project *Carnivore Mari din Carpați* (Large Carnivores from Carpathians), which managed to start ecotourism programs focused on the attractiveness of the population of wolves, bears and lynx in the northern area of Piatra Craiului. These ecotourism programs as well as the development of related services and infrastructure have managed to grow in popularity and be recognized by the UNWTO as one of the best ecotourism destinations in the world in 2002." (Guvernul Romaniei, 2016)

Although concerns for the development of sustainable tourism are relatively recent, after the 1980s, only a few years later, the first criticisms of the theoretical and practical achievements in the field of sustainable tourism appeared. In this respect, "planning, management and policy approaches which fail to operationalise sustainable tourism in a manner consistent with the general aims and requirements of sustainable development. In particular, it is suggested that the tourism-centric paradigm encourages inappropriate and inconsistent consideration of the scope and geographical scale of tourism's resource base, whilst also failing to adequately account for the intersectoral context of tourism development In order to re-engage sustainable tourism development" (Hunter, 1995)

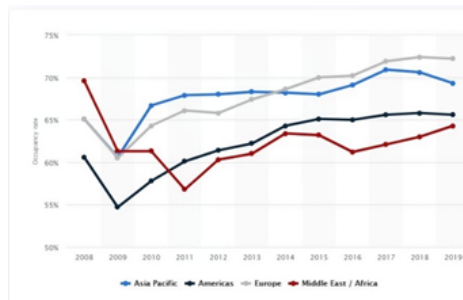
The author Zhenhua Liu highlights, in a critical sense, some aspects that are not sufficiently taken into account in the analyze of the sustainable tourism "it explores six issues that are often

overlooked but must be addressed in research: the role of tourism demand, the nature of tourism resources, the imperative of intra-generational equity, the role of tourism in promoting sociocultural progress, the measurement of sustainability, and forms of sustainable development. Finally, in order to transform research on sustainable tourism to a more scientific level, a systems perspective and an interdisciplinary approach are indispensable." (Zhenhua, 2003)

3. Characteristics of the existing tourism sector

In 2019, FDI investment in the tourism sector were 61.746 billion \$, which represents an increase of about 10% over the previous year and a peak after 2003. Most projects based on foreign direct investment in the last 5 years or carried out in the UK, USA, Mexico, Spain, Germany, China, Japan, India, UAE, France, which created a number of 470.542 jobs. The previous trend was confirmed by the fact that the largest number of international tourist arrivals was in Europe (Tourism Investment, 2020) (Figure 1). The largest investment in tourism, in 2019, were made in the US (209 billion \$), followed by China (169.9 billion \$) and India (51.6 billion \$) (Statista a, 2020). The direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP in 2018 was 2760,65 billion \$ and the total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP in 2018 was 8810,96 billion \$. (Statista b, 2020).

Figure 1: Occupancy rate of the hotel industry worldwide from 2008 to 2019, by region



Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266741/occupancy-rate-of-hotels-worldwide-by-region/>

One of the main problems in the sector of tourism at present is the high and increasing energy consumption. This consumption is due to the increase in the number of domestic and international number of tourists worldwide, to the tourists' preference for shorter trips, which determines a higher number of trips and to the preference of the tourists for the types of transport that are very energy consuming, such as planes, cars and buses. It is known that the highest energy consumption in tourism comes from the tourist's transport (which produces about three quarters of the direct greenhouse gas emissions) and also from accommodation (almost a quarter of the direct greenhouse gas emissions), where energy is used for heating or cooling, for lighting, for food preparation and for ensuring some sports activities. To the direct greenhouse gas emissions must be added the indirect emissions, related to the activities of the travel agencies and to the transport of the necessary products used in hotels.

Water consumption in tourism is a smaller problem than the energy consumption. It is a problem especially for the countries with water shortages, and where tourism is the main consumer of water. Out of the total water consumption in tourism, over 50% comes from accommodation, being related to what tourists use in their rooms, but also for swimming pools, spas or garden irrigation.

Another important issue related to the tourism sector is waste management, given that, on average, in Europe, a tourist generates 1 kg of waste per day and in the United States 2 kg per day.

Tourism causes also problems related to the biodiversity loss in those areas where tourism activities affect the environment and also problems related to the cultural heritage, by the fact that the entry of tourists in certain areas affects the traditional way of life of the local population. There are problems related to the interaction between tourists and local communities, which may have very different conceptions and ways of behaving. The intensification of trade in certain areas can have as a negative effect the excessive exploitation of some resources, but it also has a positive effect by increasing the employment of the local population and by increasing the local incomes.

Concerns about improving tourism activity are reflected in the European Union since 2000 by numerous communications on policy guidelines in tourism. Between 2001 and 2014, the Commission published 7 communications on tourism policy guidelines, the most important being - The Agenda for Sustainable and Competitive European Tourism (2007) - Europe, the world's favorite tourist destination - A new policy framework for European tourism (2010) - Implement and develop the common visa policy to stimulate economic growth in the EU (2012) - A European strategy for boosting growth and creating jobs in maritime and coastal tourism (2014). In EU countries, "In 2018, half of the total nights spent by non-residents in the EU were spent in Spain, Italy and France. Spain was the most common outbound tourism destination in the EU for people travelling outside their country, with 301 million nights spent in tourist accommodation, or 23 % of the EU total. 64 % of EU residents made at least one personal tourism trip in 2018." (Eurostat a, 2020)

The top three countries in the top destinations for European tourists are Spain Italy and France and the favorite months are June, July and August (Eurostat b, 2020).

4. The transition to a sustainable tourism

In the literature are defined two different types of tourism - ecotourism and sustainable tourism. Ecotourism is mainly focused on the environmental issues, while sustainable tourism (Figure 2) seeks to solve both environmental and economic, social and cultural problems.

Figure 2: Sustainable tourism



Source: <https://ecobnb.com/blog/2016/12/why-sustainable-tourism-important/>

“Sustainable tourism aspires to be more energy efficient and climate sound (e.g. by using renewable energy); consume less water; minimise waste; conserve biodiversity, cultural heritage and traditional values; support intercultural understanding and tolerance; generate local income and integrate local communities with a view to improving livelihoods and reducing poverty.” (UNEP/GRID, 2011)

An important role in the transition to a more sustainable tourism is played by both consumers, who must change their consumption patterns and by tourism companies, that need to adapt their offer so that it becomes more sustainable. The State needs to support this area in which financing risks are very high so that private investors are more difficult to get involved. It is necessary to promote corporate social responsibility (CSR) and to create more institutions at national and international level to promote the sustainable tourism. Numerous studies revealed that CSR is strongly linked with sustainable business models, sustainability and sustainable economy (Toma, 2006; Toma and Hudea, 2012; Toma, Marinescu and Gradinaru, 2016).

“After six decades of consistent growth, tourism is an important driver of economic growth. On average, the sector directly contributes 4,4% of GDP, 6,9% of employment and 21,5% of service exports in OECD countries. It is of vital economic, social and cultural importance, and offers real prospects for sustainable and inclusive development; however, integrated and forward-looking policies are needed to ensure this growth better delivers benefits for people, places and businesses.” (OECD, 2020)

More than 80% of the amounts spent by international tourists in OECD countries is reflected in the increase of the domestic added value of the respective countries, the contribution of tourism being higher than that of exports. In OECD, “countries are putting in place measures to co-ordinate better across and between different levels of government, improve destination

management, modernise regulations, adopt digital solutions and work more closely with the private sector and civil society when designing policies.” (OECD, 2020)

The tourism sector is constantly developing, it being a very important resource in achieving the economic growth. Tourism is expected to have a higher global average growth rate than industry. Most of this growth will be in the developing countries, where not very well-known tourist destinations until now have a growing interest and where there is the potential to create a sustainable tourism from the beginning.

Even starting 10 years ago, about 10% of the total worldwide tourists clearly specified that they want to live in environmentally friendly hotels, and over a third of them said they would be willing to pay more to live in such conditions, being interested in preserving the biodiversity and in the cultural and the social aspects of the destination localities. For example, the Accor hotel chain has invested in photovoltaic panels, gray water reuse, rainwater recovery, energy efficiency, sustainable construction, renovation projects. 80% of hotels are small and medium-sized businesses worldwide and 90% in Europe.

Tourism contributes to the local development and to poverty reduction. “1. Its ability to harness biodiversity, landscape and cultural heritage available in developing countries can play a major role in enhancing incomes and employment opportunities; 2. Tourism is a relatively labour-intensive sector traditionally dominated by micro and small enterprises with activities particularly suited for women and disadvantaged groups; 3. A tourism product is a combination of different activities and inputs produced by many sectors: enhanced spending by tourists can benefit agriculture, handicrafts, transport, water and waste management, energy efficiency and other services; 4. As tourism development at destinations requires investment in facilities such as roads, water supply, and energy, it improves the basic common infrastructure facilities required for development of other sectors and improvement of quality of life (Bata 2010); and 5. Tourism employs more women and young people than most other sectors: providing economic benefits and independence to women is very important in terms of supporting child development and breaking the cycle of poverty.” (UNEP/GRID, 2011)

Figure 3: Towards smarter tourism development



Source: <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/tourism/2020-Tourism-Brochure.pdf>

Most of the SMEs companies operating in the field of tourism are preparing to move to a more digital activity, although they face a series of difficulties or barriers.

“⊗Inadequate access to digital infrastructure (e.g. high speed internet access and widely available Wi-Fi).

⊗ Insufficient resources including access to finance, networks, skills and time.

⊗A mismatch between current and anticipated sector skills requirements (e.g. digital/IT, data analytics and administration/finance), while tourism businesses may not have the financial or management capacity to employ tech experts or invest in workforce training.

⊗A focus on business survival makes them risk averse to business innovation coupled with uncertainty around the benefits of digitalisation, especially when considering the costs.” (OECD, 2020)

Tour operators must take care of the continuous improvement of water consumption, of the reduction of energy consumption and of the use of renewable energy, of a better land use, of waste reduction, they must protect all the natural resources and the biodiversity, the traditions and culture of the places where there is tourism, to protect the local communities, and the cultural-economic benefits must always be compared with the socio-cultural costs. Tourism operators must prove seriousness, flexibility, communication, cooperation, use of appropriate staff, well trained for this activity and motivated. An important way to encourage green tourism is to promote sustainable hotels. Some of the most important examples in the world are

⊗ Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay – the hotel significantly reduced the effects of the energy consumption on the environment through the use of solar energy, being among the first large hotels in California, USA that received a LEED certification as a green building. The hotel has important achievements also in the field of reducing the water consumption, by using low flow batteries. The water consumption has been reduced also for washing linen, by using special detergents, and hot water production is done taking into account the principle of energy cogeneration. The green areas around the hotel are decorated with many plants, irrigated by a controlled drip system.

Figure 4: Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay



Source: <https://www.portolahotel.com/gallery>

Figure 5: Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay



Source: <https://www.portolahotel.com/gallery>

© In California there is also a smaller green hotel, Bardessono, which is among the very few hotels that has a LEED Platinum certification, its green building being made of non-toxic materials, which does not cause allergies, and the wood used is recovered. The necessary energy is provided mostly by the solar energy, and the geothermal energy is used to heat the rooms and to produce the necessary hot water. The organic materials are the ones from which the linens are made, as well as the detergents. The property's restaurant is based on farm products.

Figure 6: Bardessono Hotel and Spa



Source: <https://www.bardessono.com/gallery.htm>

In Europe, there are considered to be 11 Friendly Hotels in different European states. One of them is in Sweden, Tree Hotel, whose construction is based on an idea from a traditional Swedish film. The rooms have been built in such a way as to have as little impact on the environment as possible, using durable materials. The energy used for heating is hydroelectric, and the surrounding landscape is unique.

Figure 7: Treehotel, Harads, Suedia



Source: <https://travelator.ro/cele-mai-ciudate-hoteluri-din-europa/>

Green Solution House in Denmark is a beach hotel that addresses sustainability in many ways. The energy used comes from renewable sources, the wastewater is treated, and the building materials used are recycled, including those used in the restaurant. The menu is based on local organic products.

Figure 8: Green Solution House in Denmark



Source: https://www.google.com/search?q=Green+Solution+House%2C+Denmark&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwjH46-Azq_tAhUQyKQKHVZVCB4Q2-cCegQIABAA&oq=Green+Solution+House%2C+Denmark&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQAzIECAAQE1CUzBdYIMwXYOTSF2gAcAB4AIABkwGIAZMBkgEDMC4xmAEAoAEBqgELZ3dzLXdpei1pbWfAAQE&sclient=img&ei=R7LHX4ckkJCTBdaqofAB&bih=920&biw=1795&rlz=1C1JZAP_enRO912RO912#imgsrc=LDU7gUQtS1UZzM

Forsthofalm is one of the most green hotels in Austria, being built entirely of wood (mostly pine wood, considered optimal for sleep quality), without metals or glue. The landscape is special, especially in the winter, and the menu consists of regional, organic foods.

Figure 9: Holzhotel Forsthofalm, Austria



Source: https://www.google.com/search?q=Forsthofalm%2C+Austria&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwiJwoS6z6_tAh-WVq6QKHa3ICH4Q2-cCegQIABAA&ooq=Forsthofalm%2C+Austria&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQA1DHgBRYx4AUYM6DFGgAcAB4AlABiwGIAYsBkgEDMC4xmAEAoAEBqgELZ3dzLXdpei1pbWfAAQE&sclient=img&ei=zLPHX4msFpXXkgWikaPwBw&bih=920&biw=1795&rlz=1C1JZAP_enRO912RO912#imgrc=uhJQiUSonLYzhM

The other environmentally friendly hotels in Europe are located in Switzerland, Iceland, Greece, Slovenia, Italy, Germany, United Kingdom, The Netherlands.

In Romania, in 2009, Vega Hotel became the first hotel in our country certified Eco-Hotel Management System by Tuv-Rheinland Romania. "The Eco-Hotel principles govern all the processes carried out within the Vega Hotel:

- control of energy consumption: starting with March 2013, the Vega hotel in Mamaia became the first hotel consuming renewable energy in Romania (energy from renewable sources - wind energy, hydropower and solar energy, which significantly supports the reduction of CO2 emissions). The supplier of this type of energy is the company UGM Energy.

- control of water and paper consumption and control of waste and hazardous substances management

- purchase and use of biodegradable products." (Hotel Vega, 2020)

Figure 10: Vega Hotel, Romania



Source: <https://hotelvega.ro>

The risks and the costs being very high in the tourist activity, require a greater involvement of the State. Tourism is a labor-intensive activity, its cost having a large share in the total cost,

as well as payments for the land used, as competition for the land use in tourist areas causes an increase of its price. In addition to the costs of these factors of production, the taxes paid for them have a large share in the total payments. The cost of capital can also be high when the locations are at a greater distance. In tourism, more than in many other activities, there is a high degree of uncertainty about the possible future gains from the current investments, and planning projects and approvals also have a higher cost as they have a longer duration.

Sustainable tourism requires the increase of the institutional capacities to be able to integrate multiple economic policies that must take into account both the natural characteristics and the human and cultural ones, must improve the standards and issue new rules, so that make those that are planning the tourist destinations to know better the advantages that a green tourism can bring and be able to benefit from a qualified staff in this field.

The state should be more concerned with allocating better the resources used in tourism, with providing benefits and compensations to those who practice the green tourism and also with investing in protected areas cultural assets, in reducing energy and water consumption.

One of the most important issues today is the wider digitization of tourism operators, especially of the SMEs. For this, the role of the State is particularly important because it must ensure the adequate infrastructure for digital transmissions and must also promote the modernization of urban and regional planning, must modernize the legislative framework so that SMEs are supported to introduce in their activity the innovations, in order to develop more sustainable tourist destinations.

In EU, "Five projects are being co-financed under the 2019 call for proposal 'Boosting sustainable tourism development and capacity of tourism SMEs through transnational cooperation and knowledge transfer' (COS-TOURCOOP-2019-3-01). These projects aim at

1.reinforcing transnational and cross-border cooperation to enable sustainable growth of tourism SMEs

2.cultivating SMEs' capacities and skills for solutions for more sustainable management and tourism sustainability in general

• 3.encouraging innovative solutions for sustainable tourism through cross-sectoral cooperation." (European Commission a, 2020)

The competitiveness and sustainability of tourism is a constant concern of the European Commission. It is considered necessary to improve the quality of tourist destinations, which depend on natural and cultural resources, on how the tourism can be integrated into the local communities, being necessary to combine the economic criteria with the social, cultural and environmental criteria, respecting the ethical principles of organization and progress. "Major challenges for sustainable tourism include:

- preserving natural and cultural resources;
- limiting negative impacts at tourist destinations, including the use of natural resources and waste production;
- promoting the wellbeing of the local community;
- reducing the seasonality of demand;
- limiting the environmental impact of tourism-related transport;

- making tourism accessible to all;
- improving the quality of tourism jobs.” (European Commission b, 2020)

Must be mentioned also the EDEN initiative, that promotes European tourist destinations of excellence and those that are on the rise less known, but which respect the principles of sustainability and the CALYPSO initiative, which promotes social tourism for the elderly, young people without opportunities, families with special needs, people with reduced mobility. In 2009, NECSTouR was created - an open network of European tourism regions - a platform for the exchange of information and innovative solutions in issues related to competitive and sustainable tourism.

In Romania, “natural and semi-natural ecosystems represent approximately 47% of the country’s surface Along with the natural setting, the Romanian space also benefits from an ethnographic and folkloric potential of great originality and authenticity. This spiritual dowry represented by popular architectural values, popular installations and techniques, traditional crafts, folklore and ancestral customs, popular holidays, etc., to which are added numerous historical and art monuments, archaeological remains, museums, happily amplifies and completes the ecotourism potential of country.Currently, the main areas in Romania where ecotourism programs are concentrated are:

- Danube Delta and Dobrogea Biosphere Reserve (bird watching, boating);
- Piatra Craiului National Park and its surroundings (programs based especially on the observation of large carnivores (wolf, bear, lynx), but also of specific plant species, equestrian tourism, cycling, hiking, etc.);
- Apuseni Mountains Natural Park (speotourism, themed hiking, cultural programs, cross-country skiing, equestrian tourism, cycling, etc.);
- other protected natural areas, some with the status of national or natural park: Retezat National Park - Dinosaurs Geopark Țara Hațegului, Măcinului Mountains National Park, Rodnei Mountains National Park, Călimani National Park, Lunca Mureșului Natural Park, Vânători Neamț Natural Park, with programs focused on: equestrian tourism, cycling, themed hiking, cross-country skiing, observation of flora and fauna, cultural programs, canoe expeditions, etc. ;
- Transylvania - Târnava Mare area (discovery of Saxon and Szekler culture, horseback riding, themed hiking, etc.)
- Maramureș (nature discovery programs, horseback riding, cycling, discovering occupations and traditional architecture, etc.);
- Bucovina (nature observation programs, themed hiking combined with cultural tourism and monastic tourism).”

At the level of ecotourism Romanian destinations the aim is to practice a sustainable management, to have a responsible marketing image, a real support for the local communities, to inform the tourists about this and to prove a permanent concern for the protection of the nature and the biodiversity.

“The priority in the Romanian tourism development policy is the transition from “passive tourism” (waiting) to “active tourism” (anticipating the wishes and needs of the tourist), with priority treatment of the following aspects:

- Active promotion of Romania as a tourist destination, relying on modern technologies; “Designing a positive image of Romania, [...] developing domestic tourism by diversifying the offer and specific marketing activities, including by creating a unitary system of online tourism information and statistics”

- Organized development of the general infrastructure and of the specific, tourist one;
- Invigorating spa tourism in the context of promoting health tourism (restoration, modernization or recreation of specific infrastructure and associated services);

- Development of thematic tourism (wine road, berry road, mineral springs, monasteries and many others) and events, commercial approaches (animation, derived products, etc.);

- Using the opportunities related to the proximity between the country’s capital, the Black Sea and the Carpathian chain, an asset in the development of tourism as a branch of the national economy;

- Identifying priority tourist areas at national level and concentrating investments in these areas.”

5. Research methodology

The quantitative data were mainly collected from the publication issued by at the international and European Union level on the sustainable tourism and green hotels and also issued by the competent authorities in Romania. The results of the quantitative and qualitative research were taken especially from the documents issued by the European Union regarding the sustainable tourism and the green hotels, regarding the reduction of the energy and water consumption, the reduction of generated waste, using recycling materials, renewable energies. The qualitative research from this paper aim to highlight the importance of the sustainable tourism not only for the environment, the biodiversity, but also for the society and for the preservation of traditions and culture and the main international economic policies that may transform the unsustainable tourism to a sustainable one.

6. Results and discussion

The results of the research carried out in this paper are highlighting that the tourism sector is an important activity because it represents over 10% of total investments in national economies as a world average and it has a significant share of the national and global GDP and it contributes with a significant share at the global number of jobs, most of them being green jobs.

This sector has both an economic impact, through the costs and the benefits involved, but also an impact on other fields, such as environmental, social and cultural.

The main problems from the tourism sector at present are related to the greenhouse gas emissions, to the energy and water consumption, as well as issues related to the waste management and preserving biodiversity and culture of the local communities. The main negative effect of tourism on the environment is related to greenhouse gas emissions from tourist transport and accommodation, given that much of the energy currently used in this sector is based on fossil fuels.

The increase of this sector in recent years is based on the increase in the number of the tourist

population, domestically and internationally, as well as on the tendency to reduce the duration of the trip which means that several trips can be made in the same unit of time.

In order to make the transition to the sustainable transport, all the elements related to this sector must be improved.

„Major challenges for sustainable tourism include:

- preserving natural and cultural resources;
- limiting negative impacts at tourist destinations, including the use of natural resources and waste production;
- promoting the wellbeing of the local community;
- reducing the seasonality of demand;
- limiting the environmental impact of tourism-related transport;
- making tourism accessible to all;
- improving the quality of tourism jobs.” (European Commission b, 2020)

The States must support the development of the sustainable tourism by providing aid or subsidies, through tax cuts and by other measures that facilitate the financing process and that encourage the participation of the private sector, by creating the necessary institutions so that all economic agents involved are sensitized.

At the EU level, concern for sustainable tourism or manifested in recent decades by publishing numerous work agendas. In recent years were promoted some transnational projects meant to encourage the sustainable tourism, the small and medium-sized enterprises in this field, the sustainable management through a cross-sectoral cooperation.

In Romania, after the 2000s, most projects in the field of sustainable tourism are in the field of ecotourism.

The transition to the green tourism is relatively slow, having both positive and negative aspects. The biggest possibilities for creating a green, sustainable tourism are in the developing countries because they do not have to change some existing models, but they have to provide directly a green tourism.

7. Conclusions

This article supports the most of the previous researches.

Nowadays, the tourism sector is an important sector because it represents over 10% of total investments in national economies, an important role being played by the foreign direct investments. The tourism creates income and the income multiplier demonstrates that the amounts obtained directly from tourism are indirectly contributing to the increase of the activities when it is invested in other local activities, contributing to the increase of the general welfare and to reduce the poverty. The effect that has the income obtained from tourism is different, depending on the structure of the economic activity and of the behavior of economic subjects who obtain these gains as a result of the tourist activity.

Tourism is an important sector that determines the growth of the job market, not only in tourism (where the largest share have women and young people, who work in small companies), but also indirect jobs, related on the activities of the sustainable, green tourism.

The sustainable management in the field of transport is an essential condition for the current economic development because it is....”more energy efficient and climate sound (e.g. by using

renewable energy); consume less water; minimise waste; conserve biodiversity, cultural heritage and traditional values; support intercultural understanding and tolerance; generate local income and integrate local communities with a view to improving livelihoods and reducing poverty.” (OECD, 2020)

As the costs in the tourism sector are very high due to high expenditures and taxes on land and labor, and the risks of obtaining future incomes are also very high, the State needs to be more involved in promoting the sustainable tourism.

Sustainable tourism means increasing the institutional capacities in order to integrate multiple economic policies, taking into consideration both the natural, human and cultural characteristics. The standards must be improved, so that make those that are planning the tourist destinations know better the advantages that a green tourism can bring.

The state should be more concerned with allocating better the resources used in tourism, with providing benefits and compensations to those who practice the green tourism and also with investing in protected areas cultural assets, in reducing energy and water consumption.

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