

7 CULTURAL TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Valeriu IOAN-FRANC*
Elena-Manuela IȘTOC**

Abstract

The cultural tourism covers a wide range of interdependent activities, connected with other economic branches, that play a major role in the developing tourism industry. The people's increasing amount of leisure time, the tourists' changing interest and the increasing life expectancy help the cultural tourism gain popularity faster than other tourism segments.

Further, the cultural tourism plays a significant role in the recovery of some districts, zones, localities or towns.

Keywords: cultural tourism, sustainable development

JEL Classification: O10, Q01, Q26

1. The tourism industry could be of substantial economic benefit, especially to the incoming (host) countries and regions. For the regions enjoying cultural attractions, the tourism could be an alternative preferable to other economic development activities, provided that the resources are highly capitalized.

According to the studies made by the World Travel and Tourism Council, in 2005 the tourism was one of the greatest industries in the world, producing about 6000 billion USD. The direct impact of the tourism industry accounted for 1712.4 billion USD (3.8% of the world GDP). However, since the impact of the tourism is much higher than its direct contribution, the tourism industry produced, in fact, 4745.7 billion USD (10.6% of the world GDP). At the same time, the World Travel and Tourism Council estimates for the next ten years a 4.6% annual growth rate of the total demand in the tourism industry, that is, over 10,500 billion USD in 2015. The annual average growth in the tourism industry GDP will be 3.5%, amounting to 2660.6 billion USD¹ in 2015, as a direct effect, and, if the indirect impact is included, the amount will be 7798.7 billion USD.

* National Institute of Economic Research, Romanian Academy.

** National Institute of Economic Research, Romanian Academy.

¹ www.world-tourism.org.



The wide variety of cultural tourism activities, their interdependence, the strong ties between such activities and other economic branches, the population's increasing leisure time, the changes in the tourist's interest, the increasing life expectancy and numbers of the third age people, etc., have made the cultural tourism play a major role in the ascending tourism industry. As a matter of fact, it seems that "the cultural tourism gains popularity faster than the other tourism segments and clearly faster than the tourism growth rate in the world"¹, as recent estimates reveal that about "10% of all incomings in the world concern the cultural tourism"², that means 60-70 million incomings, to which we may add the incomings whose main objective is not culture, but cultural attractions.

2. The way the cultural tourism contributes to the economic wealth of a region is shown by the direct and indirect socio-economic effects. But, to have positive effects (and, implicitly, to help the economic wealth), the cultural tourism activity should be correctly *planned, integrated, organized and managed*.

3. The contribution of the cultural tourism to all the world and regional tourism depends on the type of activity and the territorial features alike. The cultural tourism, as an important specific activity that does not exhaust its "raw material", but increases its value significantly, is not automatically beneficial to some region, but conditionally.

First, the seasonality is more or less conspicuous. The permanent activities have a higher potential to gain benefits. Although many local entrepreneurs hope to earn higher incomes and have prospects for future investments, many holidays or festivals have not the expected effect: they are unable to change the local economy structure in a positive way or, even worse, they may cause the importation of most of the required raw material, while the community pays the bills. Recognizing the positive effect of a festival or other cultural event in terms of image on a territory, such events could cause evil (the so-called curse festivals). For example, the optimum solution for the territories that organize festivals is to use such events as a starting point for other educational or economic activities. As a matter of fact, many localities in the world that organize such festivals apply this procedure.

Second, the density of the incoming area has shown that the activities specific to the cultural tourism would have a higher positive impact if the area were more populated or a metropolitan one.

The reason why the areas with a higher population density get more benefit from the cultural tourism is obvious: the more populated regions have the required capacity to provide services to meet the tourists' needs and gain profit. On the contrary, the less populated regions provide less diversified services and need, very often, to import the means to meet the tourists' requirements, which brings about higher costs.

¹ Institutul Național de Cercetare-Dezvoltare în Turism: Studiu privind fundamentarea strategiei de dezvoltare a turismului în România după aderarea la Uniunea Europeană. Faza a II-a. Evoluții și tendințe pe plan mondial și European în turism. Decembrie 2005 (The National Institute for the Tourism Research and Development: A Study concerning the Foundation of the Strategy for the Tourism Development in Romania after the Accession to the EU. Stage Two. Developments and Trends in the World and European Tourism. December 2005).

² Idem.



Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Development

A report of the National Endowment for the Arts of 1981 gave as an example the City of New York in comparison with other seven American cities that were less populated (Columbus, Minneapolis/St. Paul, St. Louis, Springfield, Salt Lake City and San Antonio) to demonstrate that the benefit from the cultural tourism may vary directly proportionally to the population of those cities. The study proved that not only the income was significantly higher, but also that the tourists' expenditure changed by the size of the city (by its population), and this change was comparatively more significant than the higher number of tourists¹.

Another condition to obtain a higher value added from the cultural tourism is *the local population's involvement*. The cultural potential may be changed into a source of various activities throughout the year, not only in the tourists' season, preserving the cultural attractions, providing funds for investment, mobilizing volunteers, finding partners to prevent the cultural heritage deterioration – the basis of the cultural tourism and not only. All of them imply the involvement of the locals and communities, since the transformation of an area into a museum does not guarantee the sustainable development.

The cultural tourism has a stronger positive effect when the cultural activities work together, help each other and take advantage of the crowd of tourists. A festival alone cannot have a real impact on the local development, but if it stimulates other activities to extend the tourists' season, the indirect outcome and the multiplying effect will grow.

4. The economic potential of the tourism, in general, and cultural tourism, in special, is similar to the export potential, but, in our case, the consumers come from the goods production and service provision areas².

The World Travel and Tourism Council evaluates the tourism contribution to the export of goods and services in 2005 at 1512.5 billion US dollars, that is, 12% of all world exports. For the next ten years, the Council estimates an annual average growth rate of 5.7%, expected to amount to 2632.93 billion US dollars in 2015.³

The cultural tourism contributes to the world tourism diversification since the export consists of products that traditionally are not part of the foreign trade. Being achieved inside a region or a country, the products used as raw material for the specific tourism services or the goods bought by the foreign tourists from the business firms are not burdened by major expenses on transport, packing and insurance, or by customs duties or other taxes. Moreover, the holidays are "the celebration of consumption", as the tourists buy at their heart's desire and not within reason, accepting higher prices or purchasing goods that they would not usually buy.

The hard currency contribution of the cultural tourism is important for the economy of every country owing to the opportunity for creating a positive, active balance within the own balance of payments.

¹ *National Endowment for the Arts: Economic Impact of Arts and Cultural Institutions, New York, 1981.*

² *Advanced Travel & Tourism, Oxford University Press. Cambridge Training and Development Ltd. 2000, p. 98.*

³ *www.world-tourism.org.*



5. Also, the cultural tourism plays a major stimulating role in the investments. The demand will bring on investments in the tourism (accommodation, eating and entertainment units, etc.). And since the tourism is closely linked to other activities, it also stimulates the investment in the tourism-related fields (several industries, agriculture, trade services). When the business firms are owned and managed by local investors, the profit remains in the area and helps to invest further. As a matter of fact, the studies conducted by the World Travel and Tourism Council show that the 2005 contribution of tourism to the investments amounted to 918 billion dollars, that is 9.4% of all investments. The ten-year prediction of the Council is an annual average growth of 4.8%, thus reaching 1673 billion dollars in 2015.¹

6. The cultural tourism brings on the diversification of the opportunities and new facilities for leisure for the locals, as well as the stimulation of the residents to travel inside the country. At the same time, the increasing access to the culture becomes an active means of education and broadening the locals' information and cultural horizon, and of physical and psychical recovery of the local workforce, that is, one of the possible means of the labour productivity improvement.

Moreover, the cultural tourism may speed up the territory planning and a new approach to it, not only technically but also aesthetically, which may result in a more efficient and beautiful area, with a positive effect on the locals' mood, that is being more involved, active and productive.

7. All the above-mentioned converge towards another major role of the cultural tourism: *the recovery of some districts, zones, localities or towns*. Considering the planning and conditions the cultural tourism implies, it contributes to the introduction in the economic circuit of some areas with smaller initial investment (since there is a basic patrimony) able to develop one by one businesses that produce national income and, at the same time, absorb the available local workforce, thus contributing to the economy and culture of those areas and, of course, to the locals' welfare.

The most obvious high resource capitalisation (as compared to other economic branches) by the cultural tourism is related to the workforce.

As a component of the tertiary sector, the cultural tourism is characterized by an intensive labour utilisation. According to the WTO estimates, at present, out of eight employed people, one is directly or indirectly dependent on the existence and development of the tourism industry². At the same time, the cultural tourism provides jobs even when there are limited opportunities for the economic development and "it may even preserve them under unfavourable conditions, since that field is less susceptible to general insolvency"³.

Moreover, according to a 1982 study made by the British Authority, it seems that the tourism jobs have a lower cost than the other economic sectors. The study revealed that the necessary capital per worker amounted to half the national average. In 1980,

¹ www.world-tourism.org.

² Snak, O.; Baron, P.; Neacșu, N.: *Economia turismului (Tourism economy)*, Expert, București, 2001, p. 86.

³ Neacșu, N.: *Turismul și dezvoltarea durabilă (Tourism and sustainable development)*, Editura Expert, București, 1999, p. 90.



the capital per worker was on the average, 9 thousand pounds in the hotel and restaurant business as against the average of 19 thousand pounds in the economy¹.

Returning to the quantity, a study by the World Travel and Tourism Council revealed that the tourism industry provided 74.2 million jobs in 2005 (*i.e.*, 2.8% of the world's employed population). As a whole (considering also the indirectly provided jobs), the tourism ensured 221.6 million jobs (8.3% of the world's employed population). Also, the Council predicts that the number of jobs generated by the tourism industry (both direct and indirect ones) in the next ten years will increase annually, on the average, by 1.4%, amounting to 254.6 million jobs in 2015.

Illustrative of the impact of the cultural activities on the provision of jobs are the results of the research made in France by the Ministry of Culture that demonstrated that the quality improvement and the real estate patrimony conservation were important economic activities². The cultural services and jobs provided by the monuments and museums imply both their maintenance and utilisation. The personnel employed for a monument consists of the maintenance workforce, the workforce for welcoming the visitors and related services and the workforce for secondary services to the visitors, such as the souvenir shops or the proximity trade network. These jobs form "the heritage employment". Then we find the conservation and restoration of the monuments and museums. They create, in turn, jobs for the public utilities, private entrepreneurs and for free lances.

In France again, the studies concerning the labour effort required by a monument, by the protected areas or the development of the surrounding areas revealed that the towns that regulated the cultural heritage area protection created, for this purpose, about 150 jobs for over 20 years in areas with a population under 30000 inhabitants³.

The cultural tourism may also provide jobs for the youth (anyhow, the average age of the employed in tourism is below the age in other economic sectors), for women and local ethnical minorities; and this process may stop the locals' emigration to seek jobs.

Moreover, the cultural tourism has not only quantitative effects on the labour resources, but also qualitative ones, on the workforce education and training.

8. The properly planned cultural tourism have a major positive effect on the cultural resources and contributes – to attain its own objectives – to their maintenance and protection. The cultural resources capitalized by means of the cultural tourism are of a immovable or movable nature. By integrating the immovable cultural resources into the tourism circuit, financial resources may be collected for their conservation, safeguarding and development so that the future generations might enjoy them. The tourism may contribute to keep alive the cultural traditions and ethnical identity. Their transformation into tourism resources enables the inhabitants of a zone to be aware of their heritage and carry it on and develop their area as well.

The development of a proper cultural tourism helps to improve the environment quality, since most of the tourists try to visit not only the culturally attractive areas, but

¹ Idem.

² OECD, *Culture and Local Development, 2005*, p. 65.

³ Idem, p. 63.



also functional, clean and unpolluted ones. At the same time, the tourism may create the motivation and means to preserve and improve the environment quality. Today, when the pollution is a worldwide problem, many territories opt for developing the tourism instead of polluting industries, especially when the profits are similar. To avoid the environment deterioration, the tourism industry may promote the utilisation of recycled products, alternative energy resources, direct involvement in the ecological education and training of the tourists. Moreover, needing an unpolluted environment, the tourism sector may “compel” the other economic sectors and local community to protect the environment, since a high quality of the environment is very necessary for the locals, too.

9. Nevertheless, the development of the tourism industry is not necessarily of benefit to the community. The tourism may even make the local economy unstable. That risk occurs when the tourism facilities in the area are owned by foreign companies that gain the profit and take it out from the area without making any investment. Also, the seasonal labour from outside the locality may keep their earnings by the end of the season and spend them in their area of residence.

Another risk of the tourism development is the increasing cost of living for the locals. The price of the goods and services fluctuates due to several factors, among which we find the consumers' demand and the competition. Usually, in the tourism areas, the prices are higher than in other areas. When people travel, they are ready to spend more than they usually do. So, there is a risk that the suppliers raise the prices due to the increasing demand. Consequently, the locals may have troubles to face the rising prices and, eventually, may leave the area and move to other localities with a lower cost of living.

Moreover, the uncontrolled development of the tourism may have negative effects, such as: pollution, environmental problems, local economy destabilisation due to the quick change in the population number, etc.

10. To accomplish the mission of provider of economic wealth, the whole tourism business should reach a high quality and maximize the positive effects and minimize the negative ones.

The maximisation of the positive effects may be achieved in various ways, such as:

- The locals' proper training and education to enable them to run a business and have a good chance for jobs in the area, and to involve in the tourism industry development.
- The tourism and cultural facilities should be as accessible as possible, and the visitors should have as many opportunities as possible to spend their money.
- The investment of the income from tourism in public and social programmes for the local community.
- The locals' increasing access to the facilities and goods. Due to the high prices, the locals may have limited access to some preferential treatment: low fares for the unemployed, students and pensioners, free access in some days of the week when the visiting rate is usually lower, or for the schoolchildren in organized groups, etc.



Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Development

- In case of similar training, the locals should have priority access to employment in tourism and culture units.
- The ownership and management of the tourism firms by the locals and assistance to the locals to set up tourism SMEs.
- The stimulation of the enterprises working in the tourism and culture fields to use as many local products as possible in order to create and supply tourism and/or cultural products, but preventing the environmental troubles.
- The drawing-up of tourism projects based on the community, especially in the rural tourism field with cultural concerns.
- Strong relations between the tourism and other economic branches and sectors.

The minimisation of the negative effects, as follows:

- The controlled planning of the cultural tourism. It may be achieved by taking measures, such as: constraints on the height of the new buildings or the use of some building materials, the erection of the tourism localities in quite, unpolluted areas at some distance from the residential areas, limitation of the number of all-inclusive and fully-catered accommodations and the stimulation of the B&B and self-catering ones, etc.
- The application of the sustainable tourism principles. In many countries, the strategies for the tourism development comply with the *Agenda 21*. Although there is no single list for defining the sustainable development principles, the main targets of the sustainable tourism include the following:
 - The diminution in the hyper-consumption and the prevention of the exhaustion of the natural resources, such as water and wood;
 - The stimulation of the local industries and measures to keep the local incomes as high as possible;
 - Consultations with the locals on the tourism development in the area so that they support and be involved in tourism and “not to put them to flight”;
 - The personnel training according to the sustainable tourism principles;
 - Responsible tourism marketing to ensure that the tourists are fully informed of the consequences of their actions on the environment and the host community.
- The development of the visitors' and traffic management. In the peak period of the season, the traffic jams in the tourism areas could cause troubles, especially, in the airport areas, in the streets around the most popular tourist attractions, in museums, etc. The historical towns are exposed to pollution and crowding due to the narrow streets that were not designed for today's traffic. The strategies for preventing the traffic jamming should include plans for the car parking, and the car and pedestrian traffic. The tourists themselves may cause crowding, especially in the attraction places not built to receive a large number of visitors. But the modern attractions are planned to receive a large number of visitors.



- The evaluation of the tourism impact on the environment. The tourism planners should have a clear image of the particularly risky areas. The plans should allow for that tourism size that does not cause damage to the area. And, whenever necessary, measures should be taken immediately to repair the damage.

The impact of the tourism development in given areas could and must be controlled by adequate planning, development and management. We should note that the cultural tourism is a “consequence branch” whose evolution is permanently correlated with the development level and rate of the other economy branches.

