

THE FUTURE OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM IN ROMANIA DEPENDS ON THE HUMAN RESOURCES

Mirela Mazilu and
Roxana Maria Ispăș*

Abstract:

Hospitality and tourism represent a profession, and to understand hospitality and tourism means to have certain skills, requiring training and experience in the field. However, many people are involved in it directly or indirectly and must know the basic principles.

Local planning authorities, regional and national planning authorities of almost all ministries and departments are in some way directly or indirectly involved in the organization and development of tourism. Some decisions of planning are in opposition with the objectives of tourism development; some development strategies affect the sustainable development of tourism.

Tourism development is something very sensitive, because tourism is one of the most competitive business activities in the world. Tourism development is not automatic, because it is linked to the image and reputation. The sustainable and successful tourism requires cooperation between all the factors of responsibility and requires the formation of partnerships between the public sector, which should support tourism, and the private sector, which should provide facilities and services for different markets and market segments

Without understanding the mutual objectives and issues, tourism will not develop satisfactorily and will not be beneficial.

Keywords: tourism, hospitality, tourist industry, human resources, sustainable

JEL Classification: L83, Q13, Q27, Q34, Q56

Introduction

Tourism Awareness represents the understanding of the basic principles of hospitality and tourism, the benefits and consequences of tourism development and tourism to the country, a basic understanding of visitor satisfaction and concern towards the client and the preconditions of tourism and sustainable access. The general level of awareness in the public sector of hospitality and tourism is low. Also, the degree of understanding of the conditions and of the needs to develop safe and sustainable internal and international tourism is low.

Most officials and the public sector at national, regional or local levels do not have a clear understanding of the basic principles of visitor satisfaction, of the

* Mirela Mazilu is Professor of Economic Geography and Tourism at the University of Craiova, Centre of Drobeta Turnu Severin. E-mail: mirelamazilu2004@yahoo.com

Roxana Maria Ispăș is Asistant Professor of Public Finance at the University of Craiova, Centre of Drobeta Turnu Severin.

marketing approach, of the behaviour of visitors and the objectives of the trade with tourism products.

Tourism development is something very sensitive, because tourism is one of the most competitive business activities in the world. Tourism development is not automatic, because it is linked to the image and reputation. The sustainable and successful tourism requires cooperation between all the factors of responsibility and requires the formation of partnerships between the public sector, which should support tourism, and the private sector, which should provide facilities and services for different markets and market segments. Without understanding the mutual objectives and issues, tourism will not develop satisfactorily and will not be beneficial.

The main objective for the hospitality industry for a tourist destination is to generate the satisfaction of tourists who have enjoyed a positive experience and are willing to return and tell others.

They leave the country for the following reasons:

- Many young people do not feel respected by the older generations and the current legal system, laws and complicated regulations.
- The educational system is quite outdated, focused more on teaching and obtaining diplomas than on learning and competence, more theory than practice.
- Extremely low wages, particularly in the hospitality and tourism sectors.
- Lack of practice training at the work place to improve operational performance and skills.
- The image of a bad job in the service sector is still weak.
- The development of tourism in Romania is still weak.

And yet, the future of hospitality and tourism in Romania depends largely on the young generation.

Another imperious aspect of the presence of waste in the country, especially trash in rural areas, in addition to the tourist attraction areas and access roads to tourist areas. The amount of garbage (especially plastic drums and also bottles, metal cans, etc.) that pollute rivers, brooks, roads and paths is enormous.

Around rural settlements there are masses of rubbish which have been simply thrown into ditches and forests. Generally, this creates a strong negative impression on tourists. It is an important part of the public awareness of tourism and tourism awareness of the local authorities.

The waste does not represent only the negative aspect in relation with tourism, but it is also related to health and public safety, as well as the environment in general.

1.2. The necessary educational future

It is very difficult to quantitatively identify future needs for skilled workforce necessary for the hospitality and tourism in Romania. Currently a large number of people, who have completed a training program or university, go to find a job abroad. Also, a large number of people who have begun their career in one of the

major international chains, after graduating from school, leave Romania after a few months of practical experience.

It is estimated that less than 20% of graduates of high schools or universities specialized in tourism with tourist projects end up working in the hospitality and tourism sector in Romania.

The main reasons for this percentage are:

➤ The current skills acquired is low, because the quality of the course curricula and of the courses is poor, teachers do not have the necessary qualifications and also as a consequence of the fact that most courses are not practical but mostly theoretical.

➤ The value of the diploma has dropped considerably

➤ Relatively low wages in the hospitality sector.

➤ Lack of career opportunities due to lack of preparation and practice in the workplace

➤ The incorrect perception of university graduates in tourism that must also begin their career as managers.

Romanian staff is very popular in many countries in Europe and abroad. They learn quickly and are willing to make a lot of effort at the work place. Salaries in the hospitality and tourism sector are usually much higher than in Romania, where average net monthly wage for a waiter, receptionist or a maid is almost 140 Euro.

The figures referring to the number of staff departing overseas and to their level of training do not exist. Also, there are no figures referring to the average duration of their stay. Also, there are no figures on the average duration of their absence. A rough estimation of the number would be between 10 and 20% of those with basic education in tourism and a diploma offered by one of the existing high schools that provide training programs in tourism.

What the hospitality sector needs in particular is trained personnel and not graduates with university theoretical training.

1.2.1 The institutionalised professional training needs of the workforce in the hospitality sector

In 2007 the number of staff employed in the hospitality sector was estimated at approximately 88,000 employees, of which 67,000 in hotels, 16,000 in recorded hostels and 5000 in other types of accommodation units.

There are approximately 6,000 management positions, including the owners of hostels , 9000 positions of supervisors, 20,000 positions of skills (cooks) and approximately 17,000 positions of skilled execution that require a form of qualification in the hospitality sector and around 33,000 positions of unqualified workers who do not require any form of institutionalised training.

Currently there are several new hotels in Bucharest and other cities and towns across the country under construction, and a number of other places are planned. All these new hotels and hostels require qualified personnel.

Given the number of hotel units newly constructed and rapidly increasing number of hostels in rural areas, it is estimated that if we include the substitute personnel, the future needs for annual training in the hospitality sector will be approximately 12-15%.

Management positions	800-1000
Supervisors	1000-1400
Specialists	3000-4000 (for kitchens)
Qualified workers	2000-2500 (cleaning, reception and restaurant services)

They cover approximately 55% of the annual additional staff in the hospitality sector. Approximately 45% of necessary manpower is not qualified by an institution and may be trained at the work place, especially cleaning staff, the staff serving meals, reception staff and support staff. Most specialized staff does not need institutionalized training.

It is clear that these percentages differ for hotels which comply with international standards and pensions in the rural areas. In principle, the need for training is much greater, since the available data on the number of units of accommodation does not cover unregistered hostels and many hotels and hostels built in 2007 and subsequent years. Also, the large number of independent restaurants is not known, and their staff certainly needs institutionalised training safety.

It is also implied that an increasing number of young people are ready to leave Romania to work abroad in the hospitality sector, as long the image of working in the hospitality services and salary are still weak.

A restructuring of the training situation in the hospitality sector at the institutional level is required not only based on the need for training, but must also be based on available resources and realistic possibilities.

1.2.2 The future needs of institutionalised training in tourism

Pre-qualified number of staff in tourism and travels depends largely on the tourism development and on the increased tourist travel sector, the tourism operators of incoming and outgoing, the travel agents and additional tourist guides.

The main requirements refer to the capacities of the specialised personnel of the tour operators and tourist guides, and improve curriculum of study in accordance with relevant standards in force. Also, regarding the tourist institutionalized training; the courses should be more focused on preparation and practice adapted to the needs of the travel and tourism sector.

In principle, institutionalized training in travel and tourism sector should be accomplished through multi-professional training programs to offer the graduates a wider perspective to find a work place. Thus the following should be required:

* The qualification of the tourist guides

The main activity of a tourist guide is accompanying groups of foreign or internal visitors, in the visits to the domestic sightseeing objectives, museums and monuments in the region or city in question, and to interpret inspirationally and interactively in the native language of the visitor / visitors, the cultural and natural elements of the heritage and the environment.

In terms of visitors, the tourist guide is a person employed directly or through an operator, a private tourism organization or state travel agency, to inform, advise and provide instructions to the tourists before and during their journey.

The tourist guide also has an important role for the presentation and should help his interlocutors to understand and appreciate the country. All the aspects must be presented in a lively manner by the tour guide. He or she should present the realities of the country in the best manner possible.

The tour guide's task is not just that of repeating a series of facts providing information as audio tape, but to create an image of the country for visitors in a properly and attractively manner.

The tour guide should have a range of qualifications, especially language skills and general knowledge of history, geography, art and architecture, political economy, sociology and religion of the country and / or his or her region.

The tour guide is much more than a person who informs, presents, and provides instructions during visits. For most foreign visitors, the tour guide is the person with the nationality of that country and with whom they spend most of the time.

The tour guide is also an organizer and a manager for managing and organizing a tour or for a group or for individual tourists. Those organizational skills and skills for the organization of tours are less important for guides specialized in specific tourist attractions, museums, monuments, etc.

These tasks require skills and expertise acquired through practice and theoretical training.

* Skills for the employees of the tourist information centres

The proper information of tourists is one of the most important aspects of successful development of a strong tourism. The persons, who are in a different and unfamiliar environment, whether abroad or in their own country, always need information. Visitors need information about a number of topics, where to go, where to stay, where to eat, what to do, what to buy etc.

More information is provided in advance by internet or in travel guides, but visitors to a place, to a region or country often seek Tourist Information Centres. Particularly in a country like Romania, where most foreign visitors do not know the language and can not read all signs, the assistance and information provided in English (and German) are critically important.

Also, tourists in Romania need information when they visit other places in the country.

The offer of travel information is a key service to all visitors. The offer of adequate information is a key factor in the overall tourism experience and also for the satisfaction of visitors.

The offer of appropriate travel information represents a specialized attitude. The production, the presentation, the handling, the distribution, the communication and the management of various types of travel information represent specialized skills that require training.

In principle, the offer of tourist information is a service, but it should not always be a free service as well. More and more tourist information centres in Europe are forced to operate on a commercial basis, selling products and services for a nominal price.

Also, the information should not necessarily be presented in the form of promotional brochures and expensive and colourful maps of the city, but these can as well be simple informational leaflets, yet effective, or black and white maps, printed upon request.

This means that the representatives of the Tourist Information Centres of tomorrow must also be familiar with sales techniques and business thinking. The audience starts to get used to the fact that the information they need has a price. Few visitors nowadays are expected to receive thick expensive coloured brochures for free when visiting a tourist information centre. They expect to receive simple informational material, direct and precise, which may be printed upon request.

The urgent need to train representatives of the tourist centres in communication techniques and as well as to acquire specific skills in tourist information is more and more present and felt.

The special training programs for the tourist information staff do not exist in Romania, either the ones in the institutionalised tourist training area or the ones in the education sphere.

Conclusion

The permanent training at the work place for maintaining and improving staff skills and the performance of the existing personnel from the hospitality sector represent an urgent requirement. If operational skills are not well supervised and guided, and if skills are not developed through continuous training and upgrading, performance will decrease, affecting the quality of services.

First of all, the general level of supervision and management (middle) should be developed, both in terms of their professional and practice skills to train, lead and motivate the staff to achieve better results.

This will solve the big part of the shortage of staff problem and also will improve the overall quality of the hospitality services sector in the following years. Improving middle management of independent hotels and restaurants must go hand

in hand with further professional and behaviour training of the existing operational staff.

This will be a huge challenge because many people are involved, but it represents a big step forward to a competitive position of Romania as a sustainable tourist destination on the internal and international markets.

References

- Baker S., Bradley, P., Huyton, J. 2002. *The Principles of the Operations at the Hotel Reception*, ALL Beck Publishing House, Bucharest.
- Bavoux, J., Bavoux, D. 1998. *Géographie humaines des littoraux maritimes*, A, Collin.
- Ionciță, M. 2000. *The Economy of services*. Uranus Publishing House, Bucharest.
- Lupu, N. 2003. *The Hotel - Economy and management*, the 4th edition, All Beck Publishing House, Bucharest.
- Mînciu, R. 2000. *The Economy of tourism*, Uranus Publishing House, Bucharest.
- Niță, I., Niță, C. 2000. *The Tourism market of Romania*, Ecran Magazin Publishing House, Brașov.
- Mitroi M. 2000. „The Predictions of the World Organization of Tourism: 2000 – 2010”, *Tribuna Economică Magazine*, Bucharest, no. 27.
- Mazilu M. 2004. *Ecotourism and tourist arrangements*, Scrisul Românesc Publishing House, Craiova.
- Mazilu M. 2007. *Tourist Geography*, Didactical and Pedagogical Publishing House, Bucharest.
- Mazilu M. 2007. *Le tourisme roumain dans le contexte du tourisme européen*, Universitaria Publishing House, Craiova.
- Mazilu M., Marinescu R. 2008. “The Globalisation Impact on the Romanian Tourism”, article defended and published on the site of the IASK Conference (International Association for the Scientific Knowledge) - Advances in Tourism Research, Portugal, 26-28 May, <http://www.iask-web.org/atr08/programme.html>, and www.iask-web.org/publications.html
- Mazilu M, Marinescu R. 2008. *Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas – Case Study of the Iron Gates Natural Park*, Rural Futures Conference, organized by University of Plymouth and School of Geography, 2-4 April, Plymouth, the Great Britain, ISBN: 978-1-84102-185-0, p.1-7.
- Mazilu M, Marinescu R. 2008. *Perceiving Romania as a Sustainable Tourism Destination*, published in the vol. Proceedings Book of the 4th World Conference for Graduate Research in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure, organised by Anatolia Journal: An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research, 22-27th April, Antalya, Turcia, ISBN 978-975-96260-4-4, pg. 320-330.
- Snak, O. 2000. *Services and Quality Management*, Romanian Academy of Management, Bucharest.
- Stăncioiu A. F., Mazilu M, Căescu Șt. C, Constantinescu M. 2006. „Considerations regarding the strategic thinking in the marketing of the regional

identity” article published in *Economica Magazine*, year XIV no. 4 (December) (56), ASEM, Chişinău, 2006, ISSN 1810-9136

Stăncioiu A. F., Arsene O, Teodorescu N., Mazilu M. 2008. The SWOT Analysis of the tourist destination – conceptual aspects – methodology. Case Study: Northern Oltenia or Oltenia at the bottom of the Mountain - published in the vol. The International conference Competitiveness and stability in Knowledge – Based Economy, 30-31 May, Craiova, ISBN 978-606-510-162-3, pg. 600-607, Universitaria Publishing House, Craiova.

Stănciulescu G. 2004. *The Sustainable Tourism Management in the urban centres*, The Economic Publishing House, Bucharest.

Vellas F. 1998. *Tourism - tendencies and predictions*, Walforth Publishing House, Bucharest

The National Institute of Statistics - 2006-2008.