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Heritage as an Alternative Driver for Sustainable Development and Economic Recovery in South East Europe

Tourism – significant driver shaping a destinations heritage

Mara Ursache^{a,*}^aCentre for European Studies, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Carol I Bulevard, Nr. 19, Iasi - 700507, Romania

Abstract

Tourism is a complex socio-economic phenomenon and without doubt one of the most important forces shaping the society in which we live. Tourism is becoming a significant instrument for economic rejuvenation and development and for enhancing and preserving an area's heritage. Tangible-intangible, movable-immovable or spiritual heritage assets become promoters for regeneration and growth of a destination. This paper deeply analyses the way in which tourism can be associated with the sustainable development pattern, by valorising the destinations heritage. The analysis is qualitative and divided into two parts: argumentation of the tourism importance for economy; explanation of South East Europe context, in particular five member states of UE, insisting on the main tourism – heritage correlations, from the point of view of the sustainable development pattern. The study directs to the better understanding of the potential contribution which tourism can have to the sustainable development of the developing regions and their heritage.

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1. The importance and particularities of tourism to the economy

Tourism phenomenon experienced a spectacular development in recent decades, moving from an activity with limited importance to one of the largest industries in the world as evidenced by the increasing international arrivals since the 90s. Despite the decrease depending on certain factors such as the global economic crisis, regional conflicts, political instability, tourism continued its upward trend over time, reaching in 2012 one billion of international tourist arrivals of which over 51% belong to Europe therefore maintaining its first place both as a source and destination.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: 004 0749 829 227.

E-mail address: maraurache@yahoo.com

Among the most important factors that led to the expansion of tourism activity are: increased income and wealth, the economic recovery of underdeveloped regions and emerging countries, improving and modernizing transport routes, while improving comfort and reducing travel time, changing lifestyles and values in terms of consumption, the variety and extent of tourism development: launch of new tourist products, diversification of services, facilities on price, package customization; increased duration of free allotted time, the openness and globalization, immigration, the growing interest of the developed states for the culture and tourism potential of developing countries, special events, education, information and communication technologies, marketing and promotion of tourist destinations, increasing intraregional and inter-regional trade due to the current trend toward privatization and deregulation, improving tourism infrastructure and so on. Tourism can be considered as a stimulator of the entire economic system. As an important element of the tertiary sector and as an industry with huge potential, tourism plays a significant role in a country's economy, being a factor that is based on growth.

This implies a sustainable increase of macroeconomic results in terms of efficient use of production factors, concretized in the increasing of GNP, GDP and NNP per total and per capita. It also has a significant contribution in terms of investment incentives, the fight against poverty, while being part of the nation's foreign relations. In 2012 tourism generated 5% of world GDP and about 8% of total employment. According to UNWTO, international tourism ranks fourth (after fuels, chemicals and automotive products), representing 30% of world exports of commercial services and 6% of total exports. Tourism is not only GDP creator, but also an important contributor to the added value. Through its specificity - service activity, manpower, intelligence and creativity intensive consumer - tourism participates in creating added value at a superior rate than that of close branches in terms of level of development. Tourism has also an important driving effect of stimulating production in other areas, a result of its character of interference and synthesis branch.

Also, it should be noted its contribution to ensuring a balanced cash movement, carried out both on domestic and international tourism. Thus, in the case of domestic tourism through tourist expenditures made for the purchase of goods and services, part of their revenue is returned to the cash circulation; this way, a balance between effective demand and supply (production) is achieved, mitigating inflationary pressures. In terms of international tourism, foreign exchange earnings help alleviate the balance of payments deficit, strengthening the national currency and free convertibility.

Tourism has great potential in terms of employment, having from this point of view, a major contribution to attracting surplus labor force from other sectors and thus alleviating unemployment, especially in disadvantaged segments with relatively low chances of entering the labor market: young people, women, people with medium/low education and training. But at the same time, employment in the tourism sector is characterized by a number of concerns about the specifics of tourism activity: high seasonality, low skill level that does not allow extensive opportunities on career, atypical work schedule especially in hotels and restaurants, relatively low income. The relationship between tourism and the use of labor manifests quantitatively and qualitatively, directly and indirectly.

Tourism activity is also established as a specific form of export - invisible export, eliminating the drawbacks of classical exports because foreign consumers come themselves tourism in the exporting country of the tourism product. Through the belonging in the invisible trade, tourism makes a significant contribution to the growth and diversification of exports. Depending on the specific conditions of each country, tourism is seen as an export or an import. Therefore, goods and services that tourists consume during their movement in a country can be assimilated to the country concerned with an export, while the expenses made abroad by tourists for their country of residence, as an import. Therefore an increase in international tourists and / or their expenditures leads to increased volume of international trade. Tourism participates in the formation of the state budget revenues through direct and indirect contributions. Direct contributions are generated by taxes on wages of workers in the tourism sector by taxing profits from tourism and direct taxes imposed on tourists. Indirect contributions come from taxes on goods and services provided to tourists.

The tourism sector plays an important role in enhancing competitiveness by stimulating competition between local firms and related businesses in other international tourist destinations and leads to increased investment in

public utilities and transport infrastructure, including roads, airports, ports, electricity, sewerage, water and communication infrastructure. Also, foreign direct investments in the tourism sector includes capital technology, skills, know-how, demand for local good, improving trade balance, representing a significant vector of sustainable development.

Strengthening the urban – rural network by improving transport infrastructure (air, shipping, rail and road) increases mobility (both tourists and residents), ensures the seamless flow of goods (both inside and outside), intensifies local competitiveness and security. Furthermore, tourism benefits local economies by increasing labor mobility. Remittances have become an important source of income for developing countries. Tourism facilitates positive exploitation of economies of scale at the local level and is an influential agent for the dissemination of technical knowledge; stimulate research and development and human capital accumulation.

The various branches of the economy are interdependent, with certain mutual influences as a result of the exchange that takes place between them. Increases in tourism activity produced a number of positive effects on other sectors of the economy. Specialists consider three elements that contribute to measuring the economic impact of tourism expenditure: direct, indirect and induced effects (Minciu, 2004). Direct effects refer to expenditures in the tourism sector, based on a list of specific tourism products developed by the WTO and the OECD. Therefore, when the tourists spend money in hotels, restaurants, transport, communications and retail outlets this will cause direct revenue, government revenue, employment and direct imports of goods and services. Indirect effects refer to intermediate consumption for the production of goods and services in the tourism sector. These are goods and services that travel companies buy from their suppliers, forming the supply chain of the tourism sector. Indirect effects can harness production of local products and it is important to encourage the acquisition of goods and services produced locally in the tourism sector in order to maximize the economic impact of the income generated by tourism in a country or region. Induced contribution measures the GDP and jobs supported by the spending of those employed directly or indirectly in the tourism industry. It measures spending on food and drink, leisure, transport, housing and household goods, etc.

The multiplier effect of tourism (K) can be calculated by dividing the sum of the three effects to the direct effects (Minciu, 2004), aspect illustrated in the equation below:

$$K = \frac{\text{direct effects} + \text{indirect effects} + \text{induced effects}}{\text{direct effects}} \quad (1)$$

Tourism multiplier refers to the fact that the initial expense carried by the traveler, in a region or a country is transformed successively in revenue for other areas of the economy, directly or indirectly related to tourism until those funds leave the country, reference area or economic sector. Tourism is a composite product involving a diverse mix of products and services offered by different sectors such as transport, accommodation, tour operators, travel agents, visitor attractions, retail etc. The complexity of linkages between tourism and other economic sectors, directly or indirectly, permanently or periodically expressed horizontally or vertically, demonstrates the important position of tourism in the economic mechanism structure and its active role in the development and modernization of the economy and society.

2. Tourism and heritage: Promoters for sustainable development?

Europe is going through a period of transformation. The global crisis suppressed years of economic and social progress and highlighted the structural weaknesses in Europe's economy. Sustainable development has become the biggest challenge for our societies in recent years and is a primordial and fundamental objective of the European Union. The notion of sustainable development refers to a process that involves changes, progress and development and aims to achieve and support improvement in quality of life for present and future generations. Consequently sustainable development is less a pursuit for a stable equilibrium but rather a dynamic concept that recognizes that change is inherent in human societies. Tourism, a highly sophisticated and fast-changing sector, is one of the most important industries of the EU economy, with a significant contribution to the overall dynamics of the integration process and the strategic objectives of the Union. Likewise, tourism plays an

important role in strengthening Europe's image in the world. The intensity of intra and inter tourist flows stimulates mutual understanding and protection of European values, creates a sense of belonging to a common space of values, contributes to the development of European identity and all this leads to promote the attractiveness of the European model, which is the result of centuries of cultural exchanges, linguistic diversity and creativity. The increasing attention being paid globally and in particular in the European Union to sustainability made it more and more a guiding principle and a concrete approach for the European tourism industry, because tourism is a people oriented industry which depends largely on the natural and social potential, two essential pillars of sustainable development. Tourism is an activity related to cultural and natural heritage as well to traditions and contemporary cultures of the European Union, exemplary illustrating the need to reconcile economic growth with sustainable development.

Heritage, culture and nature have become interchangeable terms and are increasingly used as means of social and economic development. Further, together with the cultural heritage the natural resources and climate have been identified among the significant factors determining the attractiveness and competitiveness of a country as a tourist destination. Previous research points out that cultural and natural heritage gained an increasing significance at different levels of the economy and that regions may built competitiveness leveraging their heritage (Bandarin, Hosagrahar & Albernaz, 2011; Boix, Lazeretti, Capone, De Propriis & Sanchez, 2012; Cooke & Lazeretti, 2008; Pereira Roders & Von Oers, 2011). Culture has a major direct contribution to the economy and society in terms of generated income and people employed and it also makes a substantial contribution to social well-being and to the development and maintenance of social capital. The relationship between culture and economy has undergone a significant shift, from the simple preservation of culture to its economic enhancement, which reveals the connexions among culture, society and economic development (Power & Scott, 2004). Moreover, the erroneous idea that the economic enhancement of cultural heritage could hinder its safeguard and vice versa is gradually vanishing (Zan et al. 2007). The link between culture and tourism is the most obvious side of the contribution of culture to local development. As well, a growing number of economists now accept that there is a third form of „capital” or „economic good”, which is crucial for the proper functioning of the economic system of production, consumption and global welfare. This distinct category consists in the endowment of natural resources and environment available in an economy, which refers to natural heritage (Daly, 2004). There is a strong consensus in literature that tangible-intangible, movable-immovable or spiritual heritage assets create competitive advantages and innovation and become promoters for regeneration and growth of a destination (Bailey et al., 2010).

Through its specificity, the tourism industry is seen as linked to a country's heritage more than other industries. The competitiveness of the European tourism industry is closely interconnected to its sustainability, as the quality of tourist destinations is strongly influenced by their natural and cultural heritage. Sustainability is acknowledged as of a great potential for bringing heritage preservation, tourism and economic development into a balanced and constructive connection, as it is recognized that the mistaken neglect of the important economic and social dimensions of heritage in many cases has led to the irreversible decay and destruction of heritage assets. However, the road to achieving tourism sustainable development is more complex than at first glance. In the European Union, complementary to the economic deficits, tourism is facing, from the point of view of the strategic objectives of sustainable development, the difficult harmonization of its three dimensions, particularly in developing regions (Pascariu & Frunzã, 2012). From *the economic point of view*, the relationship between tourism and economic growth can take the form of a unidirectional causality manifested in one of two forms: economic growth driven by tourism or vice versa, or a bidirectional causality, namely the two phenomena influence each other (Caglayan et al., 2012; Dritsakis, 2004(b); Eeckels et al., 2012; Ekanayake & Long, 2012; Surugiu & Surugiu, 2013). In general, the mechanisms that determine the positive relationship between international tourism and economic growth in the long term are significant inflows of foreign currency, stimulation of inter-industry linkages, incentives for investment in public infrastructure and multiplier effects on employment. However, it seems that tourism sustains economic growth and has a significant multiplication effect in the developed economies/areas rather than in the developing regions where the dependence on the foreign capital is high, thus with risks regarding the sustainability and the perspectives of improving for this areas.

According to *the social-cultural point of view*, tourism is seen as a force for stability in a society. Tourism activities raise awareness about the social and cultural values of local residents with the opportunity to present their own identity. Therefore, tourism is becoming an instrument of accountability and perpetuation of cultural and social values, an opportunity to create a local brand. It can contribute to increased employment, increased income and improve quality of life, increase comfort, increase the level of culture, or at least, the acquisition of new information and knowledge otherwise unavailable, the acceleration process of social progress and access to modernity, integration in the world of values, revitalize poor or peripheral regions. Tourism can influence social and cultural cohesion of the community residents (Rayan, 2010). Appreciation of natural and cultural heritage by tourists and the connection with the local environment may generate a sense of local pride and identity for communities and residents alike and a desire to do more for their community, thus reuniting forces to support local development. On the other hand, the residents can travel to other parts of their country and how movement strengthens the political unity of a country, domestic tourism strengthens national sentiment, providing a sense of national unity and helps prevent regional fragmentation.

Complex socio-cultural and economic phenomenon, tourism is more than an exchange of services, products or a shallow socio-cultural encounter. It involves continuous processes of communication, negotiation, resistance and adaptation, significant for those who identify with a particular culture. Tourism provides the opportunity of capitalization of the local goods and facilities and commercialize them in a superior manner, contributes to the revitalization and preservation of local traditions, customs, cultural life, handicrafts, art, identity and heritage, renewal of local traditions that otherwise would be lost or would remain unexploited. Tourism improves the living conditions of residents; diversifies and improves leisure facilities; stimulates greater recognition of the importance of preserving historic buildings; supports infrastructure development, pollution control and conservation of flora, fauna and natural resources, imposing in some cases even the limitation of number of tourists; creates the possibility of intercultural exchanges offering both residents and tourists a better understanding of the world, increases residents wealth etc. Tourism can identify, preserve and promote the cultural and natural heritage (cultural & heritage tourism, ecotourism, green tourism) related to it, pillars which keep the collective memory of the community. An adequate capitalization of the cultural and natural heritage may determine improvements of the performances of the travel and tourism industry and support the overall contribution of the industry to the GDP formation and to the employment. The negative impact of tourism on culture includes a „loan process” by which cultures become „somewhat like the others”. While tourists are less likely to borrow customs and values from their hosts, residents are more likely to abandon their traditional culture and values when they become part of a so called „holiday culture”, or they may even experience a feeling of alienation. Hashimoto (2002) speaks of cultural imperialism and assimilation of the weaker culture, tourists from developed countries tending to impose their cultural values on host communities, which in turn may even embrace them consciously or unconsciously. Loss of authenticity may also result from the fact that tourists can't understand the local culture, rituals, habits or have a default route and do not have time to appreciate it. Another common problem in many tourist destinations is the lack of architectural urban planning, the construction of new buildings does not comply with the traditional architectural style, affecting the general appearance of the stations, making them unattractive not only for tourists but also for long-term urban development. Tourism affects urban systems, causing overcrowding especially in central areas. Residents may also experience loss of privacy and degradation of life quality. Excessive development to support the tourism sector could generate hyper urbanization, changes in appearance and the viewpoints of community, loss of property and even destruction. Tourism can also generate other social problems related to: an increase in crime (eg. theft pockets, robbery, illegal business, murder), drug trafficking, terrorism and prostitution, spread of disease (eg. HIV/AIDS), abuse of the human rights and exploitation of vulnerable groups, both residents and tourists being exposed to these problems. Furthermore, it can lead to the spread, in the social body, of servile behaviour type, inferiority complexes, coercion, moral and cultural perversion, distortion of traditional practices, changes in traditional social structures and loss of value of the long-term attractiveness features.

From *the environmental point of view*, the relationship between tourism and natural heritage is of particular importance, the protection and conservation of nature representing a primordial condition for the progress and

development of the tourism industry. Tourism and nature influence each other, the conditionings being complementary. On the one hand, a clean environment with a well-preserved diversity of landscapes, flora and fauna is a good support for tourism development, a key element of attractiveness and generator of comparative advantages, having priority in the selection criteria of destinations. On the other hand, tourism activity allows better use of natural resources, especially through international flows of tourists and alternative tourism segments and has a significant role in increasing human awareness regarding environmental protection. However, tourism involves a series of negative externalities on the environment. Intentional or unintentional behavior of tourists exerts pressures on the natural environment, leading to deterioration or change in many ecosystems belonging to tourist destination by collecting flowers (Chang, 2010), fire wood and medicinal plants, transporting seeds on clothing, equipment or vehicles (Pickering & Mount, 2010; Torn et al., 2009), collecting various specimens flora and fauna (Alessa, Bennett & Kliskez, 2003; Kim, Airey & Szivas, 2011), disturbing wildlife and habitats, pollution (Logar, 2010; Teh & Cabanban, 2007), noise, solid waste and garbage associated with travel, accommodation and leisure activities (Dwyer et al., 2010, Gosling and Schumacher, 2010), emissions of greenhouse gases, consumption of space and overcrowding (Dickinson & Robbins, 2008; Poitras & Getz, 2006). European tourism sustainability is being perceived as a significant element of added value not only for the tourist industry, but also for the integration process as a whole. The main challenges are connected with the correct and efficient management of heritage as main source and resource of tourism durability.

Culture, nature, cultural and natural heritage and development have been making an incalculable contribution toward improving human livelihoods and well-being in lasting and sustainable ways (Bandarin et al., 2011). Fostering cultural and natural heritage opens up a space for rejuvenation and development of historical industrial regions and low-tech sectors (Bailey et al., 2010), through: new applications of science and research activities to old low-tech firms localised in historical systems; the introduction of innovative business models in traditional sectors, such as the virtualisation of distribution, outsourcing/offshoring choices, the valorisation of the design function, and the establishment of linkages with the cultural local heritage; the formation and development of clusters where tourism is synergic with cultural and natural heritage for regional competitiveness (Mizzau & Montanari, 2008; Mommaas, 2004; Power & Scott, 2004; Sacco & Segre, 2006; Stern & Seifert, 2010). Heritage is a focal point of the tourism sustainable development, that is why cultural and nature tourism could provide a consistent support for increasing of the South East member states of E.U. (Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Romania and Slovenia) as tourists destinations. According to the UNWTO report „Tourism 2020 Vision”, cultural tourism belongs to the most popular forms of tourism and the interest for it raises faster than for other forms of tourism. As well, UNWTO estimates that cultural tourism accounts for around 40% of all European tourism. In the last couple of years cultural excursions declined due to the economic crisis, but appear to have less hard hit than other tourism sectors. Although it does not seem at first glance, cultural tourism is very closely connected with landscape. For example, the location of historical monuments in the diverse Slovenian landscape completes the character of the whole cultural heritage. Thus, cultural heritage can not be understood separately from the landscape, which can be considered as the primer factor for the development of cultural tourism. Culture and cultural heritage must be seen as being particularly essential in a state whose tourism product has been largely based on sun/beach holidays, like the countries in our study because unfortunately the share of arrivals in the sea-side area decreased from 13,6% in 2007 to 12,8% in 2011, as well as in the mountains from 16,2% to 15,7% or in recovery locations from 13% to 12% (WTTC, 2013). Tourism demand is also highly seasonal and spatially concentrated. Consequently, cultural tourism is seen as one possible vehicle for diversifying the basic sun/beach holiday product, for spreading the tourism season and persuade tourists to discover hitherto unknown areas of the South East states. According to the Eurobarometer report „Preferences of europeans towards tourism” a quarter of respondents mentioned culture as one of their main reason for taking a holiday and nearly half of the respondents said that the natural features and cultural and historical attractions would determine them to go back for another holiday. Heritage visitors stay longer, visit twice as many places, spend more per day and thus have a meaningfully greater per trip economic impact. Cultural tourism has become an important agent of economic and social change in Europe. Cultural consumption has grown and tourism is an increasingly significant form of cultural consumption. Cultural inheritance increases the number of employees

needed for hotels, restaurants and in the transport sector, its value flowing to other business rather than cultural heritage itself. Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Romania and Slovenia are considered special destinations that people worldwide are visiting in order to know their cultural legacy and natural beauties, but although the rich cultural and natural heritage of these countries is a major draw for tourists and an important source of competitive advantage in the battle for tourism market share and thus development, cultural and ecotourism as distinct market segments are still poorly developed. Most tourists coming to the states of South East Europe view culture as one part of the total tourism product, rather than a primary motivation for visiting the countries. So how can the E.U. member states from South East Europe sustain their development taking advantage of their inheritance? We believe this is possible through tourism, which is more than an economic branch, contributing to the fulfilment of a wide range of the Union key strategic objectives: economic growth, social and regional cohesion, preservation of natural and cultural heritage, EU citizenship, peaceful relationships, sustainable development, etc. In these times of crisis within traditional economic approaches, the focus on immovable resources is shaping up as an alternative and sustainable option and as stated before the tourism sector is closely and deeply interlinked with the natural and cultural heritage more than other sectors of the economy. Linking tourism with heritage, culture and nature can do more for local economies than promoting them separately. The major challenges are represented by the current consumption designs (the dominance of the quantity side, the high concentration in time and space) and by the production designs as well determining mass tourism, destructive on the receiving economic, social and natural environment. Thus, it is more than important to have a coherent and long-term vision for the Union future development. The decisions about tourism development should be a balance among the national and the local needs, the private sector and the state, the local communities, the communities of citizens, between the tourists and the mass media etc. Political decisions in particular ought to take into consideration the direct returns and also the long-term benefits, which involve a clear and well defined vision.

3. Conclusion

As the five member states of EU in the South East Europe are not uniform but diverse entities considering their location, topography, climate, history, culture and economic development, each country will have to identify its own competitive advantage to access sustainable development. Cultural and natural heritage can be engaged and capitalized in order to support the sustainable development of South East Europe. Tourism is a specific and complex socio-economic phenomenon of modern civilization, firmly anchored in society's life and influenced by its evolution, with a high national and international dynamics. Heritage tourism can be an attractive economic revitalization strategy for these states, especially as studies have consistently shown that heritage travellers stay longer and spend more money than other kinds of travellers. Recognising the role of the cultural and natural legacy of the countries of South East Europe is a key element for strengthening regional and global cooperation and a primer step in implementing a road for sustainable development.

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