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ABSTRACT

DOCTORAL THESIS

**THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE ROMANIAN TOURISM
OFFER DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPEAN CONTEXT**

**PhD Student,
Robert Claudiu Rusu**

Scientific coordinator Professor Daniela Ancuța Șarpe, PhD

Scientific reviewer Professor Gabriela Prelipcean, PhD
Professor Gheorghe Hurduzeu, PhD
Professor Mihaela Neculiță, PhD

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Keywords

Tourism, Sustainable development, European context, Diversification, Comparative qualitative analysis.

CHAPTER 1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROMANIAN TOURISM MARKET WITHIN THE EUROPEAN SPACE

Tourism has become an important vector in the countries and regions' development through the transformations it produces within society, performed at the economic, social, cultural and environmental level. In the same time, tourism has a growing impact, rallying important resources and consequently, the expense results evaluation of these resources is necessary not only from the angle of the benefits on the tourist but also on the economy, in general. Tourism, a specific phenomenon of the present civilisation, evolves under the impact of the changes of the contemporary civilisation, meaning that, its dynamics integrates in the general development process.

Although it has a rich and diverse natural and anthropic potential, with a strong tradition in planning journeys, Romania still holds a modest place in the hierarchy of the East and Central European countries in what regards tourist traffic indicators. Even if it is a member of the European Union, Romania is a society pattern which has a still indefinite economy and civilisation, an incoherent strategy, a non- articulate economy, marked by major disorders and a pretty low living standard, which wants to be aligned with world-wide requirements, and is looking for a new way of creating or producing wealth that will enable it to value its productive resources as much as possible.

1.1. Tourism - sector of strategic interest for the economy

The growing importance that tourism has gained in the contemporary era has increased the concerns of the specialists to define it as accurately and thoroughly as possible. In various forms, tourism connections to the economy are often multiple and difficult to fully assess. Under these circumstances, the knowledge of economic implications at macroeconomic level concerned and continues to concern not only the academic environment but also the public authorities or the representative organizations of the private sector. It is necessary to have coherent information which should reflect the tourism situation as an activity field and its place in the economy. This information fundamentals sectoral

policies as well as strategic decisions in the field. Their finality will be reflected in greater respect for the tourism community by the business community, central and local authorities, and last but not least by the public opinion, in general.

Tourism presents itself as a complex activity with a multitude of facets, with an important economic load, positioned at the intersection of several branches and sectors of the economy. This is why there is also a wide variety of views on the content of the tourism notion and its adjacent concepts.

The development of tourism requires a dynamic involvement of the entire economic system. Interdependently with other sectors of the national economy, it engages in a specific demand for goods and services to help increase the output of the sectors they are calling for. The tourist offer must adapt to the tourist demand, requiring, among other things, the development of the technical-material base. Indirectly, this aspect leads to an increase in the production of the branches involved in the construction and equipment of public accommodation and catering, the modernization of the road infrastructure, the construction of transport means, recreational facilities, etc. "Corroborating the tourism phenomenon with the state-owned tourism functions, it can be said that governmental tourism organizations are accurate, up-to-date and relevant information distributors for potential consumers and the tourism industry. On the other hand, the state also acts as an information collector with whom it develops legal regulations, policies, strategies etc."

1.2. The interactions of tourism with the national economic and social system

Tourism is seen in this century as one of the key areas of economic growth alongside IT & C services, financial services, media, education or air transport. In fact, tourism and travels alongside the associated hospitality and catering sectors, conferences, exhibitions, entertainment and tourist attractions are known as the "experience economy". The world we live in has already become a "global village", and the need to travel longer and longer distances is manifested as a necessity of this globalized society.

For many regions, tourism is seen as a means of economic development and why not, an alternative for increasing economic prosperity. Thus, tourism is becoming an instrument of regional development, stimulating other related activities (e.g. construction, retail, etc.). Unlike most economic activities, tourism creates indirect opportunities provided by income and job generation due to the so-called multiplier effect. However, tourism is not different from other industries, given the need for incentives to encourage product development and investment for the private sector. In the simplest way, the benefits of tourism to the local community relate to foreign exchange earnings, income generation and employment,

diversification of economic structure, stimulating entrepreneurial activities and improving public facilities.

Like any economic activity, the existence of tourism implies a specific demand for goods and services existing within a national economy. To meet this demand, there is a supply of goods and services designed for the needs of tourists. The interdependencies between tourist demand and supply leave their mark on the structure and evolution of the economy. In this respect, a macroeconomic approach is needed, a tourism analysis in close connection with the other components of the economy. The economic activity of each country materializes in the form of a multitude of flows (transactions or operations) that take place between the components of the national economy or between them and abroad in connection with the production, distribution and consumption of goods and / or services.

Agro tourism, for example, referring to "staying in a farmhouse - a boarding house, a farm - and the consumption by tourists of agricultural products in that board" develops a close link with the primary sector, which supplies a part of the necessary products for making food recipes.

As a revenue generating sector, tourism contributes significantly to the economies of many countries. In general, it can be said that tourism produces economic effects that are beneficial to the economy. Income generation and jobs are the classic examples of this. Its contribution to GDP, employment and zonal development are well documented, unlike other segments in this branch. It is expected to experience continuous development over the next decades as a consequence of increasing leisure time.

From the point of view of its economic and social character, tourism is globally aware of profound transformations, as it is an essential element belonging to contemporary society. As tourism has a social, economic and cultural dimension, it is closely linked to its evolution by a large part of the sectors of society's activity, which at the same time influences them in their evolution, defining its criteria, characteristics, concepts and factors depending on the three dimensions. International recipient tourism contributes to making up the balance of payments or to its surplus due to attracted foreign currency earnings.

Tourism is a possible enabler for economic growth through its beneficial effects, namely:

- it generates significant revenue for the economies of beneficiary countries or regions, and stimulates investment to finance other sectors, thereby contributing, through its multiplier effect, to economic growth and development;
- the increase of the labor supply by capitalizing the cultural and natural heritage;
- it creates opportunities to diversify local economies by capitalizing local income;

- it encourages the emergence and development of local firms, transforming areas with low economic competitiveness into attractive areas for investors;
- diversified demand for goods and services to other economic sectors (construction, food industry, small and craft industry);
- it can generate cooperation between local firms, between them and companies operating in other economic sectors, as well as the creation of clusters;
- it may also have an impact on the reduction of disparities in the structure of gender differences in unemployment through the predominant use of female labor.

It is obvious that the economic benefits of tourism are immense, but the intensity of these benefits depends on many factors including the level of economic development, the structure of the economy, institutional strength, or government policy in the field. As mentioned, countries with less developed economies are disadvantaged as long as tourism requires imports of goods and services. This is reflected in economic leaks and weak links with other sectors of the economy, thus reducing benefits. The contribution of tourism to economic and social development, the intensity of its actions differs significantly from one country to another according to the policy adopted in this field. Generally, however, the tourism industry is considered to generate substantial economic benefits both globally, internationally and nationally for the "host" country.

Under these circumstances, an overwhelming role is played by management that can maximize the benefits of tourism for the local economy. For example, although certain goods for tourism must be imported, some imports can be avoided by an appropriate marketing policy. For example, if that country wants to develop a product that has "local colour" then local materials should be used in the construction and operation of hotels and resorts.

From this point of view, any successful tourism development involves long-term, strategic planning of the directions for adequate allocation of resources, minimizing negative impacts and costs, and the right distribution of benefits and wealth.

In conclusion, it must be emphasized that tourism should not be seen in a very optimistic way. It is also necessary to take into account the fact that it is a very "sensitive" sector to political problems, events, calamities, etc. However, there are also many opinions that a strong point of tourism is relative stability and resilience to economic fluctuations. An example is the 1997 financial crisis in Asia and the Pacific that affected many economic sectors including tourism. However, tourism has proven to be the least affected and has shown a good recovery capacity.

Returning to the multitude of the tourism effects on the economy, however, in the last period of time, there has been an increase in the preoccupations towards finding the means

to measure them as rigorously as possible. In order to quantify the overall effects of tourism, both the direct payments resulting from travel and indirect proceeds from other activities have required the development and use of the Tourism Satellite Account (CST / TSA).

The direct effects of tourism are obtained as a result of the tourism expenses incurred by the economic units in the industry (accommodation, food, recreation) in the form of profit, of funds for payment of employees' salaries. They are represented by changes in production associated with the immediate effects of variability in tourism expenses. In other words, the direct effects of tourism are due to tourism expenditure generating income for businesses and households, jobs and tax revenues. For example, an increase in the number of overnight tourists in hotels will directly lead to an increase in hotel sales. Additional sales and changes in hotel payments for wages, taxes, and suppliers are direct effects of rising travel expenses.

The indirect effects are the result of successive transactions between firms as a result of direct travel expenses, purchase of goods and services from suppliers. They reflect changes in production resulting from different rounds of revenue reclamation obtained by establishments directly providing services to tourists in other branches of upstream activity (e.g. in the industries supplying goods and services to hotels). Businesses that, in turn, offer goods and services to hotel providers are another round of indirect effect, linking in different ways to hotels and many other economic sectors in a country. In other words, indirect effects refer to the results of successive transactions between firms, caused by direct tourism spending; more precisely, the purchases of goods and services that tourism companies make from local suppliers, and these, in turn, from the producers of raw materials, goods and so on.

The induced effects are expressed by the influences of the increase in consumer spending on goods and services production, growth driven by the increase in individual incomes, as a result of the growth in tourist traffic. The induced effects consist of the changes that occur in economic activities as a result of household spending that earns direct or indirect income as a result of tourism. For example, hotel employees in the hotel-supplying industries directly or indirectly supported by tourism spend their income in a region for accommodation, meals and transport as well as for their regular products. Sales, income and employment resulting from household expenditure are induced effects.

Through indirect and induced effects, changes in tourism spending may theoretically have an impact, to a greater or lesser extent, on each economic sector. The magnitude of the side effects depends on the inclination of businesses and households in a country or region to purchase goods and services from local suppliers. Induced effects are visible when a large employer in a region stops working. Ancillary industries (indirect effects) are losing their

businesses, and the whole economy suffers from a reduction in household incomes in a region or country.

In order to determine the multiplier effect, three elements contributing to the measurement of the total economic impact of a certain amount of tourism expenditure are taken into account:

- *Direct impact* - measures the effects of the first round of monetary circuit generated by a tourist (the proportion of the expenses of a restaurant for the purchase of raw and auxiliary raw materials required for the tourists' food preparation and for staff salaries and the amount of money spent by the tourist in that restaurant);

- *Indirect Impact* - measures the derived effects of additional rounds caused by the re-circulation of the tourist's initial monetary unit (procurement of goods by firms in other sectors that contributed to the supply of raw materials to the restaurant, necessary to provide catering services required by the tourist);

- *The induced or stimulated impact* - measures the derived effects caused by the employees of a travel company who spend part of their salaries in other business sectors (hotel employees spend some of their income for clothing, food, etc.). "

Tourism has an important role in the economy due to its potential to produce jobs and, as a result of this situation, it makes an important contribution to attracting labour surpluses from other fields of activity, reducing unemployment. This happens because tourism is an intensive branch of work, that is, it depends largely on human effort, in contrast to technology and mechanization-automation. Creating jobs is undoubtedly one of the most important benefits of tourism development. As a general rule, the capacity to generate jobs in tourism is much higher than other economic sectors. This is due to the diversity of economic activities involved in the realization of the tourist benefit, the jobs here presupposing both qualifications and non-qualifications. By creating jobs, tourism is implicitly a factor in the mitigation of unemployment in the areas where it is developed. Thus, the surplus of unemployed labour can be attracted to tourism mainly through programs for the professional re-employment of the unemployed.

The total contribution of Travel & Tourism Industry in labour supply was 435,000 jobs in 2011 (i.e. accounting for 5.1% of total employment). This is projected to increase by 4.2% in 2012 to 453,500 jobs (i.e. 5.3% of the total workforce). By 2022, it is expected that Travel & Tourism industry will support 561,000 jobs (i.e. accounting for 6.6% of total employment), an increase of 2.1% per year in the next period.

CHAPTER 2. THE TOURISM OFFER - COMPONENT OF THE TOURISM MARKET

The tourist market is defined as the place that meets and faces tourism demand, reflected by consumer demand for tourism products, especially adapted to travelling buyers who meet sellers in order to exchange services.

The tourism market presents a number of characteristics, depending on the specific feature of the activity in the field:

- *complexity*, due to the fact that the tourism product includes elements of great heterogeneity, resulting from the activity of several producers-bidders, with a wide variety of forms of realization, which emphasizes the complexity of the market;
- *fragmented character*, determined by the multitude of forms of tourism, sub-markets, resulting from the confrontation on the tourist market of the various forms and associations of the tourist product, on the one hand, and the diversity of the consumers' needs and wishes, on the other hand;
- *opacity*. There is more uncertainty in the tourist market than the tangible market for the tangible goods, which poses a risk to the bidder and the buyer, due to the fact that the offer is "invisible", expressed by "images" created by the buyer on the basis of the information received and previous experiences;
- The tourism market is characterized by the emergence of specific structures that are imperfect, which justify the necessity of the administrative intervention of the state. Customer information and competition on the supply is limited, which leads to a reduction in the role of price as a regulator of the supply-demand ratio and limits the free movement of capital and unrestricted entry into this sector;
- *elasticity and dynamism*. Tourism demand has, over time, registered one of the most dynamic upward trends on which several factors had a positive or negative impact: the structure of the economy, the degree of development, the occupation degree of the force work, the legislative framework, the political climate, etc.;
- *mobility*. The offer has a dominant position on the tourist market; the place of the offer, the production, coincides with that of the consumption, but not with that of the demand formation. The tourist offer cannot meet the demand: the one that is moving towards finalizing the sale-purchase act is the demand. Motivation increases the risk of confrontation between supply and demand, and the movement of demand can be disturbed by many causes;

□ *concentration in time and space*. The tourist activity may be more concentrated as the size and volume of transactions from one period to another and from one area to another. This concentration has implications for the functioning of the market in the sense that it favours the emergence of supply-free or demand-free supply situations with negative implications on the use of production capacities and economic outcomes.

The tourism offer is made up of the natural and anthropic framework and potential, the tourism service production equipment, the mass of material goods for tourism consumption, the workforce specialized in the specific activities, the tourist infrastructure and the trading conditions.

The offer is also defined as "the value of services and end-goods created by the tourism sector in a generally determined period of one year" or "all the attractions that may motivate tourists to visit them".

The content of the concept of tourist offer has been analyzed from different positions, but these approaches fail to capture the tourist offer in its complexity, which is not limited to the natural and anthropic potential. In summary, the tourist offer consists of:

- *the tourism potential* (natural and anthropogenic attractions, located in a certain geographical area, with a certain structure, value and capacity, having a decisive role in the development of tourism;
- *the specific material basis* - refers to the accommodation, food, leisure facilities and the general infrastructure specific to tourism;
- *the workforce*, which by number, structure, level of training determines the value of production;
- *the services*, as the general form under which tourism products are generally represented by; the factors of tourism production (labour force, resources, capital) are also included in the tertiary sphere.

Tourist production has a narrower scope than tourist offer and represents all the services that mobilize workforce, production equipment and material goods that materialize in actual consumption within a specific environment.

The tourism offer - tourist production relationship is marked by the following peculiarities, compared to the same relation on the physical goods market:

- a. tourism output may be at most equal to the offer, while on the material goods market the offer is at most equal to the production;
- b. the tourism offer may also exist in the absence of production, while tourist output cannot be achieved outside the supply. The supply of material goods cannot be detached from the existence of a production;

c. the structure of the tourism offer does not always correspond to the structure of the production, while the structure of the supply of material goods coincides with the structure of the respective production;

d. the tourism offer is firm, it exists as long as there are elements that make it up, while production is conditioned by consumption and ceases with the end of consumption.

Romania is the beneficiary of an area that has a vast natural and anthropic tourism potential with a characteristic of attractiveness, which is closely related to the specificity of the relief, the climate and the history of our people. This touristic potential of our country is the significant element underlying the creation of tourist offer.

The basic elements of the natural potential, which give it the necessary qualities for the development of tourism, are represented by:

- *varied relief*, with balanced and easily accessible forms distributed in the territory (31% mountains, 36% hills, 33% plains and meadows);
- *temperate continental climate* with comforting thermal regime and a significant therapeutic value of the bio climate;
- *the mountainous tourist area* - the mountains occupy 36% of the country's surface and concentrate an exceptional tourist potential that benefits from a moderate climate characterized by thermal comfort, low viscosity, few avalanches and a snow-bearing persistence of up to 180-200 days / year, easy access opportunities, favourable for climbing, hiking, various skiing and other winter sports. These elements are accompanied by the existence of numerous caves accessible to speleology tourism, forests of social, recreational and scientific interest (nature reserves and national parks), which also possess a valuable hunting ground, a network of natural / anthropic rivers and lakes with a varied pond pool that gives the opportunity to practice various forms of nautical leisure;
- *the touristic balneary potential* recognized by the richness and value of cleaners such as mineral and thermal mineral waters, natural therapeutic gases, therapeutic sludges and lakes, used in the prophylaxis and therapeutics of various diseases as well as for maintenance. The quality of the approved reserves for hydro mineral resources places Romania among the first countries in Europe;
- *the tourist potential of the Danube Delta*, with its ecological, landscape and fauna valences, represents an attraction for cruises and expeditions in a special, unique landscape in Europe;
- *the tourist potential of the Black Sea coast* with various tourist resources such as sea water, beach dimensions, marine bio climate, thermal waters, marine water and mud and lack of tides, provide the seaside with optimal conditions for responding to a wide range of tourist motives: rest and recreation, complex thermae bath spa treatment (prophylactic, therapeutic),

nautical and sports recreation, etc. In the 1970s, the Romanian seaside was one of the favourite destinations of tourists from Western and Northern Europe;

- *the fauna and flora potential*, rich in species of scientific interest or for hunting and fishing, characterized by the existence of unique ecosystems;

- *the anthropic tourism potential*. This form of potential derives from the millenary and rich history of the Romanian people, a continuity of living in the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic space, as well as from the older and newer economic and social achievements of our country.

-*the cultural and historical potential*. "

- *the technical and economic potential* includes on the one hand, contemporary constructions: hydropower installations (dams, reservoirs, hydroelectric power stations), navigation channels and locks, roads, viaducts, bridges and on the other hand, economic units: industrial complexes, farms, markets .

- *the socio-demographic potential*. Human settlements, whether they are urban or rural, can be mentioned on the list of reasons for travelling with increasing importance in recent years. Their attractiveness is conferred by specific architecture, art values and culture, by the events they host. In the case of rural settlements, besides the elements already mentioned, there are also natural conditions suitable for spending holidays (fresh air, abundant vegetation).

The tourism potential, both natural and man-made, is therefore very rich and diversified, which allows all forms of tourism to be practised. However, their lack of capitalization cannot bring enough benefits to tour operators or to the national economy.

Along with the attraction elements, adequate means or material resources are needed to carry out the tourist activity, satisfying the requirements of the tourists during the voyages. These means, known as generic basic material, mainly technical capital, have a diverse structure (accommodation and catering units, means of transport, recreational facilities, etc.) tailored to the tourists' specific needs, economic and social functions of tourism.

The material base plays an important role in the organization and development of tourism, being a component of the tourist offer; its dimensions and structure, the technical level of the equipment directly determines the access and presence of the tourists in a certain area, the extent of the flows and the travellers' degree of satisfaction; at the same time, the increase and modernization of the material equipment leads to an increase in the tourist traffic.

After 2001, the Romanian tourism industry experienced an upward trend due to the intensification of the privatization process (92% of the state-owned accommodation facilities were privatized). During these periods, a lot of investments were made for the modernization

of the accommodation structures. At present, the hotel industry in Romania is characterized by the fact that it has different products and services that address different segments of the population.

The touristic accommodation capacity of Romania, expressed in thousands of places-days, underwent an evolution almost similar to that expressed in number of places. Thus, if in 1990 this indicator registered a value of 77,022 thousand places-days, in 1995 it decreased to 53,540 thousand places-days, in 2000 it decreased to 50,197 thousand places-days, this being the lowest value registered since 1990; in the period 2000-2002, the indicator fluctuates around 50,752 thousand places-days, so that in the next period they will experience a revival, reaching in 2008 around 58,000 thousand places-days. It should be noted that during the period 2013-2016, this indicator recorded significant increases of 3.24% in 2014 compared to 2013, by 4.42% in 2015 as compared to 2014 and by 7.22% in 2016 compared to 2015.

Trends and perspectives on tourism flows

The last years have been a challenge for the Tourism Industry. Thus, since summer 2008, the demand for tourism has diminished as a result of the international economic crisis as well as the concerns about terrorism that have raised many challenges for this industry. However, despite these difficulties, this industry remains a decisive factor in the global economy, with a significant share in global gross domestic product but also in terms of employment, while providing an important opportunity for developing countries to move the value chain towards delivering greater value added from services.

CHAPTER 3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROMANIAN TOURIST OFFER – AN ESSENTIAL STAGE FOR THE INTEGRATION OF TOURISM IN THE EUROPEAN TRENDS

Romania's accession to the European Union on 1 January 2007 is of particular importance to the tourism sector. At all levels, membership involves benefits, opportunities, but also risks and costs. Romanian tourism has to adapt to these new realities in order to develop itself. Romania's accession to the European Union involves essential mutations both in the management of tourism enterprises and at the level of the institutions involved in this economic sector. The essence of these transformations is the efficiency of the work, a new model of organization, leadership and control, based on modern managerial principles and mechanisms adapted to new economic realities and in line with the EU standards.

There are a number of implications of EU membership that directly target tourism in Romania:

1. *The increase of the number of foreign tourists coming from the European Union who visit Romania.* However, growth is unlikely to be spectacular and must be seen on the one hand, within the general trend of tourism growth on a European level and on the other hand, in the context of Romania's media coverage in the Member States and the increase of interest for a new country Union. We also need to keep in mind that in 2004 there has already been a huge expansion with 10 new Member States, many of them genuine tourist destinations - Cyprus, Malta, Czech Republic, Hungary or Poland. Moreover, the population of the old Member States still prefers "already traditional destinations": Spain, Italy and France, which remain the main destinations for Europeans. Tourism flows to these countries cannot change suddenly, as a result of long-term developments.

2. *An increased competition at both the destination level and tourism operators.* As a holiday destination, Romania will compete with the new entrants to the European Union in 2004. Tour operators on the Romanian market will compete with any similar tourism company on the European Single Market.

3. *The quality of the tourist product will become a decisive factor* in order to best meet the needs of tourists and to face the competition. That is why Romania needs to improve the quality of tourism products and services offered. This is possible primarily by investing in the specific material base, infrastructure, and secondly by facilitating the training and professional development of the human resource directly involved in tourism.

4. *The environmental protection and sustainable growth will condition the development of tourism.* This is an imperative around which any new tourist facilities, as well as the existing facilities, will be rewarded.

5. *More emphasis on tourism development at regional level* in the context of the decentralization / regionalization trend of tourism skills as an economic activity.

6. *The reinforcement of cooperation between different tourism operators at the level of a tourist destination* as a result of creating the public-private partnerships needed to access European funding and to provide better competitiveness of the destination.

7. *The access to EU funding will further facilitate the development of tourism and infrastructure in areas with tourism potential in Romania.* Of course, this depends to a great extent on Romania's capacity to "develop good tourism projects", in this sense, human resources have an important role to play.

The overall objective of the sectorial R & D plan in the areas of territorial development, construction and tourism is to allow scientific substantiation of policy development in the area

of responsibility of the ministry by financing research and development projects of applicative character, focusing on the following specific objectives:

- the balanced and sustainable development of the national territory in order to strengthen territorial cohesion in a European context;
- developing a polycentric and balanced urban system and strengthening the partnership between urban and rural areas;
- developing and preserving nature and cultural heritage through prudent management;
- preserving and developing regional identity, and preserving the natural and cultural diversity of regions and cities;
- balanced and sustainable polycentric development of human settlements and in a regional context;
- increasing the quality of living in human settlements, according to the concept of sustainable development;
- development and diversification of tourist infrastructure and services;
- improving the external and internal image of the tourist destinations;
- increasing employment, increasing the level of revenue collection to the state budget through coherent tax measures;
- developing advanced techniques and tools for spatial planning of the territory at national, urban and rural levels, including the use of geographic information systems and the creation of spatial data bases;
- supporting and substantiating the housing policy and the national programs, analyzing the main changes of the housing patterns in urban and rural areas;
- developing sustainable housing and functional management tools for national housing and real estate management programs;
- sustainable urban development, taking into account the need to achieve high quality of life in terms of respecting the identities of cities of all types, the efficient use of general and private resources, and increasing the competitive potential.

Establishing the objectives to ensure the development of Romanian tourism is one of the main stages of the strategy development process, the objectives being understood as the essence of the strategy.

An essential prerequisite for the competitive advantage to be viable is its sustainability, that is, the ability to sustain for a long period of time. If this condition is not met, we cannot talk of a competitive advantage of a strategic type, but of a temporary one, based on a favourable conjuncture situation or the capitalization of a momentary opportunity.

CHAPTER 4. NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROMANIAN TOURISM OFFER

In order to formulate the strategic variants, the presentation of both strengths and weaknesses, as well as the analysis of the region's own resources and the external circumstances that may affect favourably and unfavourably the achievement of the established objectives, will be made. As a commonly used method, SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), and the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks or threats of an organization, is based on six levels of analysis: legal, technical, commercial, management, human and financial resources.

The evolution of Romanian tourism must be guided by an appropriate national strategy that makes Romania an attractive international tourist destination. In order to understand the measures to be taken in the future for the recovery of tourism in Romania, it is necessary, among other things, to analyze the current situation and to draw the positive and negative features that characterize the domestic tourism market. The analysis can be used to increase strengths, redeploy and diminish weaknesses, eliminate threats and capitalize on opportunities through rigorous strategic planning.

Strengths

- favourable geographic location, at the intersection of the large Euro-Asian transport routes, the opening to the Black Sea;
- the existence of tourist culture and the possibility of developing all forms of tourism due to the diversity of the harmoniously distributed tourist potential;
- the presence on the Romanian tourism market of world-famous hotel chains (Mariott, Hilton, Holiday Inn, Best Western) guaranteeing the quality of services offered to tourists;
- well-developed telecommunication networks;
- national tourism development programs ("Skiing in the Carpathians", "Ski area Predeal-Azuga", "Wine Road") and social programs ("Country holidays", "Seaside for Everybody") initiated by the national tourism authority
- many rural areas with real potential for entrepreneurship development
- the diversity of natural and cultural resources for start-ups
- a good base of tourism and an increase in demand for traditional tourism products
- countrywide safety and security (low crime rate)

- the existence of programs at governmental and European level which provide the framework and resources for promoting a region with potential agro tourism
- holding patents and / or technologies that give touristic businesses a competitive edge
- increasing the loyalty of tourists to some of the products / services offered

Weaknesses

- low growth rate for the number of accommodation places in the tourist accommodation structures;
- the average use of accommodation capacity is constantly low, placed around 34.5%;
- insufficient development and non-modernized tourism base (in some areas there is a large share of old accommodation structures);
- deficiencies in attracting the workforce specialized in tourism;
- the existence of an inadequate infrastructure, physically or morally exploited;
- the lack of cooperation between economic operators in tourism;
- the low quality level and degree of diversification of tourist services (emphasis is placed on accommodation and food);
- the reduced contribution of the tourism sector to GDP formation (below 3%);
- the very low share of tourism investments in the total investments in the economy is below 2%;
- insufficient information and promotion (especially on the Internet);
- the seasonal character of the mountain and seaside tourist market;
- inappropriate cost strategies compared to the quality of the products offered;
- significant deviations in the competitiveness and quality of tourism services, the consequences of this policy being manifested today by changing tourists' preferences to tourist destinations outside the borders;
- unfriendly business environment for foreign investors;
- the lack of a good management policy at all levels;
- the instability of the governmental institutional framework with a role and attributions in the development of tourism policy and strategy.
- the lack of an entrepreneurial culture
- poor entrepreneurial infrastructure
- funding gaps for new businesses and start-ups
- high tax rates
- administrative obstacles
- the lack of promotion and incentives for investments

- low investment in human resources, lack of entrepreneurial education in rural areas
- the lack of collaboration between stakeholders in the tourism industry but also between industries
- the lack of a common tourist identity

Opportunities

- economic growth
- increasing the number of investors
- setting up clusters to support and promote tourism together with other industries in a given area
- qualified workforce
- creating, strengthening and / or improving local identity
- capitalizing niche market opportunities
- developing innovation
- increasing the number of local tourist enterprises
- developing female entrepreneurship
- strengthening local culture and identity by promoting local products / services
- keeping the population locally through training programs and professional opportunities.
- improving the quality of life
- increasing the awareness of the heritage value and the need to protect it
- an improved level of education or business management knowledge
- the protection and preservation of rural / natural cultural heritage
- reducing the resource use, minimizing waste, protecting the environment and preserving biodiversity
- promoting the sustainable development of tourism products and related business areas
- sustainable land management
- reducing environmental impacts due to the craftsmanship of rural tourism entrepreneurs
- interactive craft workshops; small workshops that work on the tourist's command: glassware, ceramics, metal engraving, temples
- granting tax incentives for new investments, depending on the size of investment in tourism enterprises
- the development of tourism by attracting structural funds from the European Union, which will allow the support and financing of projects in this field
- freedom of movement of persons, services, goods, capital;

- the single euro currency, which has brought and will bring great benefits to tourism through simplicity (the tourist will have with him a single currency), transparency (the tourist will be familiar with the currency's purchasing power), saving time and commissions
- the recognition on the national and international tourism market as a result of Romania's accession to the European Union; so it is estimated that the number of foreign EU tourists visiting Romania will grow but not spectacularly; this growth will join the general trend in the European tourism industry;
- the elaboration and implementation of tourism development strategy for each NTA; (several priorities of the strategy: creating and promoting the national tourist brand, developing a national network of Tourist Information and Promotion Centres);
- ongoing projects for future tourism activity: motorways, rail transport modernization, sea transport terminal for tourists, etc.;
- attracting investors, especially foreign, with management input and land leasing in advantageous conditions to investors, including for the establishment of new resorts.
- granting tax incentives for new investments, depending on the size of investment in tourism enterprises;
- diversifying tourists' pricing for comfort and season to promote youth tourism for low-income tourists and school children;
- tourist attractions by diversifying package tourism to personalization and taking into account the full national potential;
- interactive museums; interactive craft workshops; Small industrial workshops that work on the tourist's command: glassware, ceramics, metal engraving, temples.

Threats

- the migration of the rural population to adjacent urban areas
- the decline in the agricultural industry
- the lack of state support through legislative and financial measures
- the immigration from other parts of the world that may affect the long-term culture of some areas
- lower living standards
- economic, political crises both nationally and internationally
- the instability of the governmental institutional framework with a role and attributions in the development of tourism policy and strategy
- the degradation of the natural environment through different types of pollution
- the competition of resorts in Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece;

- the highly skilled labour migration from the European Union, especially due to the very low wages paid in Romania, compared to the external offer;
- entering the competition as a holiday destination with the new member states of the European Union; thus, the quality of the products / services offered, will become a decisive factor in the choice of a destination or operator by the tourist;
- unattractive environment for foreign investors due to the fiscal policy of the state;
- the migration of the Romanian tourists; the exit from the European tourism flows;
- deepening the effects of the economic and financial crisis on national and international level;
- changes in the tourists' preferences, needs, tastes;
- the entry of new competitors on the tourism market;
- increasing competition pressure;
- vulnerability to business fluctuations;
- the labour productivity in tourism activity is strongly influenced by factors such as:
 - The degree of tourist attractiveness of the tourist area
 - The size and intensity of tourist flows
 - The climatic conditions
 - Conjectural factors
- the companies that are located in low-attractiveness resorts will experience lower performance and will have to pursue an aggressive investment policy;
- the expansion of some viruses, which can have devastating effects;
- terrorist acts, regional wars and other types of crisis situations;

It can be noticed that the Romanian tourism has a valuable and diversified natural potential, but it suffers, in some areas, from pollution and the poor implementation of the environmental legislation. The existence of a rich cultural heritage is also overshadowed by the degradation of many historic buildings and monuments. The insufficient state involvement in the development and promotion of cultural objectives, the lack of support for local traditions and folklore are some other shortcomings. Given that tourism involves the first movement of persons from the area of residence to the area in which they will benefit from tourism services, infrastructure, in particular, transport and communications, plays an essential role. From this point of view, Romania faces many problems related to poor road quality, lack of motorways, ring roads around some localities, limited access for disabled people to many hotels and tourist attraction points, etc.

Study concerning the Romanian tourism offer's state-of-the art

In the list of pillars that enable the development of the Romanian economy, the tourism industry can be considered one among the most important. Thus, by designing and applying strategies that take into account, on the one hand, the particularities, the restrictions and the opportunities of the socio-economic environment, but also their possibilities for strategic action, and on the other hand the transformations that dominates the socio-economic environment and the forecasts of the domestic and international economy, we can identify a number of elements that can lead to performances in the tourism industry.

In order to have the big picture of the processes that take place at the level of the organizations from the field of tourism and that contributes to the development of the Romanian tourist offer, a study that has been carried out, having the following objectives:

- ✓ identifying the attitude of the managers of the tourism organizationstowards the new economic landscape;
- ✓ the new perspectives regarding both the big hotel chains, but also the medium and small structures, hotels, hostels, etc.
- ✓ identifying the way in which tourism policies are reflected in the policy of Romanian tourism resorts;
- ✓ identifying possible ways to improve tourist resort activity and, implicitly, increasing global performance in the Romanian tourism sector;
- ✓ the orientation of the tourism organizations to the client - the extent to which the company directs its activity towards identifying the clients' wishes and fulfilling them, as well as dealing with their complaints;
- ✓ the assignment of resources for innovation - the extent to which tourism organizations are concerned about innovation activity; the availability of resources and the existence of people with adequate professional training in this field;
- ✓ the extent to which the tourism organization strategy has been formulated in such a way that it can be understood by all employees, expressing clear and precise objectives, which can be acknowledged by the employees;
- ✓ the competitive advantage - the extent to which the products and services offered by the tourism organizations are different from those of their competitors and the extent to which the organization provides touristic services of the same quality to those of competition but at a better price;
- ✓ the importance given to environmental protection - the extent to which tourism organizations have supported or have been involved in at least one CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) campaign during the last 5 years.

The sample is formed by 102 respondents, managers of tourism organizations, based in Dobrogea: the counties of Constanta and Tulcea.

The survey consisted in the distribution of a questionnaire, in the period April - June 2016, directly, by fax or e-mail; the selection of the tourism organizations was determined both by the existence of the necessary tools for the communication-telephone line, Internet and the presence of these organizations in the business pages of specific publications.

In this research it was chosen a more complex approach, namely problems related to the processes taking place at the level of the tourist system, the role of the tourist in the policy of tourist resorts / organizations, the assessment of the competitive context, the role of the information and communication processes in the relationship between the tourism organizations and their clients etc.

The selection of the tourist units for the training of the sample under investigation was carried out taking into account the aim and the deductive research method for which it was chosen. Thus, the structure of the sample included tourism organizations of different sizes and ranking.

Also, in the structure of the sample there were included tourism organizations with tradition on the Romanian market, as well as new tourism locations that appeared in the Romanian tourist offer. Thus, from the structure of the sample, 3% of the organizations have been established in the last 5 years, 20% of the investigated organizations have been operating for less than 10 years, 17% are for less than 15 years and the majority (60%) has been on the market for more than 15 years. The vast majority of organizations in the research sample are based on national capital (93%), 2% on mixed capital and only 1% on foreign capital.

The questionnaire designed for determining the Romanian tourism offer framework consists of 28 questions structured in 3 sections: Section A (11 questions) - aimed at identifying general aspects of tourism policy towards the clients, environment, competition, promotion, diversification; section B (12 questions) - it contains a series of issues reflected as statements on which the respondents can express their agreement or disagreement, and section C (5 questions) is the section that allows identification of the company profile included in the research sample.

It is necessary to approach some strategic directions that can operate both proactively and reactively at the tourism level in the Dobrogea area, in order to support the entire Romanian tourism sector, namely:

- Providing reliable and timely public information on access to various tourist locations;

- Use of highly-skilled staff in the field of services and tourism;
- Activation of regulators of prices for tourism market monitoring;
- Strengthening the performance of tourism-related companies with emphasis on risk management;
- Promoting increased commitment to environmental sustainability and biodiversity use;
- Tailoring of the tourism offer at the request of tourists both from the country and abroad;
- Development of special programs for access to tourism offer;
- Implementation of tourism network design;
- Promoting the rational use of tourism resources in protected areas;
- Increasing progress in tourism access to reach the EU average funding level over the 2014-2020 time horizon.

Analysis of the impact of non-financial factors on the performance of organizations from hospitality industry

Section B of the questionnaire includes 12 items, which also aimed to identify the impact of non-financial factors on the economic performance at the level of the organizations from hospitality industry, namely the measurement of the influences on the results of their activity and the extent to which these factors lead to a higher economic performance. In the context of this challenge, a number of assumptions have been formulated, whether to be validated or not, as it follows:

H1: There is a positive correlation between customer satisfaction of the tourism organizations and their economic performance.

H2: There is a positive correlation between the level of competition between the tourism organizations and their economic performance.

H3: There is a positive correlation between innovation-diversification within the tourism organization and their economic performance.

H4: There is a positive correlation between strategy formulation within tourism organizations and their economic performance.

H5: There is a positive correlation between the environmental responsibility of the tourism organizations and their economic performance.

In order to validate the assumptions, a series of statistical tests will be carried out. In case of validation of all hypotheses, namely H1-H5, we will consider that both the stated

factors and the non-financial performance have a significant influence on the performance expressed in financial terms, so that an improvement of any considered factor will lead to a higher non-financial performance, and finally to higher financial results. Therefore, in case of validation of all the hypotheses formulated, the future model of tourism organization performance assessment will be able to take over all five variables defined in this research as the moderating variables of performance.

If the H1 hypothesis is confirmed, but one or more of H2-H5 hypotheses are rejected, the influence of the variable or variables associated with those hypotheses will be considered insignificant, so they will be excluded from the proposed model. As a result, the proposed model will only consider the variables confirmed as significant after hypothesis testing.

If the H1 hypothesis is rejected, or if the results indicate that the non-financial performance of the tourism organizations does not have a significant impact on their economic performance, we will try to identify the potential causes of this phenomenon as well as to determine other determinants of the economic performance, based on the conclusions drawn from the testing of the other hypotheses.

Following the data gathering process, a total of 102 questionnaires were complete and valid, the remainder containing incomplete answers being removed. They allowed the assessment of respondents' perceptions about the five elements analyzed: **customer satisfaction, tourism competition, innovation - diversification, strategy** and **environmental responsibility**.

The innovation-diversification process is an asset of tourism organizations in their quest to face the market competitors, as revealed by a moderate correlation coefficient between the innovation-diversification and competition variables: - 0.348.

The emergence of an increased competition in the tourism services market make aware companies to improve their existing supply, to innovate and to gain a competitive advantage in the tourism market. That is why the extent to which the services offered by the tourism organizations differ from those of the competitors and the extent to which the services offered are of the same quality as those of the competition but have an advantageous price are a key success factor in gaining the market leadership. We conclude by stating that *as the competition in the tourism offer in the South-East region of Romania is closer, the degree of innovation in this sector increases*.

The variable organizational responsibility towards the environment is interdependent with the customer satisfaction variable, the correlation coefficient being 0.378, indicating an average intensity dependency between these variables. Also in this case, the importance given to the environment is seen as a moderating variable of customer satisfaction, so that in

this study we identify the tendency to increase the satisfaction of the clients as the tourism organizations' awareness to the environment increases. Noteworthy is that, in the case of increased environmental responsibility, the human factor is the one who feels an improvement in satisfaction, whether it is represented by employees or customers. For sure, responsibility involves commitment in the sense that both employees and customers become aware of the importance of protecting natural resources.

Another dependency identified in the research is between the strategy and competition variables, where we can find an average intensity link, the correlation coefficient having the value of 0.383. The strategy, which defines the objectives pursued by the tourism organization and the means it uses in this respect, is in fact responsible for the success of the organization on the market, so that through the strategy the company's directions of action are drawn, in line with the market opportunities. As such, identifying potential chances of success on the market is mainly due to the strategy formulated, and the competition on the market is a decisive factor in setting the objectives pursued. We conclude that the research carried out allows the statement that, *as the competition on the tourist market in the Dobrogea region increases, the company's strategy improves significantly.*

Diversification – a new perspective of tourism offer development

Diversification can be an effective strategic option when: the current products and markets no longer emphasize the desired financial results; the organization has used its skills and resources below its optimum level; the organization wishes to diversify its scope to more than a product or market segment; the organization wants to make more efficient use of the existing distribution system by reducing fixed costs and enabling the revenue growth; the organization tries to mitigate its risks.

In tourism, an organization can choose one of the following diversification options: vertical diversification (vertical integration), horizontal diversification (integration), concentric diversification or integration as a touristic conglomerate.

The *strategy of concentric diversification* occurs when new products or markets have common features with existing ones and this likelihood can reduce the risks of diversification. Concentric diversification leads to development in similar industry sectors, upstream or downstream, and in the existing value chain of the enterprise.

Through the *conglomerate diversification strategy*, the development of completely new areas and market products can be achieved. In the particular case of conglomerate diversification, compared to concentric diversification, there is a higher risk of new products made for markets, which the company is not familiar with. This strategic option is adopted

when the organization has serious restrictions on growth potential on existing markets, or when it sees significant development opportunities in new market areas.

The *strategy of horizontal diversification* consists in the development of new products and services for which different technologies are used and are targeted to the same customer segments. For example, international airlines are known to associate with service providers (food, airport, etc.) in order to diversify the tourism products offered to the market. Marriott has developed a distribution system for the supply of restaurants called the Marriott Distribution System and has opened six distribution centers serving Marriott hotels in a particular region. In this way, the restaurants are supplied on time, with the freshest raw materials, and the customers are fully satisfied. By synthesizing, horizontal diversification implies that an organization enters a complementary market or a competitive market, when it works with another operator to achieve common objectives or when it takes over another operator.

The *strategy of vertical diversification* is the alternative that drives the organization to create new products and services that are not related to current products and services, either technologically or in market segments. For example, a SPA and tourism organization offers its clients both specific touristic services (excursions, leisure, etc.), restaurant services, transport services, and various medical treatments.

The diversification of tourism services is meant to satisfy the needs of as many tourist segments as possible, by offering variety of prices, forms of tourism and activities.

A first possibility of diversifying tourism services in the case of a travel agency would be that it sells holidays at different prices depending on the financial potential of the client. Thus, the following three solutions can be chosen: high prices for luxury clients with high revenues and demanding sophisticated tourism products difficult to satisfy, average prices for middle class customers, being easier to meet and low prices for mass tourism, which will benefit those customers with low incomes who can buy less developed tourism products.

The diversification of the tourism offer by including new tourist products, activities and forms of tourism is necessary for several reasons:

- it can be noticed that there is a growing need for traveling, knowing new places, habits, returning to traditions etc.;
- increasing living standards, prioritize revenue allocation and purchase tourism products and services;
- continuous improvement of the quality of the tourism offer through the integrated effort of all those involved in this industry: hoteliers, administrators of public catering units, carriers, tour operators, animators etc.

The promotion of new forms of tourism involves the following actions:

- targeted research on the tourism market by the managers of the travel agencies;
- integration of new forms of tourism so that they are able to contribute to a higher quality of the tourism offer.

According to the analysis based on the statistical data, the most desired forms of tourism for our country, along with the mountain tourism, seaside and spa tourism, are: rural tourism, green tourism, recreational tourism, hunting and fishing tourism, business tourism and cultural tourism.

The strategy for entrepreneurship and tourism should be structured into concrete tactical actions that aim at harmonizing the interests of those involved in economic and social life in each area, with the objectives and priorities of capitalizing on the tourism potential in the current stage, but also as an alternative to the perspective of economic development. The tourism management of an area with so much untapped potential is complex because it will have to consider multiple issues:

- harmonizing the interests, goals and opportunities of all participants in the economic and social life of the touristic area;
- compliance with all regulations through forward-looking economic development, in the context of the ever-increasing impact of the globalization process;
- satisfying tourists' requirements;
- all those involved in the tourism activity, directly or indirectly, strive to facilitate access to the tourism products offered by the area: modernized roads, a diverse range of services, creating a safe climate for physical integrity and protection of tourists' goods;
- orientation towards tourism in smaller groups or even personalized tourism.

For the Romanian tourism, the success of the economic strategies must be based on the strength of the resources of these areas, on the support of the central and local authorities in initiating and carrying out actions in which the immediate socio-economic interests are joined together with the principles of sustainable development, the preservation of the natural habitat and the national heritage of material and spiritual values.

CHAPTER 5. THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MENTIONS ON THE HOTEL ONLINE BOOKING (CASE STUDY: TOP 10 HOTELS FROM THE ROMANIAN BLACK SEA COAST)

Social networks play an important role in the hospitality industry as tourists can make decisions based on relevant information related to reviews and ratings on specialized sites such as Booking.com or TripAdvisor.com. We are currently facing a phenomenon in tourism

that can be interpreted as a trend due to the development of web technologies and especially social networks: Facebook and Twitter are increasingly used to promote tourism services in most countries (Milan, Baggio and Piattelli, 2011).

Online reviews posted on specialized websites (Booking.com or TripAdvisor.com) are essential pillars of viral marketing campaigns in e-Commerce and e-Tourism (Fileri and McLeay, 2013). According to a survey conducted by TripAdvisor, 93% of tourists are influenced by the reviews made to hotels they choose to stay, while 53% of potential clients do not book a hotel room without having a trustful opinion from other tourists about it. Therefore, user-generated content, reflected in reviews or ratings, has become a major influence factor in travelers' decision-making.

Social media has become in many countries a communication space able to promote tourist destinations and hotel brands (Leung, Law, Van Hoof and Buhalis, 2013). More and more hotels use social networks to improve their competitive position on the market, as online tourist communities like TripAdvisor influence millions of tourists based on comments from other customers (Casalo, Flavian, Guinaliu and Ekinci, 2015).

The research presented in this chapter explores the causal configurations of the factors that ensure the success of the top ten hotels on the Romanian Black Sea coast on Booking.com. The ranking of hotels on the Romanian Black Sea coast - based on customer scores on the first page of results of the search engine Booking.com - is significantly influenced by the mentions of tourists on social networks.

The study provides an overview of the causal relationship between social networking mentions (analyzed through four key performance indicators: hotel brand strength, sentiment related online reviews, passion for hotel brand and social media campaigns' reach) and the ranking of hotels on the Romanian Black Sea coast according to the ratings given by the clients on the Booking.com web portal.

The study is built on the available data regarding the ranking of the top ten hotels on the Romanian Black Sea coast - based on customer scores on the first page of the search results of the Booking.com search engine, as well as on the mentions of social media tourists about these hotels. The data set analyzed in the conceptual model of research comes from two web portals dedicated to data analysis in Social Media Marketing and e-Tourism: www.booking.com and www.socialmention.com, which provides sophisticated statistical analysis of hotel mentions in social networks.

The variables associated to social mentions are perceived as antecedents of the expected outcome: a better ranking of hotels on Booking.com.

Booking.com, the world leader in online hotel booking, provides over 1,200,000 daily bookings to hotels included in its database. The ranking of the top ten hotels on the Romanian Black Sea coast on the basis of the notes available on Booking.com is presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 - Ranking of hotels on the Romanian Black Sea coast - based on customer scores on the first page results on the search engine Booking.com

Case	Hotel	Score Booking.com
1	Belle Epoque Boutique Villa	10
2	New Splendid Hotel & Spa	9,1
3	Hotel Scapino	9
4	Hotel On Plonge Junior	8,9
5	Hotel Hawaii	8,8
6	Hotel Inter	8,7
7	New Belvedere	8,6
8	Vega Hotel	8,3
9	Hotel Del Mar & Conference Center	8,2
10	Savoy Hotel	7,6

Sursa: Datele au fost accesate pe Booking.com în data de 28.09.2016

Source: Data were accessed on Booking.com on 28.09.2016

The second tool analyzing the content generated by tourists through social media mentions (Socialmention.com) provides four relevant indicators associated with the perception of tourists on the hotel brands analyzed: **strength** (the likelihood that a brand is being discussed in social media); **sentiment** (the ratio of mentions that are generally positive to those that are generally negative); **passion** (a measure of the likelihood that individuals talking about a brand will do so repeatedly) and **reach** (a measure of the range of influence, determined as a number of unique authors referencing a brand divided by the total number of mentions). The values associated with these indicators for the top ten hotels on the Romanian Black Sea coast on the basis of the scores available on Booking.com are highlighted in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 – Indicators related to social mentions

Case	Hotel	Strength	Sentiment	Passion	Reach
1	Belle Epoque Boutique Villa	79%	4:0	85%	12%
2	New Splendid Hotel & Spa	67%	15:0	72%	20%
3	Hotel Scapino	100%	1:0	61%	56%
4	Hotel On Plonge Junior	100%	29:1	55%	45%
5	Hotel Hawaii	62%	19:1	33%	47%
6	Hotel Inter	51%	27:0	39%	37%
7	New Belvedere	50%	15:1	57%	24%
8	Vega Hotel	55%	7:1	77%	13%
9	Hotel Del Mar & Conference Center	100%	4:1	63%	40%
10	Savoy Hotel	34%	19:1	29%	30%

Source: Data were accessed on Socialmention.com on 28.09.2016

The research method considered appropriate to the processing of available data is Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). The main advantage of this research method consists in fact that it bridges the gaps between quantitative and qualitative analyzes (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009), claiming that a combination of antecedent conditions generates a relevant outcome.

Qualitative Comparative Analysis proves its effectiveness when introducing in the conceptual model conditions that are sufficient (but not also necessary) to generate a certain outcome. By using indicators such as consistency (a measure of correlation from quantitative research) and coverage (a measure of the magnitude of quantitative research effects), this method provides accurate information on the impact of causal configurations on a relevant outcome (Woodside, 2010).

The collection of data using Qualitative Comparative Analysis (closely related to the selection of cases discussed in the previous section) remains a serious problem: different cases may lead to different conclusions, even if they can be replicated (Dusa, 2014).

As the relations between the variables associated with social networking are asymmetric, due to the different perceptions of tourists on hotel services, alternative combinations of causal conditions can lead to the outcome associated with the conceptual

model of research - the rankings of the top 10 hotels on the Romanian Black Sea coast on Booking.com.

Qualitative Comparative Analysis enables the transformation of causal conditions (strength, sentiment, passion and reach) and the outcome (the ranking of the 10 Romanian Black Sea coast hotels on Booking.com) in scores associated with fuzzy sets in the range 0.1 - 1.00. This operation is called calibration of the scores and involves three qualitative anchors: one that defines the full inclusion point in the set, the midpoint inclusion point in the set, respectively the anchor that defines the full inclusion in the set.

Table 5.3 reflects the calibration of the outcome embedded in the conceptual model, while Table 5.4 illustrates the calibration of causal conditions, which are the indicators specific to the mentions in the Social Media.

Table 5.3 – Outcome calibration (rankings of hotels analyzed through Booking.com)

Hotel	Score on Booking.com	Ranking	Fuzzy-set value	Level
Belle Epoque Boutique Villa	10	I	1	fully in
New Splendid Hotel & Spa	9,1	II	0.9	mostly but not fully in
Hotel Scapino	9	III	0.8	
Hotel On Plonge Junior	8,9	IV	0.7	
Hotel Hawaii	8,8	V	0.6	
Hotel Inter	8,7	VI	0.5	cross-over: neither in nor out
New Belvedere	8,6	VII	0.4	mostly but not fully out
Vega Hotel	8,3	VIII	0.3	
Hotel Del Mar & Conference Center	8,2	IX	0.2	
Savoy Hotel	7,6	X	0.1	

We have not included in this study the complete exclusion point of the set (fully out) because it is not suitable for the chosen data set.

Tabel 5.3 – Calibrarea condițiilor cauzale (mențiunile pe Socialmention.com)

Caz	Hotel	Putere	Sentiment	Pasiune	Atingere obiectiv
1	Belle Epoque Boutique Villa	0.7	0.8	1	0.1
2	New Splendid Hotel & Spa	0.6	0.9	0.8	0.3
3	Hotel Scapino	0.9	0.7	0.6	1
4	Hotel On Plonge	0.9	0.6	0.4	0.8

Caz	Hotel	Putere	Sentiment	Pasiune	Atingere obiectiv
	Junior				
5	Hotel Hawaii	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.9
6	Hotel Inter	0.3	1	0.3	0.6
7	New Belvedere	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.4
8	Vega Hotel	0.4	0.3	0.9	0.2
9	Hotel Del Mar & Conference Center	0.9	0.2	0.7	0.7
10	Savoy Hotel	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.5

E-tourism appreciates any initiative from hotels to stimulate their customers' interest in posting comments. Many intermediary sites between hotels and customers engage in reviews-boosting projects, which automatically lead to increased traffic and conversions on their websites.

CHAPTER 6. FINAL REMARKS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

Following the investigations and analyzes carried out in order to improve the activity of the Romanian tourism sector by adapting the structures, processes and activities in this field to the needs of the modern tourist, a series of conclusions were formulated. Starting from the analysis of the functions, principles and operating rules of the Romanian tourism sector, we conclude that the modern and strategic approach of tourism is an important and most important initiative to achieve the expected economic performance indicators.

The opportunity to study such a theme is given by the wide range of opportunities to develop the tourism offer in Romania, including the opportunities offered by the international tourism. The researches carried out in order to identify the prospects for the development of the Romanian tourist offer in European context allowed the following conclusions to be drawn:

- Romanian tourism is a branch that allows the capitalization of many natural and anthropogenic resources, with benefits for tourists and investors. It can also be seen as a means of diversifying economic structures, creating jobs, stimulating the country and promoting it both internally and internationally.

- The issues related to the promotion of the Romanian tourism offer and in this case, the tourism in the Dobrogea area, should be analyzed in a strategic context, by developing strategies and plans for promotion, coordinating the activities of promoting tourism products at national and international level.

- For the Romanian tourism, the Dobrogea area can be a real strategic option in the context in which the processes of tourism resources valorization are facilitated by the support of the central and local authorities in carrying out actions in which the immediate socio-economic interests are harmoniously combined with the principles of sustainable development, an economy that will preserve the natural habitat and the national heritage of material and spiritual values.

- The new context offered by social networks plays an important role in the tourism industry, as tourists can make informed decisions based on reviews and ratings from specialized sites such as Booking.com or TripAdvisor.com. We can state that there is even a culture of collaboration on social networks, and tourists are helping each other by providing recommendations on the locations that have delighted them.

- The causal configurations presented in the results of the study can be a decision support tool for hotel managers, so they can understand how they can capitalize on social media interactions in strategies to increase the reputation of tourist sites. Also, the ongoing evaluation of existing social networking references leads to the identification of solutions to increase the visibility of hotels in the online environment.

- The approach of tourism from the perspective of sustainable development is based on a threefold efficiency: ecological sustainability through which the tourism facilities and their actual exploitation contributes to the ecological reconstruction, potentiates actions to stop the aggression against the environment; social and cultural sustainability aims at developing tourism that highlights the cultural, ethnographic and perennial values of the area, including them in the national and European circuit; Economic sustainability - able to ensure economic development by rational exploitation of the area's resources, leaving future generations an environment less polluted.

- The studies in the paper highlighted that as competition in the tourism offer in the southeastern region of Romania is closer, the need for innovation in this sector is increasing. The innovation-diversification process is an asset of tourism organizations against the competitors in the market. A challenge is the integration of the new forms of tourism in the tourist offer: rural tourism, green tourism, recreational tourism, hunting and fishing tourism, business tourism and congresses, cultural tourism.

- The Romanian tourism architecture is characterized by an optimistic forecast regarding the tourism indicators for the period 2016-2020, which calls for the identification of new ways, methods and tools for promoting the objectives and structures of the Dobrogea area.

- Identification of new directions for updating and multiplying demand both on the domestic and foreign markets, namely: increasing, modernizing and improving the tourist

offer, expanding the range of services, increasing the share of tourism in the national economy.

- The quality of tourism services is sometimes achieved at a formal level by the certification and classification of the tourism facilities. Providing various and quality services will facilitate the promotion of tourist destinations in the Dobrogea area.

- Active promotion of Romanian tourism on the national market and especially international but mainly on the European market is an effective tool for attracting tourists to the Romanian space and boosting this sector of activity.

The conclusions formulated elucidate aspects related to the prospects for the development of the Romanian tourist offer in the European context, which led to the development of a set of tools for the efficiency of the activities in the Romanian tourism sector in order to increase its notoriety and attractiveness for the tourists from the country and abroad.

As a concluding remark, we propose a series of recommendations aimed at completing the solution of the problem regarding the promotion of the Romanian tourism offer in the European context:

- Establishment of a regional structure subordinated to the Local Administration of Constanta County having the following tasks: evaluation of the natural and anthropic natural heritage in order to make better use of tourism; mapping and certification of all tourism structures in rural areas; creation of tourist clusters; organizing cultural events that would promote various tourist destinations in the Dobrogea area; identification and mobilization of funds through public-private partnerships and European projects.

- Creating a regional tourism product and a regional tourist brand coherent and easy to identify in the Romanian tourist offer for both domestic and foreign tourists. In the context of the proposed diversification strategy and the existing options, this tourism product will include elements of rural tourism and green tourism. In order to facilitate the promotion, it is recommended to create a unique logo to identify this product.

- Initiation and development of tourism projects both at the level of local public authorities and at national level on various thematic areas of interest that would generate viable tourism services.

- Creation of a cluster in the field of regional tourism, whose structure should optimally exploit the natural and anthropic resources of the area.

- Implementation of a plan of measures to improve agro-tourism in the Dobrogea area, namely: creation of computerized software for the registration of the tourists accommodated in these accommodation structures; continuous improvement of the agribusiness

management in the area; revision of seasonal and off-season pricing policy according to the category of tourists, country of origin; frequency and rate of return to the same boarding house; joining a tourism cluster by initiating and developing harmonious cooperation with various actors interested in the development of agro tourism; permanent assessment of customer satisfaction.

- Valorization of touristic diversification opportunities, respectively an integrated model of tourism embedding different types of tourism, with different economic and social players, but which also offer the dimensions of the sustainable development in the tourism sector.

In conclusion, we consider that the achievement of the proposed measures create the premises of a beneficial restructuring of the tourism sector in order to improve the activity of the structures that support the Romanian tourism offer in order to achieve the expected performance.

My name is Rusu Robert, I am a PhD student at the Doctoral School of Economics at the “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galați and I conduct, in order to finalize the PhD thesis, a study to identify the current framework of Romanian tourism as well as the perspectives of developing the tourism offer. I mention that this questionnaire is anonymous and will not involve you later. Thank you.

Section A

1. How do customers appreciate the quality of the services provided by the tourism organization that you are managing?

- a. Very good
- b. Good
- c. Not good - not even weak
- d. Poor
- e. Very weak

2. Compared to the tourism season 2014 - 2015, the number of customers is currently:

- a. Growing
- b. The same
- c. Declining

3. How do you think clients / tourists appreciate the offer of the tourism organization that you are managing?

- a. Very varied
- b. Variant
- c. Slightly varied

4. What promotion tools do you use for higher tourism awareness?

- a. Internet
- b. Television
- c. Leaflets, brochures
- d. Magazines
- e. Events
- f. Loyalty programs
- g. Other

5. To achieve better business results, you consider that fighting the competition is:

- a. Absolutely necessary
- b. Whether
- c. No need

6. To what extent do you consider the diversification of tourist offer to be a necessity?

- a. Very high
- b. Large
- c. Whether
- d. Small
- e. Very small

Section B.

Please check with X in the box corresponding to your reply. The statements are evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents your total disagreement with the stated statement, and 5 represents your total agreement to the stated statement.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	5	4	3	2	1
1. The company identifies customer wishes and meets them in the shortest possible time.					
2. The company has a clear strategy with well-defined objectives.					
3. The company deals with customer requests as soon as possible.					
4. In the company , the activities that require the creation of new ideas are stimulated.					
5. The company aims to continuously improve the services offered.					
6. Within the company, the resources are assigned so that it maintains its acquired position.					
7. The company's strategy is reviewed periodically, depending on the evolution of the environment and the market to					

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	5	4	3	2	1
which the company addresses its value proposition.					
8. The company periodically conducts polls among customers on the possibilities of improving the services offered.					
9. The company has supported over the last 5 years at least one action to promote environmental protection.					
10. Employees are regularly trained on environmental protection rules.					
11. Business customers are encouraged to protect the environment by drawing attention to the importance of their actions.					
12. The services provided by the company differ significantly from those of competitors.					

Section C.

1. Your company is on the market:

- a. Less than 5 years
- b. Between 5 and 10 years
- c. Between 10 and 5 years
- d. For over 15 years

2. Which category of tourism unit belongs to your company:

- a. Hotel
- b. Tourist villa
- c. Bungalow
- d. Holiday Village
- e. Tourist stop
- f. Motel
- g. Camping
- h. Tourist board
- i. Agrotourist boarding house
- j. Turistic complex
- k. Other

3. By legal perspective, the company you are managing is:

- a. Limited liability company;
- b. Joint stock company;
- c. Authorized individual;
- d. Individual company.

4. The number of employees of the company is:

- a. 1-9 employees;
- b. 10 to 49 employees;
- c. 50-249 employees;
- d. Over 249 employees.

5. The capital of your company is:

- a. Domestic
- b. Foreign
- c. Mixed

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