

PROBLEMS AND BARRIERS IN THE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT REGIONS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract: *The analysis of the main problems and dysfunctions of the tourist field in the development regions, as well as the effects they produce separately or aggregated, suggests the formulation of some challenges for the development of the tourism industry in the Republic of Moldova. The major problems of the Moldavian tourism industry, which are systematized and overlapped on the attributions of the deciding factors in tourism, allows through this research to present a systematized framework of problems to be solved for the country's development as an attractive tourist destination in all development regions. In this respect, the state policy and strategy regarding the tourism development of the Republic of Moldova must be elaborated and realized based on the concept of sustainable development.*

Key-words: *regional development, regional politics, region, tourism industry, SWOT analysis, touristic flows, lasting tourism.*

JEL Classification: *R11, R58, Z32.*

1. Introduction

Tourism is a competitive economic sector, well-balanced developed that values efficiently the representative patrimony of the a country, it promotes the hospitality at high standards, ensures the diversity of citizens' consent.

The tourism sector can be considered one of the basic engines that ensures the economic development and flowering of a country. The touristic patrimony represents the ensemble of elements that lay at the basis of the touristic activity on a certain territory, including touristic natural and antropic resources, technical-material basis, general infrastructure, touristic infrastructure and goods for touristic consume.

A well conceived and administrated touristic sector can help to the conservation of the natural and cultural patrimony on which it depends, to the empowerment of the host communities, the creation of business opportunities, the promotion of peace and intercultural understanding, imminent evidence constituting statistical data.

However it has a small surface, the Republic of Moldova has a considerable touristic potential, represented first of all, by the geomorfological territory – an unusaul diversity of landscape reservations or natural lands and unique geological monuments, of global european value.

The constitution of the Republic of Moldova, guarantees the right to the free circulation through the country, to leave and return to the country (27 art.), the right to the paid leave (art. 43) (Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, 1994). The focus on the citizen is inspired from the right of rest and recreation of any person, promoted by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 24). At the same time, all recent governmental programmes have promoted the idea of a good governance of the touristic sector via the development of the touristic routes, an attribution that is specific to entrepreneurs in the sector.

The Republic of Moldova dispose of touristic potential but a limited one, by both the small territory and limited natural and financial resources or poorly developed managerial or institutional experience. However, tourism is characterized by the marketing opportunity and legend selling. In addition to the legend of wine and traditions that are still preserved in rural areas, other sweet legends for foreigners are very difficult to invent and it is especially difficult to turn them into a source of income.

The primary forms of tourism practiced in the last decade in the Republic of Moldova are rural, wine, cultural, health and beauty tourism. The history of tourism development shows that we are just at the beginning of the path, and often, namely experience is a decisive factor in promoting national values.

2. Analysis of the current situation and identification of the problems of the Center Development Region

The tourism activity on a global level is also valued by assessment of the position of the different countries in the international tourism structure. Thus, every year the World Tourism Organization carries out an unfolded analysis of the international tourist circulation, exploiting all the destinations in the world.

The impact of tourism on a national economy is measured by a phenomenon known as the multiplier effect of tourism.

Tourism in the Republic of Moldova is considered to be as one of the primary fields of the national economy. Being a service sector, tourism contributes to the development of the economy by capital accumulation within about 12 types of branch-specific activities, attracting in its activity about 20 branches connected to about 140 services related to the tourism sector: catering, transport, production and goods trading, equipment, souvenirs, cultural activities, sport, leisure activities, healthcare etc.

The foreign tourists stay in the Republic of Moldova on average 2-3 days, explained by the nature of business and service trips or short vacation trips. Customers from the tourist-generating countries for Moldova over the last 10 years have shown a relatively steady behavior towards the Moldovan hotel offer, with the exception of tourists from Turkey, who are more dependent on the programs offered by the travel agencies (5-6 days).

The tourist infrastructure constitutes a totality of forms or types of constructions necessary for the communication of a tourist area with other areas, whose existence is necessary before but also during the tourism activity itself. Traditionally, the tourist infrastructure is determined by the networks of: touristic routes, touristic resorts, touristic areas, specialized touristic transport, beaches, complexes to serve tourists. It should be noted that that a large number of tourist service structures to increase efficiency are join in networks or chains with a well-developed corporative management system with high-tech relationships.

In the Republic of Moldova such networks are in the process of being set up. Thus, the travel agencies have elaborated a system of 20 national tourist routes, 7 of which are part of a national program "The Road of Wine", and the government has established by a decision a national system of recreational and leisure areas related to aquatic pools. Nowadays, there is under development a network of accommodation and food structures in the rural area. Such directing management systems have museums and partilly the units for organizing events (theaters, sports complexes etc.).

At the level of the national economy around 13.56 thousand or 3.67% of the employees are in the hospitality field (HoReCa), from this category only every tenth employee (10.66%) is from the hotel, the others being employed by restaurants, cafes and other catering units (Regional Development Agency Centre, 2017, p. 15).

The Central region of the Republic of Moldova covers 13 districts. The economic specialization of the region is: agriculture, especially viticulture and fruit growing, processing industry, trade and services. The tourism industry is somewhat more dynamic than in the rest of the country and consists of 8.6 thousand accommodation places. We note that the vast majority of foreign tourists prefer to stay in the capital. In this region there are 105 summer camps for children, which serves approximately 35-40 thousand people every

year. We would like to mention that the number of summer camps and similar structures in the center of the republic is higher, but these are not covered by the national statistical investigations or those carried out by the National Tourism Authority.

In the central region of the Republic of Moldova there are 124 natural areas of value protected by the state with a total area of 39.4 thousand ha, 2 national resting areas, 40 museums, 274 cult buildings of national importance and 27 of local importance, which gives it an attractive investment attractiveness (Regional Development Agency Centre, 2017, p. 18).

The tourism potential of the Center Development Region is varied and cognitively valuable and sufficient to motivate the journeys to the destinations here. The attractions are expressive and create a clear and persistent image of the region as an forest area with old settlements and many medieval monasteries. The wine tradition in the region is enlightening for different local household activities and economic ones.

In the territorial profile, in the Center Development Region there is a lower average number of employees per economic unit than the average per country, as well as average incomes. But the quota of profitable enterprises in the Center Development Region is above the average per republic.

In the Center Region there is a slight decrease (after a relative increase) of the number of places from 9399 places in 2008 year to 8591 places in 2018 year. The most dramatic decreased in 2018 year (about 15.5%), especially from the account summer accommodation units. However, we must note the precarious discipline of reporting (statistical and of other order) of summer accommodation units.

In the districts of Orhei, Dubăsari, Criuleni and Ungheni the accommodation capacities exceed 1000 places, but which lately have a tendency to decrease (2018). In the other districts the accommodation capacities are in a relative stagnation (Regional Development Agency Centre, 2017, p. 20).

The accommodation units serve an important number (94,381 persons) of foreign visitors who cross the border of the country (about 2.8 million visitors). However, the percentage that stay in the hotels and other establishments is approx. 3.37%. This is explained by the large number of one-day visitors (small border traffic), transit passengers, and accommodations in the gray sector.

The reduced diversification of tourism offers in the region, the territorial imbalances in the administration and promotion of the regional tourism offer make the Center Development Region remain still a destination appreciated by a limited number of foreign tourists. In this regard, there are large discrepancies in the accessibility and quality of accommodation units, especially those for mass tourism; at the same time, the short tourist stay results in low performances in domestic tourism, trips and museums. The cultural patrimony is degraded and, in general, few visitors know the region through excursions. This is also due to the lack of actions for the tourist visibility of the region inside and outside, the lack of financial resources to promote the field (such as: exhibitions, promotional materials, financial support of projects in the field etc.).

The tourist attractions represents the main image trainer and motivator of the tourist trips in the RD Center. The natural, cultural-historical, ethnographic and other patrimony of each local community in the region is a decisive potential for the development of the tourism sector. Thus, preserving this treasure, but first of all, its intelligent capitalization is a necessity, but also a norm for a hospitable society. Currently, most of the regional tourist attractions are in a precarious state, being unknown, unesthetically, inaccessible and undeveloped in order to visit them. And the state of the attractions has an almost decisive impact on the general image of the RD Center.

The increased migration of the qualified staff in tourism and the shortage of the skilled labor forces in the HoReCa sector aggravate the situation of the hospitality sector in the DRC.

Similarly, the infrastructure connected to the major highways is not fully equipped with rest stops arranged for tourist needs, the deplorable and uncertain state of the access roads to most tourist attractions and the poor visibility of most tourist attractions on the roads of the region (without the appropriate tourist markings) makes RD Center a quite unknown area.

3. Capitalizing and promoting the tourist patrimony of the Center Development Region

The tourism infrastructure forms the basis of the regional tourism product. Elements of specific infrastructure must be present in destinations rich in tourist attractions, in order to enhance them and to allow the visitor to explore them safely and comfortably. The advanced state of degradation, fragmentation and territorial dispersion, imbalances in the tourist infrastructure quality - bring a great damage in the distribution of tourist flows in the RD Center. Thus, the tourist, due to the lack of supply of the destination, because of the doubtful quality of the services or the uncertainty of the trip, is often demotivated to travel through the RD Center (rather than for short periods) and prefers to stay in the capital.

That's why there are needed sustained measures for the touristic arrangement of the access corridors in the RD Center and to the representative destinations, including by marking some national and regional routes connected to those from the neighboring regions. These will take into account the existing network of road connections, railways and navigable rivers, as well as the potential routes for alternative transport (velo, naval, sports, cable etc.), which need to be arranged and interconnected to increase the mobility of tourists through RD Center.

The precarious situation in the field of accommodations in the destinations visited by tourists, the territorial and seasonal discrepancies, the doubtful quality of the hosting services, make the region less hospitable. Thus, there should be given encouraging actions as to restore and increase the accommodation capacities in the tourist destinations, especially for the children's camps and the accommodation units accessible to the mass tourist, as well as their classification according to the national requirements.

Recommended actions (*Decision of the Government Strategy "Tourism 2020"*. Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova no. 127-133 of 23.05.2014):

- Installation of tourist markings, road signs, information panels around the attractions and along the tourist routes;
- Arrangement of stopping places on national and regional roads;
- Development of various transport logistics (car, railway, naval, velo, cable, etc.) interconnected to ensure the increased mobility of the visitors to the RD Center.

The restoration and modernization of the material tourism base in the locations developed even before the 90's of the century XX, as well as the development of new accommodation capacities around the tourist attractions - must be the main actions of this measure. This refers in particular to the accommodation structures accessible territorially and financially to a large number of visitors (eg. children's camps, rest bases, holiday villages, camping, caravan parks), including for the extension of existing ones to be able to work in the off-season or for new categories of tourists (eg: family, weekend, vacationers etc.).

The contemporary tourist is cautious about what and where to buy, prefers a wide range of accessible services and goods, and in new destinations he focuses on safety and

comfort. The complex service of the tourist to the destination in RD Center is difficult to achieve solitary by a single actor on the grounds of lack of investment in facilities, lack of capacities to serve a disproportionate number of clients in time, limiting the choice for the potential consumer, etc. In the RD Center destinations, this can be achieved if the entrepreneurs are associated at the level of a tourist destination or within known networks.

Tourist services are offered from person to person, and hospitality is provided by the receiving host. This is why the role of the human factor in tourism is most often decisive in the tourist offer of any destination, and the companions of tourist groups from elsewhere compensate to a small extent the lack of qualified staff at the destination. In such areas as accommodation, quality food service, guidance, tourist transport, the specific leisure is practically impossible to activate without "direct contact" personnel with the tourist. At the same time, contemporary tourism submits specific requirements for the knowledge of the people responsible for managing the flows of visitors or managing the tourist attractions in the visitor circuits (as well as for the LPAs representing the host destinations in national or international trips). The training and development of the human resources capacities in the tourism region must be a permanent concern, so that it can meet the increasing expectations of the country's guests, but also be able to create new competitive tourism products, exploiting effectively all the other resources of the RD Center. The Regional Sectorial program in the field of tourism is designed for the implementation period 2017-2025. Thus, the forecasted sources of financing are the National Fund for Regional Development, the National Ecological Fund, external and internal donors attracted within the projects and initiatives of the actors involved in the development of tourism in the RD Center.

4. Conclusions

Center Development Region has a number of competitive advantages that encourage tourism activity such as: favorable geographical location in the center of the country, at the proximity to Chisinau (which is the largest domestic tourist market), the high mobility of the population of the region encouraged by the presence of 7 touristic areas consecrated with a great diversity of valuable historical-cultural monuments of national value, old monasteries situated relatively compact, natural reservations and protected areas, many aquatic and forest resources for recreation that facilitate entrepreneurship in the hospitality field, functional museums distributed relatively uniform, wine traditions with well-known brands, rich and diverse craft traditions, as well as favorable climate conditions for the spa tourism, which ensures a good diversity of tourist offers and circuits, a growing accommodation sector for tourists especially from the neighboring countries and the EU or developed states. Besides this, the population is increasing the consumption potential of tourism and travel services.

This is why the interested actors propose to develop attractive and competitive tourist destinations in the Center Region in order to enhance the life quality of local communities, including by following specific objectives: capitalizing and promoting the tourist patrimony from the DRC; development and arrangement of tourist infrastructure; facilitating the association in order to develop tourist destinations, the development of touristic products, improvement of marketing destinations and tourist visibility systems; developing human resources skills for the tourism industry.

These must be achieved through the insistent promotion and implementation of a set of actions and projects that can ensure the balanced territorial development of the sector for the benefit of the host-communities and guests in the RD Center.

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