

# TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** *Tourism and sustainable development are the subject of many initiatives and public or private debates in Romania. The main problem to which these initiatives try to find an answer is mostly related to the income generation for the local communities by using rationally and efficiently the local potential, in agreement with the economic, social, natural, and cultural factors. Consequently, some measures should be taken, and the tourist sector as a whole needs all the methods of sustainable development: new technologies, change of social behaviour, change of environmental legislation, methods of environmental management, better planning and development of control procedures. In this article, we presented a model of tourism development which should be applied in all the regions of great tourist attraction, and we realised a synthesis of the socio-economic advantages of sustainable tourism.*

**Keywords:** tourism; sustainable development; lasting development.

**JEL classification:** L83; Q01.

## INTRODUCTION

*In the last century, a change with enormous implications appeared on the list of human priorities: instead of happiness, the first place was taken by the problem of survival (Giurgiu, n.d.).*

We all know that any human activity can have positive or negative effects on the environment. The geo-system includes several subsystems interacting with each other, with a continuous exchange of energy and matter among them. The anthroposphere presents different interactions with the biosphere, and it can modify it by its actions (Avramescu, 2005). The irrational environmental exploitation for economic or social welfare reasons, which represent the main purpose of intensive economic development, characteristic of our century, cannot be maintained on long term unless the environment becomes completely degraded, involving risks even for the survival of human species in the near future. The resources of the planet are limited, and although some of them are recyclable, this requires a rather long time, and we are using them at an alarming rate.

According to the report provided by the World Wide Fund for Nature, *if the consumption and production practices continue at the same rate, after the following 50 years we would need another planet Earth in order to survive.* (Grand et al., 2007)

In 1987, the Prime Minister of Norway, who at that time was also President of the World Commission on Environment and Development, published a report bearing the title *Our Mutual*

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*Future*, in which he analysed the entire evolution between human beings and the environment, and he also tried to explain the difference between growth and development, rejecting the concept that the ecologists were against economic development and human society.

Daly and Cobb (1989), considered *the founders of the theory of sustainable development*, elaborated between 1971 and 1981 the concept of *steady state economics*, which is the basis on which the notion of sustainable economy was later consolidated. Starting with this concept of *steady state economics*, the concept of sustainable development was initiated ten years later.

In 1990, the World Bank was organising in Washington an International Interdisciplinary Conference with the subject *Ecological Economics of Sustainability*, when *The International Society for Ecological Economics* was founded. This became a reunion of several specialists from the entire world.

In 1992, in Rio de Janeiro, from June 3<sup>rd</sup> to June 14<sup>th</sup>, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development took place, attended by 178 states, which was later followed by a two-day summit, called EARTH SUMMIT (World Conference *Environment and development* in Rio de Janeiro, 1992). This conference constituted the beginning of the endeavours concerning environmental issues and sustainable development (Casey J. Dawkins, 2003). The participants in the Summit, leaders of the states of the world, adopted there the following main documents: the Rio Declaration; the Convention on Climate Change; the Convention on Biodiversity; the Declaration on Desertification; Agenda 21. (Giurgiu, n.d.)

Since Romania is member of the European Union, the concept of *sustainable development* should also have an impact on the territory of our country. Nowadays, not only that the concept of sustainable development is of great interest, but it also has a long perspective. Sustainable development, among several other roles, also contributes to change the life style, and it makes us, in a certain way, become better and more tolerant.

## **1. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – CONCEPTUAL APPROACH**

Taking into account the concept of *sustainable development*, we can state that this mainly refers to the problem of resources. All the evidence shows a real concern for our planet and the natural resources, which are limited quantitatively. Also, our environment is more and more polluted, and the population of the planet is continuously growing, which does not limit the main problem of sustainability only to strictly economic aspects. On the contrary, efforts are made to optimally combine the economic aspects (concerning the resources) with the social ones

(concerning the social classes), and with the ecological ones (concerning the environmental protection and pollution reduction).

A *sustainable development* should allow human life to continue, and it should also assure environmental protection from the activities of the society. Some natural disasters appeared not only as a result of high risk activities, but also due to the way we behaved with the place where we developed our daily activities (Țugulea, et al., 2013). *The greenhouse effect, acid rain, desertification, ozone holes, pollution, destruction of forests and of biodiversity, erosion* are indicated as evidence that an economic development with no limits is a way with no return, which can lead no more to economic welfare; the natural capital and the patrimony left by our ancestors should persuade us to reinitiate a truly sustainable economy.

According to Tiezzi and Marchettini (1998), *the new theories of sustainable development and ecological economy confront us with a paradigm: today there is no economy based on two parameters (capital and work), but an ecological economy which admits the existence of three parameters: work, natural capital, and capital produced by man*. Consequently, we consider that sustainable development also represents a problem of relationships and interdependence. *Carrying capacity* is the capacity of the planet to support the population and other life forms, flora and fauna, which man and nature need in order to survive. This is the *basis of sustainability*.

Over the time, it is obvious that from a rich world concerning the natural capital and a poor world concerning the capital produced by man, we passed to a very poor world from a natural point of view, and rich in what concerns the capital produced by man. (Țugulea et al., 2014) Consequently, Rudolf (1985), the founder of thermodynamics, stated: *In a nation's economy, there is a generally available law: the consumption should never be higher than what can be produced in the same period of time. This is why we should consume no more fuel than it can be possibly reproduced by tree growth*.

A very clear definition was given within the World Commission on Environment and Development attached to United Nations Organization, also known as Brundtland Commission or Brundtland Report (from Gro Harlem Brundtland's name, who was then the Prime Minister of Norway): *sustainable development represents a development satisfying the present needs without compromising the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own* (Ardelean and Maior, 2000).

Other definitions attributed to sustainable development are as follows: *sustainable development is the economic development of mankind which completely takes into account the ecological consequences of the economic activity, and it is based on the resources that can be replaced or regenerated and therefore cannot be exhausted* (Berca, 1998-2001); *sustainable development is nothing but a vector of the desired social objectives, obviously the ones related to*

*the level and repartition of income, access to health, education and other services (OCDE, 1995, p.28); sustainability can be expressed with the help of a system of indicators. It is fundamental that a sustainable development is based on the following three value judgements: equal rights with future generations, leaving the inheritance of an intact nature, and an international justice (Pitea, 1999).*

In the concept of sustainable development there are three main axes, as follows: *sustainable environment, social equity and economic prosperity*. Most of the times, people think only about themselves, they are too selfish to think of the future, of the future generations, and they have norms like: *having a decent and comfortable living; economic prosperity; to relax in a nice landscape, at least in leisure time; to have access to health and education systems; to have a series of basic rights respected; to have the perspective of a decent pension.*

From these norms, we can clearly see that very few are those who are concerned about nature, about what surrounds them, and about the fact that one should be responsible for the society and for the environment, eliminating the indifference and demonstrating that by involving personally one can obtain positive effects on the environment and society.

In conclusion, as a general imagine of the future society, sustainable consumption will become a complex field, situated at the crossroads of several subjects. We should all participate in the action of supporting a sustainable environment, because society is an immense consumer with mechanisms directed only towards economic development, using the sustainability of natural environment in order to develop.

## **2. LASTING DEVELOPMENT vs SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

*Sustainable development can be generally defined as the improvement of each person's life now and for the generations to come.*

The concept of sustainable development promoted by United Nations forums mainly refers to:

- Equitable and balanced economic development;
- Higher level of employment, social cohesion and inclusion;
- Assuming responsibility for the use of natural resources and of environmental protection;
- Coherent, open and transparent policies;
- International cooperation for global promotion of sustainable development.

Georgescu (1995) considers that *the economic and social development, the state of the environment and human health are strongly connected, conditioning one another, environment and health constituting conditions necessary for any process of development, which can influence at its*

turn, positively or negatively, the state of environment and human health (Dinga, 2006). Although it is generally accepted that the terms *lasting* and *sustainable* can conceptually substitute one another, we consider that we should accept a few distinctions which could prove important, including the methodological point of view. In this context, the expressions “lasting development” or *lasting growth* are quasi-correct, because both development and growth are processes necessarily associated to social institutions (in their most general meaning), so they bear the impact generated by the non-natural action agent.

*Development or growth can only be sustainable, not lasting.* Taking into account the specialists’ opinion, (Țugulea, Bobâlcă and Soponaru, 2013) we can speak of *lasting development* or of *lasting growth* only metaphorically, or by abuse of language. From a rigorous point of view, the terms should be referred as *sustainable development* or *sustainable growth*.

The acceptance of the concept of lasting development by the Romanian authors (Cămășoiu, 1994, p.24) led to a series of semantic or pragmatic difficulties.

The concept of *lasting / sustainable* is considered by Bănaciu (2004) a debatable topic, due to an erroneous understanding of the semantics of the words mentioned. Consequently, he gives further explanations with the intention to justify his preference for the use of the expression *sustainable development*:

- the expression *sustainable development* is taken from Anglo-Saxon literature. The term *sustainable* originates from Latin, the verb *sustenare* meaning *to sustain*, *to support* and also *to self-support*.

- the term *sustainability* has the same meaning in other Latin languages, like Spanish (*sostenibilidad*), Italian (*sostenibilita*) or Portuguese (*sustentavel*). It means a state of continuous balance due not only to the capacity of a system to be consumer of (primary) resources, but also to its capacity to create its own resources, to follow a regenerative cycle.

- according to Merriam Webster Dictionary, a *lasting system* is a system *existing or continuing for a long time*. This does not necessarily mean that it would be in harmony with nature (which is required by the principles of sustainability), neither that it would have the possibility to create its own resources (to self-support). For example, a rock is lasting in time, and a tree or any living organism is sustainable, because it has the capacity to sustain, to support itself – to integrate in a natural cycle.

- the term *sustainability* cannot be considered a neologism in Romanian (perhaps only partially), due to its Latin origin (the verb *sustenare*) with corresponding Romanian words (*a sustine* – to sustain/support, *a se sustine*, *a se intretine* - to support itself).

Dinga (2006) considers he can make a distinction between the terms *lasting* and *sustainable* by the presence or absence of dissipative systems in the process or system analysed. From this point of view, it is considered that the reference to durability (lasting systems) as a dynamic characteristic of processes or systems, excludes the natural environment where there are no dissipative systems; in any natural environment where there are dissipative (human or non-human) systems, we cannot speak of durability anymore, only of sustainability.

The concept of *lasting* has the significance of persistence in time of a structure or entity, while the concept of *sustainable* has rather the meaning of the possibility to maintain in time that entity or structure, in an attractive way (Jugănar, 2007, p.247).

In such an approach, we may consider a rock as being lasting if it has no intervention upon it, but a public institution can prove to be sustainable. From this perspective, we can make a semantic distinction between the two concepts, considering the aspect of their connection with the action agent.

On the other hand, while *durability* denotes only the aspect of being stationary, *sustainability* may also refer to a dose of growth or ungrowth. In other words, there might be a *sustainable development* or an *unsustainable development*, or a *sustainable growth* or an *unsustainable growth*, as well as a *sustainable ungrowth* or an *unsustainable ungrowth* (Theobald, 1998).

In such an approach, we consider it is correct to use the terms *sustainable development* or *sustainable growth*.

#### **4. MODEL OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

According to Vellas, sustainable tourism development belongs to the process of planning the activities whose purpose is to avoid any actions affecting the very bases of development, as follows: ecosystems degradation, endangering the cultural patrimony, brutal modification of traditions and people's life style, as well as competition for the access to equipment and infrastructure. (Vellas, 2002, p.190)

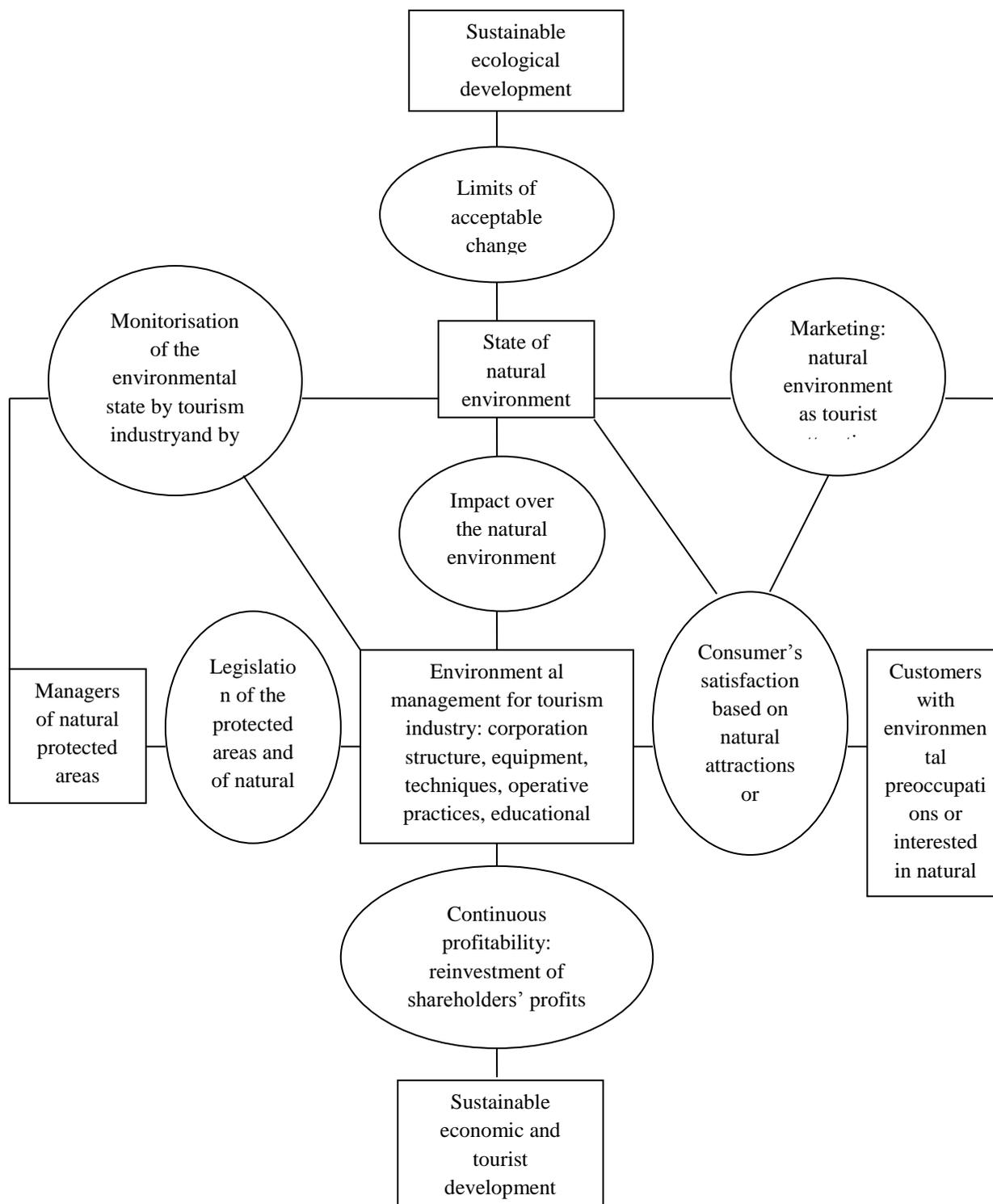
Consequently, sustainable tourism development is related to anadequate environmental management. There are several ways by which it may be assured. A model of sustainable tourism development is presented in *Figure 1* (Buckley, 1996).

This model of tourism development should be applied in all the regions of great tourist attraction.

Starting with this model, we consider that sustainable tourism development should be approached from the very stages of design and construction of tourist equipment in order to avoid

the conflicts with the environment, local community, and other economic sectors. Then it should be continued to the stage of tourism activity development, when the effects over the environment could be controlled through the authorised organisms, and when strategies could be established to resolve the deficiencies, to adequately equip ecologically the tourist endowment.

**Figure 1 - Model of sustainable tourism development**



Source: (Buckley, 1996)

At the same time, it would be beneficial for tourism sustainable development to have a good cooperation among authorities (who possess the legislative, economic, social instruments, other regulatory documents of public interest), economic agents (who initiate projects of improvement and tourist services), defenders of the environmental protection and cultural patrimony, local providers of tourist services, tour-operators and tourism agents, and last but not least, tourists - as beneficiaries.

In practice, we have come to the conclusion that there were two separate coordinates applicable in tourism in what concerned sustainability (Ștefănică, 2010). The first and the most important coordinate on long term consists of *improving sustainable practices at the destinations chosen by tourists*, where they can have a negative impact over the natural environment (for example, the erosion of coral reefs by recreation activities, or of mountains by skiing and hiking, excessive use of fresh water for bathing, swimming, watering the gardens, the golf courses, water pollution by dumping untreated waste in rivers, and carbon dioxide emissions by the use of automobiles), as well as over the socio-cultural environment (for example, the transformation of art and traditional customs in a form of animation and profit for the hotels, imposing behavioural and cultural norms of abundance, characteristic especially to Western societies, to the cultures who are not familiar with such methods, by a process often called *neo-colonialism*).

However, in contrast with other industries, comparable as dimension and relevance, tourism industry has the potential to contribute positively and in a great measure to the welfare of the destinations visited. The opportunity to exploit these positive, sustainable contributions is making tourism such a vital preoccupation for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The second coordinate refers to the *modality in which the companies from tourism industry make their operation and development decisions*. Some activities take place at the destination, for example at the hotels, B&Bs, inns, resort villages, different forms of attractions, others take place away from destinations, for example airlines, tourism agencies or tour-operators' activity. Tourism companies have as many reasons to control the pollution and to administer waste as any other company from other industry. They even bear a greater responsibility, taking into account that they often operate in highly attractive areas, but also very sensitive from an environmental point of view. This becomes a problem for the design of a hotel building, or for the development of the surrounding area. A good design of buildings and green areas can reduce very much the level of pollution produced by a given number of tourists per day. Furthermore, it is necessary to implement programmes for saving the energy, for the control of sound pollution and emissions, for reduction of fresh water consumption, for lower use of toxic chemical substances, for recycling and reuse of materials.

## 5. SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Sustainable tourism has the potential to promote social development by the creation of new workplaces, redistribution of income and decrease of poverty. (Ștefănică, 2010) From an economic point of view, the main advantages of sustainable tourism are related to foreign currency gains, contributions to Governmental income, generation of opportunities concerning occupation of labour and of business. *Table 1* presents synthetic advantages generated by the practice of sustainable tourism.

**Table 1 - Synthesis of socio-economic advantages of sustainable tourism**

	Advantages	
	Social	Economic
<b>Sustainable tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It represents a force in maintaining peace</li> <li>▪ It strengthens the communities</li> <li>▪ It brings benefits to local residents by development of facilities</li> <li>▪ It revitalises culture and traditions</li> <li>▪ It encourages civic involvement and the sense of pride</li> <li>▪ It brings benefits to the tourists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Income realised from the exchange of foreign currency</li> <li>▪ Contributions to the governmental income</li> <li>▪ Generation of workplaces</li> <li>▪ Stimulation of investments in infrastructure</li> <li>▪ Contribution to the development of local economy</li> <li>▪ Direct financial contributions concerning nature protection</li> <li>▪ Advantage offered by the competition</li> </ul>

Under *asocial aspect*, the advantages determined by the practice of sustainable tourism are presented as follows:

- *Tourism represents a force for maintaining the peace.* By travelling, people have contact with one another. Due to the fact that sustainable tourism has an educational component, it can cultivate the understanding among people and cultures and it offers the possibility of cultural exchanges between hosts and visitors. This leads to the increase of people's chances to develop sympathies and reciprocal understanding, and to reduce prejudices.
- *Strengthening the communities.* Sustainable tourism can bring vitality to the communities in many ways. An example would be the events and festivals where the locals are the main participants, but also spectators. These events are often refreshed and organised as a result of the interest manifested by tourists. At the same time, the workplaces created in tourism can act as an important motivating factor in reducing the migration from rural areas. The locals can also have

a higher influence over tourism development and over the improvement of working conditions and of the perspectives in what concerns the income obtained from their professional training in the field of tourism, business development and their organisational abilities.

- *Development of facilities as a benefit for the local community.* In the places where tourism industry supports the creation of facilities and services useful to the community, which otherwise could not be developed, it can lead to reach high standards of prosperity in some regions. These benefits can include a better infrastructure, the improvement of health system and of transportation network, new recreational and sports facilities, restaurants and public areas, as well as an influx of high quality food and consumption goods.
- *Revitalisation of culture and traditions.* Sustainable tourism has the potential to improve the conservation and transmission of cultural and historical traditions. Contributing to the sustainable conservation and management of natural resources, it can generally lead to the possibility of protecting the local cultural patrimony or to the revitalisation of local cultures by regenerating cultural arts and crafts.
- *Tourism encouraging civic implication and the sense of pride.* In some cases, sustainable tourism contributes to the raise of the level of local conscientiousness concerning the financial value of natural and cultural places. This could stimulate the sense of pride in what concerns the local and national patrimony and develop the interest for its conservation. Consequently, the implication of local communities in sustainable tourism development and operation seems to be an important condition in what concerns the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity.
- *Benefits of sustainable tourism for tourists.* There are many benefits for tourists: they can enjoy the undegraded beauty of the natural environment and of the landscapes, the quality of the environment (clean air and waters), a healthy community with low rates of criminality, the authenticity of flourishing local traditions and culture (Ștefănică and Butnaru, 2013).

We present as follows the main *economic advantages and benefits* which sustainable tourism can enhance:

- *Income realised from the exchange of foreign currency.* The money spent by tourists, the import and export of goods and services generates an income for the host economy. Tourism represents an important source in what concerns the income of foreign currency for at least 38% of the countries. (UNWTO, n.d.)
- *Contributions to the governmental income.* The income realised by the government due to this sector of tourism can be classified as direct and indirect income. The direct income is generated by the taxes on the tourism employees' income, by commercial activities related to tourism, and by the fees applied directly to tourists, like the ecological fees, or the output taxes. The indirect

contributions derive from the taxes and fees applied to the goods and services offered to the tourists, for example the taxes on the souvenirs, alcohol, restaurants.

- *Generation of work places.* The quick expansion of tourism led to the creation of a considerable number of work places. Tourism can generate work places directly by hotels, restaurants, taxis, souvenir sale, and indirectly by providing goods and services which are necessary commercial activities within this sector (Dumitrică, 2012). According to World Tourism Organisation, tourism represents approximately 7% of the total number of employees at a global level.
- *Stimulation of investments in infrastructure.* Tourism can determine the local authorities to improve the infrastructure by creating better systems of water supply and sewage, roads, electrical energy supply systems, telephony and public transportation networks. All these contribute to the improvement of local residents' quality of life, and to the facilitation of tourism.
- *Contribution to the development of local economy.* Tourism can constitute an important or even essential part of local economy (Butnaru and Timu, 2011). Due to the fact that the environment represents one of the basic components of the values of tourism industry, the income realised by this sector is often used as a measure of the economic value of the protected areas. There is also another local income which cannot be easily quantified, because not all the tourists' expenses are registered officially in macroeconomic statistics. Part of the income from tourism is realised freely, like that of street vendors or unofficial guides. The positive side of these activities which develop freely or are not registered in statistics is that the money obtained is returned to the local economy and has a substantial multiplicative effect, because it is introduced cyclically into the circuit. World Tourism Organisation and Tourism Council estimate that tourism generates an indirect contribution equal to the direct encashment from this sector.
- *Direct financial contributions concerning nature protection.* Tourism can contribute directly to the conservation of the sensitive areas and habitats. The income realised by park entrance fees or other similar sources can be allocated especially for financing the protection and management of the environmentally sensitive areas. Some governmental authorities collect these sums of money by different exhaustive and indirect ways which are not particularly related to parks or protected areas (Ștefănică and Butnaru, 2013). Consequently, the taxes of use, income taxes, taxes on sale or rental of recreation equipment, and licensing fees for activities like fishing or hunting can provide governments with the funds necessary for the administration of natural resources.
- *The advantage offered by competition.* More and more tour-operators admit an active approach concerning sustainability, not only because tourists expect them to act accordingly, but also

because the persons employed in tourism are aware that the intact destinations are essential for survival of this industry on long term. More and more tour-operators prefer to work with the providers acting in a sustainable manner, for example saving water and energy, observing local culture and helping the host community.

## CONCLUSIONS

Due to the attention and support that sustainable development received in general, and particularly in tourism, is still a subject of intense debate, with no consensus in what concerns its definition and practical applicability. No matter the opinions of several researchers and analysts, sustainable development of tourism represents the dominant approach regarding the administration of the relationship between tourism and environment, based on a group of principles and objectives which had been adopted almost unanimously, with the purpose to minimise the negative impact of tourism over the environment.

In conclusion, we consider that, both theoretically and practically, sustainable tourism should aim, on the one hand, to integrally capitalise exceptional natural and cultural resources, to improve the quality of life in local communities, and on the other hand, to satisfy tourists' motivations and requirements in close connection with environmental conservation and protection for the future generations.

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