

The Romanian Seaside between Advertising and Disinterest

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Abstract

An important issue of the Romanian tourism is the fact that simultaneous advertising is at the core of advertising. Any country worthy of respect will start any year by making public a schedule of 10-20 tourist events, which shall be the tourist structure of the respective year. The launching of such a schedule on time, which should comprise the most important events, is similar to the departure of a Shinkansen from a Japanese railway station, at the precise moment, and not to the postponement and therefore the delay of the start to the destination.

The president of ECTAA, Jan Van Steen, asserted that the Romanian tourism needs advertising campaigns on the European market to persuade foreign visitors to discover this tourist destination. At the same time, Van Steen gave Romania little chance as concerns the development of the seaside area, explaining that “there is seaside everywhere, from Spain to Greece and Turkey”.

Furthermore, an advertising campaign must have two essential elements: a presentation of the destination properly and the quality-price ratio.

Key words: *advertising, disinterest, tourist potential, intelligence*

Introduction

We ask ourselves why foreign people do not come to visit the Black Sea Romanian seaside. Why should they come? Just for sunbathing? This is old-fashioned, they would come if there were tourist routes to take, if they could explore, in an organised manner or individually, everything regarding the ancient culture in Dobrogea. They would have so many things to do: from Adamclisi and the monasteries in Dobrogea, Histria, wine tasting, to the less known Dacian/Greek ancient cities that can still be visited ... They do not need cable railway, but pure history, the local authentic style, this sells well in Greece, Croatia, Hungary and the other countries. Romania has been an important tourist destination for the regional market, mainly promoting tourist seaside products, spas, cultural programs and the monasteries in the north of Moldavia and Bucovina.

The people in charge with the Romanian tourism blame each other for the decay of the seaside tourism, but they hardly take any measure to change this state of facts. Or if they do, they are simply theoretical, never to be put into practice for the benefit of the economic development as a whole.

The Romanian tourist offer has barely changed throughout time and has become non-competitive as concerns the requirements of the tourist demands and of the similar tourist products from the international market.

The reception tourist structures and especially the entertainment offer are outdated, they lack competitiveness, the tourist services and programs are of little value and stereotypically made, whereas the quality-price ratio is inconclusive.

That is why there has been a continuous decrease of the external tourist demand for Romania in the last 20 years.

In order to enter the international tourist competition, the Romanian tourism needs to be modernised, rethought and developed while new, modern and competitive tourist products need to be created in this respect.

Besides modernising tourist structures and tourist resorts, new tourist products, resorts, as well as original, attractive and novel programs are needed which might, by means of constant advertising on the international market, attract important tourist inflow to Romania. To this aim, it is necessary to develop a highly attractive entertainment and animation offer, by creating thematic and entertainment parks, aquatic parks, offers that are available in the traditional tourist countries in the world.

Besides the modernisation and development of a diversified and competitive tourist offer, measures need to be taken to improve and develop marketing and advertising activities, leading to the integration in the world tourism, the guarantee of the legislative framework and to a stimulating and stable financial-fiscal environment as appropriate.

The Romanian Seaside from the Black Sea

The Natural and Anthropic Potential

The Romanian seaside from the Black Sea stretches on 245 km, from the Danube outfall on the north side (Chilia branch – the country's border to Ukraine) to Vama Veche located at the south, on the Bulgarian border. Between Gura Chiliei and Sfântul Gheorghe, covering a distance of about 40 km, the seashore is bordered by the limit of the Danube Delta. From Sfântul Gheorghe to Cap Midia, there is an area of low sand, mostly dominated by the Razelm lagoon complex.

There are two different sectors along the seaside: on the north side of Cap Midia, the seaside consists in low, sandy beaches with strata that prove the fluvial genesis (areas covered with cane, lagoons, banks) and at the south side of Constanța the seaside is made of a series of headlands in which there are concave coast alveoli with high cliffs, where shore lines meet to delimit Tașaul, Mamaia, Agigea, Techirghiol, Tatlăgeac and Neptun lakes.

The southern area of the seaside, where the tourist resorts are located, is situated between parallel 44° 25' and parallel 43° 25' North latitude and covers a distance of 82 km.

The climate conditions of the Romanian seaside are among the best, with soft, dry climate and long, hot days in summer. The sun shines about 10-12 hours a day in July. The average temperature during summer is 24° C, and the annual average temperature is 11° C. Winters are moderate, with heavy winds. There can also be added the fact that the Black Sea is not tided and the waves lose their strength at the shore because of its low depth, which continues below the sea level, thus creating the proper conditions for talasotherapy.

The level of water salinity is very low, which creates the proper conditions for nautical sports and scuba diving; there are no high intensity sea currents during the summer and the sea waves have low heights; there is no tide, fact which permanently offers tourists dry beaches; the shore is smooth, without abrupt depths and without cliffs and gravel that may hinder the access to the

sea; the fact that the sea fauna does not have dangerous elements and that the sea air is characterised by a high level of purity (the natural aerosols result from the waves that break up on the shore) helps mineralizing organisms.

As concerns *the public food supply system on the seaside*, including Constanța and Mangalia, the number of units involved is of approximately 800 with an estimated capacity between 145.000 and 150.000 seats, without taking into consideration the units and points of sale such as tuck-shops, doughnut stores, pretzel stores and kiosks that sell food and soft drinks. We may notice, based on the calculations, that the ratio between the table seats and accommodation places is more than 1.2 seats for one accommodation place.

The entertainment offer of the seaside resorts has been diversified in the last years, which includes indoor and outdoor terrestrial entertainment facilities and aquatic entertainment facilities – beach and nautical entertainment areas. The indoor entertainment is represented by disco clubs, fun and gambling games, night bars, their main function being that of entertainment, especially for young tourists. With some exceptions, the material resources are good and have been modernised, while new buildings with high-quality equipment have been built, even if there are no or very few video clubs and multiple-function clubs.

A superior type of indoor entertainment is represented by the hotels organised as “*holiday clubs*” that has begun to take shape in Romania as well; this sort of hotel is to be found in Jupiter (Capitol Hotel), in Venus (Adriana Hotel), in Mamaia (Yaki Hotel and Club Scandinavia) and offers the tourists tennis, volley, football, mini golf facilities, clubs, disco clubs, playgrounds for children, casinos.

The outdoor entertainment activities are well represented, focusing especially on sports activities. In this category, we include sports fields, entertainment parks, bicycle renting, coach driving, horse riding, helicopter or airplane riding and parachute jumping. This type of entertainment is best represented in the Mamaia resort, the number of such equipment being too small in the other resorts, some of them being old, such as open-air theatres for which there have been no modernisation investments, or entertainment parks that produced even human casualties.

In the Mamaia resort, *the aquatic entertainment park* Aqua Magic was built, as well as eight more nautical entertainment facilities, 4 on the beach and 4 on the Siutghiol lakeside and a “telegondola”, which attracted a large number of tourists willing to admire the panorama of the resort.

In Saturn, investment was made in order to build *the aquatic complex* around hotels Hora – Balada – Sirena, which includes swimming pools, artesian wells, aquatic toboggans, water bars, etc.

The first private entertainment port in Romania for light boats was built at western standards – Yacht Club – “Europa” in Eforie Nord, *the first authorised private aerodrome* in Romania at Tuzla, where tourists are offered the possibility to take some entertainment flights and parachute jumping. *The stud farm Mangalia* was also modernised in 2004.

The Degradation of the Romanian Seaside

The Romanian Black Sea seaside is currently facing a continuous and intense process of degradation due to marine erosion. The seashore withdraws annually by almost 15-20 m for the shore of the Delta (between Sulina and Cape Midia) and by approximately 0.20-0.5 m for the seashore (Constanța – Vama Veche).

The erosion process of the seaside is due both to natural causes (global climatic changes and changes of the sea level) and to anthropic ones.

Among the *anthropic activities* that have a special impact upon the condition of the seaside, we may mention hydro technical works on the Danube and its main feeders, port developments and other technical coast works.

The hydro technical works made on the Danube and its main feeders have resulted in the reduction of sediment flux in the seaside area by more than 50%, as compared to the values registered before the construction of the dams. Thus, a great sedimentary unbalance in the coast area has been created, which triggered the activation of the erosion process.

The port developments and other engineering coast works, such as the seawalls of the navigable channel of Sulina, the seawalls of the ports of Midia, Constanța Sud and Mangalia, seaside safety works on the tourist beaches, lead to serious environmental fate.

The global climatic changes and the rise of the sea level, as well as the geo – ecological regional conditions that characterize the *Danube – Danube Delta – Black Sea geo-system*, have shaped two tendencies:

- *on the medium term* – the erosion process of the Romanian seaside will be as active as it has been in the last two decades;
- *on the long term* – *speeding up of the erosion process of the beaches*, especially because of the continuous reduction of the sandy flux in the seashore area, because of the continuous rise of the sea level, as well as of the increasing energetic level of the hydro-meteorological factors.

The issue of the seaside degradation due to the erosion process imposes strategies to prevent and reduce it. This issue is considered to be of national importance in many other countries, because of the fact that beach erosion leads to important loss of territory and especially to the endangerment of the tourism industry, which may create important damages to national economies and may influence, sometimes irreversibly, the ecological condition of the seaside area.

The Black Sea seaside represents an important tourist and spa area not only for Romania, where there can be found the following resorts: Năvodari, Mamaia, Constanța, Neptun, Jupiter, Cap Aurora, Venus, Saturn, Mangalia, 2 Mai (on the Romanian shore), but also for Bulgaria and its resorts Balcic, Albena, The Golden Sands, Varna, Burgas (on the Bulgarian seaside), Georgia (Suhumi, Batumi), the Russian Federation (Soci) or Ukraine (Ialta).

The SWOT Analysis

To better understand the problems which Romanian tourism faces, I tried to present, in Table 1, the number of international trips registered at Romania's borders in 2004-2006. The number of arrivals exceeds the number of departures. The overplus of departures regarding arrivals, 371.928 in 2004, 1.300.449 in 2005 and 2.868.765 in 2006 must be an alarm signal for the authorities who must ask questions like: Why does the Romanian tourist prefer another destination? Which are the Romanian tourist's interests? When we find the answer at these questions, we must state, that in future, we expect the Romanian tourism to be cured.

Table 1. International trips registered at Romanian' borders in 2004-2006

	2004	2005	2006
Total arrivals	6.600.115	5.839.374	6.036.999
Total departures	6.972.043	7.139.823	8.905.764
The overplus of departures regarding arrivals	371.928	1.300.449	2.868.765

Source: National Institute of Tourism, *Romanian Tourism*, Breviar Statistic, 2007 edition, pag. 85

Strong points

- the geographical orientation of the beach – to the East – allows the healthy ultraviolet cure;
- historical sites from the ancient Greece and Rome period;
- location on the territory: the region of Dobrogea, in general, and of the Seaside, in particular, have great strategic, political and economic position, being located at the crossroad of two major geopolitical zones: the Central Western and Oriental Europe and West and South-West Asia;
- the European roads E 60 and E 87, the main railroad București – Constanța, the international airport Mihai Kogălniceanu and the sea ports Constanța and Mangalia allow easy access to and from Europe and Asia;
- the Danube – Black Sea Channel;
- the natural and anthropic potential of the seaside;
- the importance of the Black Sea in the international politics at regional level;
- the large number of tourist structures - 41,36% of the total accommodation capacity of Romania (Table 2).

Table 2. Seaside position in the total tourist destinations from Romania in 2005 and 2006

Year		Total Romania	Of which on tourist destinations					
			Seaside	Spas	Mountain	Danube	Bucharest and county residences	Other localities
2005	Establishment of tourist reception	4.226	891	369	828	122	745	1271
	Structure (%)	100,0	21,09	8,73	19,58	2,88	17,62	30,08
	The tourist reception capacity	283.194	117.218	39.090	33.196	3.808	51.736	38.150
	Structure (%)	100,0	41,39	13,8	11,72	1,35	18,27	13,47
2006	Establishment of tourist reception	4.710	919	377	973	144	818	1479
	Structure (%)	100,0	19,51	8,0	20,66	3,06	17,47	31,40
	The tourist reception capacity	287.158	118.776	39.413	32.233	7.086	53.097	39.551
	Structure (%)	100,0	41,36	13,72	11,22	1,42	18,49	13,79

Source: National Institute of Tourism, *Romanian Tourism*, Breviar Statistic, 2006 and 2007 edition (statistic data processing)

Weak points

- the lack of coherent advertising campaigns on the European market to persuade foreign visitors to discover this destination;

- the environment pollution and the degradation processes of the Black Sea beach and sea front;
- the lack of coherent policies and programs for the integrated development of the Romanian seaside (infrastructure and technical and town equipments, protection and rehabilitation of the natural and built environment, etc.);
- the lack of unitary economic and tourist development policies of the county, for the three specific territorial units: the seaside area, the central area and the Danube area, yet all of them in close connection to the seaside area;
- the poor entertainment offer in point of quantity (the small number of facilities) and obsolete in point of equipment/installations;
- the lack of cooperation at regional level of the people concerned with tourism management, as well as of the local and central public authorities respectively;
- the decreasing training level of the personnel, as a result of the labour force migration;
- the summer tourist season is very short, very often no longer than two months; (Table 3)

Table 3. Overnight registered seasonality of the establishment of tourist reception in the seaside area in 2003, 2005 and 2006

Month of the year	2003			2005			2006		
	Overnight	Structure %		Overnight	Structure %		Overnight	Structure %	
		monthly	trimester		monthly	trimester		monthly	trimester
I	13.493	0,32	1,73	9.291	0,23	1,35	12.995	0,35	1,49
II	24.369	0,58		17.558	0,44		17.031	0,46	
III	34.696	0,83		27.568	0,68		25.224	0,68	
IV	36.551	0,87	18,58	34.794	0,86	17,38	27.437	0,73	15,96
V	136.075	3,24		98.670	2,45		111.334	2,97	
VI	607.762	14,47		556.626	14,07		459.057	12,26	
VII	1.368.053	32,57	77,51	1.314.856	32,65	79,52	1.229.242	32,82	77,04
VIII	1.545.880	36,80		1.587.144	39,41		1.523.713	37,45	
IX	342.085	8,14		300.353	7,46		253.813	6,77	
X	42.029	1,0	2,18	36.063	0,90	1,75	35.758	0,95	2,29
XI	34.565	0,82		22.218	0,55		31.471	0,84	
XII	14.868	0,36		12.037	0,30		18.795	0,50	
Total	4.200.426	100,0	100,0	4.027.178	100,0	100,0	3.745.810	100,0	100,0
Media lunară	350.035	8,33	-	335.598	8,33	-	312.151	8,33	-

Source: National Institute of Statistics (statistic data processing)

Legend:  The summer tourist season.

- the lack of direct flights to the international airport of Constanța;
- the low quality level of services in relation to the prices;
- difficult access to the seaside, especially by roads;

- the unfavourable image of Romania abroad as potential tourist attraction.

Opportunities

- the increase in the number of the three or four star hotels, to the detriment of those that have not been modernised;
- the increase in the number of tourist structures that offer accommodation in compliance to the international trends: all inclusive, of small size, personalised;
- the involvement of the important tour operators on the international market in seaside incoming;
- a coherent legislation regarding beach management, the integrated management of the coast area;
- international assistance projects to preserve and enlarge the beaches, the preservation of the coast area.

Threats

- the decrease of the buying capacity of the population;
- the superior development of the similar product in Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia and other countries in the area;
- the potential decrease of tourism income, as a result of intensifying the tendency towards season coming and weekend tourism;
- the tendency of the labour force to migrate abroad.

Advertising, Disinterest, Intelligence and Money

The poor advertising of the Romanian seaside at the Tourism Fair will send Romanians to Bulgaria or in cruises. The spring edition of the Tourism Fair of Romania should be a well-organised, elaborate one and, last but not least, a more attractive one.

When we speak about attractiveness, we actually mean that in 2007, the Romanian seaside was quite poorly represented in tourist agencies. According to the data from Table 4 we must notice that: from the total internal tourist actions organized by travel agencies, the weight for the seaside area is small, this value was 27,44% in 2005 and 27,35 in 2006.

Table 4. Tourism organized by travel agencies

	Years	Number of tourists	Number of tourists-days
Internal touristic actions-total	2005	1.210.041	9.217.091
	2006	1.275.951	9.487.620
Of which seaside area	2005	332.097	2.441.914
	2006	349.023	2.489.715
Seaside area structure in the total internal tourist actions (%)	2005	27,44	26,49
	2006	27,35	26,24

Source: National Institute of Statistics, 2007 (statistic data processing)

The low effort shown by the tourist agencies was supplied by the hotels, which tried to present their offers in their own booths.

The poor advertising of the Romanian seaside can easily be noticed from the great price difference between the offers of the Romanian resorts and of those from abroad. For instance, for the Mamaia resort, prices start from 150-200 Euro in two-star hotels for 5-6 nights in June, or start even from 300 Euro at peak season and may reach 400-500 Euro for three or four star hotels. As compared to the Romanian seaside offer, it is good to notice the offers in Bulgaria, Greece or Croatia, which, by their friendly prices, managed to guarantee a top position for the holiday of the Romanians in the summer of 2007.

Normally, the costs for one week in Greece, be it the peninsular or insular area, may start from 100-200 Euro, depending on the hotel. Prices may reach 800-1000 Euro per week in four or five star hotels.

Another event at the Tourism Fair was the appearance of cruises, be they famous, of the great-specialised companies, or local, such as, for instance, the Greek ones. Prices may vary between 1000 Euro for 7-10 days and maximum 1700-1800 for a 12-day tour.

Bulgaria's booth was a remarkable one, which, due to the great number of people who were at the disposal of the public, managed to offer valuable information to the visitors. In fact, our Bulgarian neighbours were present in the Fair with offers at promotional prices, obviously much smaller than those offered by the Romanian seaside resorts.

In conclusion, we may easily notice that there has been and still is a disparity between Romania and the competitor countries in the area as concerns the money invested in the promotion of the offer – millions of Euro.

In the last two years, 2006 and 2007, we witnessed the increase of the funds given to tourism advertising. Nevertheless, the investments in advertising, unfortunately, have barely been felt at the level of foreign tourist circulation. The specialists in promoting the Romanian seaside have offered an explanation for this situation, which seems to be quite reasonable, namely: *the outcomes of the aggressive market advertising are to be seen after 4-5 years of continuity*. This would be the good part of the story. Still, we must be objective and analyse the bad part as well. In the circles of those who deal with product advertisement, there is a saying that goes like this: *with a lot of money, anybody can make advertising. A strategist is the person who is able to make it with little money and much intelligence*.

Whereas from the point of view of the quantity of materials taken out on the market by the National Association of Tourism Agencies in 2006 and 2007 and of their graphical form (folds, leaflets, maps, alums, CDs, DVDs, etc.) we may assert that there was a process of recovery as compared to the "crisis" from the past but, as concerns the innovating content and especially the moment of their launch on the market, they are still far from perfection.

Another important issue of the Romanian seaside advertising is that of advertising strategists who did not understand the fact that they cannot show the offer for the current year in the international tourism fairs, but the offer for the following year. It is well known the fact that most tour-operators from Romania showed, in important international fairs, promotional materials with the current year offer.

We may notice the fact that the advertisement of long termed products, the Seaside in our case, keeps being dominated by two faults that are difficult to overcome: it is extremely small and it is even totally missing in some cases; it is, at the same time, simplistic and anachronistic, without showing, in a visible way, the new and shocking elements.

Let us hope that the 150 million Euros, which represent the European funds for tourism advertising, will have been spent usefully by 2013. EU will allocate 75 million Euros to create a national tourism brand and to perform promotional campaigns. Further more 15 million Euros

will be allocated for the development of the internal market by means of supporting advertising projects. At the same time, approximately 60 million Euros will be used in order to create a pilot network of national tourist advertising and information centers.

It seems that money is no longer an issue, or is, at least, a partially solved problem, whereas the burden of the Romanian seaside advertising is now replaced by the anaemia of intelligence.

Conclusions

Michael de Blust, secretary general of the European Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Associations (ECTAA), declared in a press conference that "Romania has an important potential, both concerning the number of Romanian tourists who will travel abroad, and regarding the number of foreign tourists who will come to visit you."

Within the same press conference, Jan Van Steen, the president of ECTAA, declared that the Romanian tourism needs advertising campaigns on the European market in order to persuade the foreign visitors to discover this tourist destination. At the same time, Van Steen gave Romania little chance as concerns the development of the seaside area, explaining that "there is seaside everywhere, from Spain to Greece and Turkey."

Van Steen's piece of advice for the development of the Romanian tourism is that of shifting from standard tourist offers to personalised holidays, which will lead to a great segmentation of the offers.

We believe that things would be completely different if the ministry paid less attention to advertising some seasonal destinations and more to creating/promoting tourist circuits, to substantial investments in the long-lasting development of these areas (land leasing for restaurants and handicraft shops near Adamclisi, near Histria, near so many other tourist objectives, repairing of the roads, partial reconstruction of ancient cities, organisation of festivals, stimulation of the local authorities by offering assistance in getting EU funds, etc.).

When the ministry understands the fact that foreigners are not obsessed with the image of Romania as much as we are and that they are more interested in exploring the ancient history of the Greek, Romans and Walachians who lived on this land, things will be better then.

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Litoralul românesc între promovare și dezinteres

Rezumat

O problemă importantă a turismului românesc este aceea că la baza promovării stă promovarea simultană. Orice țară care se respectă începe anul cu anunțarea unui calendar care să cuprindă 10-20 evenimente turistice, ce vor constitui osatura turistică a anului respectiv. Lansarea unui asemenea calendar din timp, care să cuprindă cele mai importante evenimente, echivalează cu plecarea unui Shinkansen, dintr-o gară japoneză, în mod punctual și nu amânarea și deci întârzierea startului spre destinație.

Președintele ECTAA, Jan Van Steen a afirmat că turismul românesc are nevoie de campanii de promovare pe piața europeană pentru a convinge vizitatorii străini să descopere această destinație turistică. Tot Van Steen nu dădea șanse prea mari României în legătura cu dezvoltarea zonei de litoral, precizând că “litoral este peste tot, din Spania până în Grecia și Turcia”.

În plus, o campanie de promovare trebuie să conțină două elemente primordiale: prezentarea destinației în sine, respectiv a raportului calitate-preț.