

FACTORS INFLUENCING ADVENTURE TOURISM IN ROMANIA IN A SUSTAINABLE PERSPECTIVE

Pop Al. Nicolae¹ and Baba Cristina Andrada²

^{1,2)}Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania

E-Mail: nicolae_al_pop@yahoo.com; baba.andrada@gmail.com;

Abstract

The adventure tourism has known a spectacular evolution in the past two decades due to the increased mobility and the individual self-indulgence desire. The anthropic potential in Romania meets the adventure demand and on the basis of the investigation, a series of directions of development of the adventure tourism in Romania are revealed. They were grouped on a short and medium-long time horizon. The research is qualitative one among travel managers who develop adventure offers. They have been invited to validate a series of hypotheses resulting from anchor discussions, as designers of this type of tourism. The hypotheses were tested by the brainstorming method. For the survey, an in-depth interview was conducted face-to-face with a conversation guide.

Keywords

Adventure marketing, sustainability, tourism in Romania

JEL Classification

M30, M31, L83

Introduction

New business areas are developing due to behavior change over the past decades. The consumption of goods and services not only grows as a general tendency, but has diverse requirements that changes the well-known businesses into more specific and defined activities. In this article, there are presented several tendencies, motivations and reasons, for which the classical tourism is slowly giving back, welcoming a more satisfying alternative for the modern society. There are presented as well, the results of a research which aims to analyze the effects over Romania of the adventure tourism. In particular there is taken into consideration the multiplier factor and the sustainability of this kind of activities, based on qualitative exploratory research on the basis of the free interview.

Based on the study of (Ashworth & Goodall, 1988) the individual motivation of travelling was to escape routines and work, or to overcome the worries by visiting new places. As the daily stress is increasing among the working population, the need of disconnection has to be fulfilled by activities with even greater impact and transposition. The cities travelling is no longer considered to be efficient enough in the fight against stress. Moving from one urban settlement to another is a change of landscape that causes comparisons and requires an active spirit for observation, care, responsibility which conduct to a greater level of tiredness

and confusion. People agglomeration is nowadays an element to be avoided, rather than a blooming field in the business.

Here comes the adventure tourism as a nesh, based on experiences which fulfils several motivational aspects such as psychological, physical, prestigious, social, fantasy and cultural. The focal point for studies in adventure tourism is the individual's need as through its motivation, the consumer profile is being best understood. Adventure tourism is one of the newest forms of travelling, and it is growing in importance because it is changing the lifestyle and the carried-out activity which have the role to distract the attention from the usual issues and by focusing on other aspects, beginning to have new perspectives about life.

Literature review

In the context of this article, travel and tourism have interchangeably definitions, but travel implies a more purposeful journey, while tourism refers to attracting, accommodating, entertaining tourists, and the business of operating tours (Wikipedia, 2018). Adventure is an experience creating excitement, it is bold and it implies the risk-taking factor and undertaking. (Wikipedia, 2018). In the past two decades, the concepts merged into a phenomenon called adventure tourism, a niche tourism, it involves exploration and it implies a certain degree of risk. It often requires special skills or physical exertion (Wikipedia, 2018). Considering the challenging character of this activity, the target group is formed by people wishing to overcome the personal limits, willing to put themselves under risk and pressure, and having the physical strength to complete the actions. The spectacular tourism might also include experiences that could be considered an adventure, the difference consists in the fact, that adventure tourism implies experiences in the greater percentage, it is based on limits, not on relaxing and it implies a high but evaluable risk factor. Tibi Useriu, the Romanian sportive who won for the third consecutive time the Polar Circle contest, is practicing an adventure tourism with a great implication of risk for a less experienced runner, but adventure is being evaluated individually according to the personal potential. In order to evaluate the risk grad and to classify an experience as being an adventure, there have to be taken into consideration factors like known conditions in which it is taking place, training and previous limit evaluation.

In order to understand the individual motivation of people to undertake adventure tourism, there needs to be researched, the tendency of the psychological aspects and greatest challenges occurring. The decision-making process of choosing an adventure is described by the push and pull study developed by (McDonald, 2002) (Dann, 1981) (Klenosky, 2002) and (Crompton J. L., 1979). The push factors are the internal reasons, the self-drive and the intrinsic motivation, while the pull factors are the activities or the destination itself. According to (Hsu, 2008), it is considered that socio-psychological motives, or push factors, include the need of escape, self-exploration, relaxation, prestige, social interaction, enhancement of kinship, and regression while the natural assets, the historic background, and the tourism destination are the pull factors. Like the spectacular tourism, the adventure tourism is combining the push and the pull factors. In order to attract a greater number adventure followers, it is necessary to understand the push factors and to adapt the pull factors according to those. Among the pull factors, safety has to be taken into consideration by adventure tourism managers. Alpinists practicing an adventure tourism, have safety pinions during the climb, even though they have many years of experience behind, circus acrobats use protective nets during training and the tracks for mountain bike contests are being tested and the dangerous areas are being secured or advertised. Even for the extreme adventure practitioners, security represents a pull trigger.

The main reasons (Crompton & McKay, 1997) being claimed for driving one to leave the comfort zone, are disequilibrium, tension and stress within an individual and the experience

of a different lifestyle or activity with the aim of changing perspective. The personal reason is the decisional factor which determines the chosen destination, the length of the stay and the money to invest, but one of the most effective determinations is the adventure or the experience gained, because through it does one have the chance to fulfil its need of development. To predict their decision-making procedures has to be understood which are the goals aimed to be achieved (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Tourism satisfies a human need of culture, knowledge, disconnection of daily life, routine and it is addressed to people of all ages and nationalities (Baltescu, 2004). Due to the core characteristics and vast approach it is one of the most sustainable and developing service-businesses. (Pop, Roman, Saniuta, & Petrisoiaia, 2012) In the last decade, the mobility has become more affordable and the travel frequency as well as the touristic concentration have changed. The new key word attributed to tourism is experience (Brown, 2017). On websites selling touristic products, the accommodation and transportation together bring only 55% of the total revenue, while the rest of 45% is being assured by the activities to be completed in the chosen destination. Most of them are promoting an active and cultural lifestyle. They are not only seen as options for spending the free time but as real lessons and developing methods. The personal impact generated by experiences becomes the middle point in making a choice, therefore responding to the market demand, traditional destinations have been involved in creating value-added products to maintain a sustainable development (Voon & al, 2017), as adventure places integrated touristic facilities for being sustainable (Bratucu, Baltescu, Neacsu, Boscor, & Tiorean, 2017).

Romania is well known for the natural component, represented by spectacular landscapes, favorable climatic conditions, varied relief, therapeutic value, but mostly for the anthropic component (Bogan, Constantin, & Dirloman, 2017). The natural, adventure tourism can be a multiplication factor for Romanian tourism, and in order to exploit its potential investments in its sites are required (Holm M. R., Lugosi, Croes, & et.al, 2017). Adventure tourism organizers need to have a background in practicing it. The requirements are very specific, beginning with a great understanding of the explored area, continuing with needed materials, quality products, safety requirements and measures, to financial support and targeted marketing. As the costs of adventure is risen and the expense is extended longer time than the experience itself, athletes often get sponsored or use the crowd-founding. Among the most effective marketing strategies used in adventure tourism is the entrepreneurial marketing with the following divisions:

Community marketing: According to Maslow pyramid, belonging is a fundamental need of the human beings (Shaw, Dibeehi, & Walden, 2011). Besides families and friends, online communities fulfill this need as well and they can be organic, when the people gather in forums, social media groups or other platforms according to their common interests, or sponsored, created by companies, where this assure the interaction as well between members but also between those and the company. (marketing-Schools.org, 2018) This removes the distance between customer and brand, it is a two-sided relationship, useful especially for business areas that can be confusing for customers. Adventure travelling is one of the fields where marketing best works when customers can interact with more experienced travelers and with organizers as well to assure safety and quality. Most of the experienced adventure travelers belong to communities where many of them are sponsored by travel organization.

Guerilla marketing: Adventure tourism is a less explored and less known tourism segment by Romanians. In order to gain popularity and encourage people to practice it, the interaction with the brand in an unconventional form is needed. Guerilla marketing exploits the outdoor and indoor resources in order to create innovative ideas to strengthen the brand image or for brand awareness. The creativity process is the most import one, it is the key element and generates a viral impact. (Isoraite, Ginevicius, & Rutkauskas, 2010). The

provoking concept is suitable for small companies and it does not imply high costs which are exactly the needed characteristics for adventure tourism in Romania.

Ambush marketing

Already recognized as sport-marketing, ambush marketing assures exposure, by associating with big events or competing with the spectacular type of tourism, emphasizing the differences and the competitive advantage adventure traveling has, the concept would be better understood and also easier accepted and adopted.

Methodology

The study is based on a qualitative exploratory research, on the basis of the free interview. The respondents are adventure tourism managers and practitioners as well from Romania, with a minimum of ten-year experience. They are involved in the organizing activity of the adventure, representing community groups in the field, covering more areas of adventure tourism present in Romania. Out of 13 respondents, four are representatives of extreme adventure activities worldwide, including the founder of “Today you can do anything”, a support group organization. In the field of mountain adventures, three are professional mountain bikers and organizers of national and international mountain bike contests, leader of the profile organization ADMR “Association for the development of mountain biking in Romania” and two are alpine skiing international champions. In the aquatic field, two respondents are managers and practitioners of yachting at the Black Sea, owners of yachting ships and contests organizers. The yoga and mindfulness areas are each represented by practitioners and masters with international experience. During the free interview, the focus was set on the four focal points with qualitative discussions in the specific fields, led by the interviewer with a specific agenda in order to reach the researched area. The discussion has been extended on the activity specification in order to extract the most important influencing factors of the adventure tourism and a sustainability strategy used by each interest group. Through brainstorming there were extracted common ideas trying to define the terminology and build a common opinion. The results of the research are summarized in the four hypotheses initially formulated.

Hypothesis 1: “The concept of adventure tourism in Romania is insufficiently clear defined reason for which the activity is not potentially explored.”

Adventure Tourism is defined as an activity that combines at least two of the following elements: Physical Activity, Cultural Immersion, Natural Environment. It fulfills the need of personal discovery, reconnection with the self, disconnection from daily life and personal growth. The difficulty level is ranging from easy to extreme. Adventure is associated to growth and learning process, to a healthy and normal life, though in Romania it is rather considered as an extreme activity, that implies previous experience, physical strength and certain abilities. Some sports are not associated to adventure, although they have the characteristics of one. There is a big anthropic potential, to place Romania on the international extreme travel map, but people still believe that extreme means danger, there is not necessary seen the personal growth in it and the fact that most categories of people can practice it, is sometimes being denied. Experience tourism is used as a synonym phrase for adventure tourism, it involves the service sector which in Romania is associated to an expensive activity. The tourism activity in Romania is addressed as well to locals as to foreigners, but the marketing activity has to start internally through unconventional ways in order to change the paradigm and motivate people to explore it, because in certain field, the local potential is better known by foreigners. (Pop N. , 2011) Considering the fact that adventure tourism is an alternative way of disconnection, alternative methods of promoting should be involved, as community marketing, guerilla marketing or ambush marketing.

Hypothesis 2: „In Romania the mountains adventure is more attractive to potential tourists and has more perspectives of development than other adventure areas.”

The Carpathian Mountains, covering 28% of the country offer an immense anthropic potential for tourism development. With numerous peaks over 2000m high and various natural phenomena like mountain biking, skiing, rock climbing, caving, hiking, camping or nature reconnecting such as yoga or mind-fullness, they are way more attractive than the Black Sea seaside, which is limited by only 255km. In order to reach extreme travel, there is needed to be a combination of the natural environment and the invested capital. In the mountains, the area is already offering the framework for the adventure activity with lower needed investments, while the sea side requires equipment and created infrastructure for its development. In Romania, going to the sea side is still a mass-number tourism, while adventure is addressed only to certain kind of people, having certain kind of interests and being offered to spend higher amounts of money, while the mountains area is more frequented by people already inducted into the adventure travel field, making the process easier. Managers of aquatic tourism admit that the interest is lower in this field and the struggle to organize and to arrange facilities is big and sometimes not worthy, while mountain adventure managers recognize the advantage the natural habitat offers, as well as the risen interest of the practitioners. Regarding all the answers, the hypotheses approves, the mountain adventure in Romania is more attractive as well for the tourism managers as well as for the tourists.

Hypothesis 3: „Adventure tourism is a multiplier factor for classic tourism and can be a trigger for its future development.”

The decisional process of tourists choosing a spectacular travel destination implies economic factors, such as transportation and accommodation costs or living costs, comfort factors like travelling distance, direct flights, weather conditions, politics, security, accessibility or language barriers. Cultural elements, as touristic options and one of the most important ones, the popularity and site coverage. A great exploration of spectacular tourism destinations, develop in time adventurous activities, to diversify the experience of the travelers and to maintain the competitively. This is the case of Las Vegas, a vivid place, where jumping off the Stratosphere building has been included as a tourist facility. Where the natural environment is already offering the framework of an adventure tourism in a more distinguished way than any other facility, this can be used as a trigger to develop the classic tourism as a consequence. Having the example Niagara city, which developed as a rural site, worldwide known as a tradition symbol for Canada, developed due to the Niagara Falls. The tourist agglomeration around a natural site, offering an experience, have the tendency to investigate the area and complete the tour by visiting close sites with different meaning than the main point. In Romania, people doing yachting are also taking advantage of the Black Sea seaside. The activity itself is a multiplication factor for the seaside tourism as well as the seaside tourists are likely to become yachting adepts. Tourists exploring, skiing or doing downhill in the Carpathian Mountains are visiting the castles and the palaces as well as the cities around the slopes. Investments in adventure tourism extend to a growth in tourism in general. This hypothesis has been approved and generally accepted by all the asked responders.

Hypothesis 4: The Adventure tourism awakens a feeling of responsibility towards the environment.

Adventure tourists aim to explore virgin natural areas, undiscovered natural phenomena and unpopular travel destinations in order to keep an original tone and to distinguish themselves from the growing mass of traveling population. The adepts of this concept are usually nature-lovers, they ignore the trends and seek to be different. By exploring natural habitats and starting a trend out of it, as the case in the local floating markets in Cambodia or the gateway to the Baikal lake, the Siberian city Irkutsk, several changes and degradations are being faced. The first affected is the nature, that loses the virgin character and it is endangered through the waste left behind, the irrational use of the resources and the irresponsibility, generated by the traveler unconsciousness, as well as by the unsuitable

travel conditions. Continuing the exploration, more affected are the communities. The normal way of living is being disturbed by a touristic boost, those requests and wishes would affect the consumption, the income balance, the production and not at least, the psychological changes might be irreversible. If the touristic concentration is not being organized introduced in a new area, it can cause more bad than do good. Environmental conscious people have acknowledged the risen issue. For tourism organizers and promoting organization, to keep the customers and to preserve the areas assuring a longer attractively, they have introduced environmental friendly programs together with the adventure, having also the purpose of attracting tourists through the shown responsibility and the well-making activity. Some of the campaigns have impressive results, like the yachting teams, collecting waste out of the Black Sea, mountains explorers having to collect at least five pies of waste along the track, schooba divers having river-cleaning days or companies sponsoring or prizes given to organizations protecting the environment. The exact ratio between the help and the damage caused to the nature is difficult to measure, and the psychological influence exercised over communities even less. As a general tendency, adventure tourism only awakens a feeling of responsibility for the matter of fact that the bad caused is greater and it has to be diminished. For a sustainable development, authorities or organizations have to be the actors introducing tourism in the natural habitats, by controlling the runed activities, the brought products and the nature protection. Eating, sleeping and buying habits of the tourists should also be controlled in order to avoid unauthorized merchants and real estate investors. Environmental protection becomes a marketing element, as the issue has been risen and it grows in importance, but the areas are badly affected with long-term effects. Even though in appearance there is an encouraged a certain responsibility, responders commonly consider that the environmental protection is not necessary being yet achieved through adventure tourism.

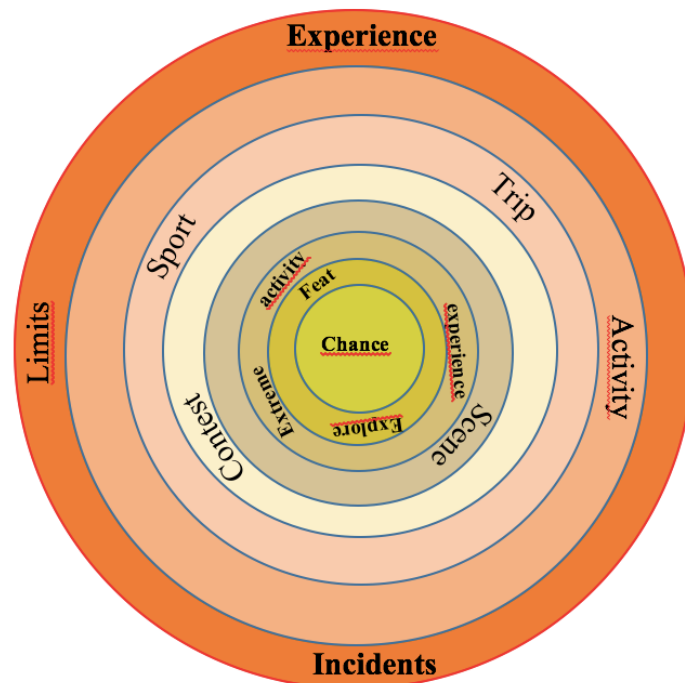


Fig. no. 1 The frequency and the words used to describe the adventure tourism by interviewed tourism managers

Source: processed by the authors

Conclusions

In conclusion, Romania has the potential of hosting adventure tourism. The anthropic potential and the existing amenities facilitate its development and grows further through investments in infrastructure and highlighting the key-advantages. A better understanding of the traveling offers content is needed, to observe the differences to a spectacular tourism and also to understand the purpose and its benefits. Offering different kind of opportunities, the typology separation has to be made clear, in case of mountain or aquatic experience. Through a better description and explanations, through human support and trust, people take the chance to exit the comfort zone and experience adventure. Comparing the asked managers opinion to the theory, it becomes clear that for this, risk is the most important factor in adventure tourism. Not only that it defines it, it implies incidents, reason for that protection towards adepts is crucial. Slowly, the protection factor might be reaching also towards nature to preserve it, but the efforts are not yet sustainable. Overcoming the personal limits is the main purpose of practicing, while experience the key word to describe the various activities is. Most of the adventure traveling is being seen as travel, because it is exercised during the holiday and has the disconnection as the main purpose, but because many of the activities are sportive, sometimes are being taken to extreme and athletes can become representative for a field or category, reason for that, they need material support through sponsoring or crowd-founding.

Tourism, in the meaning of the authors must not be associated to the spectacular tourism, this represents in the first place a way to educate the human spirit, in order to reach higher development and performance levels of the individuals. It is also interpreted as an educational characteristic, in the meaning of development, tenacity and a constant self-control. Due to these factors, and others, the practitioners of this form of tourism are self-teaching themselves for a constant, sustainable and long-term contact with the environment. It also implies a rising level of respect towards the environment through its medium and long-term preservation. At an educative and coercive level, adventure tourism must respond to certain social commandments of environmental preservation.

The marketing process applied in the adventure tourism, does not set as an objective to underline the spectacular characteristics of the first concept-marketing, such an approach is considered to be superficial in a scientific point of view.

Bibliography

- Ashworth, G., & Goodall, B. (1988). Tourist Images: marketing considerations. În & G. B. Goodall, *Marketing in the tourism industry. The prootion of destination regions* (pg. 213-238). London: Routledge.
- Baltescu, C. A. (2004). *Strategii de marketing in turismul montan romanesc*. Brasov, Romania: Editura Universitatii Transilvania din Bucuresti.
- Bogan, E., Constantin, D. M., & Dirloman, G. (2017, MAR). The adventure tourism in the Brasov county: The attraction and retention of the tourists . *Quality-access to success*, 18, 73-80.
- Bratucu, G., Baltescu, C., Neacsu, N., Boscor, D., & Tiorean, O. M. (2017, NOV). Approaching the Sustianable Development Practices in Mountain Tourism in the Romanian Carpathians. 9(11).
- Brown, M. B. (2017). Adventure education: Redux. *Journal of adventure education and outdoor learning*, 17(4), 294-306.
- Candea Melinda., E. S. (2000). *Romania, potential turistic si turism*. Bucuresti: Ed. Universitara.

- Crompton, J. L. (1979). Motivations for Pleasure Vacation. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 6:408-24.
- Crompton, J. L., & McKay, S. L. (1997). "Motives of Visitors Attending Festival Events."
- Dann, G. (1981). Tourist Motivation: *An Appraisal*. *Annals of Tourism Research*. 187- 194.
- Holm, M. R., Lugosi, P., & Croes, R. L. (2017, DEC). *Risk-tourism, risk-taking and subjective well-being: A review and synthesis*. *Tourism Management*, 63, 115-122.
- Holm, M. R., Lugosi, P., Croes, R. R., & et.al. (2017, DEC). *Risk-tourism, risk-taking and subjective well-being: A review and synthesis*. *Tourism Management* , 63, 115-122.
- Hsu, C. H. (2008). *Travel motivation: a critical review of the concept's development*. Woodside, AG, Martin, D (eds) *Tourism Management: Analysis, Behaviour and Strategy*.
- Isoraite, M., Ginevicius, R., & Rutkauskas, A. (2010). *Guerilla Marketing Strategy realization assumptions*. *Business and management-Spaudinta*, 382-389.
- Klenosky, D. (2002, MAY). *The "Pull" of Tourism Destinations: A Means-End Investigation*. *Journal of Travel Research*, 40(4), 385.
- McDonald, R. &. (2002). *Principles and Practice in Reporting Structural Equation Analyses Psychological Methods* 2002. 7, 64-82.
- Parcul natural Bucegi - Posibilitati de cazare*. (2018, 01 13). Accessed http://www.bucegipark.ro/turism.php?show=posibilitati_cazare
- Pelau, C., & Pop, A. (2018, JUL). *Implication for the energy policy derived from the relation between the cultural dimensions of Hofstede's model and the consumption of renewable energy*. 118, 160-168.
- Pelau, C., & Pop, N. Al. (2018, JUL). *Implications for the energy policy derives from the relation between the cultural dimensions of Hofstede's model and the consumption of renewable energies*. *Energy Policy*, 118, 160-168.
- Pop, N. Al., Roman, M., Saniuta, A., & Petrisoiaia, C. (2012). *Relationship Marketing, Engine of Sustainable Development and Organisational Change in the Romanian Business Environment*. 14, 349-364.
- Pop, N. Al. (2011). *Marketing international. Teorie si practica*. Bucharest: Uranus.
- Shaw, C., Dibeehi, Q., & Walden, S. (2011). *Customer Experience: Future Trends and insights*. England: Palgrave, Houndmills, Basingstke RG21 6Xs.
- Voon, B. H., & al, e. (2017, JUN). Socio-environmental dimenions of tourist service experience in homestays. *International Journal of geomate*, 12(34), 96-100.
- Yoon, Y., & Uysal, M. (2005). *An examination of the effects of motivation and satisfaction on destination loyalty: a structural model*. *Tourism Management*, 45-56.
- Xxx, *Adventure tourism* , (2018, 04) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adventure_travel
- Xxx, (2018, 04 11) *Tourism* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism#Definitions>
- Xxx, (2018, 04 11) *Adventure* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adventure>
- Xxx, (2018, 04 09) *Educational options in the creative field of marketing:* www.marketing-schools.org/types-of-marketing/community-marketing.html