

ADVENTURE TOURISM FEATURES IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:

Tourism is one of the forms of use of the time available for leisure and recreation. Appears as a phenomenon of the period we live and work together in social and economic environment, with various forms of manifestation and development. Adventure travel is associated with the fact that tourist can discover new things. Therefore, they travel the world to be so large that it knows the existence of other people, to discover continents, people customs. Adventure tourism has grown rapidly in recent years as outdoor recreation has become increasingly commercialized. The actual commercial products offered by adventure tourism operators do not seem to have been subject to any coherent and comprehensive review. This paper aims to explore this form of tourism as a vector in tourism development, especially in natural areas and not only.

Key words: adventure, development, tourism, natural areas, sustainable

JEL classification: Q01, Q 18, Q 26, Q 57

1. Introduction

Adventure tourism is a complex industry with a wide variety of elements and suppliers. Some of these suppliers are also part of the mainstream tourism industry such as accommodation operators while others are specific to adventure tourism like equipment manufactures. The growth of adventure tourism has been fuelled by the activities of specialist tour operators who focus on adventure tourism. Adventure tourism is the most exciting and popular among all types of tourism [R.M. Ahuja, pp.296, 2011].

The paper aims to introduce the notion of adventure tourism while analyzing the fundamental components of adventure tourism offers key definitions examines the relationship between adventure tourism and other established form of tourism sectors and puts forward various typologies, to help to understand the nature and scope of adventure tourism.

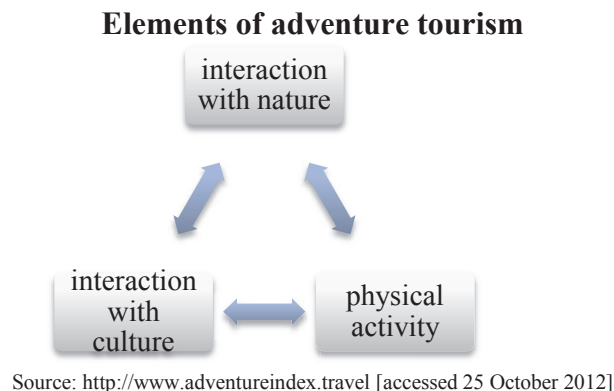
Adventure is an attitude that must be adopted by people against the unknown in order to find unique potential. Journey, meaning mishap, adventure has gained in significance for adventure becomes a form of knowledge enhanced by new technologies.

Adventure tourism involves visiting a region almost unaffected by human impact, with specific features for engaging in risky sports that require physical effort relatively high performance and greater risk taking.

Adventure travel is associated with that tourists could discover new things. Therefore, they did travel the world to be so large that it knows the existence of other people, to discover continents, peoples. In a journey the tourist knows he is willing to maximum responsiveness, has around strangers, new places and begin to analyze, observe everything to teach and protect, so travel is a form of knowledge, complicity and transparency. It is a method of self-recovery, reconciliation and restoration, learning and accumulation.

As a final point in introduction we can say that a trip may be classified as an “adventure” trip if it involves two of the following three elements as are shown in the next figure:

Figure no. 1



2. The place of tourism adventure regarding the sustainable tourism

Tourism and travel activity represents in present an industry with sure perspectives of a positive evolution, not only at regional level but also at its national and international levels, able to raise the economic growth and development.

Tourism has become a source of strong competition among destination regions and has prompted many new (public and private) initiatives in order to make these regions attractive to an increasing number of visitors. In fact, tourism has become a “normal” industrial sector that is critical for the economy of destination areas in order to maximize their expected revenues [Girard, L.F., Nijkam, P., 2009].

The World Tourism Organization suggests that sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and environmental needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological process etc..

In the next table are shown some fundamental truths about tourism:

Table no. 1 Some fundamental truths about tourism	
1	As an industrial activity, tourism consumes resources, creates waste and has specific infrastructure needs.
2	As a consumer of resources, it has the ability to over-consume resources.
3	Tourism, as a resource-dependent industry, must compete for scarce resources to ensure survival.
4	Tourism as a private-sector-dominated industry, with investments decisions being based predominantly on profit maximization.
5	Tourism is a multi-faced industry and, as such, it is impossible to control.
6	Tourists are consumers, not anthropologist.
7	Tourism is entertainment.
8	Unlike other industrial activities, tourism generates income by importing clients rather than exporting its products.

Source: McKercher, B., Some fundamentals truths about tourism: understanding tourism’s social and environmental impacts, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, no. 1(1), 1993, pp. 7

Consequently, tourism has become a key factor in development strategy. The main challenge of modern tourism policy is to market the attractiveness of a certain region with a certain touristic potential in such a way as to generate growth in tourists visits.

Principles of such a tourism that ensure a tourism with positive effects are shown in table no.2:

Table no. 2
Principles for sustainable tourism

"Sustainable development" should be clearly defined in its specific context
Sustainability should be viewed in an holistic sense, including economic, social and ecological components
Notions of equity should be included in any perspective sustainable development
Time horizon should span both human and ecosystem timescales, and the spatial scale should include local and long distance impacts on people and ecosystems
Progress towards sustainable development should be based on the measurement of a limited number of indicators based on standardized measurement
Methods and data employed for assessment of progress should be open and accessible to all
Progress should be effectively communicated to all
Broad participation is required
Allowance should be made for repeated measurement in order to determine trends and incorporate results for experience
Institutional capacity in order to monitor the sustainable progress

Source: Bell,S., Morse,S., Sustainability Indicators-Measuring the Immeasurable?, 2008, pp. 22

The idea of sustainable development is that economic growth and environmental conservation are not only compatible, they are necessary partners. One cannot exist without the other. It needs to be economically sustainable, because if tourism is not profitable than it is a moot question to ask whether it is environmentally sustainable-tourism that is unprofitable and unviable will simply cease to exist [Harris, R., 2012].

The place of adventure tourism in sustainable forms of tourism is given like it is shown in the next figure:

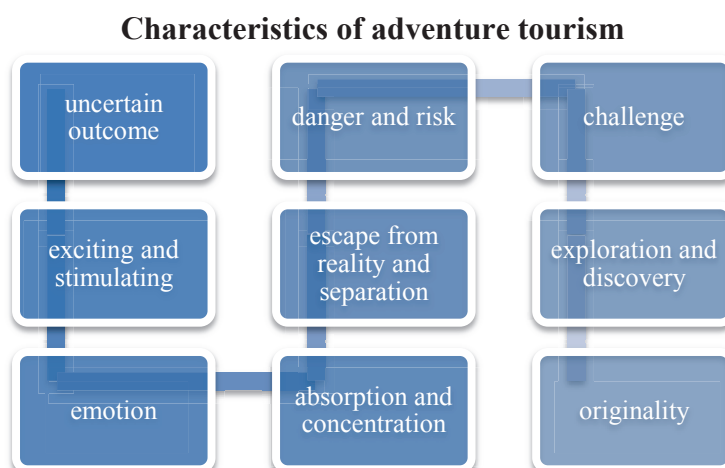
Figure no. 2



Source: <http://www.sustainabletourismmanagement.com/education.html>, accessed at 23 October 2012

In this context it is important to mention in the following figure the main adventure product features, features that form the basis for adventure tourism:

Figure no. 3

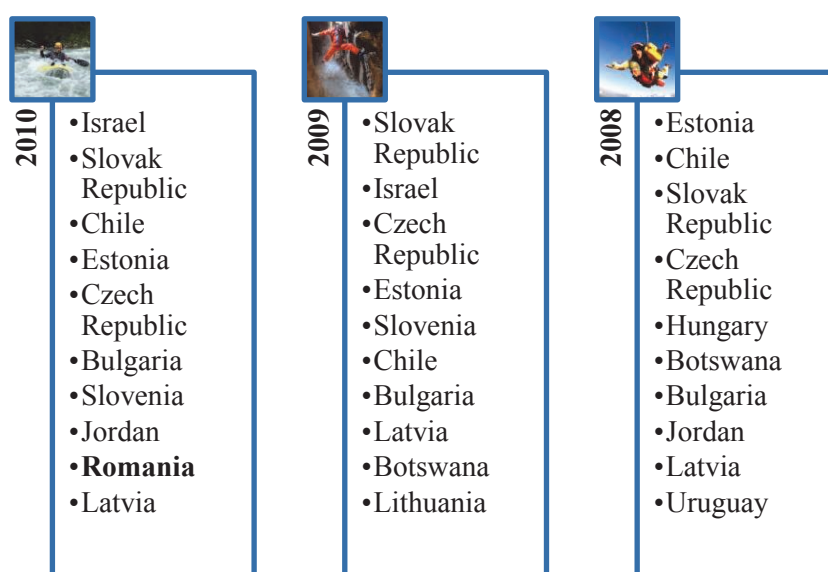


Source: adapted from Oltean, F., Turismul de Aventura – Oportunitate pentru antreprenori, Oeconomica Journal, 2010, pp. 3

A study by the Adventure Travel Trade Association of University George Washington from U.S. classifies countries in the world according to the opportunities for extreme experiences. From the next table we can see that Romania is in top ten countries with adventure tourism potential:

Figure no. 4

Adventure tourism potential in developing countries



Source: <http://www.adventureindex.travel> [accessed 25 October 2012]

Positive development of Romanian adventure tourism, Romanian entrepreneurship and open new perspectives for sustainable exploitation of natural resources for practicing this form of tourism [Olteanu, F., 2010, pp.1].

3. Forms of adventure tourism in natural areas from Romania

The scope of adventure tourism has commonly been expressed through list of specific outdoor activities involved. In the next figure are shown some activities that take place in this form of tourism:

Figure no. 5

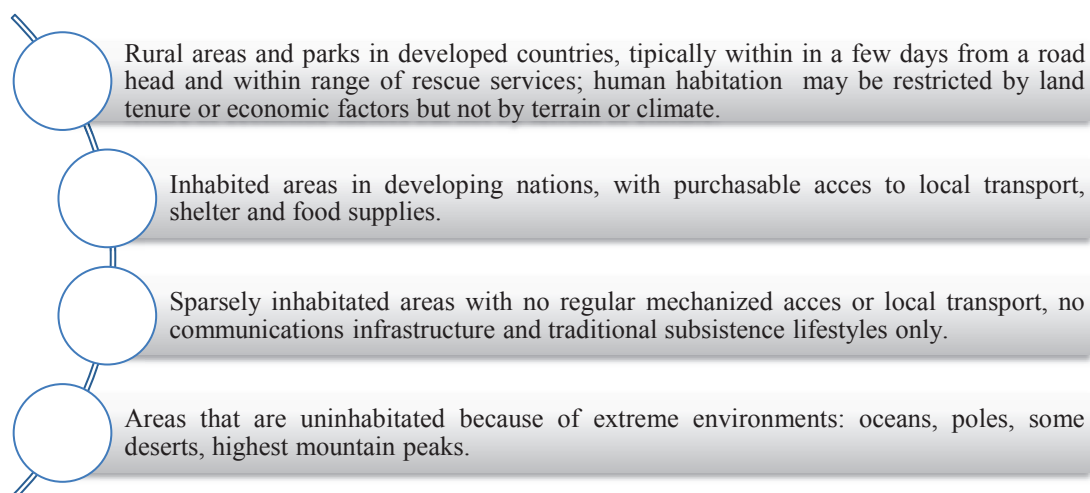


Source: adapted by authors from Bentley,T., et al., *How safe is adventure tourism in New Zealand? An exploratory analysis*,

Through its many activities, adventure tourism offer to tourists the opportunity to recreate, to know things / places us or to evaluate their own forces.

The place in which adventure tourism could take place differs from region to region. As Buckley R. in his book *Adventure Tourism* (2006, pp. 8) there are four categories of remoteness that can be distinguished:

Figure no. 6



Pedestrian tourism or travelling defines walking and requires a higher perspective in terms of its effectiveness, as these physical and mental health. It is a completely free tourism activity, where the tourist pays only exercise price, plus the satisfaction. The route carried along hiking, tourists enter in a particular area represented by mountain or other natural corner to give him what he wants: quiet, scenery, space, height.

Pedestrian mountain tourism is a sport in which many followers of all ages and from various social participate in it. These are not just ordinary passengers using means of transport to move, but are practitioners of a mass sport whose main objectives are to strengthen health, active rest, and knowledge of new areas of interest. It is characteristic of modern civilization, tourist offering what it lacks: outdoor movement. The natural features stunningly picturesque, clean air, ozone, tranquility, it leads to improved health.

Trekking is a "all season" sport being able to perform under favorable conditions in all seasons, with no conditions of temperature, snow cover, ice, during the day-light, requiring concrete adaptation measures: appropriate equipment, choice of short routes or environments, avoid areas favorable to trigger avalanches.

In Valcea County, this sport can be practiced in various tourist routes: Vaideeni–Valea Luncavatului–Podul lui Pasare–Lacul Balota–Stana Balota–Vf. Capataii; Izvoru Rece–Valea Recea–Luncile Frumoase–Stana Zavidanu–Pietrele Stroiestilor–Coasta Lacurilor–Curmatura Funicel etc.

Equestrian Tourism. In the developed countries of Western Europe, the horse can be used in various sports activities like horse racing, equestrian sports, equestrian clubs and pony clubs, equestrian tourism, hunts. Equestrian tourism represents all recreational equestrian activities practiced by tourists, which are diversified by how the horse use (as carrier harness or ridden) and by its features: outputs of a day or several days (traveling). It is an asset for rural areas, thus participating in the economic reconstruction of a territory and revive an ancient practice that has adapted it. In Romania, as well as our Valcea county, this activity is less practiced, although the horse is an integral part of the villages, especially in mountain areas. Unfortunately, it is used mainly as a means of traction in agricultural or forestry work.

There are some attempts equestrian centers (Poiana Brasov) or some studs, to provide tourists rides offer scenic areas on horses.

Mountain bike. It is a tourist activity, sport, leisure, released in 1985 in Europe, and bicycle is the main instrument being made to conditions in the mountains. The sport involves the tourist routes with a certain degree of difficulty and different distances or moving between points where other activities. Mountain biking is a sport and while tourist activity in Romania is still in its infancy, a very large share in the development of sport have European countries with mountain areas and the United States.

Favorable in Valcea county's practice of mountain biking are hills around Ocnele Mari, with heights ranging from 400-600 m, which has many trails suitable for this task, the gently sloping through forest trails to the highly difficulty, including limestone slopes of the Evantaiului area.

Classic mountaineering. Typical objectives of this category of climbing routes are normal to high peaks and alpine areas of high altitude. This activity is the main illustration of traditional climbing practiced in Romania, but is less accessible to tourists because it involves new equipment, specific materials and thorough knowledge of specialized. Winter climbing favorable places in our country are the highlands steep, among which we mention: Fagaraș Mountains, Retezat Mountain, Piatra Craiului Mountain, Parang Mountain, Iezer Mountain, Bucegi Mountains etc. Mountaineering, ski touring or combined with extreme skiing, often go on to become the most attractive to those experienced. .

In Valcea county, climbing can be practiced Buila-Vanturarita mountains tails.

Escalate is one of activities belonging to adventure tourism. In the mid'1970s, climbers invented free climbing, whose territory belongs to high altitude mountains. In Europe, citing Romania too, climbing became known during the 1980s. Number of climbers is increasing, especially in areas near natural climbing walls. Artificial climbing walls are reduced in our county, which hinders the development of this discipline very attractive for main-young practitioners.

Canyoning is a sport, leisure spending time, treated both as water sports, and separate. In our country and in Valcea County, canyoning is sometimes confused with abseil descent, but is not limited to that, assuming steep descent of water courses, using specific materials, including neon suit holding great importance. Professional associations and specialized clubs of canyoning are missing in our country and sport practitioners are taking part in groups climbing, sailing groups or independents.

Scenic flights have a lower impact to practice, attracting a small number of tourists. They are more interested in paragliding, hang gliding detrimental an older sport in which learning conditions and costs are less favorable. It is a sport activity that develops slowly and it requires to overcome barriers to risk, cost, time, and especially those related to the practice space. Compared to other outdoor sports, its gaming space, the sky seems to be hug. To practice hang gliding flight, an area must be present to ensure a safe take-off and landing easily on flat places, solid unforested.

Bungee Jumping-ul it is one of the most beautiful and spectacular extreme sports, is a defiance of gravity that requires more courage, experience and endurance. This sport first appeared in New Zealand when it was patented by New Zealander Alan John Hackett Bungy. The only bungee jumping facilities in our country are the Cheile Rasnoavei (difference of 136 meters) and the dam Vidraru (difference of 166 meters).

Rafting the term comes from English to mean cork and appeared in the U.S. after 1950. Romania has a good potential site for practicing rafting, the existence of fast waters with high throughput, but unfortunately it is not capitalized, but some rivers can be lowered with sport-specific boats: Bistrita River, particularly between Vatra Dornei and Poiana Teiului, Aries River between Campeni and Turda, Mures River between Toplita and Deda, Jiu river in the gorge, river Nera, River Somes Mare in the mountains.

There are also another adventure recreation and entertainment activities that are relatively recent in origin and do not have yet future significantly as commercial tourism products. Kiteboarding is a good example.

Conclusions

With growth of the industry comes the move towards increased professionalization of the sector; in destinations around the world, adventure tourism companies are striving to improve their business practices and impact and interaction with the environment. Safety and responsibility are key themes at industry meetings and within companies. As their share over the larger tourism market continues to grow, it is expected that adventure tourism actors will increasingly have more influence in policy-making and development [http://www.adventureindex.travel, accessed 25 October 2012].

In Romania and in our county, this form of tourism is still in its early beginning. Tourists wishing thrills are relatively few, but according circulated by connoisseurs, they will record an increasing volume and diversify the structure.

Based on its potential, Romania, the call and Valcea County through two essential components: natural and anthropogenic, have opportunities for adventure tourism development, offering a wide range of tourist proposals in this regard. Adventure tourism development in Romania is particularly important role entrepreneurs.

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