



**“Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu, Romania
Faculty of Economics**

The tourist destination of the future: scenarios and trends

- Summary -

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Summary

The PhD Thesis entitled “The tourist destination of the future – scenarios and trends” addresses a topic of great importance and perspective – the tourist destination of the future. I chose this topic because tourism, as a socio-economic phenomenon of modern civilization, is included in society and therefore influenced by its evolution. The tourist destination, one of the most important subsystems of tourism is also influenced by the evolution of society, and researching the influence of trends on the tourist destination was designed to help professionals in tourism to understand these trends and to suggest strategies to exploit them, offering at the same time reference tools and examples of best practices for achieving competitiveness and performance of the tourist destination in this ever changing world.

Tourism has a vast material and human potential and has major implications for the economy and society and international relations. Tourism is a stimulating element of the global economy acting as a lever to mitigate interregional imbalances and active mean of education, of raising the level of education, culture and civilization of the people.

For the beginning it is important to say that despite wars, political turmoil, natural disasters, medical scares, terrorist attacks, or economic and energy crises in various parts of the world, international trade in tourism services has grown spectacularly since the 1970s and 2014 proved to be another successful year for the Travel & Tourism sector. Travel & Tourism’s total contribution to the global economy in 2014 was 9.8% of total economy GDP, generating more economic output than chemicals manufacturing, agriculture, education, automotive manufacturing, and banking, according to WTTO (2015). Travel & Tourism is one of the leading job creators in the world, with its 277 million jobs in 2014 worldwide. According to The Benchmarking Report 2015 (WTTO Press Releases, 2015) the global Travel & Tourism sector employs more people than automotive manufacturing, mining and financial services combined globally.

Total Travel & Tourism GDP is estimated to grow on average by 3.8% per year from 2015-2025. It is expect that Travel & Tourism will provide a total of 72.9 million new jobs, 23.2 million of which will be provided directly within the sector. The contribution of total Travel & Tourism GDP to the wider economy is expected to rise from 9.8% in 2014 to 10.5% in 2025, and from 9.4% to 10.7% for employment (WTTC, 2015).

The international experts of WTTC (2015) show that the Travel & Tourism’s contribution to world GDP grew for the fifth consecutive year, helped especially by strong demand from international travelers. If in 1950 25 million tourists traveled internationally, international tourist arrivals reached 1,138 million in 2014, according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer. International tourist arrivals worldwide are expected to increase by 3.3% a year between 2010 and

2030 to reach 1.8 billion by 2030, according to UNWTO's long term forecast *Tourism Towards 2030* (UNWTO, 2015).

These millions of people will have demographic, psychological, social, etc. characteristics very different from the population today and will move in a completely changed environment. These aspects, as well as others that will impact the way tourism is done and the impacts on the tourist destination will be presented in this thesis.

The mega trends researched by the thesis affect us and the economic environment, the consumer behavior and business process, but their study can provide a major support for setting destination organizations for all aspects regarding its management, and also for the introduction of new products and services. The companies need to focus on strategies that can influence these trends in order to stay competitive in the future.

The pressures of competition within the 24-hour global marketplace have greatly imposed a more flexible and faster reaction of the organizations and destinations to their environment and their rivals. It is very important to know the background of a destination, its potential, trends, etc. Therefore through this dissertation I seek to analyze all of the aspects of a tourist destination, its management and competitiveness, marketing, policies and planning, in order to find out what changes impose the trends and how these will affect the tourist destination in the future.

More than half of the world's population resides in urban settlements and by 2050 it is projected that about two-thirds of all humans will live in urban areas. The world's cities are also some of the world's greatest tourist destinations. City tourism is gaining importance and will have better brands than countries and promotional budget shifts from country to city level. The mutually beneficial relationship between culture and tourism has been one of the major sources of tourism growth in recent decades. There are many types of destinations and building and developing them is not an easy task. Because of this diversity and also because city tourism will gain importance, as presenting below, the thesis focused especially on urban/city destinations.

The tourist destination is a very complex concept, its approach involving not only relevant knowledge, but also an adequate expertise in the field. The thesis in this regard is a comprehensive approach developed in 4 chapters plus introduction and conclusions, 17 subchapters and 175 sub-subchapters.

The first chapter, Conceptual map and research methods, starts with the formulation of the research problem of the PhD thesis including the subsequent questions that derive from it. Furthermore I am presenting how the thesis was thought and the steps that were done in order to receive an answer to the research objective: What is the tourist destination of the future. Also I presented the determination of aim, objectives and questions. Moreover, this chapter presents the

research methods used in the thesis, including the analysis of both secondary and primary data.

Chapter two, Theoretical and managerial dimensions of the tourist destination, aims to synthesize existing research, theories and concepts in order to understand the key aspects regarding the tourist destination and to provide a bridge from past research to future performance. In this part I've analyzed at the beginning the issue of **defining a tourist destination** without the pretention of clarifying the never ending debate on "what is really a destination". I consider the presented aspects sufficiently relevant to outline the destinations' essential aspects. After presenting some destinations, I focused on four **special and new types of destination** presented in international conferences: the social destination, the sustainable destination, the smart destination and the virtual destination because of their relevance for the new environment of the 21st century, one of the major challenges for destinations performing in this sector being to stay on the market, adapted to the travelers' needs, to their own identity and to the well-being of the locals.

The tourist destination is a complex system that can only be managed by bringing together key private and public stakeholders that are involved in tourism planning. This is the reason why I presented some considerations regarding the tourist destination **stakeholders** (residents, tourists, businesses, NGOs, government, etc.). Because in modern tourism **local communities** represent a key factor of tourism destination sustainability and one of the most important stakeholders in the destination the thesis further on presents the latest developments in this field. Because as showed the destination is an important subsystem in the tourism and leisure system, the thesis presents some considerations regarding the **tourism system** in order to clarify the interdependence between the subsystems of the tourist product. This chapter furthermore studies the main literature regarding the **tourism potential** of a destination because this represents the first stage that should be considered when developing a tourist product. Another important aspect that this chapter deals with is the **destination management**. From all types of management activities taking place in a destination, not because they are not important, but because it is not the research purpose, the thesis focuses only on few aspects regarding the knowledge management, the visitor management, human resource, financial and crisis management. Another aspect that this chapter deals with is the politics, planning and developing a tourist destination. This subchapter brings an overview on the key aspects of **tourism policies**, the aims and objectives and policy implementation. Moreover are described the transnational policies with focus on European Union Tourism Policy and in addition it presents strategies for planning and developing a tourist destination. It also presents some **best practices and innovative initiatives** with focus on the challenges facing tourist destinations in the future.

Also, another important aspect that this chapter deals with is the **marketing** of a tourist destination. The thesis presents the marketing planning of a destination, the destination image, positioning a destination and destination branding. The finality of all the aspects presented so far in

chapter one is the achievement of destination competitiveness, or to accomplish or maintain a destination position that is profitable for its stakeholders. This subchapter describes the attributes of the destination competitiveness and the OECD indicators for measuring competitiveness in tourism and the connection between the competitiveness of a destination and its performance.

Further on the chapter presents the tourism **sustainability** concept, describing the concepts of sustainability, sustainable development and corporate responsibility, the influence of sustainability on tourism and tourist destination, the benefits of being sustainable and sustainability criteria for tourist destinations. This chapter also presents the **cultural and natural heritage**, including some background information and continues with the concept of cultural heritage tourism, as a way to sustainable development.

Chapter three, Socio-political and economic trends and their impact on the tourist destination, aims to analyze already existing trends, including the megatrends, tourism industry trends, social trends and consumer trends. In order to assess correctly the influence on the tourist destination it is important to understand the influence of these trends on the tourism as a whole and see how can tourism be innovative and adapt in this globalized world to the forthcoming drivers of ageing population, climate change, technological changes, social change and many other features that are expected to appear.

This chapter starts with a theoretical basis about **trend research** and continues with the **megatrends** and their influence on tourism. It describes the following megatrends: connectivity, globalization, female shift, urbanization, silver society and demographic trends, new ecology, health, education, new work and mobility and individualism. Few ideas that I consider important from this chapter are presented below.

- **Connectivity** (and **technology**): Since the majority of the population is now online, connectivity has become the norm both in private, professional and social life. Humanity is now organized in networks. The total number of global broadband subscriptions reached 2,3 billion in 2014 and there are almost 7 billion mobile-cellular subscription worldwide and almost 3 billion people are using the internet (ITU, 2014). It is estimated that by 2015, one billion consumers will use mobile as their only form of Internet access leading to the conclusion that mobile is certainly a big traffic driver of the future. Billions of Internet users are both creators of information as well as consumers. As consumers, they have the opportunity to interact with brands at a time and through a channel that best suits them posing challenges to businesses, as it is more complex to identify the best ways to interact and engage with them.

- **Globalization**: this increasing worldwide integration and interdependence has been one of the most important drivers of change and development. Now, according to Farrel (2014), the world became "a single community, a global village" where something that happens in one area can have

knock on effects worldwide. Because of this we are assisting to rebalancing the economic force of the developed (primarily Western) economies and the rest of the world and creating a more complex, diverse and multipolar environment for business, not a straight-forward rollout of Western practices, standards, and values with powerful new actors. The “next wave” of globalization, as presented by Deloitte (2014), is bringing “unfamiliar opportunities and challenges, increased diversity and complexity, rapid technological change and fast-evolving business models, industry structures, and organizational forms”.

- **Female shift:** denotes the fundamental change of the male-dominated world that we live in. In this new era women won more and more power and influence on economy and society, on science and politics and this will change our society profoundly, transforming our entire life - the way we live, work, and live. Female–male polarity represented the traditional model of the society, where differences between genders are potentiated and exaggerated and the male side was more highly valued. This model is, in general, most likely to remain a product of past and contemporary times.

- **Urbanization:** According to UN-HABITAT (2010) in the next 20 years, Homo sapiens, “the wise human”, will become Homo sapiens urbanus in virtually all regions of the planet and this imposes that the ultimate goal of urbanization should be the logical response to the needs of its residents in order to increase their quality of life: well-being, environmental quality and cultural identity. According to UN DESA’s Population Division (United Nations New York, 2014) 54 per cent (3.5 billion) of the world’s population is residing in urban areas in 2014 and by 2030, the world’s urban population is expected to hit five billion. Urban centers are estimated to generate 80 percent of economic growth and in the future it is estimated that cities and not countries, will drive wealth creation.

- **Silver society and demographic trends:** Aging is one of the forces that will shape society and the global economy over the next decades. Worldwide populations are getting older, a trend that is likely to continue for decades to come, expecting a number of persons aged 60 or over more than triple by 2100, increasing from 841 million in 2013 to 2 billion in 2050 and close to 3 billion in 2100. That imposes the fact that societies with aging populations must adjust business practices and policies to boost their economic vigor and the silver economy can be a new and growing market and demand.

- **“New ecology”:** We are assisting now to a human-induced rapid environmental change with habitat loss/fragmentation, the spread of exotic species, harvesting by humans, pollutants of various sorts and, of course, climate change. There are significant consequences for all the Earth’s inhabitants and that is why a wide range of means to slow down all these consequences are developed and implemented worldwide.

- **Health:** According to experts we are in the midst of a long term trend in which preventive care will

gain importance, surpassing the spending on reactive medical care. This preventive care can take many forms, from genetic testing to wellness or other preventive programs. So health & wellness tourism might be the optimal solution to many problems of the modern civilization.

- **Education:** Education plays a crucial role in individual and societal development, in creating jobs, economic growth and prosperity and in providing a highly skilled human capital. After studying the literature regarding education trends, this chapter further researches four of the trends, because of their impact on tourism. These are: “more education”, “a mix of formal, non-formal and informal education”, “lifelong learning” and “social media”.

- **New work and mobility:** The distinction between working life and retirement may become blurred in the future and people increasingly will work at one career, “retire” for a while (perhaps to travel) when they can afford it, return to school, begin another career, and so on in endless variations. Many researchers demonstrated the benefits for retaining the older workforce because its flexibility, strong works ethic, experience and maturity. Travel & Tourism holds real opportunities for job creation to address the aging workforce. Education in volunteering might become also increasingly important as different sectors, including tourism, search for the benefits of an aging population.

Mobility, correlated with work, is about being a mobile worker which means that work can be done from anywhere, anytime, and on any device and also about being able to work and get access to people and information from a mobile device. Tourism and mobility are inextricably intertwined in all spheres or facets of development. Because of the mobility tourism professionals have to be able to offer personalized products and services which target increasingly specific customer needs and offer benefits and time savings.

- **Individualism:** Individualism is a new moral culture or a philosophy which supports the freedom of the individual and encourages personal development and self-direction, with few social limitations. According to Douthat (2014) in the future, it seems, “there will be only one “ism” - Individualism - and its rule will never end. Ian Yeoman, cited in Leigh et al (2012) considers that individualism is a key driving force for the future of tourism, because individualism is an expression of “identity and escapism”.

All these trends are described with their background information and then applied in the tourism industry, where it shows how these megatrends impact tourism. Furthermore, the chapter continues with the **industry trends** and their influence on tourism, presenting following industry trends: global growth, impact of millenials, unstoppable elders, rise of conspicuous leisure, growth of the “creative tourism”, gay on the go, staycation trends, bleisure trend, whole living, and last but not least DMO versus DMMO, with the aim to help professionals in tourism to understand these trends and to exploit them.

Also, this chapter presents the **social trends** and their influence on tourism. Social trends show how and in what direction the values, behaviors and needs of the population will change. Under the influence of the megatrend individualization, regardless of social milieus and age groups, a pluralization of lifestyles has developed and this chapter describes some of these.

Last but not least in this chapter are the **consumer trends** and their influence on tourism, these representing a line, a brand, a path or a trail that follows the consumer in a market. The most important consumer trends described in this chapter are: mood manufacturing, neo-recycling, multi-tool design, “me-values-consumer”, super security, discretionsim, new-urbanism, dialogue, self-design, multiplicity, hyper efficiency, mindfulness and super-personalized.

Chapter four, Delphi Study and Expert Interview, includes a **Delphi survey** that was conducted in accordance to the results in the trend research, and an **expert interview** with professor Buhalis, made in order to check the validity of the conclusions that I reached through an extensive study of the literature.

The Conclusions chapter of the thesis sums up the most important aspects of the thesis and presents some personal consideration regarding the presented issues, linked to the purpose of the thesis: to find relevant aspects that will help destinations to adapt to the rapidly changing environment of the future and increasing competition. Some of the most important findings are presented below.

I. The tourist destination between present and future

Regarding the key-aspects of a destination

Regarding the most important features of a tourist destination definition I consider important to present a summary of the most important definitions found in the literature. According to them a tourist destination is a physical entity (Bieger, 2002; Bierman, 2003; Metelka, 1990; Gun, 1994; WTO, 2003; Buhalis,2000; Seaton&Benet, 2001) but also an intangible entity (Seaton&benet, 2001; UNWTO, 2002) (image, identity, personality), a processual and complex construct (Ren, 2009, Jucan, 2012), with a mix of products and services (WTO, 2003, Fyall&Wanhill, 2008; Mill&Morison, 1992; Buhalis, 2000; UNWTO, 2002) that must be managed as a strategic business unit (Bieger, 2005; Wagenseil, 2010), a value network of competencies (Coles, 2006) a philosophy for tourist as a subject, for local as beneficiary and for the intermediary as profiteer (Rotariu, 2009).

By author's opinion tourist destinations in general and city destinations in particular will be a stakeholders construct, a co-creation, as Buhalis (2015) also stated, based on destination's features (attractions, facilities, infrastructure, transportation and hospitality) and on the network of commercial actors connected to the value-chain, supported by technology and within the

framework of smartness, that delivers a mix of products and services in order to ensure some particular experiences to visitors and to increase the social and economic well-being of the local community and that requires a strategic and visionary management in order to stay competitive and performing.

Place making and experience design based processes, in the context of smartness (technology and sustainability), and an adequate management that enables a more flexible and faster reaction to destination environment, in the broad sense, will be, in the author's opinion, the most important features that a destination has to achieve in order to remain competitive, performing and sustainable.

Regarding tourist destination organization

To achieve the mentioned objectives tourist destinations should move beyond marketing activity to redefine its goals and to integrate management functions and development. The solution the author has found in the literature is the DMMO (Destination Marketing and Management Organization) which is starting to be implemented in Vancouver, but only by creating networks between the office coordinator of destination and business groups. There are other cities, well strengthened tourist destination, that try to actually implement this type of project, such examples being presented in the paper.

The author believes that we need to go further with this model, namely that the organization responsible for destination management must build its own or together with policy makers, and mandate community, a vision on which to build a brand correlated with the destination tourism products (and their development) and together with visitor experience, and to communicate it clearly to all stakeholders; maintain the commitment of stakeholders including the local community in its realization by developing the customer relationship management, business communities, local communities, workforce, etc.; be concerned with increasing the quality of offered services; establish partnerships and collaborations with tourist organizations, customers, local communities, universities and other knowledge based institutions or other destination management or marketing organizations, with regional, state, European and international organizations; to develop the technology and techniques of social media, etc. Such an organization could reach an alignment of tourism management strategies with urban growth policies, resulting in a highly attractive tourist destination both for tourists as well as for community and business, profitable and sustainable.

Regarding the tourist destination stakeholders

In tourism there are many different stakeholders involved and finding a common denominator among their concerns has become very difficult. The author believes that addressing stakeholders should be achieved through a strategic management process that considers, on the

one hand, the achievement of destinations' objectives and, on the other hand, the development of strategies for the stakeholders on the long run. These strategies must take into account the actual and perspective needs of stakeholders, through strategic, proactive, built on interdependence, shared values and common objectives.

Obviously, stakeholder management is not a simple thing and this is another argument for the necessity of the destination management organization. A good communication with stakeholders can generate innovation, better goods and services tailored to the needs and expectations of consumers, increase competitiveness and ensure the destinations' long-term sustainability.

As like most of studied experts agree, the author believes that, despite the time, energy and other resources, the organization has to develop the stakeholder management, because, by addressing their interest, an organization will be sustainable and will perform better.

Local community

Because in modern tourism local communities form a basic element and it is impossible to sustain a tourist destination without the support of the local people, the author considers that local community have to be one of the most important stakeholders in the destination.

The identified problem is that the lack of community is so much the norm in our culture of rugged individualism and the obvious consequence of globalization and increased mobility seems to be less identification with and attachment to the local. So, there is a need to recreate the community with an empowered public that can ensure public services are responsive to their needs, to re-envision how the whole range of types of community may be best brought into decision-making processes, to determine what the people value and what is no longer relevant to them as a community.

Rekindling the community has many benefits. It can deliver pro-environmental behavior change, raised moral standards, can offer a sense of belonging and place attachment, etc. Related to place attachment and the sense of belonging is place identity, a very important asset for tourism.

Community is the key stakeholder in the process of destination development, with engagement crucial throughout the long-term process not for a discrete period to shape a strategy. Community driven projects help forge the community itself, and community engagement is also, in part, community creation. The author believes that community driven projects help forge the community itself, and community engagement is also, in part, community creation. Also, the development of tourism should be regarded as one of the alternative development strategies that can help local communities to overcome socio-economic and developmental weaknesses,

preserving their strengths and enhancing their chances of development.

The author supports the experts' view regarding the fact that the community based tourism respects people and identity, roots and local customs, is ecological consciousness, stimulates the sustainable development of the local economy, being environmentally and socially responsible.

Regarding the tourism system

A new argument for the need of a management organization that integrates all aspects of tourist destination resides from the research of a destination as a system.

The tourism system as a whole is comprised of tourists, companies and destinations, closely interrelated with one another and each component is vital for the operation of the whole system. The supply and demand are interrelated and the nature of tourism changes over the years. The external environment (namely political, economic, social and technological factors) influence and are influenced by tourism.

The tourist destination is also a complex and complicated system of diverse interrelated components, deeply connected among themselves. It comprises a variety of organizations offering heterogeneous products and services (such as accommodation, transport, attractions, hospitality etc.). The system also involves people-to-people and people-to-place subsystems. Through exchanging material, energy and information flows within and outside the system, it has to improve permanently its structure and functions in order to adapt to a complex and ever-changing external environment.

The **tourism supply** is the tourism product, and is represented, in a broad sense, by the destination's features, and, in a narrow sense, by the tourism industry/services at destination. The author considers that today's and future's focus is on development and provision of experiences, services and infrastructure that exceeds customer expectations. This suppose product development, marketing, becoming a hospitable and welcoming community, and developing and sustaining the resources and capacities needed to keep the efforts going and successful. The challenge is to be completely aware of the many product options available within the destination area, or to create or co-create new products, experiences, and/or services that are meeting the consumers' expectations. After that, this knowledge, sites, experiences, services can be organized and presented to the visitor in a way that creates value for the consumer and maximizes benefits for the destination.

The pressure of competition in a globalized world will impact all the stages in the tourism value-added chain (travel agents, travel organizers, the transport and hotel and catering industries) registering growth in size, trends towards concentration, niche strategies and strategic alliances

increasingly pursued internationally through investment, mergers and joint ventures.

For example, the air transport will register a rise in the international traffic, globally operating airlines and the formation of strategic alliances; this means that transport is only possible in cooperation with strategic partners. One example of good practice regarding this aspect is Edinburgh. The city realized a strategic partnership with the low cost carriers. The city must work closely with the carriers to help them to increase the number and frequency of low cost air routes and to develop special offers that can be promoted at times of low occupancy.

Another aspect regards the destination safety and security, which, because of a strong competition, will have to be sustain both by individual operators and the whole destination. Destinations perceived as less safe and secure will be avoided.

By author opinion, the quality and authenticity of the destination, as well as its efficient management represent two other important aspects that leave to its sustainability. Cultural heritage tourism projects can represent an interesting solution in the long term for this purpose, because they can contribute to the construction and renovation of the tangible heritage, but also to rekindle the community, and, through this, to develop the intangible heritage.

Because, based on studied trends and estimations, cultural heritage tourism will be one of the fastest growing market in the industry, the thesis present also some considerations in this regard. I support the experts' view that claim that linking tourism with heritage and culture can do more for local economies than promoting them separately. It can bring increased revenue to the heritage sites and in this way to the community and country that hosts them and it can be an engine of economic growth. Tourism can stimulate the preserving and enhancing actions of the cultural heritage, since the revenue it generates can be channeled back into initiatives to aid its long-term survival. In order to succeed tourism needs a strategy for reinventing the role of heritage so that it serves the needs of everyone, and this can be done through a community-centered approach, in order to truly engage the residents around the heritage assets that everyone shares.

The ***tourism demand*** is represented by tourists and its study for marketing purpose and product development. As presented in the thesis, the demand structure is dynamic (along with demographic, cultural, educational, and technological change and experiences travelers) and consumers are multi-optional (flexible, as they have a lot of attractive options). Because tourism consumption patterns do change, tourism demand trends reflect the increasing diversity of interests of the modern society. From the plurality of developments identified in the thesis I am presenting only the most significant for tourism professionals:

- the “**amazonification**” induces the necessity to customize the offerings more and more to the needs of specific individuals, because they no longer wish to be a part of the mass market. The

consumers will be more engaged, confident and vocal, and will need a greater degree of flexibility in their travel in the future.

- **customization (hedonism)**: the consumers should be able to put a personal stamp on the product, providing it with a uniqueness relevant only to them.

- **women** represent the most important and fastest growing segment of the travel market, in terms of both leisure and business travel and are, also, travel influencers. Tourism developers have to be prepared for the female customer that is looking for a unique shopping experience, pay attention to detail, and is pleased with little attentions throughout the purchasing. Women are keen on culture and trips, and have a higher level of concern for the environment and sustainable development.

- **the new family structure**, with more generations included, single parenting, people marrying later, more people never marrying, and many people never having children will be on the wave and tourism businesses need to be proactive in responding to this trend. For example, Edinburgh has strategies to attract the double income pre-kids market, Linz aims to appeal to families and the elderly, etc.

- **millenials** will be of growing importance to the travel industry. They travel more often, are more comfortable mixing business with pleasure, are more interested in urban than resort destinations, look for places that are fun and entertaining, and interactive and hands-on, consider online reviews important when planning a trip and are more likely to voice their displeasure.

- **the silver tourists**, which will continue to be one of the fastest growing areas of tourism, represent an untapped opportunity for marketers. To capture this segment of the market, they have to adapt and expand the delivery of services in the leisure, hospitality and tourist industries, in order to meet their specially tailored services. The silver tourists can boost the destination because they can travel throughout the year and non-seasonal tourism can increase revenues and the use of infrastructure throughout the year. It is important to say that tourism security is very important for them. For example, Hungary and Poland made a scheme to facilitate low-season transnational exchanges of seniors and families facing difficult circumstances. The same, the Romanian government has a scheme for its citizens with the same purpose.

- the **LOHAS (Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability)** consumers represent a market limited now to few developed country, but I support the opinion of many experts who believe that they could be the tourism industry's new premium customers in the years to come. This type of consumers has a focus on personal development and an eco-friendly life-style (respecting the principle of green living (based on 4R's): Rethink, Reduce, Recycle and Reuse).

- **LGBT (gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender travelers)** are a dynamic and influential segment within the tourism sector and will also continue to grow. They travel more, spend more and have larger amounts of disposable income, but destinations that want to reach them have to take into account the social acceptance of homosexuality in their area, the government legislation

and the effects of these on their business. For example, Vancouver has a development plan to attract this group and develop a tourism product adapted to their needs.

- the **medical wellness tourism** and **health-oriented holidays** have an enormous potential and will gain an important part of tourism market, because it will comprise not only older people but also the younger people (by rising perceptions of time pressure and blurring distinctions between work and leisure). A destinations' competitive advantage will come from the local assets, both natural (lakes, salinas, etc.), or produced, like culinary products, wellness or lifestyle rituals (yoga, qigong, ayurveda, or other forms), and any other products that will address wellbeing of body and mind.

- more tourists will seek **life-enriching travel experiences**, learning-while-travelling, wildlife viewing, attending festivals or other cultural events, so destinations that will engage visitors in powerful and transformative learning experiences will have an important competitive advantage.

- the **emergence of flexible e-workers** will be a growing trend and for millions of people the dividing line between working time and leisure time will become vague or non-existent. This will impose the need for and availability of 24/7 connectivity throughout the destination and, for the tourism professionals, to offer a motivating tourism package in order to determine this people to extend their business trip for a few days of leisure to enjoy the destination.

- the **creative tourism** is also on the rise. This type of tourists is looking for creative places where their own creativity can feed and be fed by the creativity of those they visit. This means that the destination has also to be creative, to re-think its products and services and to develop connections between tourism, culture and creativity.

- the **staycations** (a vacation spent in one's home country rather than abroad) is a trend, but also social phenomenon which appeared because of the economic recession in UK, and apparently will continue and even expand to other areas of the world. Many travelers attempt to maintain breaks and holidays even more frequently than in the past, as an antidote to the everyday life stresses.

Regarding the destination value chain and local economic development

The typical **value chain** is the combination of services that contribute to the delivery of the tourism product/experience (tour organization, accommodation, catering, entertainment, transport). Its approach suppose the establishment of circular flows of income (national, regional and local) and of an integrated product and business policy which considers the whole tourism value chain, a difficult mission in the context of the actual DMO.

From many studies and personal observations, I conclude that tourism SMEs have often a limited knowledge of their role in the global value chain and of the significance of the multiple linkages that occur in it. We are assisting again at the necessity of a well-established destination management organization that can help them to know the market trends, to reach more markets

due to joint marketing and promotion, to know and meet their customers' requirements, to access latest technologies and solutions, innovative practices and professional training, or increase their expertise and quality of advices to clients.

The **multi-stakeholder approaches**, already described, are one face of the value creation in the tourism chain.

The research revealed some significant elements in destination value chain in order to offer a comprehensive tourism experience: networks, clusters and personal relationships.

I support the experts' belief that in order to create travel and virtual experiences, intra and inter-industry networking grouped by clusters will be extremely important and that this type of networks will record a significant increase. Creative industrial cluster and cultural industrial cluster (like Pecs, the Region Emilia-Romagna, Maribor)) are just two examples of how this type of network can increase the tourism value chain. Studying the clusters I can conclude that this process can improve the collaboration between some of the most important destination stakeholders, like private and state tourism organizations, media, NGOs, the government, etc., and can serve as business incubators for policies concerning economic cooperation structures and smart regions.

Moreover, the idea of the development of clusters that engage public and private players from all sectors was pointed out by the participants of the 3rdGlobal Summit on City Tourism in December 2014 (PATA, 2015) as central to the new paradigm for city tourism development; a development that needs to be conscious of the fact that tourism is a policy instrument for social cohesion and cultural preservation, beyond its fundamental contribution as an economic activity.

Regarding the management of tourist destination

As I noted, we are witnessing the need to put more accent on destination management, rather than marketing, which has been the emphasis historically, in order to coordinate and lead all the elements that make up the destination, its marketing and product management, while creating a suitable environment (through legislation, policies, regulations, etc.).

The environment of the destination is very complex and according to WEF (World Economic Forum, 2015) "identifying priorities, upgrading infrastructure, calibrating fiscal incentives and executing international marketing campaigns are among the tasks necessary to succeed in developing the T&T sector-tasks". Coordination and cooperation will be extremely important in this new era in which an entity's power depends on the extent of its interconnectedness. The link at the local level, by our opinion, can be a well-established and efficient tourism destination management organization.

Leadership

As presented in the paper, the destination is a system, a network, and the leadership of the whole network will be of tremendous importance. Starting from the studied destinations, we can say that successful destinations must have strong leaders that create a common sense of purpose and provide a strategic focus for a destination.

Tourism leaders will require a global perspective in order to respond positively to crises, to political, socio-cultural, economic and environmental problems that may be brought about or exacerbated by tourism development, they must have a visionary role, engaging the tourist sector in long-term planning; have to guide and coordinate destinations' stakeholders, to lead the destination marketing, to maintain the quality standards, to protect the environment, etc. Another important task, recently appeared, is the coordination of the new ways of working that social media represents. Experts, that I also join, consider that through the involvement of the leadership in social media the organization gets a competitive advantage

Visitor experience management

Until recently, visitor management was largely about minimizing negative impacts of tourists' activities, while visitor satisfaction, that has to be one of the goals of visitor management by our opinion, was not perceived as being equally important. Researchers suggest that there are ways to manage visitors others than controlling numbers and modifying resources.

Because the visitor experience begins with planning and arranging the destination trip and ends when the person return home and, some of them, relives and/or share their experience through social media channels, destinations must engage with visitors through this period in a relevant, timely, and personal manner.

The author considers that the design of visitor experience will suppose in the future free WI-FI or accessible corridors in order to help them to access and use geolocation or translating into the native language, activity booking applications, mobile apps that can help tourists to learn the history and culture of the places they visit, to enable visitors to share and promote their destination experiences (positive or negative) via social networks. After the tourists' trip, the destination has to be able to monitor, respond to and act upon feedback received through online review sites.

More than this, there are experts (Guo et al, 2014; MacKay and Vogt, 2012) who believe that the development of tourism IoT (Internet of Things) technology that features mobile search, mobile positioning, mobile payment, mobile tour guides, virtual offices, social media, interactive communications, and other information services, will result in a shift from online travel to smart travel.

Another aspect also needs to be mentioned. The community is vital in the visitor experience, the research suggesting that it is impossible to sustain tourism to a destination that is

not supported by the local people. At the same time, the tourism impacts on communities, either it is about the environmental, economic, social or about the cultural area, and managing visitors' experience is of tremendous importance.

Connected to this issue I can mention two different situations. Barcelona decides to respond to its global popularity and to the problems that affected its community because of this and adopted a smart tourism management in order to keep the city's natural rhythm in balance. The program comprised of more than 20 tourism stakeholder businesses intend to offer visitors a more sustainable way to enjoy the city. The city of Cambridge had a different problem: its current model of tourism was not maximizing the value from the visitor economy. They created an organization that had focused more on destination management, rather than marketing, in order to convert more of the day visits to overnight stays and short breaks in the city.

Human resource management

Human resources represent according to experts the main strategic resource of organizations. HR development in a destination is crucial in achieving a comparative advantage in the highly volatile and intensely competitive global tourism industry.

Tourism industry already has difficulties in attracting top talent, both for technical and managerial positions. Besides, WTTC, cited in Crotti and Misrahi (2015) estimated that “the total global impact of talent gaps could cost the global economy nearly 14 million jobs and \$630 billion GDP loss”. So, as this research and some experts suggest, the big challenge for the tourism industry and the destination regarding human resources is to recruit and retain the right employees.

Researchers (Crotti and Misrahi, 2015) show that “for every 30 new tourists to a destination, one new job is created. The aviation and travel sector is already the second-largest employer in the world, with huge potential for further job creation-travel and tourism is forecast to employ 338 million people by 2023, and aviation and aerospace an additional 58 million people”. So the need for skilled labor in tourism will be extremely high in the future and destinations should take action in this regard. The research conducted in this thesis presented some solutions to this problem.

The ageing population can be seen as an opportunity, as most of the older workforce is flexible, has a strong work ethic and bring experience and maturity with them. Elderly people can act as tour guides keeping the local history alive and playing the role of ambassadors of cultural identity, as it happens in Sierra de las Nieves, Spain. Cultural mediators are also tasked with the responsibility of ensuring the quality of stays in each town.

Motivating Y generation could be realized through strong training program that gives them a clear path for advancement but, for the tourism industry, this may be difficult to provide.

A way to solve this problem is applied in Ireland. Here, the state is investing in training, professional development and accompanying measures for tourism business. Suitable training programs are managed at a local level by a local association in consultation with local tourism employers and an institute for certification, with certification in line with the national qualifications system in order to ensure that the training matches the demands of the industry in each region. A group of experts is planning to commence a detailed assessment of the workforce skills and competency requirements for the hospitality sector in Ireland up to 2020. Another report regarding the key skills necessary for enterprises to trade internationally made a number of recommendations relating to the subjects of applied training programs that should be developed for tourism.

National tourism organizations collaborate with the department of education to explore how tourism can gain an enhanced profile in second-level education. In particular, second level schools will be encouraged to implement the tourism modules in the transition year, like: “The Tourism Awareness Programme” and “Tourism Studies – the Irish Experience”. Both aim to promote the importance of tourism as an economic activity by developing awareness among students of the Irish tourism product as well as an awareness of the careers and employment opportunities within the tourism industry. Also, the department of education and skills will provide a framework for the future development of Ireland’s overall level of proficiency in foreign languages.

Germany also has a project to examine the specific need for skilled labor in the tourism industry, in the context of the demographic change that is altering also the labor market in the tourism industry.

Another aspect relates to the changes in the way of work because of the technology. Because work can be done anytime, anyplace and anywhere, and the employment arrangements are very diverse (part time work, second and third jobs, temporary jobs, teleworking, full or partial self-employment), tourism operators have to be able to offer less traditional ways of working and more flexibility, access to flexible arrangements for training and development, innovative strategies such as seasonal job sharing, incentives, better articulation of career paths, improved employment conditions, in order to attract and retain their best talent in the future.

As the paper presented the DMO of the future will have virtual offices, so employees worldwide will be able to work together online. But these people must become an elite with unique skills, experiences, and professional attributes in order to have a more powerful and evolved structure able to lead its destination through this always changing and challenging future.

Financial management

The financial management has a fundamental role in the management of any organization including tourism organizations. Any activity must be financially supported otherwise it would be

impossible, and needs to end with a financial advantage, profit, added value and for tourism also with a competitive image.

The application of financial management tools is very important for tourism businesses within the destination, as the paper presented, because:

- finance is required at each stage of functioning (in promotion, incorporation, development, expansion and administration of day-to-day working, coordinating various functional activities (marketing, production, etc.). A proper financial administration assumes studies, analysis, evaluation of all financial problems, etc.
- make decisions in the light of profitability and to minimize the risk involved in the plan;
- measure the performance of the entity;
- bring economic growth and development through investments, financing, dividend and risk management decision which helps the destination stakeholders to take better projects.

Crisis management

Crisis management in tourism is a subject of big interest, highlighted also at international level by the participants of the UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held on Sendai, Japan 2015, that stressed the need for adoption of disaster risk reduction measures in order to build more resilience into the sector, and to allow for a resilient and sustainable development.

Because of the multiple risks appeared in many areas of the world, like current geopolitical tensions, from the Middle East to Ukraine, the growing terrorism threat from ISIS, the refugee crisis, the risk of pandemics, like Ebola, significant affected some destination through a decrease in the number of tourists and amount in revenues. We join expert opinion that to mitigate these risks, it is necessary to implement technological advances and innovative processes that can increase both the efficiency and security of travel. In order to realize this goal it is necessary to generate better collaboration among international institutions, governments and the private sector.

The thesis presented also two possible risk approaches: sustainable development that tries to prevent the shock event from occurring (by behaving more responsible toward the environment and society) and the resilience that focuses more on the response and recovering after the shock event. I join the experts' opinion that consider that resilience represents an important tool for sustainable development.

What's important is the fact that destinations need to cope with change, crisis and risks in a way that enhances their capacity and ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain their identity and main functions.

At the same time tourism organizations need to include social media in their crisis management procedures, being very important to know where people talk about them and where to connect with this people especially in times of crises.

Some considerations regarding the Knowledge management

Sharing of qualitative and quantitative data, experience and expertise among city destinations are and will be, by our opinion, very important. The regional and international city organizations/ networking platforms are very useful platforms for this objective. At the same time, bringing together the destination stakeholders in some “tourism learning areas” can solve common problems, boost destination competitiveness, and creates the premises of a quick adaptation to market changes and other environmental perturbations.

In the creation of the knowledge that the tourist product or tourism market comprises customers, suppliers, consumers, interest groups have to be involved.

Regarding the marketing of tourist destination

Marketing, as a science of managing markets, has a significant importance for tourist destinations. Tourist destination marketing is the managerial process responsible for the implementation of tourism policy. The marketing planning of a destination should include a SWOT Analysis, strategic objectives, a marketing action plan, and implementation, monitoring and control.

In order for destination marketing to be successful it is necessary to have strong partnerships among the various stakeholders and a collaborative marketing strategy (Buhalis, 2000; Vellas & Becherel, 1999; Vicent, 2012). The use of tourism clusters in order to bring together key public and private stakeholders who design, plan or are associated for the achievement of the marketing objectives can drive to a sustainable and innovative destination.

For example, Emilia-Romagna (the province of Rimini) has been presented as a case study of economic success, especially for its clusters, due to the ability of its regional institutions and policy to give the opportunity for development and gave proper tools to support the small and medium enterprises that form clusters. The Province of Rimini has its own responsibilities and tasks, being the institution for planning and coordination of promotional activities in its territory.

Another example is Pecs that, thanks to the European Capital of Culture programme, tried to create the city's new cultural cluster on a famous manufactory. They started by transferring the remaining production units of the factory to the eastern buildings and then redesigned, renovated, reconstructed or newly built buildings in the Cultural Cluster on five hectares, in order to build a strong cluster of the creative industries in the region.

Co-operative marketing is any agreement to combine marketing efforts in order to obtain mutual benefits. A good example was previous presented, between Tourism Ireland and carriers

(airlines and ferry companies) and combines destination marketing with specific offers by carriers to encourage travel to Ireland.

As the web is becoming the central element of the planning and purchasing behavior of many modern travelers, the digital marketing strategies need to respond more appropriately to these changes. The trend moves in an online direction not just for bookings but also for managing a tourist destination and some solution were brought in this thesis.

Likewise, adapting organizations to the twenty-first century means adopting social media as a way of life and a way of business. Listening and engaging travelers are now critical to DMO success.

Destination image

The image that individuals/tourists have about a destination has a crucial role in the destination's marketing success. Their image or perceptions can be modified or enhanced during the travel. What is important in the author's opinion is the brand image transmitted to the market, because this image will affect consumer choice in the pre-purchase evaluation phase.

Today's cities are considerably multi-cultural and heterogeneous, more than ever and this affects their identity, which is a complex phenomenon developed in time, affected by change, and influenced by many factors. Many cities, in order to obtain the urban revitalization, opted to reshape and project an image that attracts the visitor and the resident, the city's image perception being seen as a valuable asset in the global market competition. Thus place identity is now "being produced, imagined and consumed through dynamic interactive processes, in physical as well as virtual environments" (Molenaar 1996, 2002, cited in Govers, 2005) and this trend, by our opinion, will continue.

The design and building processes of the place it is about the meaning that residents and visitors have and provide. We join the specialists' opinion that place making and experience design based processes will be the key to destination success.

Destination branding

In order to be successful a destination brand needs to go beyond the communication of an image, because globalization is making the world increasingly uniform, and the construction and promotion of our differences will be essential. Tourism professionals have, by our opinion, to go beyond logos and campaigning and to build and market smartly the local identities, through long-term initiatives and strategies. So, a well-branded city can bring value for both city itself and for residents and tourists.

Urban branding intent to improve the marketing of the city image by realizing an image of the city that integrates socio-cultural, economic, and environmental themes into the city. The main goals of urban branding, as resulting from our research, are to reimagine a city, to depend on

place-based identities and understanding of a particular local culture, through a story about the city that brings people in it, in order to attract desirable consumers. I join the experts (Rivas, 2015, Rehan, 2014) that consider crowd-sourcing the city story as a new solution to keep the range of city stories updated and fresh on a permanent basis.

Citizens, one of the most important assets of places, can be used as citizen ambassadors. This type of ambassadors are considered in the literature as a communication channel, a cost-effective place promotion technique, a resource for mobilizing local citizen pride, or a development resource, etc.

The latest research in the field of the “digital competency” of brands in the travel industry, presented the fact that there is a lack of true social tools on many travel sites. Social media tools can help to increase engagement and co-creation with the city’s diverse target groups in order to develop a mix of storytelling, stats, images, videos, facts, case studies or other communication-oriented pieces, coherently assembled into a web platform.

Regarding the competitiveness of a tourist destination

The destination competitiveness represent, according to our research, the destination's ability to create well-being for its residents (Bahar & Kozak, 2007; Crouch & Ritchie, 1999), to gain market shares (Hassan, 2000; D’Hartserre, 2000; Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013), to deliver quality, innovative, and attractive tourism services to consumers (Hassan, 2000; Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013) while ensuring the sustainable use of resources (Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013). In the literature there have been described numerous indicators that can be used to measure the competitiveness of any given destination: price competitiveness (Durberry and Sinclair 2003; Song et al. 2000; Dwyer et al., 2000); environmental attributes (Inskeep, 1991; Middleton, 1997; Mieczkowski, 1995; Hassan, 2000); quality (Go and Govers, 2000; Newall, 1992; Buhalis, 2000; Crouch and Ritchie, 1999; Dwyer and Kim, 2003); visitor numbers; culture and heritage, etc.

It is necessary to mention that competitiveness is no guarantee of performance. If the destination uses its comparative (climate, scenery, flora, fauna) and competitive (infrastructure, management, skills of workers, policies) advantages, the implementation of strategies surrounding these advantages, and their concurrence with destination goals, will be judged by stakeholders and visitors alike as to the “success” of the destination, as Ritchie and Crouch (2003) stated.

In the author’s opinion the competitiveness will represent the main pillar of business in tourism, as well as of tourist destinations, if competitiveness is understood as the performance to be the best, and competitiveness and competitive advantage will be fundamental values of future strategies.

Regarding Sustainability, Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility

In large part because of the new wave of globalization, there is a far more powerful connection between business and social impact, a commitment for socially based solutions being a requirement for success in serving an array of markets, and this trend, by our opinion, will continue and expand also in other areas.

The main findings of the author's research regarding ***the economic pillar*** of sustainability are listed below:

- Economic growth has created immense wealth in some areas of the globe, but left others behind;
- If growth was once the driving force transforming the quality of human life, now it turns out to be subject to severely diminishing returns;
- With global growth constrained by the need to limit resources and carbon emissions, redistribution becomes the only viable route to poverty reduction;
- In order to survive, the global economy is compelled to keep growing like a cancer, at an unsustainable rate that will kill its host if we are not taking the necessary measures;
- The shape of the future is one of far greater regionalization and localization of markets;
- The necessity of moving from efficiency to sufficiency and well-being;
- The necessity to replace the dominant values of greed, competition and accumulation, for those of solidarity, cooperation and compassion;
- Growth is not the same as development; development does not necessarily require growth;
- The economy is a subsystem of a larger and finite system, the biosphere; hence permanent growth is impossible;
- The necessity of creating communities that do not require major and continuous movement of individuals on a daily basis – by bringing together home, work and leisure locations as far as possible;
- More emphasis on measuring the well-being of the population than on economic production;
- The future development of modern human society has to be built on sustainable principle and on the concept of quality of life or happiness.

The main findings of the author's research regarding ***the environmental pillar*** of sustainability are listed below:

We are assisting now to a human-induced rapid environmental change with habitat loss/fragmentation, the spread of exotic species, harvesting by humans, pollutants of various sorts and, of course, climate change. The researched studies showed that nearly two-thirds of

ecosystem services are in decline worldwide; global fossil-fuel carbon emission and global greenhouse-gas emissions register a historic high; in 2008 the footprint exceeded the Earth's biocapacity by more than 50 per cent; global surface temperature has increased; >50% of Earth's ice-free land area has been directly modified by human action; the population of freshwater species show an average 37 per cent decline and so on.

There are significant consequences for all the Earth's inhabitants and that is why a wide range of means to slow down all these consequences are developed and implemented worldwide. Some of them were presented in the thesis.

According to UNWTO (2008) travel and tourism account for only 5% of all carbon emissions nowadays. But, according to UNEP, by 2035, tourism's contribution to climate change may have grown considerably. A scenario developed by Scott et al (2008) indicate that in terms of the number of trips made, global tourism will grow by 179%, while guest nights will grow by 156%. Passenger kilometers travelled will rise by 222%, while CO₂ emissions will increase at by about 152%! In less than thirty years and if no action will be taken today the CO₂ emission generated by tourism will be more than three times higher than today. Under these conditions, tourism has to reevaluate its development, being pro-active in addressing climate change and sustainability, in order to become an important factor to achieve the green economy objectives.

As part of the project managed by the Tourism and Experience Management Cluster Programme, Finland's first carbon footprint calculation model and Internet-based calculator for the use of a tourism resort have been created. Tourists can calculate their own carbon footprints, giving them information necessary to make responsible travel decisions.

The changes already mentioned determined also the consumers' growing awareness about environmental issues and of their own responsibility, generating a megatrend named Neo Ecology, that the author presented in the thesis, and the appearance of the LOHAS consumers. The missing self-awareness of this big group is one of the problems why sustainability is still far away from its potential.

The main findings of the author's research regarding **the social pillar** of sustainability are listed below:

- Social sustainability means responding better to local communities and promoting social inclusion, cohesion and accountability;
- Socially sustainable communities are equitable, diverse, connected and democratic and provide a good quality of life;
- The social policy areas and principals involved are equity and health, participation, needs, social capital, the economy, the environment, happiness, wellbeing and quality of life;

- Suppose good quality social infrastructure and local services, support for community development, opportunities for residents to get involved in local decision making, and shared social spaces and activities in new communities.

The main findings of the author's research regarding ***the cultural pillar*** of sustainability, a pillar recently accepted by the experts, are listed below:

- A society's culture is made by the society's values and the ways they are expressed;
- Culture fosters sustainable development: as a driver and as an enabler;
- Cultural heritage, cultural and creative industries, sustainable cultural tourism, and cultural infrastructure can serve as strategic tools for revenue generation;
- Culture and heritage create individual and community identity, promote social cohesion, and contribute to the creation of "social capital";
- Culture as a force for urban regeneration and social inclusion, by encouraging heritage preservation, fostering creative industries, and recognizing the value-added of cultural diversity;
- Linking tourism with heritage and culture can do more for local economies than promoting them separately. It can bring increased revenue to the heritage sites and, more broadly, to the community and country that hosts them and it can be an engine of economic growth.

Regarding the corporate social responsibility

In this challenging world, tourism industry has to adapt to the quadruple bottom line of economic, social, environmental and cultural values already mentioned, has to practice true prices, transparency, creativity, ethical behavior, value creation, and responsibility. All these values have to be implemented in the DNA of the tourism businesses in order to remain competitive and sustainable.

In tourism, the concept of CSR is connected with the idea of sustainable tourism and the growing movement for "fair trade". That means that the organizations responsible for development strategies have to include sustainable responsible tourism in their outcomes. In the context of tourist destination it can be said that Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), the key player in the tourism stakeholders systems, need new thinking, strategic agility and a will to revitalize both the economy and society in a responsible manner. To meet this expectations DMOs must redesign and ensure that public benefit is not incidental, but instead central to their very *raison d'être*. The informed participation of all relevant stakeholders and a strong political leadership that share a sustainable development vision is, by author's opinion, a basic condition of this achievement.

So I can say that CSR relates to every management function in tourism. Relating to marketing it deals with honesty in brochures, product safety, selling techniques, pricing policies, "hidden" relationships between tour operators and travel agents, etc. The aspects regarding

discrimination, wage levels, employment of disabled people relates to human resources management. The accuracy and honesty of financial reporting or the speed at which payments (bills) are made relates to financial management. Sourcing policies, supplier relationships, the necessities of customers with special needs relates to operations management. CSR can be the ideal vehicle for involving the private sector in the broader sustainable tourism destination agenda.

Another aspect pointedly by the thesis is community-based tourism, considered by some authors and I join their opinion, as a form of socially responsible tourism development with the potential to contribute substantially to local socio-economic development and poverty reduction.

Regarding politics, planning and developing a tourist destination

Tourism development policy should take into account three key issues: to establish development guidelines, to determine and control planning processes and to define the most adequate marketing strategies for the destination. In order to create a tourism policy “the nature of state involvement in and policies for tourism is dependent on both the political economic structures and the prevailing political ideology in the destination state...” (Sharpley and Knight, 2009, p. 242).

Tourist destination strategic planning is designed to be deliberate and integrative and to allow and permit the destination to adapt quickly to changing situations and develop information, planning and control systems to monitor and respond to a change.

Mature destinations and the emerging destinations may need different strategies, however, mature destinations also need to adapt to new trends and set their priorities to maintain their market share and combat the difficulties related to consumer protection, safety issues and local community stress.

For example, Barcelona needed to do some serious tourism planning for the future, as previously presented because of the out of control tourism development that stressed the community and determined dissatisfaction.

The thesis refers also to other tourism destination development plans, of which I mention only few aspects.

The co-creation phenomenon, I already mentioned in the definition of the destination, is the fact that urban tourist destinations will have to be developed in the context of city development; namely, every local authorities' decision in every area of development should take into account the development or impact on tourism, and this decision needs to be made with the stakeholder collaboration. A good example is the city of Munich that since 1950 has produced a development plan of the city with a collective compromise, a culture of balance, with over 70 organizations and institutions such as chambers of trade unions, universities, local authorities, in preparation for the Olympics. Since then, there has been a change in the style of planning to an open planning in which the citizens are able to make themselves heard. Future plans are related to identifying its

unique values and building a brand strategy designed to change the image of conservative and traditional city.

Another successful example is the city of Genoa that began in 2007 a plan to rethink the city, turning it into an urban laboratory that takes into account the cultural and artistic heritage, but also becoming an innovative town that attracts both residents and visitors or businessmen. What is interesting is that its marketing strategies and communication channels to visitors and locals tend to converge more and more.

Sibiu can also be considered an example in this regards, its development project for the next 10 years being achieved, on the one hand by consulting institutions and citizens, on the other hand including tourism as a main pillar. Sibiu City Development Plan focuses on culture and sports, creativity and innovation, sustainability and responsibility. To achieve these objectives and to be attractive to visitors and locals in the future, the city management must be concerned with a few key issues: engaging the community, clustering, technology development, innovation and sustainability, a better research and data to guide planning and management, and public-private partnerships. The examples do not stop here, with many initiatives in this respect that the city as a tourist destination is becoming a determined construct of stakeholders' initiatives.

Edinburgh invests in its tourism assets, products and services in order to provide a unique and compelling year round visitor experience and to enhance its sustainability. The strategic priorities included in the Action Plan are: World Class City Management; Quality of Experience; Winter Product Development; World Class Meetings City; and Extending Tourism's footprint.

Cornwall created a multi-stakeholder management unit responsible for the design and application of a plan regarding the conservation and enhancement of the natural landscape. The unit also provides advices on issues such as planning and development and project development.

Linz strategies comprise the development of a cultural, creative, green and peaceful city.

Manchester plans to strengthen the role culture plays in driving visits to the city-region and to develop a new model for sustainable economic growth based "around a more connected, talented and greener city region where all our residents are able to contribute to and benefit from sustained prosperity" (Marketing Manchester, 2013).

Munich plans for the future are to identify its unique assets and put in place a branding strategy in order to change the image of a conservative and traditional location. The example of the excellent collaboration between the stakeholders interested in city development was previous presented.

Dublin established as a key priority of the current collective strategy for tourism growth to 2020 the developing of tourism products where they can gain comparative advantage (namely food, culture, activity breaks, events and festivals), going beyond traditional "attractions" of Irish

people and beautiful scenery, in order to differentiate itself as a “must-visit”, stand-alone and an aspirational European short-break destination. About the special human resource development and training I already mentioned.

Vancouver established a destination strategy which comprises product development (particularly in the area of creative tourism, cultural tourism, culinary tourism, health and wellness tourism, parks and nature, shopping, cycling, etc.), events, visitor experience design, neighborhoods, tourism infrastructure development, transportation, partnerships and alliances.

Genoa plans to develop as an urban laboratory: a growing and changing city that cares about its historic and artistic heritage, but is open and ready for innovation. What is interesting is the fact that its marketing strategies and communication channels targeting visitors and locals tend to converge more and more.

As I already mentioned, the Province of Rimini, part of the region Emilia-Romagna, adopted the cluster model of development. The Art and Cultural Cities Product Union supports regional events through the promotion of real potential proposals. Also conference and congress, business centers and exhibition center are included, to serve the rich productive and commercial system, locally and nationally. The Region Emilia Romagna, as an institution, co-finances each year both Marketing and Promotion Programs and Co-marketing initiatives.

Maribor idea to form a new regional cluster – cooperation of 6 cities is a very good example of how cooperation can enhance tourism capabilities.

The biggest part of the destinations' strategies for the future, as resulting from the research, relates to:

- adopting a smart tourism management
- developing a new brand identity brief
- strategies for product development that supports existing attractions and create original, new tourism concepts and experiences, building distinctive and sustainable tourism products, services, attractions and infrastructure
- all-year-round cultural offer, arts and festivals
- heritage & places of interests, shopping, entertainment, nature & adventure, luxury travel, sports, business & mice, medical & wellness, education are also major development directions
- creative tourism as a tool for re-thinking places. In this manner, a destination that was previously reliant of the heritage of the past will be creatively linked to new sectors, in order to engage, as experts consider, new visitor markets and extend its product portfolio
- extending tourism's footprint toward destination's neighborhood
- cooperation and partnerships; the creation of clusters

- community engagement
- green development
- some of the destinations, particularly those mature, are targeting the growth markets of central and eastern Asia, especially China, adapting its products and services to meet the requirements of visitors from these countries.

Regarding countries' strategies for tourism development, as the author showed in the thesis, the main focus areas are:

- adapting to the growing demand from Asia: Australia, Estonia, France
- building competitive digital capacity: Australia
- innovation: Austria
- improve cooperation between stakeholders and their involvement in the development of the destination: Czech Republic, Hungary
- ensure the safety of consumer goods and services: Finland
- "access-to-holidays" policy for disabled people: France; or for seniors and families facing difficult circumstances: Hungary, Poland, Romania
- training and education: Germany, UK
- sustainable tourism: Germany, Hungary, Turkey
- quality: Germany, Hungary, Finland, Australia, Slovak Republic
- cycling: Finland, Slovak Republic

II. Megatrends and their influence on tourist destinations

Even if some aspects have already been mentioned above, some interesting aspects relating to trends influences on tourism and tourist destinations have to be mentioned.

Regarding the globalization's influence on tourist destinations

The main identified features of the destination in the future, starting from the globalization trend point of view, are as follows:

- Tourist destination will evolve in the context of a trend towards global markets, global competition and global communication;
- Spatial mobility of people will increase and foreign travel will be more frequently viewed as an alternative to domestic travel (Holowiecka et al, 2011);
- Asian tourists will be very important to all markets requiring tailored marketing strategy and a prepared workforce; multi-destination trips will be on the rise because of them;
- Tourist destinations quality standards have to be as high as possible because destinations

will be judged by global comparisons, even at the more localized level;

- Services quality will be more important than competitive pricing in the tourist marketing battle; stress on value for money;

- Sustainability and green development will be extremely important; the extension of the sociological phenomenon regarding the need to respect nature and its resources will determine a growing demand for “eco-tourism”;

- The Internet created cohesion of informal groups linked by common interests and needs and through this new trends that may be used to design new products;

- Destinations have to be prepared to deal with more experienced travelers who want customized services and not the impersonal, non-interactive system of mass-tourism (Dwyer, 2014);

- Greater levels of immigration, changing the ethnic, cultural and religious composition of many countries and leading to the establishment of multicultural societies will be challenging the destination marketing;

- Safe destinations will become more attractive; the consumers' desire to be safe facilitates the emergence of “last-minute” purchases;

- Because “a global network of places emerges with specific spatial patterns, highly differentiated between emblematic places and ordinary tourist places, between different tourist place qualities (sites, resorts, cities), and between functions for discovery, relaxing, playing, shopping” (Antonescu and Stock, 2014), etc. whose segments are traversed by mostly international tourists in search of discovery, connection, concentration or specific integration of some destinations will be a necessity; by the author’s opinion the strategic alliances in business networking relations will become a trend in tourism;

- In author’s opinion, globalization can be also an incentive to reconstruct or reinvent local traditions and particularities

- Closer cooperation between relevant international organizations in order “to reduce duplication, maximize synergies and facilitate the development of more coherent policy advice and coordination on emerging issues” will be, according to experts (Haxton, 2015, Buhalis, 2015) extremely important. Globalization, also, enhances the ability of countries to work together to overcome natural disasters and global challenges, such as global warming or other environmental issues.

Regarding connectivity's and technology's influence on tourist destinations

The main identified features of the destination in the future, starting from the connectivity and technology trend point of view, are as follows:

- Mobility and accessibility are and will continue to be essential issues for tourists, thus the quality, inter-modality and integration of transport networks will be an important factor in itinerary

decisions;

- The accessibility to a wide range of markets through air connections will play an important role both in destination development and in the region. According to Haxton (2015) “airport branding and destination branding complement and reinforce each other”;

- Connections with one of the 89 aviation Mega-Cities that will connect the world and the people until 2032 will be extremely important, because long-haul air travel is set to become more concentrated around a set of 'aviation mega-cities' and >95% of all long-haul traffic will flow between these points (Airbus Global Market Forecast, 2014);

- The use of resource-efficient modes, like walking, cycling, public transport, etc. will be a win-win solution for destinations;

 - Direct connection via new tech will be vital;

 - Experience-sharing is the connotation of connectivity

 - Big Data age can offer to tourist destinations huge gain with deeper knowledge, greater insights, but cannot replace strategic thinking and creativity on top of big data analysis and new skills are required to take advantage of them in this manner.

- I join the experts' opinion that expanding the integration of tourism with finance, business, information, transportation, etc. by means of advanced technologies will be the future of a smarter destination

Regarding female-shift trend's influence on tourist destination

- Women won more and more power and influence on economy and society, on science and politics and this will change our society profoundly, transforming our entire life - the way we live, work, and live.

- Women represent the most important and fastest growing segment of the travel market, in terms of both leisure and business travel, according to experts. Statistics showed that 80% of all travel decisions are made by women.

- Companies need to focus on how the markets differ between men and women. Effective marketing to women is about setting high standards and consistently delivering on your promises. The female customer is looking for a unique shopping experience and is pleased with little attentions throughout the purchasing.

- Because, as the author presented in the thesis, family patterns are changing, family forms are more varied, and there are more single parent families, stepfamilies, and families in which the mother works outside the home, there is the a need for understanding the holiday experiences of midlife single women and of the women in all the other stance.

Regarding the urbanization trend's influence on tourist destination

- According to UN DESA's Population Division (2014) by 2050 it is projected that about two-thirds of all humans will live in urban areas and most of the anticipated urban growth by 2050 will occur in Asia and Africa.

- Cities, as tourist destinations, contribute to the local economy, the well-being, environmental quality and cultural identity of city dwellers worldwide.

- Cities have to be enjoyable to all: citizens, tourists and investors, and to spread the benefits of tourism to its surrounding thus multiplying its impact and managing congestion.

- City tourism development purpose has to be social cohesion and cultural preservation, beyond its fundamental contribution as an economic activity.

- Sustainable development challenges will be increasingly concentrated in cities and smart cities can represent a solution with their new services, apps or urban products regarding safety, ecology, mobility, connectivity, retail or cultural issues. For tourists the smart city/destination will bring accessible integrated useful data available at the place they visit in a greener better organized environment in order to obtain their complete satisfaction.

Regarding the silver society – demographic trend's influence on tourist destination

- Aging is one of the forces that will shape society and the global economy over the next decades. Worldwide populations are getting older, a trend that is likely to continue for decades to come.

- Societies with aging populations must adjust business practices and policies to boost their economic vigor and the silver economy can be a new and growing market and demand.

- Destinations have to adapt to this growing segment of the market. They will need trained service delivery, new and adapted products and services associated with accessibility, to supply the needs of that this market does and will demand.

- Older consumers require entertainment, wellbeing and fun, can travel throughout the year and non-seasonal tourism can increase revenues and the use of infrastructure throughout the year, boosting destinations.

- They scrutinize the information, act rationally, frequently tend to be very impatient, frustrate with almost zero tolerance for poor service, travels primarily for rest and relaxation on either short- or long-stay trips, favor quieter, less congested destinations, etc.

Regarding health trend's influence on tourist destination

- Health & wellness tourism, as a form of touristic activity that uses the advantages of the natural environment, may be the optimal solution to many problems of the modern civilization.

- Health-oriented holidays (>5 days) are expected to grow by 90% (Sydov, 2011). Diet, fitness, stress control, and wellness trend by author's opinion will have many implications for tourism. Destinations have to adapt to their guests' wish for nutritious, low-calorie meals, exercise

facilities, tobacco-free areas, in-room fitness area, etc.

- We will assist, according to experts (Ellis, 2012) and my research, to a globalization of Ayurveda, Thai massage and Chinese medicine, Yoga, meditation, ashram tourism, etc.

- New services with a holistic and total health character will have to be available.

- The wellness and spa tourism industry will welcome the ecological and green movement.

- Destinations' competitive advantage will come from the local assets such as natural remedies, wellness or lifestyle rituals, food items.

Regarding education trend's influence on tourist destination

- Education plays a crucial role in individual and societal development, in creating jobs, economic growth and prosperity and in providing a highly skilled human capital.

- Because skills are the most important factor in economic success today over the next two decades it will be a growing demand for education and training and this will transform our working lives and educational systems around the world.

- Higher education levels are strongly correlated with demand for outdoor recreation activities, and lead to changes in the patterns of recreation and tourism, which are perceived, according to experts (Falk et al, 2012) as an opportunity for self-development, learning, seeking experiences that expand the understanding of themselves and the world

- Tourism education is perceived as not adequately preparing people for employment in the industry and if the gap between the tourism industry's expectations and the tourism educators' provision persist, sustainable development in tourism higher education may not be achieved.

- The rise of informal learning (from example through tourism) may make an equally important contribution to the development of individuals. The learning experience of new lifestyles and cultures, peoples and places, new languages can be increased by using technology and social networking to maintain contact with visitors after they leave the site, encouraging them to further process their experience.

- The tourism sector employees can take advantage of learning in their everyday activities and the organizational culture, open communication and information availability can enhance the workers ability of learning.

- Development of worker abilities through quality education, training, multi-skilling and the impact of lifelong learning are very important for destinations in order to find competent workers who can respond to consumer demands. So there is a need to be an emphasis on human resource development by all tourist destinations aiming to achieve competitive advantage.

- Social media leads to richer learning experiences for tourists and new research opportunities for tourist professionals to expand the understanding of business practices.

Regarding the new work and mobility trend's influence on tourist destination

- Tourism has become the second largest industry in the world in terms of creating employment and generating income and this trend is expected to continue.

- The tourism industry need to integrate a more culturally diverse workforce that has divergent values, work ethics, norms of behavior, and expectations and to ensure that skill and labor shortages will not derail projected growth.

- Major social changes may result from the fact that mobility will be in the future a combination of physical movement and virtual presence (ESPAS, 2012). Telecommuting will be on the rise, most people preferring to have some combination of home and office work, as studies shows. Because of this form of work and the others forms of work already presented, the human resource job will be challenging.

- Organizations will have to offer less traditional ways of working and more flexibility to attract and retain their best talent in the future.

- The way employees communicate and interact with their clients changed also. For tourism industry this means, as resulting from the research, the ability to build services around every customer.

- Because the distinction between work and leisure will blur, tourism practitioners have to diversify the offer.

Regarding the individualism trend's influence on tourist destination

- Individualism is a new moral culture or a philosophy which supports the freedom of the individual. It means: *ME FIRST*: self-asserted consumers, self-care and self-improvement; *ONLY ME*: singletons and single-person households; *JUST FOR ME*: Niche Markets and Consumer Segmentation, Mass-Customization and Open Innovation.

- This type of travelers will need a greater degree of flexibility in their travel in the future, customization, unique natural and cultural features that survive as close as possible to their original form.

Regarding the industry trends

I believe, as all the industry researchers, that the demand for tourism will increase. At the same time we will assist to a growing demand for some segments, like millenials, elders, LGBT, etc., that we already presented

The conspicuous leisure, which means the signaling of social status through consumption of experience rather than through consumer goods, will also grow. This form of tourism represents those forms of leisure that seem to be fully motivated by social factors, such as taking long vacations to exotic places and bringing souvenirs back or taking vacations that engage extreme sports, for example skiing, snow-boarding, rock-climbing, mountain-biking, river-rafting.

Connoisseurship and being an “early adopter” are other faces of the conspicuous consumption that will increase.

The creative tourism, whereof I talk in the thesis, represents a new form of tourism which combines the intangible heritage and contemporary creativity, and will also increase. Early creative tourism concepts were based on learning experiences related to traditional areas of culture and creativity. Recent models have been based, as presented in OECD (2014), on the integration of the tourism and creative industries, engaging not only consumers, but also producers, policy makers, and knowledge institutions. I believe, as many studied experts (Richards and Marques, 2012; OECD, 2014), that these new models respond to the need for tourism to re-invent itself as well as to the need for destinations to do something different and special in this global market.

Also, I believe that the staycation trend has to be capitalized by the tourism professionals in order to augment the domestic tourism. To realize this purpose they have to provide inspiration and ideas for breaks of the right quality and value to encourage the consumer to maintain and build on the domestic break habits formed in recent years of economic downturns.

The blurring of personal and professional lives will lead to a tendency to combine business tourism with leisure. In this field, professionals should create tourism packages that meet these goals either by providing extra days to know the destination or trying a combination of activities. Both situations involve however a good collaboration with the client and customized offers.

The desire to live life to the fullest is a new trend that also implies a greater concern of destinations’ stakeholders to provide experiences that provides a full wellbeing state of the visitor.

Regarding the social trends

Social trends show how and in what direction the values, behaviors and needs of the population will change. Under the influence of the megatrend individualization, regardless of social milieus and age groups, a pluralization of lifestyles has developed. The thesis describes some of them: Traditionalists, Nostalgic, Conservative, Middle Class, Consumerism materialists, Established, Hedonists, Post-Materialists, Modern Performers, Experimentalists, and their implications on the destination in the future.

Regarding consumer trends

The consumer trends represent a line, a brand, a path or a trail that follows the consumer in a market. The most important consumer trends were described in the thesis:

Mood manufacturing: products in the future must address the senses of the consumers not in the short term but in an individual, sustainable and situational manner.

Neo-recycling: the consumer of the future demands stylish products that aren’t mass produces but last for an eternity.

Multi-tool design: a thoughtful design in the future should be more than just good looks and satisfying a need and have multi purposes.

“Me-values-consumer”: looking for ethical and ecological products that would bring an advantage; willingness to donate, etc.

Super security: the consumer markets in the future will be more influenced by the need of security.

Discretionism: a new modesty is spreading throughout the consumer markets, leading not to waiving consumption but to a simplification of the everyday consumer.

New-urbanism: the feeling of “back in the city” gains importance in the development of consumer markets, the city developing into a laboratory of trends for companies, marketing and innovations.

Dialogue: the consumer of the future seeks recognition and no longer wants to be just served but also understood.

Self-design: the desire for the optimization of one’s own performance leads towards a new health market, with the target group of “healthy dissatisfaction”.

Multiplicity, hyper efficiency, mindfulness or super-personalized are other trends described in the thesis.

III. The Delphi study

A two round online Delphi study was conducted to explore the views of expert on issues relating to the tourist destination of the future under the aspect of urbanization. The study was intended to be a review of the findings of research literature and case studies studied in the last 5 years. The respondents came from Germany, UK, Hungary, Cyprus, Romania and the Netherlands and were represented by professors in the field of tourism, hotel managers, product managers at tour operators, local authorities in tourism offices, tourism associations, travel specialists and logistics experts. The most important aspects are presented below:

The experts agreed on the definition “any geographic space (country, state, region, city, resort, etc.) naturally or artificially formed, that tourist visit for a reason and for a limited period of time, with an infrastructure, facilities and services, culture, people, natural and commercial attractions, traditions and other socio-cultural features, that creates interest for certain group of people. However the author finds this definition to be incomplete, considering the destination is, on top of the aspects above, a stakeholders construct, a co-creation based on the network of commercial actors connected to the value-chain, supported by technology and within the framework of smartness, that delivers a mix of products and services in order to ensure some particular experiences to visitors and to increase the social and economic well-being of the local community and that requires a strategic and visionary management in order to stay competitive and performing. I believe that this limitation of the definition is determined by the fact that the experts based their beliefs just on the aspects currently available. This demonstrates the necessity

and usefulness of my research that points out all the changes forecasted to take place on destination level, among some of which already started happening.

In regards to words and features that come into their mind when they think of destinations and tourism in the future, the experts agreed that the most important are: health & wellness, co-creation/creativity and culture/heritage. If they were to develop new tourist destinations or reinvent destinations, the experts would choose to focus on health and wellness, sustainable tourism/ecotourism and cultural tourism. It is important to mention again that, in the author's opinion, presented also in the research, the tourist destination of the future will have a new organization of destination management, a new approach centered on stakeholders and community, strategic alliances including international ones, more quality and authenticity, as well as safety and security, a performing management, a new human resource policy in order to obtain a competitive advantage, as well as an integrative marketing policy. Obviously, the requirements don't stop here and the conclusions will further present these aspects.

Regarding the possible outcomes of urbanization, experts consider that this trend will lead to more energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, consumption and pollution of water, air and noise and more waste. It is obvious that this scenario is possible if the solutions regarding a smart and sustainable development described in the thesis aren't applied.

The respondents of the study consider that the main challenges in developing sustainable destinations are keeping a balance between development – conservation – protection and local participation and improving living conditions of residents, an answer in consensus with the author's opinion as well as with studied experts' opinion.

However, they agree that the main contribution of tourism to city development is represented by the economic benefits, e.g. income generation, creation of new work places for locals, expenditures of tourists in local shops, etc. I believe that this approach is insufficient because, as presented in the thesis, tourism can contribute to rekindling the community, a very important aspect in this multi-cultural society, it can bring benefits to city tourism in the sense of providing financial support necessary for preserving the heritage. Also, tourism can represent a very important factor for the green development of the city, both through the resources it brings but also through the models it develops. Obviously, the list is not stopping here.

The majority of respondents agree that the risk that the focus of investment and structural development may only be seen in the urban areas leading to harmful effects on the rural areas. This may lead to rural areas being less developed, which given the sustainability/ecotourism trend may be damaging for the tourist destination of the future. It is also a possible scenario but as presented in the thesis, the experts already seek solutions, some of which already being applied, by extending tourism's footprint toward destination's neighborhood, diversification of infrastructure,

namely of the supply of services and amenities designed for leisure both in the city and neighborhoods.

The experts agreed that the urban dwellers are more likely to travel for financial and access reasons, as well as being more culturally aware generally. These statements are in consensus with the author's research, thus city tourism is generally related to culture and creativity and according to all estimates it will increase. Furthermore, staycation and domestic tourism will register a significant increase, being in accordance to the experts' beliefs that people will consider financial and access aspects when travelling.

In regard to the statement "ageing population looking for active-ageing holidays" the experts have not reached a consensus. This may be because the experts come from different countries of Europe, some more developed than the others, where ageing is seen differently. The studied experts' estimations, that I join, show however that the ageing population will have one of the most significant growth in tourism. Furthermore all of the experts agreed/strongly agreed with the statement in preparation for the ageing population trend "accessibility of attractions, transport and accommodation; better infrastructure for old and disabled people", showing that cities aren't yet well prepared for old and disabled people. Also there has been a consensus in regard to the idea of using older people as target group for extra seasonal periods, again in accordance to the research's results.

The majority of experts agree that the prices for basic goods and services for local residents will increase, which is rather worrying for a sustainable destination. The concern is real being another reason why I consider that the destination needs an efficient management where the needs of the local community are put first so as the destination to be an enjoyable place both for locals and for visitors.

The experts agree that there will be an increase in the demand for trips that take people out of the daily routine, this confirming the author's research.

The majority of experts agree that it needs to be more invested in education and communication and training employees, aspect also reflected in the thesis' research.

Experts also believe that the business tourism will further develop in spite of these technological developments (video conferences, etc.), also aspect in accordance to the thesis results.

Most of the experts agree that places with less technology will gain importance, especially in terms of "digital detox". In the author's opinion the development of destinations will still be based on technology and just the unspoiled places will partly remain outside the technology. There will probably be some technology-free areas either within destinations or in their vicinity however I believe that technology itself will offer solutions needed for a "detox".

In terms of food, all of the experts agree that people are increasingly craving local, organic and slow food, confirming once again the health and sustainability trend and also the LOHAS trend and the community-based tourism trend.

The respondents haven't reached a consensus in regard to the statement that new transportation and buildings will bring changes, even though more than half of them considered that this won't bring any changes. However the author, as well as the research results, considers that smart destinations will bring many beneficial changes in regard to transportation and buildings, as the applied technology increases the sustainability of a destination.

It can be concluded that the results of the Delphi study are mostly within the conclusions of the thesis research. There are, however, some differences that the author considers to have appeared because of the lack of information regarding the trends impact and other major changes presented in the thesis about the future of tourist destinations. This confirms again the usefulness and importance of this research for the completion of the existing lacks in the literature.

The author tried to get a second check of the conclusions obtained from the findings of research literature and case studies studied with a depth interview with one of the greatest experts in tourism in the world nowadays, Professor Dimitrios Buhalis. According to his statements, the tourist destinations of the future will be based on smartness and agility, the smartness enabling to connect all the different systems that are operating by different stakeholders. Furthermore it allows the stakeholders through technology to be proactive and reactive and to increase the value created by them in a destination. The author fully agrees with Prof. Buhalis conclusion that the destination's future is going to be centered on co-creation sustained by technology and smartness.

IV. Comments and other aspects regarding the tourist destination of the future

The past century has seen unprecedented growth in human population and economic wellbeing for a good portion of the world. According to researchers (Kharas and Gertz, 2010) by 2030, 5 billion people (1,8 billion in 2009) – nearly two thirds of global population – could be middle class and this consumers will be not only of emerging economies (according to OECD by 2020 the majority of the world's middle class will be Asian) they will be also increasingly urban (the world's urban population is expected to hit five billion in 2030, UN DESA's Population Division, United Nations, New York, 2014).

Thus, if 25 million tourists (Yeoman, 2008) took an international holiday in 1950, 100 years later it is forecasted to grow to 4.7 billion. So, the problem is how can tourism be innovative and adapt in this globalized world to the next billions opportunity and also to the forthcoming drivers of ageing population, climate change, technological changes, social change, fluid markets, and many other features that are expected to appear. Business and destinations need a wholly new development principles, policies, processes, and objectives: "sustainable world strategies, comprehensive planning, integrated models, and globally effective solutions" (Alzua-Sorzabal,

2014) developed in this “smart” world. Speed, Connectivity, Innovation and Quality will be the key of providing customer services that will shape competitiveness, in the context of community well-being and sustainability.

All developments mentioned in the thesis have already led to changes in tourist demand and faced service providers in tourism with substantial need to adjust and these constant challenges will expand and intensify considerably in the new millennium. The survival of the tourist industry depends decisively on recognizing relevant trends and allowing for them in good time.

The potential and opportunities associated with tourism further evolution and the risks to the economy, society and the environment are closely matched. However, it offers the best chances of finding means and ways to reconcile the economy and the environment in this new age.

There is no single model of tourism development; rather, there is a rich and ever-expanding variety of types of tourism development that are of interest to contemporary destinations. Even if mature destinations and the emerging destinations may need different strategies, however, mature destinations also need to adapt to new trends and set their priorities to maintain their market share, because nowadays consumers have a lot of attractive options, and to combat the difficulties related to consumer protection, safety issues or local community stress.

UNWTO, Deloitte, and many other organizations and experts anticipate that cities generally will continue to be the main beneficiaries of tourism growth, particularly cities that have a very high quality environment and authenticity of offer, and can attract both leisure and business tourism markets. Maintaining and improving the quality and authenticity of the city and its management may be seen as one of the most important thing that the city must do for the future health of its tourism industry.

If we talk about cities it is important to specify that in the last years the urban dynamics and the travel industry are highly correlated and, in this regard, a paradigm shift has recently been asserted at the 3rd Global Summit on City Tourism organized by the UNWTO entitled “New Paradigms in City Tourism Development”, which promoted a concept of tourism as a key component of local economies and the social life of urban communities. So, an integrated approach to urban development and city tourism can be a strong driver of smarter, more sustainable and inclusive cities.

City managers are seeking new ways of strategic communication and branding in an attempt to broadcast their city’s image and improve its reputation and attractiveness. “The capacity to envision and imagine a city and its development pathway – including post-disaster contexts where a “new normality” must be shaped – and the construction of a city brand means also that residents and tourists need to be on the same page” (GSSI, 2015).

The negative impacts of tourism, like touristification, cultural commodification, and gentrification, effects of an often rapid and uncontrolled growth of the tourism industry in urban

contexts, should bear in mind when planning tourism-led economic development in order to turn such a trade-off into a win-win situation.

It is also crucial that tourism organizations at all levels (city, region, state, and why not the European level in our case) continue to strengthen their collaboration under the umbrella of a common approach and positioning. Therefore, an initiative of ETC (European Travel Commission), presented at the European Tourism Day 2014 (Brussels, 01.12.2014) by its executive director Eduardo Santander (2014) regards the promotion of the “Destination Europe” where the fully integration of all tourism key players has to be essential adding value to all current promotion efforts. “Brand Destination(s) Europe needs an inclusive holistic approach creating advantages for both established and less known destinations without creating confusion or further competition”. The Europe Brand capitalize on “Europe's common values (wealth of culture, natural beauty and history, high standard in human resources and quality of tourism services in a healthy, safety and secure, easily accessible environment, etc.) as well as on its exceptional diversity and great variety of tourism experiences offered”. Unfortunately on the ETC VisitEurope.com portal the offer from Romania is almost absent, including Sibiu.

The broader tourism sector requires a wide range of education and skills including management capability, IT, design, foreign language, etc., and many destinations have or try to develop training and education programs aiming to promote the importance of tourism as an economic activity by developing awareness among students both locally and nationally as well as an awareness of the careers and employment opportunities within the tourism industry.

Personal contributions

The PhD thesis entitled „The tourist destination of the future – scenarios and trends” highlights the development tendencies and trends that will influence the tourist destination of the future and the strategies for its capitalization, offering at the same time reference tools and good practice examples for reaching destination competitiveness and performance in this ever changing world.

My interest as well as the participation at international conferences allowed me to interact with researchers and professionals that played a crucial role in the development of the thesis. An extensive study of the literature with over thousand consulted sources led to the outline of the answers and conclusions and these were further checked through a Delphi study, as well as through a depth interview with experts.

The result is an exhaustive analysis and a comparative synthesis of the literature, realized in more than five year of research, that enable professionals a rapid access to the approached issue, especially in Romania where the literature in this field is almost absent. It is also innovative on the international level, where such an approach is almost missing, talking about an approach that takes into account all the aspects of the tourist destination, starting from organization,

planning, management, marketing, development and up to the issues related to sustainability, competitiveness and performance, and its evolution under the impact of the most significant trends.

On the other hand the thesis' applicability does not limit just to the theoretical field of knowledge, it offers tools, examples of strategies or good practices, useful not just for the development of tourist destinations but also for other fields.

There are multiple arguments regarding the innovative character of the thesis.

1. Related to the current level of knowledge

I've presented in the thesis all the essential aspects of the literature regarding the definition of the tourist destination, the most important types of tourist destinations, marketing organizations and recently destination management organizations, the destination stakeholder theory with special reference to the local community, theoretical and practical aspects regarding the destination management, marketing, as well as politics and development planning. Furthermore, theoretical aspects as well as indicators regarding sustainability and competitiveness are presented in the thesis. Global trends, industry trends, consumer and social trends are also developed under the theoretical aspect, and all of the above aspects are then applied on the practical field.

The research based, apart from the mentioned theoretical aspects, on a series of examples of good practices on the international level.

Both theoretical aspects and future developments of the destination are presented in a clear manner, relatively easy to use and these will constitute the basis for a further development in this field by a framework of tools and rules that enables the destinations developers to realize their goal: a flexible competitive and sustainable destination.

2. Regarding the conceptual approaches of the destination of the future

In my point of view the thesis leads to more new approaches regarding the tourist destination of the future.

- the first refers to the definition of the destination. In my opinion there are some features that need to be added both to the opinions already expressed in the literature, as well as to the respondents opinion within the realized study. Thus, tourist destinations in general and urban destinations in particular will be, on top of what it has been described in the literature, a construct of the stakeholders, a co-creation of them that requires an innovative, creative, strategic and visionar management in order to stay competitive and performant.

- the most important tasks of the destination in the future will be the construction process of the place and experiences, the creation of a smart environment through technology and the tools of sustainability and the realization of an suitable management that allows for a faster and more flexible reaction to the challenges of the environment.

- regarding the responsible organization of the destinations, this needs to overstep the borders of the simple marketing activity and take over the tasks of managing it. In the organizations' task there also has to be the creation of a development vision and the destination brand, shared by all the involved stakeholders and tourism product development has to be realized into an integrative politics of the product and business, that takes into account the whole tourism value chain.

- the integrative stakeholder management will become a necessity. Strategic, proactive, based on interdependence, shared values and goals partnerships will play an essential role in the increase of the destinations' competitiveness.

- the coherent and efficient politics of collaboration and knowledge sharing within the destination will be a prerequisite of an efficient adjustment to changes.

- the joint promotion of tourism heritage and culture will represent the most efficient way of obtaining local development

- extending the tourism footprint in the neighborhood, hence infrastructure, service offers and leisure facilities diversification both in neighborhood and cities.

- tourism and local community can have a mutual beneficial relationship: tourism can enable rekindling the community affected by individualism, multiculturalism and an enhanced mobility, and can lead to preserving and renovating the tangible heritage. The community can support the authenticity, quality and sustainable development of a destination. The development of tourist destination in the future will be based, besides the economic aspects, on social cohesion and cultural preservation.

- the tourism demand trends reflect the changing of consumption patterns and they have to be understood by tourism professionals. This multi-optional consumer, that wishes personalized offer that he can put his print on, oriented towards personal development and the environment, health aware and concerned about the alternative methods to sustain health, will require clear approach strategies, and the author's research presented some of them.

- women, increasingly important for the tourism market, the new family structures, elderly, the millennials will also require specialized strategies that tourism professionals must be aware of, and the author's research presented some approach ideas as a starting point.

- the visitor experience design for obtaining visitor satisfaction will be more and more based on technology, the use of IoT (internet of things) realizing the transfer to the smart trip.

- human resource as a strategic tool of tourism organizations will be the target of integrative approaches and strategies collaboratively with local and national authorities and destination stakeholders, so that the work force has the necessary skills to offer a competitive advantage to

the destination. The technological skills and foreign language proficiency need to be taken into account. Some good practice models will represent the starting pillar.

- social media will represent a present way of life and manifestation of the destination, and its ability to operate efficiently and constructively, both on the level of leader and stakeholders, will make the difference.

- image and destination brand will be realized through innovative and smart long-term strategies so as to benefit both the visitors and the locals.

- the competitiveness, understood as the performance to be the best, and the competitive advantage brought by smart strategies and initiatives will represent the keystone of tourism businesses.

- the sustainable development trend under all its four pillars (economic, social, environmental, cultural), so as the social responsibility applied under all the tourism management functions, will expand requiring adapted measures from tourism developers, measures that were presented in the thesis.

- tourism development strategies will have to adapt to the studied trends, as well as to the new consumer imposed standards regarding quality, safety and security in order to maintain or develop their market position. Some best practices and initiatives in this regard, presented in the research, can be a starting point for professionals in the field.

- in my opinion destination development will be based on technology, just the virgin places will stay outside of it. I expect that some free of technology areas will be built either within destinations or in its vicinity, and the technology itself will offer the necessary solution for “detox”.

Starting from these considerations regarding the tourist destination development under the influence of the researched trends, I conclude by outlining the most important features of the tourist destination of the future, based on which I intend to realize by further research the framework already mentioned, useful and practical for tourism professionals. So destinations in general and city destinations in particular will be:

- **a co-creation:** a well design and building processes of the destination and of the tourism experience will be the key to success.

- **a stakeholders construct:** reinventing the destination (in this case, the city) will suppose on the one hand an integrated approach to urban development and city tourism, and on the other hand the construction of a strong brand identity. Creativity and innovation will be of tremendous importance.

- **based on destination's features** (attractions, facilities, infrastructure, transportation and hospitality)

- **and on the network of commercial actors connected to the value-chain**, because a value chain approach through a well-established management will expand the organizations activities through greater participation in the global value chain and networks. The stakeholder approach and the development of clusters (intra and inter-industry networking grouped by clusters) that engage public and private players will be a necessary strategic management process, a matter of achieving the destination's objectives

- **supported by technology**: availability of 24/7 connectivity throughout the destination, the development of tourism IoT (Internet of Things) technology, social media as a way of life and a way of business, etc.

- **and within the framework of smartness**: new services, apps or urban products regarding safety, ecology, mobility, connectivity, retail or cultural issues, but also accessible integrated useful data available for tourists in a greener better organized environment.

- **that delivers a mix of products and services in order to ensure some particular experiences to visitors in order to obtain visitor satisfaction, that has to be one of the goals of visitor management**. The major development directions will be linking tourism with heritage and culture; medical and wellness that have to be included in the planning of any destination (especially cities) because the market will comprise not only the generation of health-conscious older people but also the younger people (by rising perceptions of time pressure and blurring distinctions between work and leisure); shopping; entertainment; nature & adventure; luxury travel; sports; business & mice; education, etc. The strategies for the non-seasonal tourism have to comprise all-year-round cultural offer, arts and festivals, but also packages for seniors, disabled people or seniors and families facing difficult circumstances. Some market segments with special interest in the future will be the new family, with more generations included, single parenting, single persons, silver tourist, women, but also

- **and to increase the social and economic well-being of the local community**. Rekindling the community and community-based tourism, as a form of socially responsible tourism development, will be extremely important.

in the context of

- **an integrated management**, either in the DMMO form, or in another form, in order to lead and coordinate all the presented elements that make up the destination, but also its marketing and product management, while creating a suitable environment. Its leadership has to become network-centric, participatory, and collaborative and has to create a common sense of purpose and provide a strategic focus for a destination.

- **sustainability and socially based solutions**: To meet this expectations DMOs must redesign and ensure that public benefit and all the issues related to sustainability are not incidental, but instead central to their very raison d'être.

- **cooperation and collaboration** with regional and international organizations/ networking platforms, strong partnerships among the various stakeholders and a collaborative marketing strategy

- **quality standards as high as possible**, because destinations will be judged by global comparisons, even at the more localized level

- **and safety and security**: destinations perceived as less safe and secure will be avoided. Also, a department within the destination organization will have to cope with change, crisis and risks in a way that enhances their capacity and ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain their identity and main functions. Social media will have to be a part in the crisis management procedures.

And a final remark: tourism will always be central in humans live and the transdisciplinary research of this phenomenon will be very important over the next decades. The academic community, but also civil society institutions or other types of institutions have to contribute with models, concepts and theories to meet the challenging and uncertain times ahead. This was the author small and modest contribution to this purpose.

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