

Mamaia Resort (Romania): strategies of tourist promotion and sustainable development

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Stațiunea Mamaia (România): strategii de promovare turistică și dezvoltare durabilă. Mamaia este una dintre cele mai scumpe și vizitate stațiuni litorale din România. Cu toate acestea, în ultimii ani se confruntă cu un flux turistic scăzut, cercetările au arătat că ar putea fi cauza unui management turistic defectuos, dar și a faptului că stațiunea nu a beneficiat de o strategie potrivită pentru promovare. Lucrarea de față își propune să aducă în prim plan imaginea actuală a stațiunii Mamaia și problemele majore cu care se confruntă aceasta. Studiul se bazează pe cercetarea bibliografică, metoda sondajului de opinie, instrumentul folosit fiind chestionarul, dar și metoda observației care s-a realizat în cadrul stațiunii Mamaia. Rezultatele studiului surprind analiza numărului de turiștilor naționali și internaționali, sosirile și înnoptările turistice, unitățile de cazare din cadrul stațiunii, dar și analiza strategiilor de marketing care au fost folosite pentru a fi promovată în ultimii ani. Toate acestea demonstrează existența unor probleme la nivel promovării, dar și a strategiilor de management utilizate în cadrul stațiunii Mamaia. Astfel, elaborarea unor noi campanii la nivel național și internațional, cât și realizarea unor strategii care au ca scop dezvoltarea într-un mod fezabil și sustenabil al stațiunii Mamaia reprezintă soluțiile de care are nevoie stațiunea.

Cuvinte cheie: turism de litoral, satisfacție turistică, promovare turistică, dezvoltare durabilă, Mamaia, România.

Mamaia resort (Romania): strategies of tourist promotion and sustainable development. Mamaia is one of the most expensive and visited seaside resorts in Romania. However, in recent years it have faced a low tourist flow. Research has shown that it could be the cause of poor tourism management, and also the other problem of the resort could be the unsuitable promotion strategy. The present article aims to feature the overall picture of main problems in Mamaia resort. The study is compounded by bibliographic research and the survey method, but also it was used the method of observation of Mamaia resort. The results of the study are based on the number of national and international tourists analyzition, also, the tourist arrivals and tourist overnights. Moreover, it was anylized the accommodation units and the marketing strategies that had been recently used in promovation. All in all, there was found out some problems either to promotion or to strategies of development used in Mamaia resorts. Thus, making up with new promotion campaigns for both national and international tourists, and also some new strategies for a sustainable development , it represints the best solutions for the resort.

Keywords: coastal tourism, tourism satisfaction, sustainable development, Mamaia, Romania.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has now become an activity that occupies about 40% of individuals' free time. Travel is a crucial element in today's stressful society where the physical and mental health of individuals is the main reason for travel (Hall, 1998). One of the most frequented forms of tourism is the coastal tourism. The concept of coastal tourism includes all the types of tourism (Warner, 1999). From the ancient Roman Empire, to medical tourism in the Middle Ages, to its emergence from all-inclusive coastal resorts in the twentieth century, the coast has always been an attraction for people. Today, coastal tourism is considered by reserchers to be the largest segment of the global tourism industries (Hall, 1998). Tourism development was initially focused on the beach, but in the last 50 years, it became more a leisure tourism and developed the concept of "The 4 S" (sea, sand, sun, surf) (Warner, 1999). The exact number of consumers of coastal tourism remains unknown. Thus, every seaside resort needs some management strategies that keep increase the number of tourists, but without damaging the environment (Wrangham, 1999).

The concept of "sustainable tourism" has emerged in the last decade to address a variety of issues, such as ecological degradation, loss of cultural heritage and economic dependence, stemming from coastal tourism (UNWTO, 2013). Sustainable tourism aims to meet the needs of tourists (for example, infrastructure, but also beauty and natural perceptions of leisure places), taking into account the needs of the local population, accommodation capacity and environment (Simpson, 2008).

The views of policy-makers and NGOs in southern Europe about tourism cost and benefits are increasingly related to discourses on sustainable development (Kousis, 2001).

Seasonality is one of the main phenomena affecting coastal tourism (Miller,1996). It depends on the characteristics of the tourist demand and the tourist destinations in terms of location and services offered (Denis, 2007). In the first variant, the tourist attractiveness is concentrated within a single season, important as a dimension of the tourist phenomenon, a season that is limited in duration (e.g. the Black Sea coast area).

Practicing tourism in all its forms brings to the fore issues of impact, namely the capacity to support tourism, which is the degree of resistance of a tourist destination to the type of tourism depending on the qualities of physical, social, cultural and benefits infrastructure and economic development (Gheorghilaş, 2014).

The cause of seasonality, which is specific for June to August, is overcrowding. Thus, every seaside resort should have some sustainable strategies which do not affect the beaches (Barker, 2007).

Excessive pollution of the Black Sea waters, especially in the NW part of the basin (including the coastal area of Romania), has led to a strong eutrophication of the sea due to nutrients from various activities, especially tourism. However, even if the indices of the Black Sea water are not exactly good, tourists are not affected by it (Neagreanu-Pârjol et al. 2014). Apart from the water pollution from the Black Sea, Romanian coast also faces a series of problems in terms of tourist services, which is why most romanian tourists prefer tourist services within the Bulgarian coast.

Nowadays, the Romanian seaside is confronted with a significant decrease of the romanian and foreign tourists, which prefer other seaside destinations where they can find similar tourist's services and products but qualitative and for acceptable prices (Nedelea, 2001). Being situated in the Constanța county, the increased number of tourist arrivals had a positive impact on the development of the area. Young people and unskilled workers are often the ones who benefit from tourism job opportunities (such as waiters, cooks, bartenders, moderators, promoters, sports instructors) during the season. Thus, in the summer months, according to National Institute of Statistics, the unemployment rate decreases by about 0.6 percentage points, compared to that recorded in the off-season. Another positive effect is the attractiveness for investments whether they are governmental or private, related to capital elements or other aspects such as promotion, workforce training, business support. In 2020 and in 2021, public investment projects in road infrastructure and modernization of water supply and sewerage systems in Constanța County were started.

There was many marketing strategies made in Romania for Mamaia Resort but none of them did not include a sustainable tourism. The marketing planning for Mamaia resort had a strategy to increase the number of tourists, especially foreign tourists (Duguleană, 2012). The strategy was applied in different market segments (business segment, youth tourism, large events) (Cosmescu, 2004). Product policy options (Mamaia tourist destination), aimed at repositioning the destination as dynamic, growing, which suggests more and more cultural, artistic and sports activities. The chosen product strategy for Mamaia resort promotes it had as destination the market in Saudi Arabia, Germany, Belgium, which created a clear and distinct identity, differentiated from those of other competing destinations, depending on the quality / price advantages (Cosmescu, 1998). Unfortunately, the strategies took place only few years, 2012-2015.

Destination of Mamaia resort which offers superior advantages over other competing destinations. Prices will be set based on competitive prices (Davis, 1995). Of course, there is a certain degree of price variability, which is a criterion for differentiation strategies. This diversification is related to the quality and complexity of the tourism product. Thus, depending on the categories of tourists, can be practiced differentiated prices. In recent years, the City Hall of Constanța has provided several emblems to be used

to promote the resort of Mamaia. Representatives of Constanța City Hall and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) presented a protocol on the implementation of "Local Agenda 21". The main objective of this program is to develop Constanța and Mamaia Resort. "The Coastal Resorts Action Plan" needs to be adapted to maximize the potential benefits for the local economy and contribute to national growth.

All in all, in Romania, tourism activity does not have a strategic approach at the level of tourist services requested by tourists (such as all-inclusive services). Thus, Romanian coastal tourism needs a development and diversification of tourist services, a strategy related to the context of a remodelling of tourism according to international demands. In general, the opinion on the level of diversification of coastal tourist services was satisfactory, but differences in this regard between the appreciation of foreign and domestic tourists were very large in scientific studies, foreign being more demanding. Romanian coastal tourism faces two main problems: hospitality services and entertainment services, which lead to increased consumer satisfaction (Moraru, 2011).

2. METHODOLOGY

For developing our analysis on Mamaia resort, the bibliographic method was used and it included the documentation from the literature for understand better the concept of costal tourism and also to make an opinion about Mamaia Resort situation. Moreover, it was used observation method to see in a practical way all the problems Mamaia resort faced over the years. Also, we used quantitative and qualitative methods such as surveys and data processing regarding the tourist flow. The survey was made by Google Forms and half of them (100) was distributed on social networks and the others 100 were distributed on Mamaia resort. We used probability sampling inselection of the tourists. Furthermore, it conteints 11 multible-choise question and 5 open-ended questions. The survey was completed by 200 tourists from 20-25 of July 2020 between 10:00 – 12:00 and 19:00 – 21:00. Participants were given 10 minutes to fill anonymously the questions (Table 1).

In order to gain a better insight into tourism flux was analysed statistics and data from 2013 to 2016 of arrivals and overnights (in season, off season) and also types of accommodation and total numbers of them for an overall opinion about the resort from National Institute of Statistics Constanța.

Tabel 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Social-demographic characteristic	Categories	Number of respondents	% of total respondents (200)
GENDER	Male	89	44.5%
	Female	111	55.5%
AGE	18-30	103	51.5%
	31-50	83	41.5%
	51-60	9	4.5%
	over 66	5	2.5%
STUDIES	Highschool	88	44%
	University	74	37%
	Postgraduate	38	19%
OCCUPATION	Student	47	23.5%
	Employee	134	67%
	Unemployed	3	1.5%
	Retired	16	8%
INCOME (LEI)	No income	21	10.5%
	Under 2000	11	5.5%
	2001-4000	70	35%
	4001-6000	87	43.5%
	Over 6001	11	5.5%

3. RESULTS

According to the survey results, tourists who visit Mamaia resort are distinguished by some following aspects. Most of the tourists in Mamaia resort have higher incomes than average ones, their age are between 18-30 years old and are employed. Also, the most of them have only high school education.

In order to get an overview about the appearance of resorts in Romania, the respondents has chosen between 1 to 5, 1 representing the lowest, and number 5 highest grade. Romanian seaside received grade 3 as an aspect (55%), being followed by grade 2 (19,3%). However, Mamaia resort was the most appreciated by respondents, it was chosen in proportion of 51% of respondents, followed by Costinești resort with 31%. In terms of appearance, most of respondents accorded the number 3 (46.9%) and 32.7% number of 4 which means a good to better appearance.

To achieve a much clear picture of the resort and to discover the problems it faces, respondents have asked about: what kind of accommodation they usually choose, the quality of services in the structures of accommodation, public catering, but also the quality of services. Although, 43% of respondents chose "hotel" as accommodation structure, nearly followed by apartments (38.6%). The hotel structures obtained a grade of 3 (41.1%) which means good appearance, the quality of public catering services also got a grade of 3 (45.1%). From the point of view of the quality of services, the Mamaia resort

gave grade 3 (51%). As an overview of the wishes of tourists, they were also asked about the appearance of the beaches, 41% with an answer "good" on the appearance of the beach, followed by "dissatisfied". In order to get an opinion about development, they were also asked about activities, 23% answered that they practice sun bathing, 26% walk and access the leisure structures (boat, gondola, holiday village), and the most of them (40 %) come to the resort only for clubs and terraces, the rest of 11% come only for landscape. Respondents were left to complete at their choice what would change in Mamaia resort, 60% of them said it would bring new cleanliness, at the same time, other changes would be made to the accommodation infrastructure that needs improvements, qualified staff, new shopping centers , public toilets, more accommodation units, more parking spaces, organizing of several tourist activities, introduction of the all inclusive concept. As it can be seen from the survey, most chose the resort of Mamaia, but they are not informed of the activities that could be done within the resort. The most of tourist would change Mamaia resort, only 10 of the 200 people are satisfied with its appearance.

Thus, was analysed the arrivals (Figure 1) and overnights (Figure 2) either season or off-season between 2013-2018 (information was taken from the National Statistics Insistute of Constanța county).

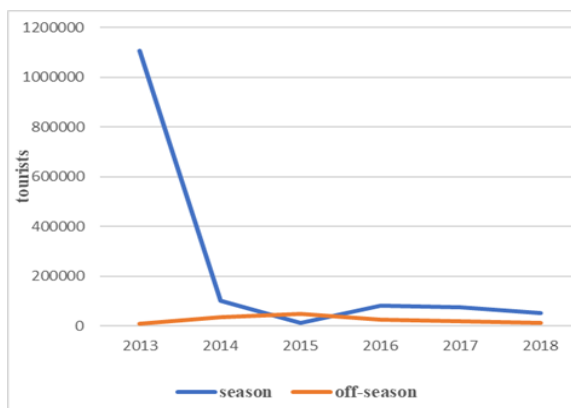


Figure 1. Tourist arrivals in Mamaia resort between 2013-2018

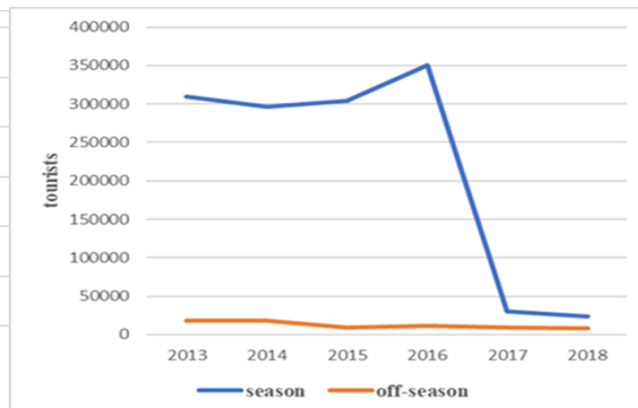


Figure 2. Tourist overnights in Mamaia resort between 2013-2018

According to the below graphs, both tourists arrival and overnight started to decrease. Obviously touristic arrivals had decreased until 2014, however from 2014-2016 there is a slowly growth. It is also worth to mention that from 2016 to 2017, the touristic arrivals in season have dropped sharply but in 2018 it remained constant. As for tourist arrivals during the off-season, they remain low and constant all over the years.

In the case of overnight stays in season, it decreased sharply until 2015. From 2015 to 2018 it remained at the same level, with a slight decrease. At the same time, we notice in touristic overnight stays that it was an increased in off-season until 2015, where it was

much higher than the touristic overnight stays during season. Then it decreased slowly until 2018. However, we notice that the number of tourists in Mamaia resort is decreasing, and the future outlook is negative.

Regarding the accommodation structures and the accommodation places was noticed that only 76 was authorized tourist structures by Tourist Minister of Romania, although they differ in number (Table 2). Thus we analyzed the year 2013 because it had the most tourist overnights in season (1105426 nights) and we referred to the number of accommodation places overall (21548 accommodation places). Thus, was noticed that Mamaia resort is overcrowded during the summer season, and the accommodation units do not cope with a large flow of tourists.

Table 2. Accommodation and accommodation places in Mamaia resort (2013)

Hotel 1*	Hotel 2*	Hotel 3*	Hotel 4*	Hotel 5*
3 accomandation	22 accomandation	89 acomodation	27 accomandation	5 accomandation
312	5323	10783	4408 accomodation	522
acomodation	acomodation	acomodation	places	acomodation
places	places	places		places

4. DISCUSSION

Analyzing the tourism development strategies in Romania, but also the Development Strategy of Constanta Municipality, it was observed the prioritization of environmental protection and attracting investments as part of the development of the tourism sector.

The Master Plan for the Development of National Tourism 2007 - 2026 aims to approve the principles of sustainable tourism development, namely meeting the current requirements of tourists and tourist regions in accordance with the protection and increase of future development opportunities. Although it was rated 3 in terms of appearance, building without giving importance to green spaces, pedestrian spaces and complementary housing, as has happened in recent years, will have a significant negative impact favoring the congestion of the resort and preventing the construction of a quality tourist product, offering, diversified and competitive.

Romania's National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030 aims to achieve sustained economic growth, which focuses on, among other things, the development of sustainable tourism to create jobs and promote cultural diversity, local products and respect for traditions and environment. This can be a benefit for Mamaia resort,

especially since the lack of activities was a problem reported by the respondents of the questionnaire.

The National Regional Development Strategy 2014-2020 (SNDR) is the strategic basis for substantiating funding programs from external / community, national, regional and / or local funds aimed at regional development. This represents an opportunity to access funds in order to modernize the infrastructure.

At this time the presence of the destination in the online environment is irrelevant, the information provided by public institutions or commercial entities is incomplete and rarely updated. It should be noted that most of the presentation texts used refer to the history of the city or provide neutral information. In the most popular social media platforms in Romania - Facebook, YouTube, Instagram - the most popular references to the city of Constanța are generated by them, or proportion worrying with negative connotations. On the other side, Mamaia resort is intensely promoted, although not necessarily constant or coherent, through press and social media campaigns, including audio-video content to professional standards. In essence, the positioning of the resort Mamaia as a regional capital of entertainment, a western oasis and libertine, can generate, by contrast, an image deficit for the city of Constanța.

As recommendations on the tourist promotion and sustainable development of Mamaia resort in near future is creating a site that centralizes the calendar of events, offers essential information for tourists from country and abroad. The only resources currently available are TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Lonely Planet, Wikitravel or RomaniaTourism.com. The sites often suffer from technical problems and are difficult to consult from mobile phones. On these sites are not presented the events that take place within the Mamaia resort. The implementation of the website /application could share all necessary information about accommodation, transport, or events. It presents an important resource of care tourists can dispose of. Also, the navigation to be as simple and fast as possible, regardless of age or user familiarity with the online environment. The menu can be found on the main page of the site where is found the information about trips in Constanța (accommodation, events, tourist attractions, restaurant, malls, means of transport, etc).

A new marketing idea for improving both national and international tourists could be new events in the resort, such as concerts and Christmas markets. Due to the seasonality, summer is the most visited by tourists but as it was observed in the graphs above, overnight stays in accommodation units decrease from year to year. The target audience chosen are young people between 20-30 years old and most of the tourists who visit Mamaia Resort. Thus, the concerts will take place during the summer, on June, July and August. A concert every month on the 15th of the month. Every concert has the role of promoting an underground band which is less promoted in Romania.. Depending on

the availability of the artists, the most suitable bands could be: “Suie Paparude”, “The watcher”, “ Kazi Ploae, Basska ”.

The winter period is usually a time of stagnation for the romanian coast, both in terms of tourism and economics. The implementation of a Christmas Market will be take place between December 1 and January 31. It is an event that could bring a new wave of tourists. We also propose that it could be located near Ramada car parking. Within the fair there will be rented stalls / stands small traders with traditional products created by romanian people. From traditional food to clothing, to specific accessories. We seek to bring a wide variety of romanian products all over the country. At the present, we estimate about 50 stands / stalls, next to a stage on which various ensembles local folklore to be able to come. In this way, the atmosphere can be maintained both by live music and by a pre-set playlist on the days when the stage will not be occupied by any folk ensemble.

The beaches in Mamaia resort are the most beautiful one. Unfortunately, the resort has many problems with the cleanliness. In order to obtain such a distinction of international recognition, a beach must be manually and mechanically cleaned every evening. It is recommended that deep cleaning of the sand is performed to eliminate cigarette butts, shells, and other wastes (Manfredo et al., 2007). The solution could be trying to keep clean by setting up some volunteer activities. Thus, the volunteer will be rewarded with some snacks and also 2 free days in a hotel. Furthermore, the idea it also could be solve the” blue flag” problem. Romania wanted for a long time to win the blue flag, but unfortunately the beaches was not enough for this prize. This situation will need changing to develop and attract foreign tourists to the seaside area of Romania, especially as such a destination should have at least one internationally certified beach (Postelnicu, 2018). In this way Mamaia Resort could be developed in a sustainable way.

Also, there could be a construction of a new residential area, new accommodation units or renovation of existing ones to increase the number of visitors, respectively the income generated in the tourism sector. Improving the infrastructure due to its using for a faster and better movement with personal car, a strict control of the beaches and more fines due to the aggressions on tourists, but also the reduction of traders without documents for selling.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the promotion and development strategies of Mamaia resort. The data used revealed the tourist flow, but also the perception of tourists on the image of the resort and the quality of services. Mamaia resort presents a big tourist potential, being the resort with the most investments on the Romanian seaside but as the results

have shown, changes are needed in the management of the resort and the quality of services must be improved.

Also, there are many solutions to reorganization it, but there must be initiative. Its promotion is quite good nationally, with little effort it could be one of the international resorts visited by thousands of foreign tourists. We hope that through this research we were able to highlight once again the strengths of the resort and we brought some plans, projects, strategies through which we could bring back the luxury resort as it was once considered.

We are aware of the differences in approach and culture between Mamaia resort and other resorts, reason for which the adoption and adaptation of these types of events must be done carefully. Mamaia has always been seen as a resort for all age groups, with various attractions, which is why new changes must be adapted to the existing model, using tools that we have at our disposal. Changes requires time and a little effort from the part of Constanta County Hall. Future studies will take into account the impact of tourism on the environment and the changes generated by tourism among the local population.

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