

BALNEAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT OF LAKE TECHIRGHIOI IN INTERNATIONAL TOURISM INTEGRATOR CONCEPT

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Regulating, monitoring and controlling the use of sapropelic mud for therapeutic purposes should be a major concern of the local and the central public administration, upon the long-term management of the Romanian natural heritage. As the owner of one of the richest and oldest historical and balneal heritage of Romania, Techirghiol resort is concerned on developing the methods and means to provide the restoration, conservation and sustainable use of its natural dowry. It is the Techirghiol Lake Nature Reserve placed inside the ROSPA 0061 Lake Techirghiol (which is also RAMSAR site). The management project of a team from the Techirghiol Balneal & Recovery Sanatorium specialists requires the development of an integrated catalog for the treatment and of joint consultancy services and reservations addressed to the Romanian and foreign tourists, a database adapted to the specific individual needs, but also to the profile of the social tourism, a dominant within this coastal area. Even if it is a spa only partially dependent on the seaside offer, the Techirghiol Balneal and Recovery Sanatorium presents a balanced seasonality of all seasons, with obvious peaks in July and August. Adding to the socio-balneal tourism profile of Techirghiol a new, rapidly growing global wellness profile is a managerial priority that provides the treatment as a major medical procedure but also the need to maintain and improve patient well-being that involves the changes of the behavioral approach towards the health care recipient. This involves fitness, spa, preventive and homeopathic treatments, anti-aging treatments with Gerovital, Aslavital, a bio food, recreation places such as Botanical Gardens of the city or minigolf spaces, conference support, a Sanatorium library, film evenings, poetry, plastic exhibitions, etc. Although medical and wellness tourism at first glance seems to involve fundamentally different activities that respond differently to the needs of the patients and the tourists, they may be complementary, providing benefits not only to the medical act but also to the development of the local community. The marketing strategy of the Balneal & Recovery Sanatorium Techirghiol offers healthcare and spa products, in line with international demand, featuring those spa products that effectively target potential customers.

Keywords: balneal, tourism, Techirghiol, research.

INTRODUCTION

Techirghiol is now a balneal resort of national interest in the seaside area, practising a form of curing, balneal-maritime and medical tourism. Although, in semantic terms, these three forms mingle and become one and the same in the collective thinking, they are subject to different particularities and addressability. Moreover, green tourism is also practised here – nature study and appreciation, as well as of the nature related local

traditions, and a cultural-religious tourism. Therefore, due to the geographic position and balneal resources of Lake Techirghiol, a mix of touring forms is created, with a diverse target audience in terms of age, health condition, financial potential and cultural interests. We shall refer to the main tourism feature of the resort, balneology, calling its century old tradition, the interests shown by the greatest Romanian researchers and specialists regarding the lake therapeutic values and the existing documentary material.

In the new law of tourism recently created at political level, balneal tourism is defined as a priority sector containing all tourism activities,

products and services designed for the prophylaxis, recovery or treatment of illnesses using natural therapeutic or climatic resources¹.

We must add, besides these, the longterm MasterPlan and the Action Plan for the development of balneal tourism in Romania prepared for the period 2009-2020, updated², yet not legislatively finalised. We only refer to the motivation of each plan version concerning the development of the Romanian balneal tourism starting with the choice of one or several marketing positions, the strategy to be approached for each market/product combination and the definition of financial means to be disposed. For the period 2014–2020, the tourism industry as a whole and the balneal tourism, in particular, benefit of Structural Funds and European Investments under national Operational Programmes.

A performing management should start from the idea that health tourism lays in three different marketing sectors entailing specific activities and different consumers: the sector of health, the sector of tourism and the sector of sporting. At the same time, the offer of the local health tourism divides between several segments: curing tourism containing treatments after medical interventions and surgeries; the balneal segment (preventive) using the curative qualities of substance resources, in this case the mud, hydrotherapy, using the lake curative properties, and thalassotherapy. In addition, the general offer of wellness and spa.

Nevertheless, tourism is an economic sector directly related to the major objective of territorial development: sustainable development (resource preservation), competitiveness, social cohesion (access to tourism for all categories of population, with priority ill and marginal population) and so on.

The World Tourism Organization defines the most effective approaches to prepare the strategies and policies for sustainable tourism. To that end, several strategic principles were set that need to be considered for the existence of sustainable tourism: the economic reliability ensuring the strength and competitiveness of touring destinations and companies, so that these will develop and deliver benefits on a long term, maximisation of the tourism contribution to prosperity in localities, reinforcing the number and quality of locally created jobs supported by the touring sector, satisfaction of visitors and also the preservation of cultural heritage, meaning the authentic culture, traditions and uniqueness of the local community, etc.

Balneal tourism is not only addressed to people with medical problems, but also to those wishing to relax, find vitality and a good physical, mental and

spiritual condition. Because of this, over the last decades, due to its major social and economic effects, balneal tourism has become a major segment of the international tourism market subject to significant material and human resources, an deeper involvement of science and technology, complex and high quality medical and tourism services aiming to satisfy the demands of the modern human and improve the population health condition.

CASE STUDIES

At Techirghiol, the regulation, monitoring and control of sapropelic mud exploitation for therapeutic purposes have been and are major concerns of the local and central public authorities for the long-term management of this Romanian natural asset. With one of the richest and oldest historical-balneal bases in Romania, Techirghiol Resort is preoccupied with the development of the methods and means ensuring the preservation and sustainable use of its natural heritage.

Lake Techirghiol was declared protected area by means of G.D. 1266/2000, and the, in 2006 also as Ramsar site (Convention on Wet Areas) by means of G.D. 1586/2006, and in 2007 Area of Special Aquifaua Special Protection (SPA) thus being part of the European network of protected areas Natura 2000. In other words, the biological diversity is preserved by means of the Green Network "Natura 2000", the Programme Natura 2000 representing a structure for nature protection, being the main tool of the European Union for this purpose³.

The transformation of Constanta Metropolitan Area into a quality touring destination, based on the natural and cultural patrimony meeting the standards of the European Union regarding products and services is one of the biggest challenges the area must face to achieve the sustainable development of the touring sector at the competitive level of other European and international destinations. The implementation of the strategy for the tourism sustainable development in the area can entail positive effects on Constanta Growth Pole in the context of a balanced and multi-centre development of Romania and according to the European strategy for territorial development.

The strategy Europe 2020 – a European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusion favourable European strategy of the European Commission, proposes three consolidated priorities for economic growth: – smart growth: the development of a

knowledge and innovation based on economy; – sustainable growth: promotion of efficient economy in terms of the sustainable and competitive use of resources; – inclusive growth: promotion of an economy with a high rate of employment⁴.

The management project undertaken by a group of specialists from Techirghiol Balneal and Recovery Sanatorium entails the preparation of an integrated catalogue for treatment and common consultancy services, as well as reservations for the Romanian and foreign tourist, a data base adapted to the specific individual needs and to the profile of social tourism, mainly in this seaside area. However, such management project of a balneal institution, as Techirghiol Balneal and Recovery Sanatorium, must equally consider the sanitary authority and all other supervision and control forms for a protected area, at the same time beneficial for health, tourism and sustainable development⁵.

Even if it is a balneal resort only partially dependant on the seaside offer, Techirghiol Balneal and Recovery Sanatorium enjoys a balanced presence during all seasons, with peaks on July and August.

Adding a new profile to the social-balneal tourism profile in Techirghiol, the Wellness profile, rapidly growing at global level, is a management priority entailing treatment as main medical act and also the need to maintain and improve the patients' well-being and assuming the change of the behavioural approach in the relation to the beneficiary of medical services. Fitness, spa, preventive and homoeopathic treatments, anti-ageing treatments with Gerovital, Aslavital, bio-foods, leisure places, such as the new Garden in the town or mini-golf pitches, conferences, the Sanatorium library, film nights, poetry, arts exhibits etc.

Although medical and wellness tourism seem, at a first glance, fundamentally different activities meeting in a different manner the needs of patients and tourists, they can be supplementary, bringing benefits not only to the medical act, but also to the development of the local community.

The marketing strategy of Techirghiol Balneal and Recovery Sanatorium offers products from the health and balneal sectors meeting the demand are at an international level, with such balneal products effectively aiming the potential goodwill.

In order to establish some development directions for the balneal tourism in relation to Lake Techirghiol by means of worldwide aggressive promotion mainly in the European space, we carried out an analysis of our resort, based on the attractiveness index, natural cure factors and therapeutic indications, in the context of environmental protection requirements. The assessment of the Romanian balneal assets and setting the priorities for the treatment profiles outline the balneal offer through the capitalisation and development of the balneal functionality, their capitalisation tradition, the endowment with elements of general and touring infrastructure. Such assessment should start from the index of touring attractiveness calculated on grounds of the defining factors measurements⁶.

CONCLUSIONS

Given all the above, the management strategy of Techirghiol Balneal and Recovery Sanatorium, considering the reinvigoration of balneal tourism in the context of the integral development of health tourism⁷ (restoration, modernisation or recreation of the specific infrastructure and associated services), launches a new form of thematic tourism on the European map: the road of therapeutic lakes.

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