PROMOTION STRATEGIES OF THE DANUBE DELTA TOURIST POTENTIAL

Cristache Nicoleta CRISTACHE
Lect. dr. ec. NICOLETA CRISTACHE

University “DUNAREA DE JOS” GALATI
Faculty of Economic Sciences,
Department of Management- Marketing,
Str. N. Balcescu, no. 59-61,
Phone: 0236 440467,
E-mail: nchihaia@yahoo.com

Abstract: The promotion of the tourist potential in the Danube Delta represents one of the prior objectives of the national strategy in tourism, being an important factor in the evolution of internal and international tourist circulation. The image capital of Danube Delta has been strongly affected by the phenomenon of the poultry flu which generated losses on the economical plan and moreover, it determined an image crisis that was hard to control and repair. The effects of this situation will be felt some years from now, if there isn’t enough involvement at the level of the competent authorities.

Keywords: tourist patrimony, image, promotion strategies

Nowadays, the Danube Delta is the biggest reservation of UNESCO biosphere, being one of the most spectacular water regions in the world, according to an article recently published in an American magazine, “Food and Wine”. The universal value of the Danube Delta reservation was acknowledged by its inclusion in the universal network of the biosphere reservations, within the program “Man and biosphere”, launched by UNESCO in 1970. The Danube Delta has become a destination for a specialized tourism, with more variants for the scientific tourism, the adventure tourism, the agro-tourism, the cultural and educational tourism. In the present, there are 19 aquatic tourist destinations and 7 terrestrial ones, approved by the environment authority of the Delta, which is the Danube Delta Administration of the Biosphere Reservation, led by a governor and whose residence is in Tulcea.

The Danube Delta offers an extraordinary sample of savage nature, quietness and mental comfort, far away from the noise of the urban agglomeration. It represents a reference point for the Romanian tourism, even if its potential is not used at its maximum level.

In the last three years, the investments have increased in the Delta. The number of the accommodation places in locations of superior category has augmented in 2005 comparative 2003 -2004, which should contribute to the attraction of a greater number of tourists.

Even if for 2006 there was expected a significant increase of Romanian and foreign tourist number in the Delta, in the conditions in which there have already been made reservations until November, the situation wasn’t very good, because the phenomenon of the poultry flu determined massive cancellations of the tickets.

1. Content analysis of the Danube Delta image

The technical and material support for the carrying out of the Danube Delta image analysis for the period June – September 2006, is represented by the supervision of the signals appeared in the written and online media and which refer directly to the Danube Delta.

The sources that have offered information are: Romania Libera, Jurnalul National, Adevarul, Capital, Curierul National, Curentul, Cotidianul, www.smartfinancial.ro.

The supervision of the articles that have in view the Danube Delta emphasizes positive and negative aspects.

The positive aspects have the following thematic structure:

− In the last three years, the investments have increased in the Delta;
− The Danube Delta is on the sixteenth place on the list of UNESCO Cultural and Natural Heritage;
− The Delta is give as an example; foreigners come to learn from us;
− The appearance of new hotel chains and the diversity of accommodation, food and recreation forms;
− The realization of some various promotion forms with modern means and techniques;
− The participation at exhibitions and tourism fairs at a national and international level;
− On the 29th June 2006, it is celebrated the Danube Day for the third time consecutively, at the proposal of the Danube countries and under the patronage of the International Commission for the protection of the Danube river, with the residence in Vienna;
− An Understanding Memorandum between the Administration of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reservation, the National Institute of the Danube Delta Research and Development (Romania) and the Administration of Dunaiskiy Plavni Natural Reservation (Ukraine), regarding the cooperation in the personnel training domain, studies on biodiversity, management, ecological reengineering and public awareness in the two humid areas;
− The recreation Center of Sulina has been introduced in the International Youth Hostelling circuit, which is a part of governmental program of the Danube delta promotion;
− The first tourist information center in the Danube Delta carried out in the project “The economy based on knowledge” was inaugurated at Jurilovca in Tulcea by the Minister of Information Technology and Communications, Zsolt Nagy;

The negative aspects have the following thematic:
− There aren’t enough hotels or night life;
− The accommodation prices at the hotels and pensions in the Delta are not very cheap in comparison with other tourist destinations. As the investors say, it is very hard to build something here, construction materials are very expensive in the area, while the transport is made on water, which presupposes high costs;
− The prime minister Calin Popescu Tariceanu has declared that he is “unpleasantly impressed” by the way in which tourism is made in the Danube Delta and he does not agree with the promotion of the mass tourism. “The Danube Delta is a unique richness in Romania. I have discussed with Romanian and foreign specialists in what concerns Romania’s main tourist potential, and they told me that the Danube Delta and the monasteries from Bucovina must be developed”, the government executive declared;
− The organization “Save the Danube Delta” warns about the dangers that pollution and bad management represent for the Danube Delta, it is shown in a written material by the Rompres Agency and quoted by www.smartfinancial.ro. The organizations’ representative, Dragos Bucurenci, stated within the debate to which the prime minister attended, that the flora and fauna of the Danube Delta are threatened by the man’s intervention;
− The illegal activities freely practiced by some economical agents, but especially by private persons who possess or build undeclared pensions in the Delta, represents another threat in front of which the authority cannot manage;
− The Danube Delta – the savage nature and the comfort of tourist pensions, minimal pollution, the lack of noise, but also some high costs for a perfection vacation. Even if there are many things to clear out – the infrastructure from certain areas in the Delta, fishing reglementation, the classification of all the accommodation structures and even the communication between investors, the local and central authorities – the Danube Delta represents a reference point for the Romanian tourism.

The program for tourism promotion for 2007 foresees the realization of a media campaign having the following goals:
− the new launching of the Danube Delta is the principle the development strategy of the tourism of the Danube Delta is based on;
− the increase of the Romanian tourist number that spend their holiday in the Danube Delta;
− the increase of the knowledge degree regarding the tourist potential offered by the Danube Delta;
− the augmentation of revenues at the national budget from the tourism practiced in the Danube Delta;
− the evaluation of the Danube Delta situation from an ecological, social and landscape point of view;
− the tourism promotion in the Danube Delta, in all the seasons, is one of the objectives of the National Authority for Tourism;
− the importance of the Danube and the Delta as an international resource that supports a whole complex of flora and fauna;
− the transformation of the Danube Delta in a national brand;
− the wish to involve the representatives of mass media, the social institutions and society in projects that have in view the promotion of the Danube Delta and the sensitizing of the opinions leaders and other political and cultural personalities regarding the necessity to establish a promotion and protection strategy of the Delta image and then, its implementation.
2. SWOT analysis of the Danube Delta tourist area

In order to fundament the strategic support and to choose the optimum use of promotion technique, the SWOT analysis is represented by a tool that can offer the necessary guides. Thus, by careful monitoring by the environment, there have been identified the following:

Strengths:
- the Danube Delta is the largest reservation of humid regions in Europe;
- it occupies the third position after Galapagos isles and the Great Coral Reef;
- the number of investments increases every year;
- numerous original centers of interest;
- an important factor in the creation and maintenance of Romania’s image in the world;
- the greatest colony of pelicans in Europe;
- the realization of symposiums regarding the Danube Delta image;
- bird-watching - preoccupation of the Englishmen;
- the Danube Delta was declared the destination of 2006;
- Sulina – tourist destination for young people;
- the foundation of new centers of tourist information;

Weaknesses
- few quality hotels;
- too high prices;
- more and more accentuated pollution;
- the insufficiency of the scientific tourism development;
- few information centers;
- the excessive granting of some locations in the Delta without precise contract terms – which led to the destruction of the flora and fauna;
- weak promotion;
- the Romanian government is not ready to face a crisis;
- a problematic access infrastructure;
- insufficient river stations;
- the lack of foreign languages abilities of the citizens in the rural tourism chains;
- the lack of the proper marketing;
- tourism agencies without guides.

Opportunities
- the creation of two ornithological research stations;
- the natural integrity of the Danube Delta;
- the promotion of the ecotourism concept;
- an increased interest for agro tourism on the national level;
- the existence of available areas for investments;
- the creation of websites for the accommodation unities in the Danube Delta;
- the invitation of European journalists to visit the Danube Delta;

Threats
- the return of the poultry flu phenomenon;
- floods;
- fishing banning;
- mass tourism;
- the existence of some areas of peasant residencies as agro tourism pensions.

The only delta in Europe lacks visitors. Affected by the crisis of the poultry flu, the tourism in the Delta hardly recovers. Despite the fact that it confronts with problematic infrastructure, sometimes with an unqualified personnel, the practice of illegal tourism, the lack of legislation framework, every Romanian and especially the authorities should be aware of the fact that the Danube Delta is something unique and we have the moral duty to promote this uniqueness which is more and more searched by the tourists all over the world.

3. Promotion strategies of the Danube Delta image

The specialized works offer a diverse typology of promotion strategies. Taking into account the existent frame and the results offered by analysis instruments, we recommend the following strategies:

1. The strategy of the “added value” – this strategy informs tourists about the offered products and services, the investments level, the offered equipments and facilities. To these, there are also added the hotel managers’ modernization involvement on long term, in order to solve the tourists’ problems, the assurance of technical assistance and the carrying out of the information exchange with the distribution partners.
2. The “new people” strategy aims at potential tourism. This strategy is based on an advertising program to make potential tourists aware that they can come in the Delta. The advertising role is to transmit the message according to which the Delta is the place where tourists will find a variety of quality tourist products and services. Thus, the Delta is associated with the most wanted attributes by the clients: bird watching, fishing, hunting, and beach.

This strategy is especially applied in the Danube Delta as many tourists don’t know this wonderful area that Romania offers. In this context, the Agency for Governmental Strategies realized an opinion survey regarding the Romania’s image in Germany, also mentioning about the Danube Delta in May – June 2006. By means of this survey, there were pursued the identification of strengths and weaknesses of the actual image of Romania and the Romanians in Germany, what are the niche opportunities to promote and outline a Romanian brand, how should this new brand be and which would be the proper communication channels and tools.

The survey showed that few Germans are attracted by Romania as a tourist destination: one of three Germans considers Romania for a tourist point of view and only one of ten would visit our country.

The main tourist destinations that interest the German tourists in what concerns Romania are: Bucharest, the Danube Delta, Dracula Castle, the medieval cities of Transylvania, the balneal-climacterical stations, antique archeological sites, the monasteries of Moldavia and the traditional Romanian villages – in this order.

3. The “events” strategy supposes the connection of the Delta advertising to important sport and cultural events with a large coverage area and broadcasted by television channels. Among this type of events that take place in the Danube Delta, we remind:

- “The Anonymous International Independent Film Festival”, between 14 – 19 August 2006, at Sf. Gheorghe, in the Danube Delta, takes place the third edition of this festival; this year the National Contest of Documentaries and Film Fiction Scripts has the first edition;
- “Ivan Patzaichin Contest” is a fishing nautical competition that takes place in the period 12 – 13 August 2006, the contest being at its fourth edition;
- “Prometheus Young Music Festival” – 16 – 24 July 2006, etc.

4. The improvement strategy of the organization image.

The problem of the Danube Delta image improvement has appeared after the poultry crisis had affected many accommodation units in the delta.

The strategy has in view the following goals:
- the constant analysis of the market;
- the creation of necessary informative materials;
- the participation at national and international tourism fairs.

In this context, Romania has participated at the International Tourism Fair from Berlin, where the seaside, the Delta and the balneal stations have been the tourist offers that Romania promoted. The government secretary in the Tourism Ministry, Ovidiu Marin, has declared that the poultry flu will not affect the Romanian tourism and he expects that the incomes grow with 3% this year. An important contribution was represented here by the visit of the Prime Minister, Calin Popescu Tariceanu, who invited the tourists to come in the Delta. The implementation of the promotion strategies regarding the Danube Delta image is defined as the process that transforms the communication plan in tasks and takes measures that these tasks are executed in a way to allow the goals achievement established in those plans.


The tourism operators see the Danube Delta as Romania’s advantage, in the tourism competition with the neighbour countries. The number of tourists that visit the Danube Delta has increased significantly in the last three years, once with the augmentation of the possibilities of free time passing. Thus, the walks by boat or the floating hotel, fishing, the flora and fauna study or the meals in the fishermen’ villages increase the attractiveness of these areas. However, it is considered that the tourist potential of the Delta is not enough exploited. The specialists considered that to exploit a proper administration of these resources, on the future, there must be built new accommodation units in the Danube Delta, respectively the appearance of new tourist areas.

The implementation of the project management, measures and goals requires the assurance of some proper conditions in every administrative component of the Euro-region and the experience accumulated in the last years in every protected natural area underlined the fact that the insurance of an adequate, coherent and precise legislation framework, the necessary financial resources and personnel that is adequately prepared for the specific activities in the domain are the conditions that can provide the best results in the shortest time.

References: