

Conceptual aspects regarding balneotherapy tourism marketing in Romania

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Abstract. *Although the Romanian balneotherapy tourism potential is exceptional, its effects do not match the level of the de facto natural resources, hence Romania's unjustified distance from the main international, European competitors, with a balneotherapy tourism tradition. The all-levels causes (macro, meso and micro) derive from both directions (on the one hand, from the consumers, whose perception should be changed, and, on the other hand, from the numerous holders of these resources). However, before studying the causes, there is a strong need for understanding, knowing and finding a common denominator for the concepts and dimensions of the health tourism.*

Keywords: balneotherapy tourism; medical tourism; wellness tourism; spa tourism; balneotherapy tourism marketing.

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Introduction

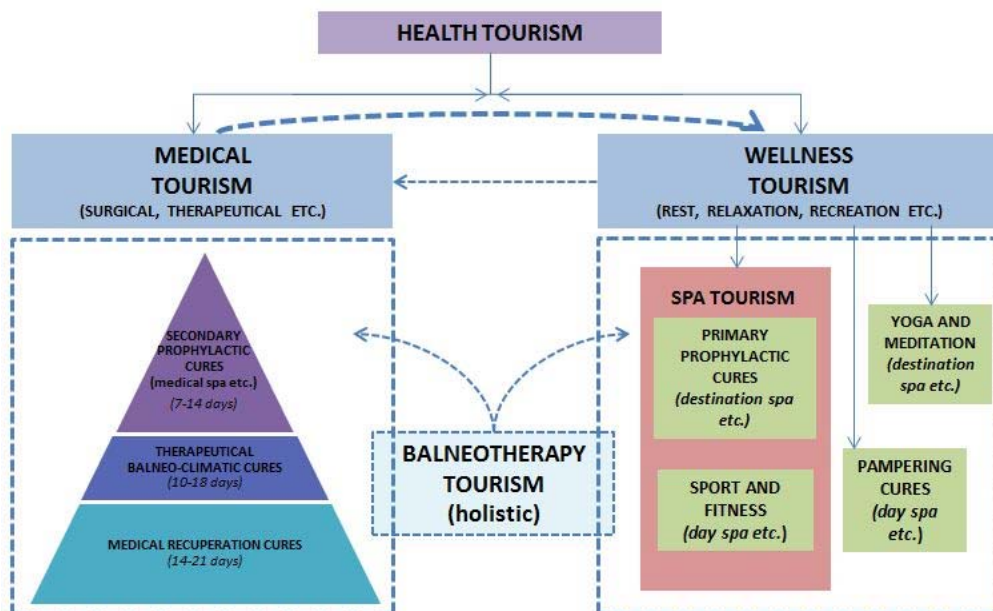
In order to have a thorough view over the role, as well as the implications of the balneotherapy tourism in Romania, it is necessary for it to be framed and examined from an extensive perspective. This can be attained by determining its multiple valences, expressed by its resources and activities within the destinations and by establishing the relationships with other two adjacent, health-related concepts (*medical tourism and wellness tourism*). The insufficiently clarified delimitation of the aforementioned concepts in the specialist literature, but also the international discrepancies, lead to a limited knowledge degree in the entire world, and, of course, in Romania, as well. For the marketing specialist, this fact guides to a more difficult elaboration of the tourism products, as well as to the necessity of establishing the correct competitive advantage in tourism, which are essential in the competition analysis, as a starting point in constructing both positioning and product strategy.

Conceptual framework

The most important aspect of the balneotherapy tourism in Romania may refer to the fact that presently, uniformity lacks in understanding the essential concepts which are closely related to its development, namely the concepts of health, medical healing and wellness. *Health concept*, initially defined as a “state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organisation, 1948), has been improved by underlining the converging concepts of physical and mental health, being considered as “an instrument for the awareness and satisfaction of the needs”, as “a resource for the daily life” and as “a positive concept which emphasizes social, personal resources and physical capacities of a person” (World Health Organisation, 1984). By association, *health tourism* represents a comprehensive concept as well, with a series of activities’ categories (sun and fun activities, healthy activities – but health is not the central motive, healthy activities – principal motive for travel is health, travel for sauna, massage and other health activities and medical treatment), all of them with inflexion points to other forms of tourism, as *leisure tourism, adventure tourism, sports tourism, medical tourism, wellness tourism* etc. (Goeldner, 1989, apud. Hall, 2013, p. 7). Although health tourism is internationally considered a sinergetic concept, in Central and Eastern Europe it is mainly represented by medical and curative aspects (Smith, Puczko, 2009, p. 6). Thus, regarding Romania (as part of Central and Eastern Europe), health concept is assumed at the collective perception level as physical, medical healing through therapeutical waters and

spas, being framed as the concept of medical wellness (Smith, Puczko, 2009, p. 24).

This belief is totally justified if the entire Romanian balneotherapy potential is taken into account, represented by the quality of the mineral and thermal waters. However, in order to clarify the concept, to highlight the features of balneotherapy tourism in Romania and, respectively, to eliminate “its amorphous image”, a repositioning process is necessary, based on the tourist’s needs and, implicitly, the motives of destinations’ visit, ranked as medical tourism and wellness tourism (Figure 1).



Source: adaptation by Smith, Puczko (2009, p. 7) and Teleki, Munteanu (2012, p. 56).

Figure 1. Dimensions of health tourism

The entire system involves medical recuperation cures, therapeutical balneo-climatic cures, secondary prophylactic cures as well as primary prophylactic cures, sport and fitness, yoga and meditation and pampering cures. For each of these possible tourism/balneotherapy products, for which an equivalent form of tourism can be shaped, there is required a compatibility also with the defining elements, components of the tourism destination/resort, such as its resources (natural and anthropic), socio-cultural characteristics, infrastructure, accomodation facilities etc., all of these facilitating the development of specific activities.

Lately, the concept of *medical tourism*, defined as “the act of traveling in order to improve one’s health” (Bookman, Bookman, 2007, apud. Reddy et al., 2010, p. 510), has had a significant development. This form of tourism is correlated to a larger extent with optional procedures (the most common of them being cosmetic, dental, cardiological, orthopedic, bariatric procedures etc.) and, if needed, with emergency situations (Horowitz et al., 2007, p. 33).

The main reason standing for the existence of medical tourism in general, is the accessibility (price). Therefore, within the current industry of medical tourism, patients travel especially from developed countries to developing countries, surgical interventions performed in the latter being less expensive than the corresponding ones from the US or UK (Horowitz, Rosensweig, 2008, p. 31). Thus, this trend is favourable to the Romanian balneotherapy tourism development as well. However, a McKinsey study, conducted by Ehrbeck, Guevara, and Mango in 2008, indicates the fact that “medical tourists” are more interested in the quality and speed of service delivery, rather than in low prices, fact which leads to the necessity of “refining” the balneotherapy tourism product, or, in other words, enriching it with services/activities having direct impact on health (such as sports, leisure etc.).

Starting from this premises, among others, specialised tourism agencies create complex tourism products, which include reservation, accommodation, transport, food, surgical intervention related services etc., but also relaxation/recreation services.

Balneotherapy tourism develops itself under the umbrella-concept of medical tourism – niche tourism/product, which includes both medical services and tourism products (Yu, Ko, 2012, pp. 80-81), whose general trends underlie the perspective of balneotherapy tourism. Referring to the traditional model of international travelling, patients from developing countries travel to medical centers with high standards from the developed countries in order to benefit from medical care (Horowitz, Rosensweig, 2007, p. 26).

Previous research indicates the fact that balneotherapy tourism is viewed and understood to be composed of a single form of tourism – treatment tourism, as a specific form of the leisure tourism, which, especially in last decades, has experienced a significant development, once the level of overwork and the number of professional illnesses caused by the stress of the modern life in large cities has increased (Snack, Baron, Neacșu, 2001, p. 38).

In fact, this perception is entirely justified, given the fact that East-european and, implicitly, Romanian balneotherapy resorts represent historical medical and spa centres, where the tourists, often called “patients”, mainly come in order to obtain physical healing (Smith, Puczko, 2009, p. 6). Key features of these centers such as: the tourist traffic with relatively linear distribution and a constant intensity during the year, reduced seasonality, the

possibility to ensure relatively long sojourns (from 12 to 30 days), the attraction of a steady clientele, the repeated treatments and balneotherapy cures with direct results upon health, providing complex and qualified services generating increased average revenues per day-tourist etc. (adaptation by Snack, Baron, Neacșu, 2001, p. 39), can become incontestable competitive advantages, in the context of destination marketing planning.

In the European health systems, balneotherapy resorts represent important tourism destinations, particularly for consumers seeking health and leisure alike. If in Romania, the tourism product initially presented only basic, traditional elements, strictly based on balneology issues (equivalent of medical spas in the US), referring to cures or treatments in the presence of a physician, nowadays, the product is supplemented with other balneotherapy services, a combination of traditional services (*specific procedures and treatments*) and rejuvenating/pampering services (Kapczynski, Szromek, 2008, p. 1035); however, in terms of marketing, one cannot yet talk about a “developed product”, the marketing process being stopped at its second level.

Internationally, health tourism market has developed, principally, by attracting those consumers who wish to benefit from health preservation and prophylaxis services, protecting themselves from the negative effects of the modern world, circumstances in which balneotherapy resorts’ standards are being continuously enhanced. In Romania, the criteria for tourism resorts certification have been established as well, either of local or national interest, which must include, among other, the location in a natural environment without pollutants; certification and value of natural cure factors; improvements and facilities for sports tourism; organising cultural, sports etc. tourism events and especially for balneotherapy resorts: balneotherapy medical care; technical equipment for the development, protection and utilisation of the therapeutical mineral resources; improvements and facilities for revival services and basis for the valorification of the natural therapeutical resources (GD No. 852/2008 for approving the rules and certification criteria for tourism resorts). Following these criteria, balneotherapy or balneo-climatic resort statute has been granted to: Băile Felix and Călimănești-Căciulata areas and Techirghiol, Covasna, Amara, Sovata, Ocna Sibiului, Băile Govora and Băile Olănești cities (GD No. 1016/2011 regarding the classification of balneotherapy of balneo-climatic resorts).

The *wellness* concept generally has a more prophylactic value than a curative one and is closely related to changing lifestyle in order to highlight the harmony between mental, physical and spiritual health, mainly aiming prevention as opposed to “cure tourists” who seek healing, recuperation from illness (Muller, Kaufmann, 2000, apud. Smith, Puczko, 2009, p. 5). According to a motivation study performed by Voigt, three types of wellness tourists are

identified, namely: those who seek beauty treatments, a specific lifestyle (correlated with health cultivation) or spiritual refuge (Voigt, 2011, apud. Hall, 2013, p. 9). Thus, while beauty treatments' purpose is body care through activities including massage, sauna, relaxation using baths (Smith, Puczko, 2009, p. 59), sports and fitness activities encourage the importance of diet and nutrition through programs aiming at relinquishing harmful habits of modern life. Holidays focusing on yoga have as central element the practice of the saunas, breathing and meditation, in order to release stress and achieve a state of calm; these exercises can be combined with activities in which nature has a leading role or with educational programs for a healthier lifestyle (Smith, Puczko, 2009, p. 60).

Primary prophylactic cures belong to wellness tourism, being preferred by healthy persons with risk factors which pay increased attention to health (Teleki, Munteanu, 2012, p. 56), and to rejuvenation, a field in which Romania is well-known, Ana Aslan being renowned and appreciated throughout the world both as a geriatrician and through its products (capillary lotion and cream Gerovital H3).

Romania represents, even considering this complex perspective from which resources are viewed, incontestably, an international force, taking into account the richness and variety of its balneotherapy resources, with the following arguments:

- an exceptional balneotherapy potential, represented by over 200 localities with natural cure factors, varied resources (having the possibility to be used in treating over 14 illnesses) and special therapeutical value, which place Romania on the top places of European countries (Minciu, 2004, p. 164);
- natural resources as well as the existence of balneotherapy cure resorts, for rest and vacations, considered "health oasis" from the seaside until the mountains (Erdeli, Gheorghilaș, 2007, p. 127);
- approximately a third from the natural mineral springs from Europe (Master Plan for National Tourism Development 2007-2026, First Part, p. 28);
- 117 localities with therapeutical natural factors, out of which 29 are designated balneotherapy resorts of national importance and 32, of local importance (Master Plan for National Tourism Development 2007-2026, First Part, p. 29).

Therefore, framing health tourism – Romania's "golden reef" – in a planned system, is a necessity urging to be addressed, since balneotherapy tourism dates from the Roman times, with a growth and development phase after the Second World War; over time, this important position in the

international market, as a strength of the Romanian balneotherapy tourism, has continuously degrading, due to the threats from the economic environment.

Although the need to travel, with its various motivations, usually belongs to higher levels of Maslow's pyramid, the need for balneotherapy tourism generally aims physiological health (both for recuperation and preservation etc.); however, individual's needs transcend this phase, as the body is closely related to the mind and spirit.

Even more, if "the desire for balneotherapy tourism" is considered, especially in its wellness form, it materializes the need for health, but, in the same time, is designed by the individual's culture and personality and stands for other necessities as well, which harmoniously intercorrelate, the desire's anticipation being a difficult task for the marketing specialist.

But the experience of a balneotherapy resort vacation certainly implies the existence of an complex tourism product, composed by multiple services (accommodation, food, transport, leisure, specific and auxiliary services etc.), irrespective of the type of "health need".

It is therefore necessary to study the marketing for balneotherapy tourism, starting from the basic concepts (need, desire, product, value etc.) which define *marketing*, respectively from offering to consumers what "they need and want ... [in other words] ... products with a certain [balneotherapy] value" (Kotler, 1994, apud. Stăncioiu, 2004, p. 118). Thus, the concept of value of a balneotherapy product represents the very essence of the transaction, and, implicitly, of the tourism offer. Defined as „the difference between the benefits obtained from the use or affiliation and the acquisition costs of a product”, in fact, the product value consists in its natural resources (converted from destination's comparative advantages into competitive advantages), which, of course, are used effectively within the targeted segments, and which lead to obtaining tourist satisfaction. But what does it mean satisfaction in a balneotherapy resort? A plurality of satisfactions, resulting from different, but as complexly structured activities, such as therapeutical, relaxation, cultural and other, all of them "encompassed within the philosophy of the six senses" ("Six Senses").

The balneotherapy product (with its self-standing resources) indicates the necessity for specific facilities and equipments. Through its valences (treatment, rehabilitation, general preservation, rest and relaxation), also regarded as medical tourism, preservation tourism, relaxation tourism, wellness tourism, the balneotherapy tourism, in the context of international tourism market trends, is characterized by dynamism, complexity and contemporaneousness.

The role of balneotherapy tourism is incontestable, the development of its market having a significant influence in supporting finance, public health,

income for administrative-territorial units belonging to balneotherapy resorts and consumers, both existing and potential patients (Kapczynski, Szromek, 2008, p. 1035).

However, in Romania one can refer more to a latent demand (consumers having a need that cannot yet be satisfied by the current balneotherapy product) or even non-existent, and, in addition, consumers do not know or are not interested in the product, due to the (incomprehensible) lack of attitude towards the need for treatment, with no health preservation perspective.

Since consumer values for this form of tourism dictate long-term choices and desires, there is a need for numerous and permanent marketing research – essential component in developing any marketing strategy. Therefore, the marketing specialist should know, in detail, at all stages of strategy development, the extent to which consumers frame health within physiological needs' area, as a central element element of balneotherapy tourism; otherwise, the decision making process for a vacation in a balneotherapy tourism destination is inhibited from the first phase – need tracking. Besides, the results of some previous research showed the fact that balneotherapy tourism is in general regarded narrowly, as treatment tourism only, reason for which the balneotherapy product, as well, has a reduced complexity degree in most balneotherapy resorts, the consumer choice criteria for a resort being the environmental factors – air and water quality – as well as the ambiance and comfort, thus outlining “*the balneotherapeutical experience*”, with direct impact on their satisfaction.

Over time, within the various studies and strategies developed by authorized institutions of the state, there was established a series of SWOT analysis for balneotherapy tourism, but they represented only a simple “sequence” of „too widely or too specifically viewed” items, often being unjustified (example, “lack of professionalism”, “inadequate funding”, “lack of effective unitary representations of the sector”, etc.).

In order to obtain a better perspective of the balneotherapy tourism in Romania, building a framework SWOT analysis – essential tool for strategic analysis – and, simultaneously SWOT analysis for the destinations, in relation to the product-market matrix, are imperiously needed.

Based on these facts, a framework SWOT analysis at a macro level should consider a “minimum” of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, valid for all balneotherapy resorts, such as, among others:

a) strengths:

- the existence and possibility of valorification of the natural mineral springs, in most resorts, for various illnesses' treatment, but also for health tourism development (implicitly, wellness tourism), or, in other words, the possibility to create and develop touristic products composed

of services like “therapeutical balneo-climatic cures”/“secondary prophylactic cures”, in paralell with “wellness-type products”/“primary prophylactic cures”;

- the quality of the superior medical education and Romanian physicians’ skills;
- maintaining the traditional profile in the most national interest balneotherapeutical resorts;
- the existence of balneotherapy accomodation services in two stars hotels, concording with tourists’ income, which represent, for now, the majority in the total demand structure for balneotherapy tourism;
- the possibility to combine a variety of forms of tourism with balneotherapy tourism in most balneotherapy resorts (cultural tourism, religious tourism, rural tourism etc.);

b) weaknesses:

- the inexistence of relevant information regarding some qualitative index/elements such as the return/fidelisation degree, tourist’s social/psychographic type, etc., in order to be transformed in secondary data for various market studies;
- total dependance on state’s subventions (through the placing of treatment tickets, and only for some illnesses) in conjunction with the inadequate mentality of the Romanian touroperators/tourism agencies regarding “the adressability of balneotherapy/medical tourism” and with their lack of interest and action in satisfying internal consumer of such products;
- fund allocation for unnecessary and irrelevant investments, in other words for the “developed product”, not for “the essence of the product” (developing touristic information centres, balneotherapy museums etc. in some resorts where no treatment basis is neither developed, nor modernised!);
- the low degree of existent accomodation spaces, most of them having one-two stars, or even unclassified, which do not meet the accepted standards for XXI century;
- the high degree of degradation of the touristic infrastructure (physical and moral depreciation of accomodation and food structures), but also of the specific one, form the balneotherapy resorts (physical an moral depreciation of the treatment equipment);
- unsuccessfull privatizations which generated misunderstandings within the former balneotherapy tourism companies, in paralell with the unsuitable management, which generated the degradation and, in some cases, the confinement of some representative accomodation and treatment structures with a significant role for the resorts as well as

feeble actions of the state against the culpable ones, at least in the international interest balneotherapy resorts;

- the existence of insufficient well-trained personnel in order to ensure tourism services and medical assistance;
- the lack of quality products, with treatment services and differentiated accommodation on comfort categories, respectively on various market segments;
- the feeble development or the inexistence of the prophylactic component in some balneotherapy resorts of national/international interest;
- the insufficient development or the inexistence of leisure and entertainment activities in most of the balneotherapy resorts;
- reduced or inexistent implication of the local communities in developing balneotherapy resorts;
- the lack of cooperation/partnership between the various supporters of tourism interests, in general, and health tourism, in particular (perhaps the most important weakness, and in the meantime, a sine qua non of its existence/development);

c) oportunities:

- the change of consumers' attitude and mentality around the world towards health in general, and towards health tourism, in particular;
- the possibility of accessing different funds in order to contract investments with direct impact onto the touristic flow towards balneotherapy resorts;

d) threats:

- the growing number of physicians who choose to practice their profession abroad;
- the pronounced development, in a growing number of countries, of the medical tourism and, in paralell, of the wellness tourism;
- the emergence of many competitors, presenting a wide range of holistic balneotherapy products for all market segments.

Among these, regarding the tourism destination (balneotherapy tourism resort) marketing planning process, the marketing specialist should conduct a SWOT analysis of the specific balneotherapy product in the destination in question, as well as a SWOT analysis of the tourism services company.

Admitting the existing natural potential, the governmental authorities in the tourism sector have planned and implemented some actions designated to revive the Romanian balneotherapy tourism. In 1993, a qualitative assessment has been developed, achieving a ranking of balneotherapy resorts by calculating their attractiveness index, and in 1997 cure factors from balneotherapy resorts were reinventorized. In addition, in 2007, a Master Plan has been elaborated,

which aims, among other forms of tourism, balneotherapy tourism as well. For this purpose, the existing balneotherapy tourism potential has been analyzed, as well as the competitors, establishing the necessary objectives in order to revive Romanian balneotherapy tourism⁽²⁾. Unfortunately, the ways in which the objectives were fulfilled (the strategies) were not the most efficient ones, product, personnel and partnership strategies remaining still, “the cinderellas” of balneotherapy tourism.

Thus, referring to product strategy, although the development of balneotherapy tourism product should be analyzed in terms of basic services combined with leisure ones (a complex product realised by combining different forms of tourism) (Firu, 2006, pp. 138-140), few were and still are the attempts of developing balneotherapy tourism product, provided to consumers with incomes above average (for example, some hotels in Eforie Nord, Băile Herculane, Băile Felix etc.), while others (for example, most hotels in Sovata, Călimănești-Căciulata, Băile Govora, Băile Olănești) aimed at segments with medium income, having their attention and efforts directed only to treatment services. The development perspective is given by the diversification of integrated services within treatment hotels, such as hydrotherapy, leisure, altogether with accommodation and treatment services. Regarding the sine qua non presence of leisure services, cure and balneotherapy treatment may be supplemented by various additional services from wellness area, with varied options (ranging from walks, trips, sports leisure to fitness centers specialized in treatments for physical, mental health and beauty or cultural activities etc.), in this sense, existing the possibility of creating a wide range of tourism products, in which creativity is “the only one to limit their number” (Stăncioiu, 2004, p. 119).

The price strategy should be based on the value of the tourism product, determined by the consumer perception regarding its competitive advantages, but also those of the balneotherapy resort, obviously starting from the importance one gives to its own health on the two coordinates, treatment and prevention.

For the distribution strategy of a balneotherapy product with an important medical side, of highly developed niche, it is necessary, firstly, to motivate the agents from the distribution channel in order for them to adopt and support the product on the market. Considering the other components of the balneotherapy product as well, very important is the market coverage, which can be successfully achieved only in the conditions of thorough, rigorous segmentation. Referring to foreign markets, although Romania has occupied one of the top places regarding balneotherapy resorts in Europe, balneotherapy tourism being then addressed primarily to foreigners, and although the attempts to promote foreign markets after the 90’s were numerous (perhaps too many,

taking into account the fact that exactly the product was missing!), nowadays, foreign touroperators, and some of the Romanian ones, adopt an unfavourable attitude towards Romania's entrance on the international market. From the series of causes, the most important are: the lack of a proper general and touristic infrastructure, the lack of facilities which are common in other resorts in the world, the absence of some investments to modernize a tourism material structure, which is physically and morally outdated, the lack of adaptability of personnel in hotels and restaurants to the new demands of international tourism, the overall image of "poor country" of Romania, created by European media in the recent years (Ianc, 2006, pp. 224-228).

Starting from the clear outline of the balneotherapy/medical products, by highlighting the treatment component within balneotherapy resorts, the next step, namely communicating the benefits of the natural cure factors involves, among others, the need for a better collaboration between the health and tourism, in this context, physicians' involvement - prescribers through their recommendations – representing a significant leverage for the decision to spend a vacation in balneotherapy destinations.

The role of personnel in performing any touristic/balneotherapy service is especially important, as the professionalism and competence of medical personnel do not constitute elements that positively complement the tourism product, but more than this, they build it, because, without them, the purpose of health recuperation and preservation during the vacation is severely affected. Therefore, within any balneotherapy tourism development strategy, for every destination and every market, personnel strategy must be consistent with its resources/its specificity.

Since the balneotherapy tourism product is a very refined and complex one, tourists wanting to get involved in many other activities (rest, relaxation, leisure etc.), programming and packaging strategies need to consider building diversified products, for different market segments, with several cultural and sports components for each of them. These can be realized using events in which the specific and potential of the rural or urban area of the balneotherapy resort is revealed, with direct effect of consolidating the destination's identity. In fact, packages have been created, with central elements consisting in cure factors (differentiating elements of balneotherapy resorts), such as "A week of recovery" (a package of six nights accommodation, two daily treatment procedures, breakfast and a medical examination to two/three star hotels), "Let's go to the baths" (five nights accommodation with full board, two daily procedures, five days of treatment and a medical examination), "Balneotherapy decade" (sojourn of ten days with full board, at least seven days of treatment, two daily procedures and a medical examination with services including accommodation, food and treatment in two/three/four stars hotels) and

“Balneotherapy wellness” (three nights accommodation, two days half-board, a gala dinner, access to pool, sauna, gym and two wellness-type procedures); it is necessary that such programs, depending only on the length of the sojourn and the included basic services, should define more clear the profile of the program and/or that of the specific activities through key-words/determinants in the decision making process, such as “*recovery*”, “*wellness*” etc. and to express their relation to the type of the destination resources.

Partnership strategy, referring to relationship marketing area, represents perhaps, in the actual context, the key element for Romanian health tourism development. It is necessary, in other words, to change the view of the supporters/economic agents involved in this sector, the success of Romanian balneotherapy tourism being conditioned by the implication of all decision factors at macro-, meso- and micro-economic level.

Conclusions

The agitation and speed of modern life, but also enhancing one’s living standards contribute essentially to the intensification of internal and international touristic flows, and constitute, in the same time, a premises for balneotherapy tourism development, in all its forms (treatment and balneotherapy cure tourism, preservation and relaxation tourism etc.)

Thus, creating and developing new products (including some “elements”, such as “comfort cures” through kinetotherapy, hydrotherapy, diet-therapy and psychotherapy, “fitness cures” of “adaptation to effort” or “aerobic workout”, “antistress cures” or “pampering cures”) require an investment effort to a lower extent, being important to determine the optimal mix between medical, health and wellness products and their synergetic combination into a “form of tourism brand”, in which all the important resources of the balneotherapy destination should be found.

Given the occasionally stark or even dramatic situation in balneotherapy destinations, despite the revival, modernization and adaptation plans developed over time and performed by different institutions and organisations, the resorts remain still inadequate to the present requirements. Thus, although the natural balneotherapy potential represents “the most valuable asset of the Romanian tourism”, it continues to lose ground to international competition, being necessary to frame its corresponding form of tourism in a planned system, with common objectives (not before the establishment of an identical specialized terminology) for all its supporters, terms and fundamental activities for each balneotherapy resort, depending on its specific, all types of resources and the market one wishes to target.

In order to achieve this goal, a consultative group is required, besides the government, consisting of specialists (university professors, specialists in the fields of: balneotherapy and labour medicine; tourism economy – balneotherapy tourism, seaside tourism, cultural tourism, rural tourism, hotels/restaurants etc.; international economic relations; management; planning, tourism marketing; project and investment management; tourism geography; ethnography and folklore; historians and curators, as well as representatives of professional organizations – FPTR, OPTBR, the Association of Balneotherapy Resorts etc.) – in order to function altogether with the relevant decision factors.

Notes

- (1) *Master Planul pentru Dezvoltarea Turismului Național 2007-2026*, Ministerul Dezvoltării Regionale și Administrației Publice.
- (2) *Strategia de dezvoltare a turismului balnear*, Ministerul Dezvoltării Regionale și Administrației Publice.

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