

## **Assessment modalities of the Master Plan for the Romanian tourism development 2007-2026**

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**Abstract.** *The complexity of a tourism destination such as Romania constitutes a prerequisite for organizing the marketing activity at the macro and meso level, in the context of the tourism development planning process at national level. An important document for the Romanian tourism development is the Master Plan, developed for the period 2007-2026, whose periodic evaluation is required.*

*For this purpose, a quantitative marketing research has been conducted, on a sample of 107 young people, with ongoing economic higher education studies, which aimed at the knowledge of the opinions on the Master Plan for the Romanian tourism development, elaborated for 2007-2026, using as evaluation criteria, the knowledge gained from the Masters program. Thus, the opinions on the way of its organization, as well as its managerial implications have been analyzed, and*

*finally, solutions have been proposed in order to improve it. Also, for a more complex view, a qualitative marketing research has been conducted, on a panel of experts, representatives of the Ministry of Tourism, in order to capture, from an internal perspective as well, important aspects of the organization and coordination processes on which the Master Plan was fundamented.*

**Keywords:** tourism planning; marketing planning; Master Plan; Romanian tourism.

**JEL Classification:** M3, L83.

**REL Classification:** 14F, 14G.

## Introduction

The complexity of tourism, admitted by all the professionals in the field, is shown not only by the complexity of the supply, respectively tourism demand (premise of building diverse tourism products), but also by the specific nature of tourism as “*multi- and transdisciplinary science*”, implying the diversity of stakeholders and explaining their multitude, both at management and operational level.

Transforming tourism into a competitive advantage for the country’s development is a complex and enduring process, to which all its supporters should attend constantly, considering its “roots” in the natural resources, while the economic multiplier factor is represented by its effective valorization, in relevant sequences of time, subordinated to its development objectives. Therefore, capitalizing tourism can be sustained only through a planned process, materialized in a development plan which “provides instructions and general concepts, identifying development opportunities, which could be analyzed in depth, by means of feasibility studies and cost-benefit analysis” (Mill, 1992, p. 388).

In this purpose, the Master Plan for the Romanian tourism development, for the period 2007-2026, has been elaborated, at the initiative of the National Tourism Authority, and respectively, of the Ministry of Tourism, by a group of international specialists, aiming to “formulate an general framework for the policies of the development and sustainable management of the tourism industry in terms of natural and cultural resources”, representing “an umbrella-policy which includes various plans and strategies, described so as to optimize the sector’s contribution to the national economy” (Master Planul pentru dezvoltarea turismului național 2007-2026, Part I, p. 1).

## Conceptual framework

The multitude of Romania’s tourism resources constitutes, in fact, a rich background of “raw materials”, which can be used by marketing specialists within the process of creating new products; therefore, a differentiated approach, specific to the marketing vision, is absolutely necessary for Romania in order to be on a solid structure regarding tourism development, aiming, ultimately, the offering of tourism products in accordance with the needs, wishes and preferences of their customers.

For this reason, it is necessary for Romania to be seen from a homogenous organizational perspective, however through a decentralized strategic approach of each microdestination (as a strategic business unit, with its own identity, objectives and independent strategies), their cohesion constituting itself in a vital system for the country’s tourism brand consolidation. Hence, the need for

elaborating a document by which the tourism activity in Romania to be planned, representing a sustaining element for channeling efforts within strategies at meso and micro level as well.

Admitting the supremacy of planning, in the context of tourism market, results exactly from “taking decisions based on knowledge, [...] setting targets and determining how they will be achieved” (Holloway, 2004, p. 24). Defined as “a complex process of establishing and maintaining the best relationship between objectives, employee training and resources of an enterprise, on the one hand, and the marketing mix on the other hand” (Stăncioiu (coord.), 2005, p. 13), the strategic marketing planning should be harmonized and framed within the tourism planning process, in fact, constituting the “*point zero*” of this activity.

Making a parallel between a tourism destination and an organization is extremely useful for the understanding and deconstructing of the marketing processes. In the case of an organization, organization the marketing department could be realized in four ways, namely, “in relation to the marketing functions, to the geographical position of markets, to the amplitude of the product range, to the served markets” (Holloway, 2004, p. 49). As a tourism destination’s potential with a national area is relatively large and, thus, it benefits from a diversified offer, it is all the more required the need for “standardized, formalized procedures” (McDonald, 2008, p. 167). In the case of developing a long-term plan, this approach could become difficult, as the forecasts should take into account the expected changes, but also the inherent ones, which appear in the marketing environment. Therefore, a marketing plan should be flexible and should take into account the change in market circumstances (processing after Holloway, 2004, p. 26); moreover, previous research indicate the necessary conditions for a planned marketing system to function: the nature of open system, the integration with other functional areas at general management level, the coherence, the leadership and the time (McDonald, 2008, p. 173). In these circumstances, it appears increasingly obvious the need to assess the planning system (including the marketing one), respectively, the plan, at regular intervals, performing the necessary corrections, so that a balance is achieved between all tourism resources (which constitute the national tourism offer) and the tourists’ expectations, materialized in wishes and preferences for tourism products (i.e. the tourism demand), built within the borders of the destination.

### **Operational framework**

The need for the sections of the Master Plan to be cohesive, following the logic of marketing planning, results from the nature of the document, which, according to its definition, includes a marketing plan as well. In the first section, the situation

analysis, efforts are concentrated, according to the document, for the identification of differentiation elements in the tourism sector, highlighting the weaknesses of Romanian tourism and the opportunities in the reference period. The section regarding the policy, management and organization of national tourism provides a structured presentation of the existing law and policy, starting with the description of the National Plan of development and continuing with regulations for authorities, suppliers, products, brands, and, not least, for consumers. The following category is represented by the strengths and weaknesses of the tourism destination (Romania), which were organized, according to the document, using criteria such as: geography and environment, culture and cultural heritage, infrastructure, transport and communications, human resources, legal framework and organization, marketing and promotion, and more.

The stage of economic impact of tourism includes the analysis of relevant indicators to the tourism economy (e.g., the income from the foreign exchange and balance of payments, the revenues and expenses in tourism, tourism contribution to GDP, contribution to the state income, the multiplier effect and creating employment). The next stage consists in iterating the vision, objectives and targets for the reference period; the vision implies transforming into a quality tourism destination and achieving a sustainable development in terms of the environment, according to the document. The strategic initiatives, the next stage of the Master Plan, are conducted on the following axes: personnel and partnerships, market research, integrated planning, education and training, and marketing, later embodied in actions and proposals within marketing programs. The stage of implementation strategy, named so within the document, consists in composing specialized and multidisciplinary teams for the optimal functioning of the action plan, the Master Plan being ended with a section of demonstrative projects for certain micro-destinations (e.g., Mamaia and Sighișoara).

### **Methodological framework**

In order to assess the main strategic document for the development of Romanian tourism, a quantitative marketing research has been conducted, on a sample of 107 young people with ongoing economic higher education studies, aiming at knowing the opinions on the Master Plan for Romanian tourism, developed for 2007-2026. Out of them, 21.5% are males and 78.5% are females. Of the 107 young people, 39.3% attend the Masters program in Tourism Business Administration and 60.7% attend the Masters program in Marketing Management<sup>(1)</sup>. Considered stakeholders of the Romanian tourism, but also future specialists for the approached field, young people's opinions regarding strategic documents at macroeconomic level are considered particularly relevant in the study, the evaluation criteria of the document

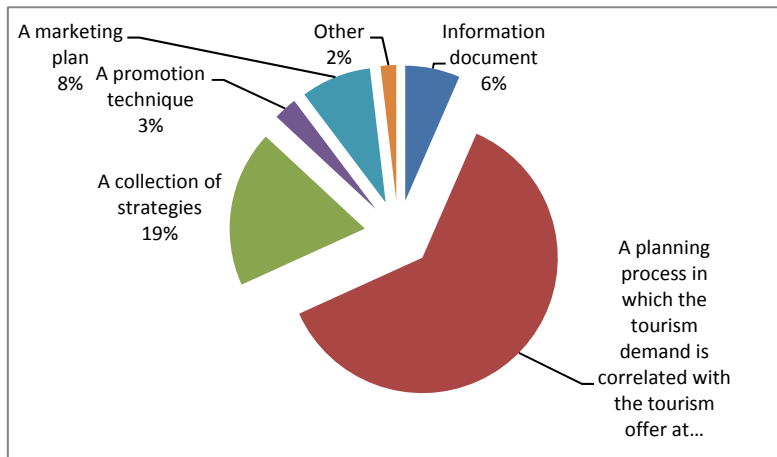
residing in the knowledge gained within the courses “Fundamentals of Marketing” and “Marketing Strategies in Tourism”, which are in both Masters programs’ curriculum. Thus, with the aim of knowing the opinions on the Master Plan for the Romanian tourism development, elaborated for 2007-2026, views regarding the integrity of the document’s component sections were analyzed, as well as regarding the highlight of priorities, the managerial implications and, eventually, the solutions proposed for its improvement.

Moreover, within a comparative approach between the theoretical side, highlighted by the opinions regarding the Master Plan, reflected by means of the academic knowledge and the practical one, of the actual way of developing the Master Plan, a qualitative marketing research has been conducted, on a panel of experts, representatives of the Ministry of Tourism, directly involved in developing the Master Plan, aiming at capturing, from an inside perspective, aspects of the organization and coordination processes, that fundamented its development. The topics of interest include the knowledge of the general impression from a management and marketing perspective, specific considerations regarding the way of developing the entire process, opinions on the efforts and effects of the process, the theoretical and practical implications of the document, aspects relating to the organization, control and evaluation.

### **Research results**

The first objective of the conducted quantitative research – starting point for data analysis – is represented by the identification of the way respondents define the Master Plan, vital information for the relevance and interpretation of the other objectives of the research. Important to mention is that the possible answers the respondents were given do not represent strict, general or exhaustive definitions and are not mutually exclusive, but highlight the way the representation of the Master Plan, based on the actual information contained within, is filtered, using the tourism marketing knowledge acquired in the aforementioned course. Thus, the majority of respondents (62 %) have considered that the Master Plan represents a planning process in which the tourism demand is correlated with the tourism offer at national level (Figure 1). This version is not only the correct version, but also the ideal version for a national document, other versions such as “promotion technique” and “information document” belonging to marketing tactics; versions such as “a collection of strategies” and “a marketing plan” are very important strategic elements, however not sufficient to establish an overall strategic framework, applicable to the macro-destination development, considering as well features that can result in competitive advantages for meso and micro-destinations.

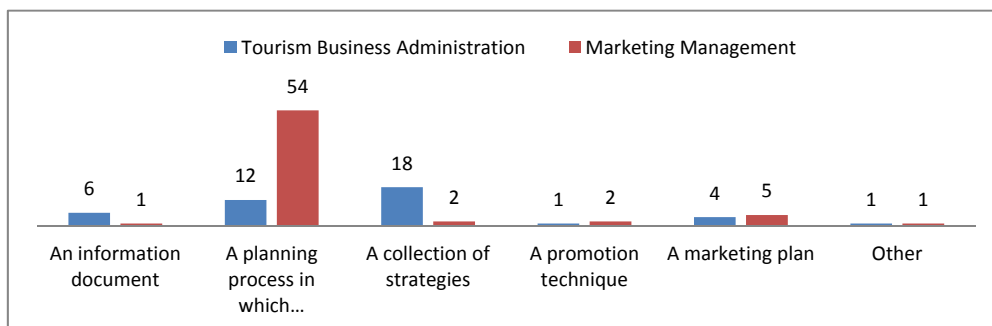
**Figure 1.** *The way in which the respondents define the Master Plan*



**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

Considering the specific of the ongoing studies as a relevant variable for the way the respondents analyze the Master Plan, by the perspective in which they study profile documents, it is noted that, of the respondents who have chosen the complex version of understanding the Master Plan, as a planning process in which the tourism demand is correlated with tourist offer at national level, most of them follow a study program at the Faculty of Marketing; of the ones who associate the Master Plan with a “collection of strategies”, most of them belong to the study program Business Administration in Tourism (Figure 2). The specificity of both programs of study, although under the “umbrella of economic studies”, indicates either approaches from different angles or in-depth study of secondary areas of a general subject. As a result, all the more for the development of a document of great complexity, with areas related to multiple economic competencies, which could be used at a national level, is necessary to create multidisciplinary teams in order to achieve a strategic instrument.

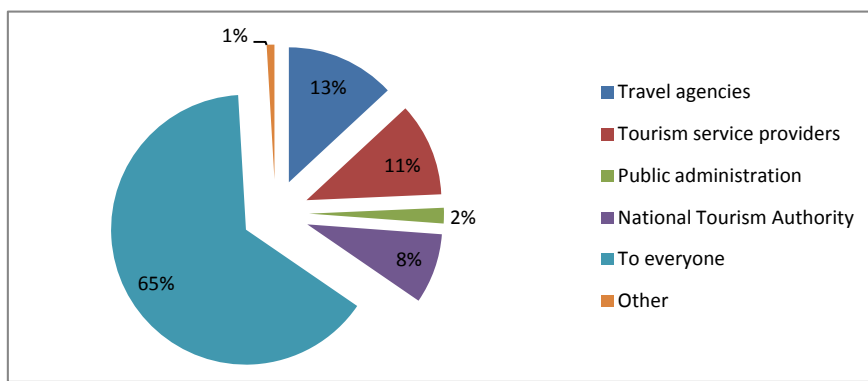
**Figure 2.** *The way in which the respondents define the Master Plan, by the Masters program they undergo*



**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

Regarding the applicability of this document, it was interesting to identify, from the respondents' perspective, the entities to which the Master Plan addresses. Thus, the majority of respondents (65%) consider that the document incorporates solutions at all three levels (macro, meso and micro), being useful for all the entities considered, i.e. travel agencies, tourism service providers, public administrations and the National Authority for Tourism (Figure 3); reduced shares were recorded wherein the Master Plan addresses only to travel agencies (13%) or tourism service providers (11%), incomplete variants, found at the micro level.

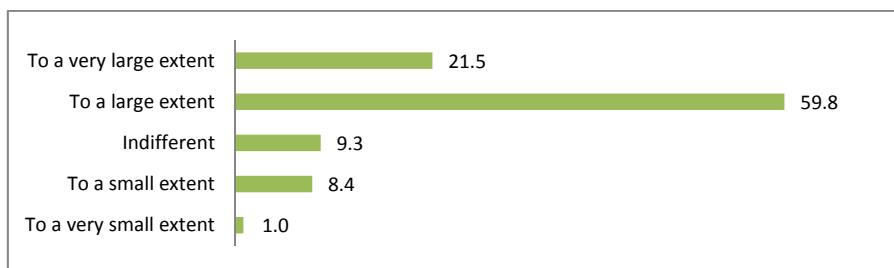
**Figure 3.** *The entity to which the Master Plan addresses, from the respondents' perspective*



**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

Considering the academic activity a relevant factor to reckon on the actuality of the Master Plan, 81.3% of respondents considered that Romania would need a new Master Plan to a large and very large extent (Figure 4). This result was predictable given that respondents, by the need to develop a new Master Plan (in relation to the obtained competencies), have perceived the need for strategic reformulation of the tourism activity.

**Figure 4.** *The degree in which Romania would need a new Master Plan*



**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

Given the purpose of the Master Plan (Table 1), while 18.7% of respondents believe that the Master Plan should contain solutions at a regional/destination level and 13.1% – solutions at a type of tourism level, most respondents consider that such a



strategic document should contain a combination between the proposed variants (59.8%). Thus, 27.1% consider as relevant a combination of two of the aforementioned solutions (a matrix' axes of building tourism products), and 11.2% add to these two options general solutions for tourism development as well.

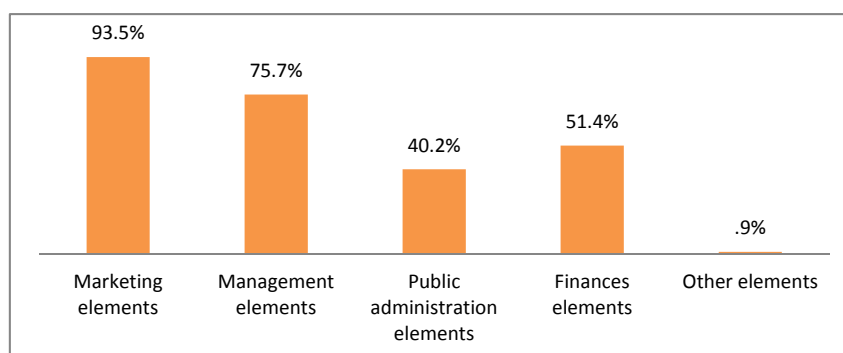
**Table 1.** Solutions necessary to be proposed within the Master Plan, according to the respondents

<i>Proposed solution</i>	–% of total column–
General solutions	3.7
Solutions at regional/destination level	18.7
Solutions at type of tourism level	13.1
Specific solutions for travel agencies, investors, tour-operators etc.	4.7
Combination	59.8

**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

Opinions regarding the structure of the Master Plan, as well as its content, have represented main objectives of the research. As its constitutive elements, most respondents (93.5%) considered that the Master Plan – a strategic planning document, should be based on marketing elements, while 75.7% considered the management elements as primary (Figure 5). The sections of public administration and finances have been considered as basic elements at lower percentages (40.2%, respectively 51.4%). Therefore, in the case of elaborating a new Master Plan, the surveyed graduate students consider the marketing and management perspectives as being suitable approaches in which information from other areas should be used and analyzed.

**Figure 5.** The constitutive elements, in the respondents' opinion, on which the Master Plan should be fundamented

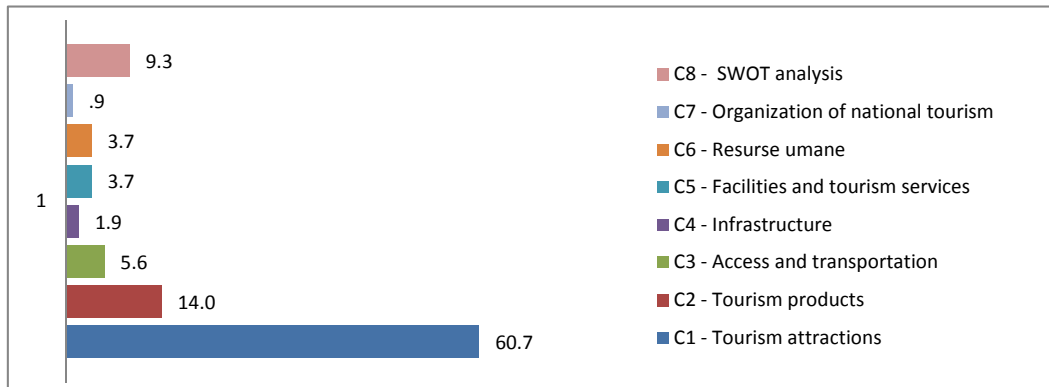


**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

A thorough analysis involved considering the Master Plan, both as a whole, and by means of each of its component parts, namely its chapters. Therefore, the best approached element of the Master Plan was, according to the respondents (60.7%), the one referring at the tourism attractions (Figure 6). In fact, this represents the most complex area of the Master Plan, representing an extensive

audit of Romania’s resources, based on their specificity. The chapters referring to tourism products (central topic of tourism marketing) and SWOT analysis recorded significantly lower scores (14%, respectively 9.3%).

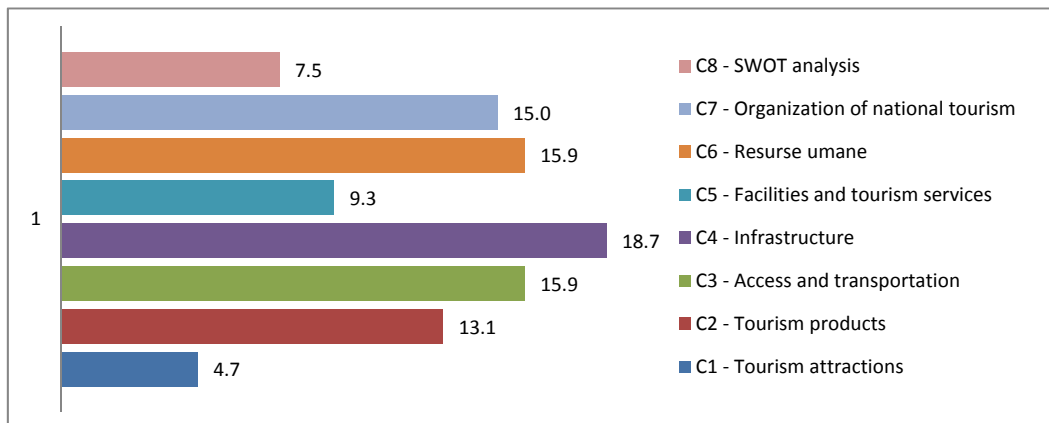
**Figure 6.** *The best approached element of the Master Plan, in respondents’ opinion*



**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

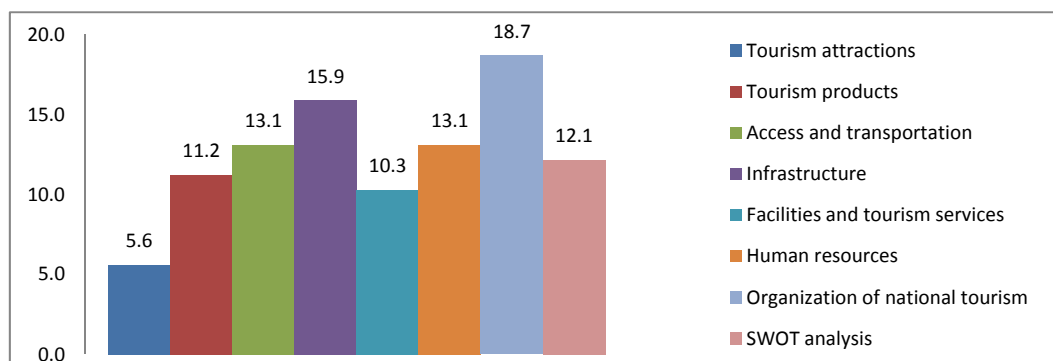
In return, the least well approached element in the Master Plan (18.7%) is represented by the infrastructure (Figure 7), followed by human resources and access and transportation (15.9%).

**Figure 7.** *The least well approached element of the Master Plan, in respondents’ opinion*



**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

According to respondents, the Master Plan section which should be redone, in case of developing a new Master Plan (Figure 8) refers to the organization of national tourism (18.7%).

**Figure 8.** *The Master Plan section which should be redone, according to the respondents*

**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

In order to assess the actions proposed in the Master Plan, the respondents were presented, for analysis, the document objectives; stimulating development and consolidation and preserving the cultural heritage have been considered as the most important for the Romanian tourism development (Table 2), obtaining scores of 9.89, respectively 8.91 (on a scale of 1 to 10). However, according to the respondents, their implementation achieved significantly lower scores (6.40, respectively 6.62). Although most of the objectives were considered relatively important for the Romanian tourism development, obtaining scores above 7.60, their implementation, to the knowledge of the respondents, was uniformly low, none of the objectives obtaining scores (related to the knowledge of its implementation) greater than 5.88, fact which denotes a “rift” between strategic and tactical approaches.

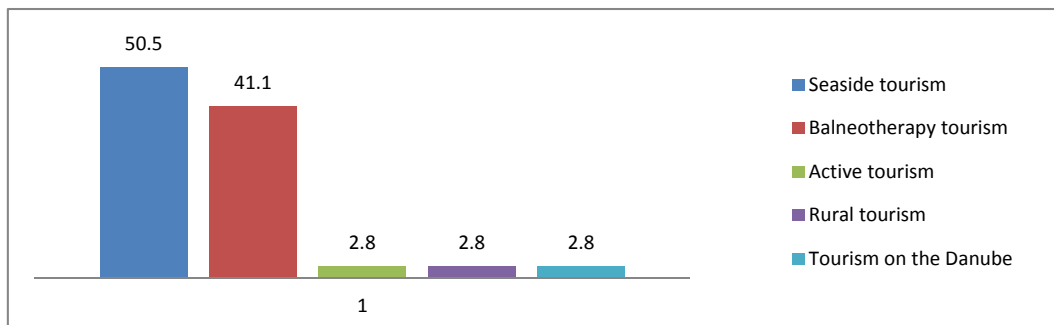
**Table 2.** *The degree in which the Master Plan’s objectives are important for the tourism development in Romania and have been implemented or they are under implementation*

	Are they important for the tourism development in Romania?	Have they been implemented or are they under implementation?
Increase of the foreign exchange earnings	7.60	5.88
Bringing economy and Romanian society at a European Union level	8.74	5.84
Increase of life quality	8.58	6.06
Increase and encouragement of investments in all adjacent fields of tourism	8.55	6.22
Stimulation of employment	8.27	6.02
Stimulation of development	9.89	6.40
Consolidation of increasing and preserving the cultural heritage	8.91	6.62
Contribution to the development and conservation of material and natural resources from the entire country	8.88	6.20
Distribution of the benefits of tourism in all of Romania’s regions	8.13	6.25
<i>Means=1,10</i>		

**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

The best approached type of tourism within the Master Plan, according to respondents, is the seaside tourism (50.5%), followed by balneotherapy tourism (41.4%), the other four types of tourism, considered tourism products relevant for the Romanian tourism, i.e. the active, rural tourism, tourism on the Danube and conference tourism obtaining insignificant scores (Figure 9). It is necessary that the level of detail of each type of tourism, presented as relevant, to match its importance for a strategic and sustainable development, in other words, to be able to generate products which bring to Romania a competitive advantage in the targeted markets. Therefore, it is necessary to have, for the main types of tourism, information regarding the resource background, the relevant economic indicators, the destinations and their corresponding targeted markets.

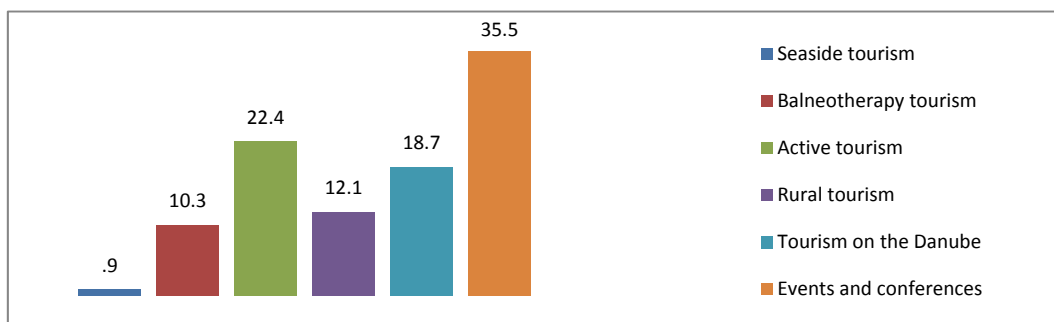
**Figure 9.** *The best approached type of tourism within the Master Plan*



**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

Considered one of the main types of tourism, tourism based on events and conferences, according to the respondents, is the least well approached one in the Master Plan (Figure 10). While the events and conferences crystallize a newer type of tourism, arising from the changes in the society, it is less studied and/or practiced over time in Romania.

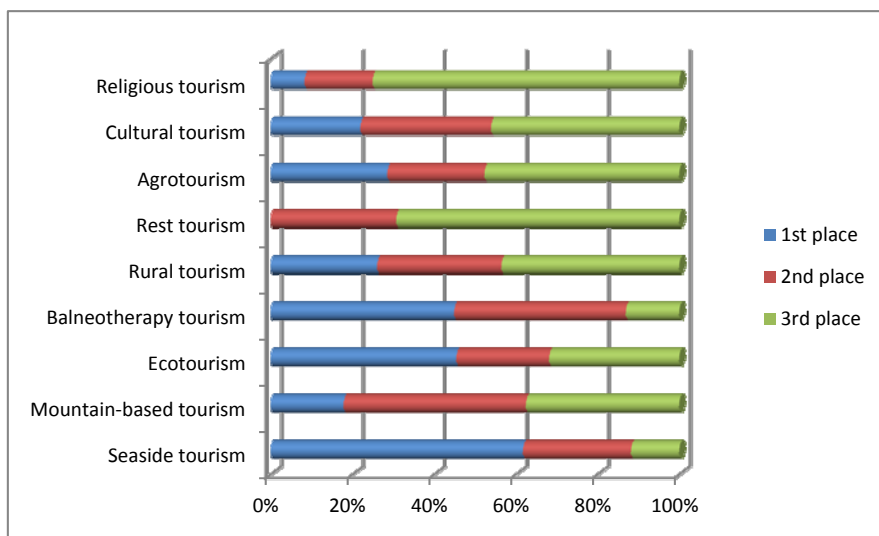
**Figure 10.** *The least well approached type of tourism within the Master Plan*



**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

As types of tourism necessary to be studied in the Master Plan, the majority of the ones who selected the seaside tourism, consider it the main priority (60%) – Figure 11, followed by other important types of tourism, namely balneotherapy tourism and ecotourism.

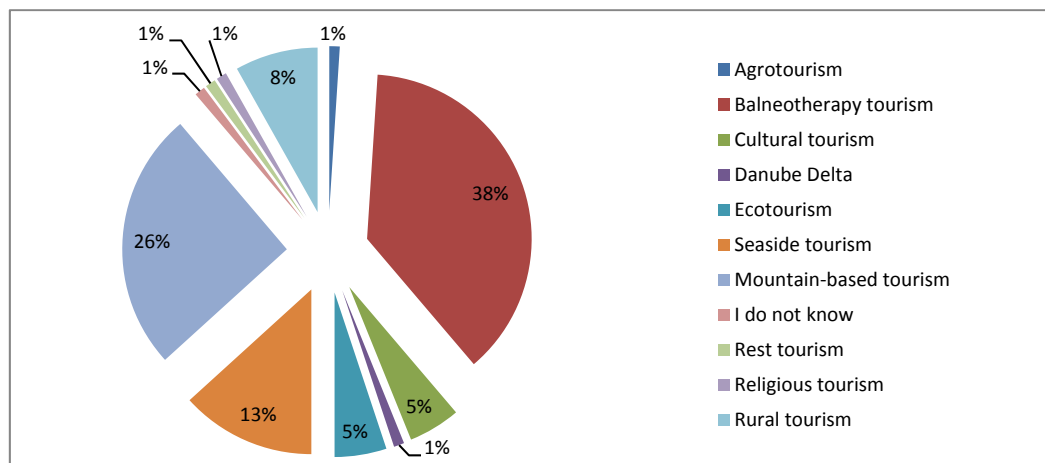
**Figure 11.** *The types of tourism necessary to be supported in the Master Plan, according to the respondents*



**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

Regarding the current tourism brand, the respondents (Figure 12) considered that balneotherapy tourism represents it best (38%), followed by the mountain-based tourism (28%). The result is all the more unexpected as Romania's tourism brand logo does not contain graphic elements that symbolize balneotherapy tourism! Ecotourism, instead, a type of tourism that can be associated with the graphic symbols belonging to the tourism brand, has recorded a relatively low score, of only 5%, as, besides, the rest tourism. These results demonstrate the need for greater attention to developing the country's tourism brand and, at the same time, to avoiding confusion between the thematic brand/brands and the national tourism brand!

**Figure 12.** The type of tourism that best represents the current brand



**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

The level of analysis addressed in the Master Plan (Table 3), according to the respondents, was structured as follows: referring to the destination (26.2%); a “combined” level, containing approaches from several angles, was noticed by 24.3% of respondents, most of these 24.3% choosing the product-market combination (representing 10.3% of all respondents). A small percentage, less than 1% of respondents, considered that the level of analysis included the destination, as well as the product and the market – necessary approaches in developing an overall strategic framework.

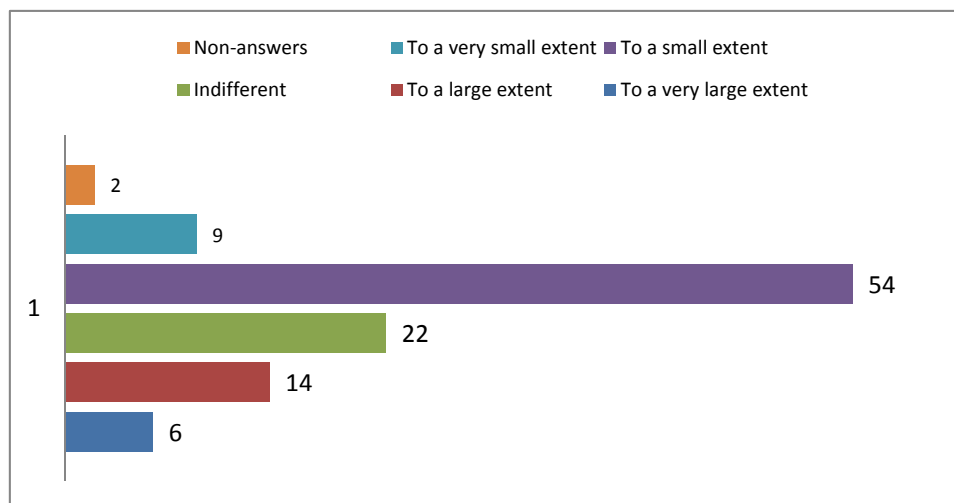
**Table 3.** The analysis level approached in the current Master Plan, according to the respondents

Analysis level	–% of total column–
Destination level	26.1
Product level	10.3
Market level	5.6
All of them	31.8
Combination	24.3
None of them	1.9

**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

Although the destination level represented the level of analysis in the Master Plan for the majority of respondents (Figure 13), 54% of them consider that the Romanian regions can be developed in terms of tourism only to a small extent, using solutions of the Master Plan.

**Figure 13.** *The degree in which Romania's regions can be developed from a touristic point of view starting from the solutions proposed in the Master Plan*



**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

The most relevant information found in the Master Plan, considered by the respondents (Table 4), belong to the area of situation analysis (83% of respondents), area to which the chapter on tourism attractions belongs, considered the best approached chapter of the Master Plan. Information on statistics, objectives, overall strategy obtained higher scores (over 70%), while the tourism products, relevant types of tourism, implementation programs and complete activities/actions obtained lower scores, under 47%.

**Table 4.** *The degree in which relevant information are included in the Master Plan*

–% of total column–

Informations	
Situation analysis	83.0
Statistical data	69.8
Objectives	89.6
General strategy	71.7
Specific strategies	47.2
Tourism products	60.4
Relevant types of tourism	74.5
Implementation program	44.3
Complete activities/actions	13.2

**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

In a marketing approach, developing the types of tourism considered as principal, on consumer segments, according to respondents, are presented as follows: seaside tourism (83.7%), as well as active tourism (55.1%), especially for the young people segment and balneotherapy tourism for senior people (94%).

Although the document proposes an approach of all age segments for this type of tourism, balneotherapy tourism has obtained 94% of the responses for the senior people (Table 5). Interestingly, the respondents answered in high proportions, that rural tourism (46.9%), “Cruises on the Danube” (42%) and conferences and exhibitions tourism (38.3%) were attended undifferentiated, this information being relevant for structures at macro level, in order to identify market segments.

**Table 5.** The degree in which the proposed tourism products have been developed until the present time, by age segments

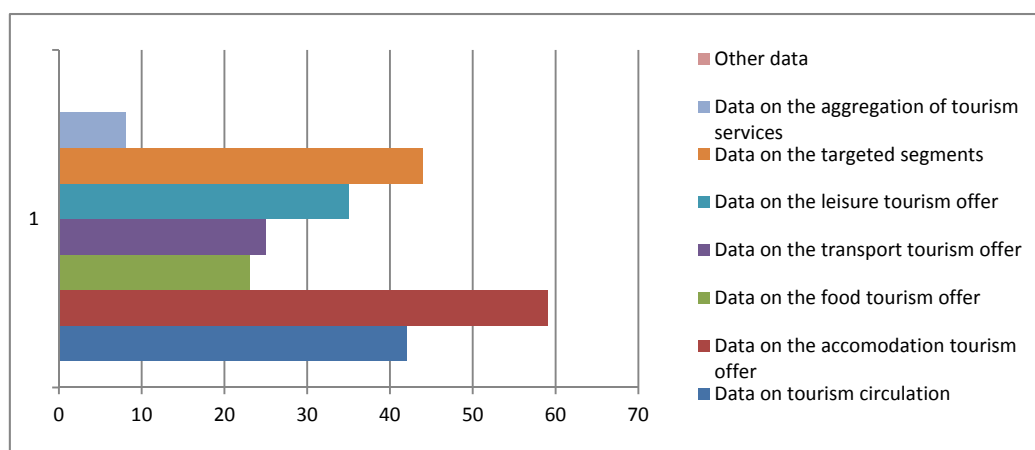
–% of total column–

	Young people	Adults	Senior people	Undifferentiated
Seaside tourism	83.7	28.6	6.0	24.7
Balneotherapy tourism	2.0	27.6	94.0	3.7
Active tourism	55.1	32.7	1.0	23.5
Rural Tourism	3.1	40.8	18.0	46.9
Cruises on the Danube	6.1	32.7	17.0	42.0
Conferences and exhibitions	2.0	55.1	5.0	38.3

**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

The key information regarding the description of tourism products is referring to the accommodation tourism offer (Figure 14), this being only one component of the tourism product (information on the food, leisure or transport offer existing data much lower rate, according to respondents). These results are expected, given the nature of a document such as the Master Plan, in which not all components of the tourism products specific to a destination should be included.

**Figure 14.** Highlighted elements in presenting tourism products



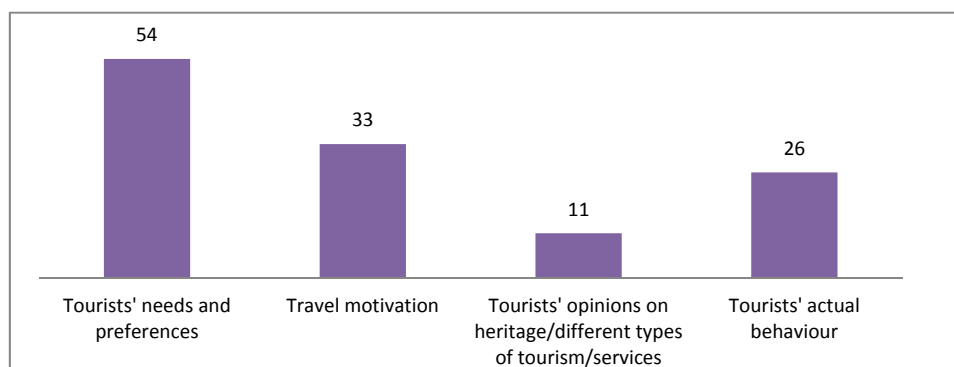
**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

For the identification of strengths (the the most correctly disseminated marketing information within the document), the respondents considered tourists' needs and preferences as the most correctly studied (54%), followed by travel motivation



(33%). Implicitly, the respondents consider that some areas of marketing, such as consumer behaviour and opinions on the heritage (Figure 15) do not fully correspond to the marketing theory.

**Figure 15.** *The most correctly disseminated marketing information within the Master Plan*



**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

The respondents' evaluation on the key priority actions, identified in the Master Plan, provides a positive result for increasing tourists' comfort (3.21), "protecting landscapes and the environment" (2.82), "enhancing the access road" (2.70) and "introducing new ways of entertainment" (2.98). (Table 6) represents actions considered by respondents not currently being tracked in the present tourism activities, achieving lower averages than 3.

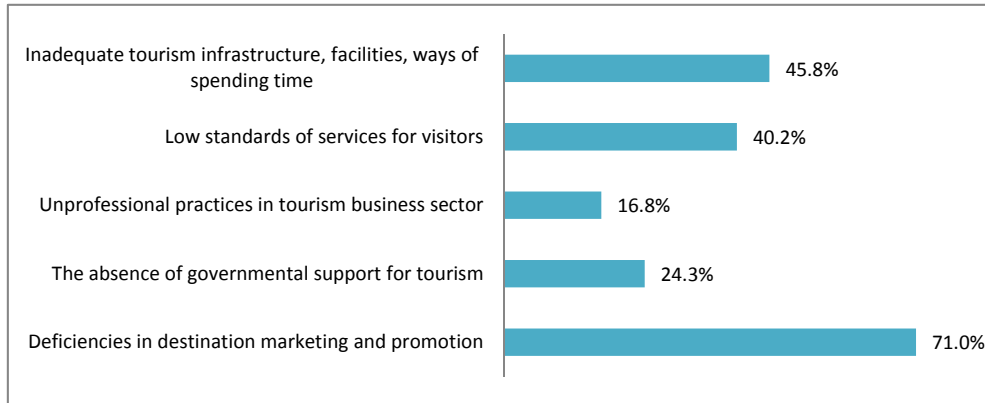
**Table 6.** *The degree in which the main priority actions are currently pursued, according to the respondents*

Priority actions	Means
Increasing tourists' comfort	3.21
Protecting landscapes and the environment	2.82
Enhancing the access road	2.70
Introducing new ways of entertainment	2.98
Other	4.75
<i>Scale: 1-5</i>	

**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

Instead, the problems identified in the Master Plan, considered to be solvable by means of it (Figure 16) largely subscribe in the area of deficiencies in destination marketing and promotion (literally takeover of the document) – 71% of respondents. However, the respondents consider other problems in document less likely to be solved (recording scores below 50%), normal situation given that once solved the problem of marketing, it entails the other components.

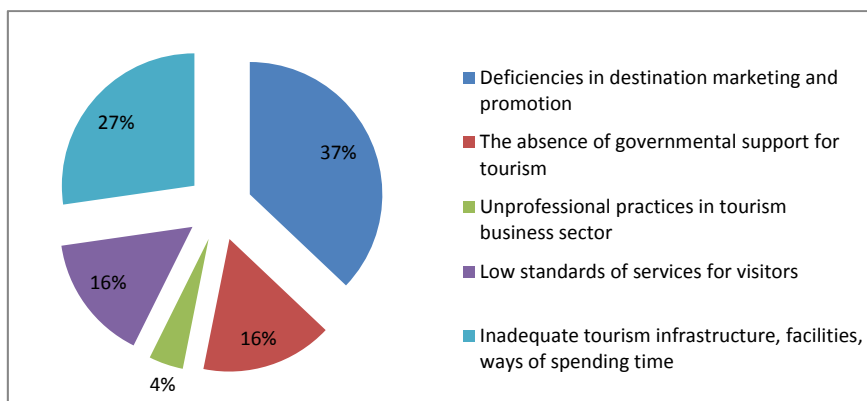
**Figure 16.** Problems identified in the Master Plan, considered to be solvable by means of it, according to the respondents



**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

Hence, the opinion of the respondents, according to which the deficiencies in destination marketing and promotion (considered as a solvable problem) are the most important (37%), with a close share to that of the other identified problems – Figure 17.

**Figure 17.** The problem considered to be the most important of the identified ones within the Master Plan



**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

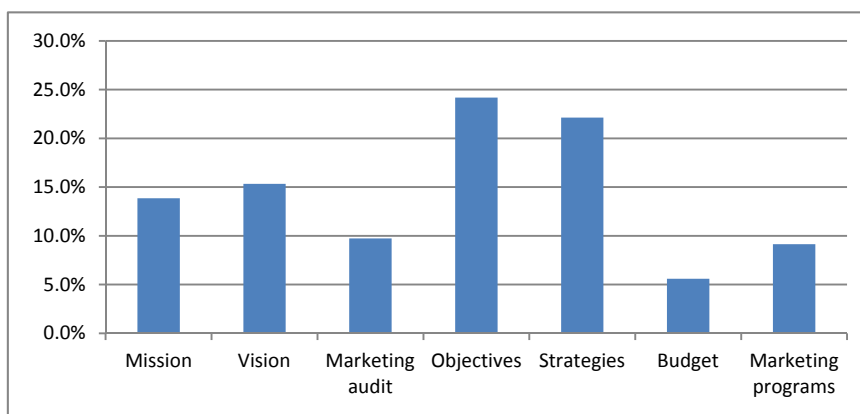
Considering the weaknesses identified in the Master Plan, none of them was considered, to a large extent, to be countered by measures proposed in the document (Table 7), all of them achieving, on a scale from 1 to 5, averages under 3.46. However, the weak point which was countered by measures proposed in the Master Plan is represented by marketing, followed by education.

**Table 7.** *The degree in which the Master Plan comprises solutions for the identified weaknesses*

<i>Weaknesses identified in the Master Plan</i>	<i>Means</i>
Public-private partnership	2.66
Market research	2.78
Integrated planning	2.80
Education	3.34
Marketing	3.46
<i>Scale: 1-5</i>	

**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

In order to analyze the studied document from a “theoretical” perspective, it was subjected to a comparison with the marketing planning process, studied by the respondents during the 3 and, respectively 4-year study in the faculty. The fact that none of the elements of marketing planning has recorded a higher score in the responses (the objectives recording a score of 24.2% and the strategies, of 22.1%), indicates that between the theory and practice of tourism marketing – strictly referring to the Master Plan, there is, according to respondents, a significant difference, the strategic document not being “overlapped” on the “skeleton” of a theoretically correct planning – Figure 18.

**Figure 18.** *Stages of marketing planning, tracked in the Master Plan by the respondents*

**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

Regarding the entity/entities which should contribute to the creation of the Master Plan, and, deeper, the competencies and abilities that should be involved in order to compile a national document, the main actors were identified, who could provide results as competitive as possible. Thus, it can be concluded that most categories obtain an insignificant score, self-contained, the highest percentages belonging to combinations between them, fact which supports the need for collaboration between specialists, within a relationship marketing vision. The option chosen by most respondents (17.8%) was, thus, a combination (Table 8),

consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Tourism, tourism professionals and representatives of the academic environment.

**Table 8.** *The entity/entities which should contribute to the creation of the Master Plan*

Entity	–% of total column–
Representatives of the Ministry of Tourism	4
Tourism professionals	10.3
Representatives of the academic environment	0.9
International specialized companies	2.8
Representatives of the Ministry of Tourism and Tourism professionals	14.0
Representatives of the Ministry of Tourism, Tourism professionals and Representatives of the academic environment	17.8
Representatives of the Ministry of Tourism, Tourism professionals, Representatives of the academic environment and National specialized companies	13.1
All the entities	5.6
Representatives of the Ministry of Tourism, Tourism professionals, Representatives of the academic environment and International specialized companies	.9
Representatives of the Ministry of Tourism, Tourism professionals and National specialized companies	8.4
Representatives of the Ministry of Tourism, Tourism professionals, National specialized companies and International specialized companies	2.8
Representatives of the Ministry of Tourism Tourism professionals and International specialized companies	3.7
Representatives of the Ministry of Tourism, Representatives of the academic environment and National specialized companies	1.9
Representatives of the Ministry of Tourism and National specialized companies	.9
Tourism professionals and Representatives of the academic environment	1.9
Tourism professionals, Representatives of the academic environment and National specialized companies	5.6
Tourism professionals, Representatives of the academic environment, National specialized companies and International specialized companies	.9
Tourism professionals and National specialized companies	.9

Entity	
Tourism professionals, National specialized companies and International specialized companies	.9
Representatives of the academic environment and National specialized companies	.9
Representatives of the academic environment, National specialized companies and International specialized companies	.9
National specialized companies and International specialized companies	.9

**Source:** statistical survey conducted by the authors.

Furthermore, with the purpose of identifying the “inside” opinions as well a qualitative research has been conducted. The first theme discussed in the in-depth interviews was the knowledge on the management and marketing perspectives which supported the Master Plan’s elaboration. Firstly, following the logic of the development process, the Master Plan has been elaborated by the National Tourism Authority and by the World Tourism Organization, with an international consultant, the teams being established by the director together with the team leader of the World Tourism Organization. The collaboration perspective was supported by all the participants, the project being developed in partnership mainly with the private tourism sector, “with absolutely all the professional associations and employers in tourism”, “travel agencies”, “hotel managers” as well as the “representatives of ministries”. The way of setting teams was established on fields, respectively, investments/economy, marketing, human resources, infrastructure, spatial planning, institutional development etc., consisting of international and national experts – representatives of the National Tourism Authority, universities. The controlling process was conducted by a World Bank expert.

The following topic was represented by specific considerations related to data analysis. Thus, data collection, mediated by the National Institute for Statistics, has been directly achieved, through meetings with organizations, central and local institutions and NGOs, but also from secondary sources, such as, “public policies developed by different ministries”, “research studies”, “local government documents”, “analysis of ADR”. It is important to mention that statistics at national and regional level have illustrated a concern of achieving a “correct image” as much as possible, however “not enough efforts related to marketing have been assumed”. Data processing was performed by team members at various levels, their presentation taking place during the meetings with each working team.

A third theme consisted in identifying the theoretical implications of the Master Plan, emphasizing the role of experience use and learning in the strategy development process. The exchange of ideas is emphasized, based on the

comprised documents and on the thorough analysis of information, achieved in a relatively short time, for such a complex process, however collaborations such as “discussions with the private sector” have facilitated the assimilation of a large amount of information in a much shorter period of time. Besides, key-elements of finalizing the Master Plan have resulted, regarding the concept of organizing the structure of work (involving tasks and attributions) and the experience of experts, required to be used in the future for similar efforts.

A fourth theme focused on the practical implications of the Master Plan, in particular on the way in which the strategy provides solutions that meet the objectives, aiming at obtaining information regarding the use of the strategy in practice by the travel agencies and local authorities. The respondents have declared the fact that this document serves local and central public authorities at a destination level. At the same time, it does not provide many solutions to the private sector, to agencies, however it highlights the fact that Romania has a much greater potential than the one they have explored. It is noted that due to the very versatile external political, economic and social environment, the private sector is mainly concerned of surviving on the market, this being far more important than “implementing some recommendations”. Also, the Master Plan had, as a practical implication, the status of starting point for developing the tourism brand strategy, as well as for ecotourism, respectively, health tourism strategies.

A final theme was represented by control and evaluation. Thus, the main topic discussed indicated the areas in need for reconsideration; assessing the level of implementation, training, investments, legislation has been mentioned as topics, emphasizing the marketing area. Given the fact that the respondents have admitted that the teams who worked for the Master Plan do not have the same composition currently, future research might focus on opinions on elaborating strategies among the current members.

### **Limits**

The limits of the current research derive from the complexity of the studied subject itself, as a strategic document developed for the tourism sector has many “stakeholders”. Since the implementation of the Master Plan could have effects for all audience categories, the opinions of each of them are necessary and could be used for its improvement. Therefore, quantitative and qualitative research is needed, with a similar purpose and among other market segments. In order to obtain a more complex image of the perceived consequences of the implementation of the Master Plan one should also periodically conduct studies and in-depth analysis within each chapter of the Master Plan.

## Conclusions

Designed to be used by different actors in the tourism market, either in the public or private environment, the Master Plan, by implementing measures, has effects for the entire population of Romania, from local communities, professional associations, non-governmental organizations to potential tourists. Through its strategic nature, general and long-term, it indicates an extremely high stake, which requires the substantiation of marketing strategies, in a planned framework, which are primarily reflected in the development of the tourism destination Romania, following that for each micro-destination in Romania quintessential solutions are found, being “marketed” in accordance with the recommendations for a “business model” that has long-term positive effects on the local community, on tourism service providers, on intermediaries, amid meeting the needs of tourists.

Although it has been stated that among the specialists who developed the Master Plan existed a good collaboration, respondents among young people believe that developing such a strategic document, that meets the Romanian tourism possibilities, can only be achieved through a close cooperation between representatives of Ministry of Tourism, tourism professionals and representatives from the academic environment, for that matter, all of these being the only ones who know in detail the country’s tourism potential, its weaknesses and its strengths.

Moreover, a series of discrepancies have been observed, between marketing theory and the way in which it has been implemented in achieving the Master Plan, especially referring to the marketing planning components, to the content of the main themes. Therefore, a collaboration covering all relevant points of view, whose materialization would lead to the development of tourism in Romania, complying with marketing requirements, should be based on “a map of skills and interests”, respecting the scientific and legislative frameworks.

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### Note

- <sup>(1)</sup> The questionnaires were completed by the students of Marketing and Commerce faculties, studying in Masters programs, of the promotion 2013/2014, within the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, whom we thank on this occasion.

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