

## THE CLUSTER CONCEPT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THERMAL SPA IN ROMANIA

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### **Abstract**

*The cluster concept is based on the idea of bringing together or interconnecting companies, suppliers and organisations from related areas, through competition and cooperation, to fulfill a common goal in order to increase growth, innovation, sustainability and superior client satisfaction.*

**Key words:** sustainable development, resources, bio-diversity, climate change, thermal waters, cluster concept, romanian tourism

### **INTRODUCTION**

The main purpose of the present paper is to bring the cluster concept to the romanian thermal spa tourism as a modern tool for its future and sustainable development.

The first study of cluster initiatives around the world was made in the "[Cluster Initiative Greenbook](#)" published by [Örjan Sölvell](#), [Christian Ketels](#) and [Göran Lindqvist](#) in 2003.

Cluster initiatives are organizations that are organized as collaborations between a different number of public and private sector actors, such as firms, government agencies and academic institutions. Whereas lobbying policymakers may be one of the cluster initiative's activities, cluster initiatives generally are involved in a broad range of activities, e.g., supply-chain development, market intelligence, services, investments from public or private partners, management training, joint projects, marketing of the region, etc.

### **MATERIAL AND METHOD**

Although the concept of clustering is mainly used in fields where *the knowledge* is the main and most valuable capital such as high-tech industries, because of its synergical feature, it can be successfully applied to other traditional economy sectors such as tourism. Therefore clustering may bring to this sector a new approach for its future and sustainable development.

Tourism is becoming more and more important for the national economies worldwide as major contributor to the national GDP. With the

increase of purchasing power in many countries the demand for tourism products and services is on a dynamic trend. But this increasing demand for tourism services requires also new and better tourism products and services from the tourism operators, but also from the cities authorities as a part of the clustering.

If the '70 and '80 the tourist need from the tourism product was only just a good accommodation, sightseeing the surroundings, today the tourist is looking for diversity and high quality and integrated services. Therefore the concept of tourist acquires new meanings and expectations from classical guided tours to active recreation, health services, business tourism to extreme tourism in the most remote places of the world. For this reason (diversification of tourist expectations and needs) the tourism services must be ready to satisfy different likes and needs. Some of the tourist want just to only enjoy the accommodation facilities all day while others want to explore different places and challenges. At the first sight or by the classical concept of tourism the two antagonistic needs or expectations seem impossible to reconcile. The new concept of clustering is the best way to combine the most unrelated tourist products or services through cooperation of all those entities related.

Although the concept of clustering in the Romanian tourism is slowly increasing, but promising, this could be one of the major key strategy for a future and sustainable development of this sector. Even we refer to the spa tourism or in general, the joining of different entities involved directly or indirectly, has to increase in order to meet the tourists needs. Even though the classical clustering, which we see in an incipient phase in the Romanian tourism, associates specifically entities in the same geographical areas, creating further links, using [IT@C](#) technologies through internet, with operators from different zones could help a better development. A starting point in tourism-clustering is to bring together as many related entities as possible in order to increase the attractiveness of the zone from landscape, natural resources to architecture, folklore, cuisine, traditional life-style, etc. One of the central point of clustering is the synergistic act of the all entities involved in the tourism process.

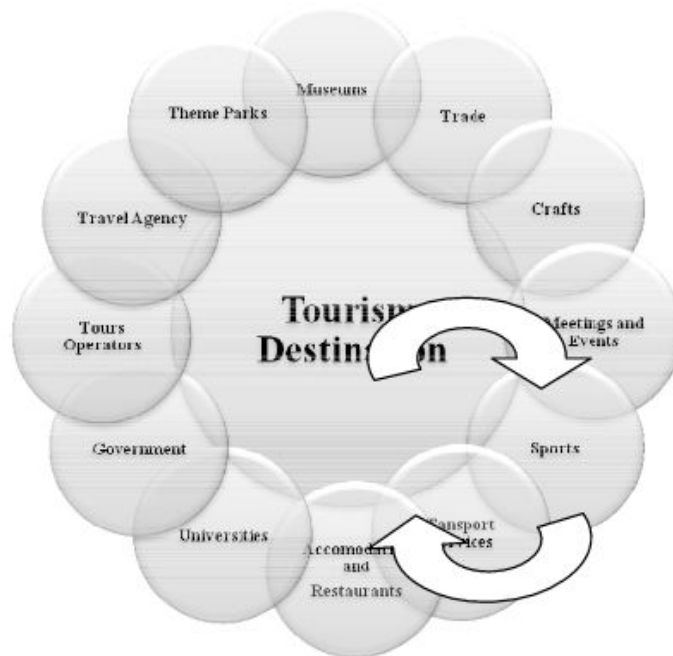
Successfully mixing the attractions of an area with a good cooperation within all the entities involved in the tourism process could result in a complete tourism product. The natural potential of an area is the starting point of clustering but its effectiveness depends and requires the existence of many elements from a good infrastructures, reliable service suppliers to a high degree of public institutions involvement.

Because of its feature, tourism is highly suitable for clustering; it involves many aspects in order to deliver a good up-to-date product, from cultural and natural attractiveness, to brand perception, accommodation

services, etc. The common actions of all the operators involved in providing the tourist services results in a higher satisfaction of the tourists needs. A cluster has a complex infrastructure, because of the different services providers, with the aim of providing a high satisfaction for the clients, but also for cutting operating costs, especially marketing which are much more less in a cluster type cooperation.

An important part in tourism-clustering is the local administration because is a strategic and legal operator. Its implication has to be active because of the turn-over that the tourism in the area could bring to the local GDP.

In the article “The Tourism Clusters Role In Regional Development: Presenting A Competitiveness Conceptual Model” authors Cristina Maria Santos Estêvão and João J. Ferreira represent the concept of tourism concept as shown in fig.1.



**Figure 1. Representation of a Tourism Cluster.**

(after Cristina Maria Santos Estêvão and João J. Ferreira  
<https://repositorio.ipcb.pt/bitstream/10400.11/1479/1>)

The tourism-cluster, as clusters in general, is defined as a concentration of related operators from a specific geographical area.

## CONCLUSIONS

Tourism is one of the major strenght of the romanian economy, but unfortunately its potential, because of the lack of implication from national and local adminstration, is far from being fully exploited. Because of it's potential growth in the local economy and because its consumed locally, the local adminstration has a major role for the development of the tourism. The tourism cluster could provide a medium and long term development of the local tourism by a competitive practices in a systematic way based on the cluster concept of cooperation and competition. For a successfull cluster in a given area is important to find the major factors that could contribute to a fully development

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