

OPINIONS ON THE ASPECTS AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF ROMANIAN TOURISM

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Abstract: I have taken this theme into discussion, because I consider it of great actuality. Thus, though it is unanimously admitted the fact that the Romanian tourism is a branch of the national economy with a huge potential, and, at official level, it is considered to be a priority domain, its performance is not satisfactory yet. Therefore, I consider it very important to identify the most relevant aspects related to the deficiencies still existing in the system and the causes generating them.

In this regard, my approach aims both at the domestic environment, which is very dynamic and where the tourist activities take place, and also at the extremely strong influence of the foreign environment, materialized by the intensification of the globalization process.

Key words: tourism, performance, infrastructure, taxation, management, accounting information, efficiency, satisfaction, accounting policies, competition, costs etc.

Jel Classification: H32; L20 ; L21; M41; Q28.

I. Introduction

During my post-Ph.D. studies, aiming at the thorough research of the directions of action for making efficient the exploitation of accounting and tax information within the Romanian tourism management, I have already published two articles on the topics – impact of the organization of accounting information on the performance in tourism and, respectively, the answer at the question whether the Romanian tourism performance is an achievable approach. In order to complete these topics, this article proposes to present a series of details which lead to the configuration of important aspects affecting the performance of the Romanian tourism.

In this purpose, I have structured the material in three sub-chapters. Thus, the first sub-chapter contains some considerations on the specific problems of the Romanian tourism, starting from the idea that the pivot centre of these problems is the interest that should be analysed through triple perspective: of the state, of the investors and of the tourists. I have also configured, in a logical scheme, a variant of the process of making the interest in the tourism, which allows the development of ample comments on this topic.

The second sub-chapter, called “Approaches Concerning the Main Aspects Affecting the Performance of the Romanian Tourism”, contains ideas and opinions related to the deficiencies still existing in this domain and some necessary solutions, all of them based on the comments related to a variant of the process of increasing incomes at budget in tourism.

My study ends with a few conclusions and suggestions related to the specific problems in discussion.

II. Literature review

The problems and particularly the controversies which are in permanent discussion may be found in a vast literature of specialty, aiming at the larger domain of the economy. In my approach, I have consulted a great many works, among which I have selected the most relevant.

Bogdan Băcanu, in his paper “Management strategic în turism” – *Strategic Management in Tourism* (Iași, 2009), presents a strategic vision on the organization and development of tourist activities, the role and place of resources, the domestic and foreign environment, the configuration of strategic decision and the strategy implementation.

Ion Ionescu and Manuela Popescu (Bucharest, 2005), in “Economia întreprinderii de turism și comerț” – *Economics of Tourism and Trade Company*, starting from the tourist services, the targets and functions of a trade and tourism company, discusses largely on the organization and activities of a service company, the strategies and evaluation of the activity of this type of company .

Emilia Gogu, in “Statistica în turism și comerț. Teorie și studii de caz” – *Statistics in Tourism and Trade. Theory and Case Studies* (Bucharest, 2009), describes the macroeconomic framework of the service development in Romania, the system of the statistic indicators used when characterising the activity of tourism and analysis methods and techniques.

Gabriela Stănciulescu and Gabriela Țigu, in “Tehnica operațiunilor de turism” – *Tourism Operations Technique* (Bucharest, 1999), presents models and titles of contracts specific to the tourism domain, the organisation and functioning of tourism agencies, as well as the techniques of recording expenses and fixing prices. It also brings into discussion the tourism products, transportation and insurance.

R. Andrei, Mihai Copețchi and Lidia Dragnea have released a “Manual de tehnici operaționale în activitatea de turism” – *Manual of Operational Techniques in the Tourism Activity* (Bucharest, 2006) where they treat the technique of the tourism operations specific to various types of operators, as well as the payment instruments and techniques in tourism.

Traian Ovidiu Calotă, in “Contabilitate. De la teorie la practica. Metoda și modelare” – *Accountancy. From Theory to Practice. Methods and Modelling* (Bucharest, 2013), speaks about the specific issues of recording and reporting the status of an economic entity the the place of accounting in obtaining the information necessary to the management body and also to third parties (tax agency, investors, creditors, clients, suppliers etc.).

Marius Ghenea, in “Antreprenoriat. Drumul de la idei către oportunități și succes în afaceri” – *Entrepreneurship. The Route from Ideas towards Opportunities and Success in Business* (Bucharest, 2011), starting from what should be known on entrepreneurship, develops the specific modalities of approaching business plan depending on opportunities, financing sources and managerial capacity .

Mintzberg H., in “Ascensiunea și declinul planificării strategice” – *Rise and Fall of the Strategic Planning* (Bucharest, 2008), analyses the models of strategic planning process, stages and elements of this process, as well as the causes of fundamental errors that occur.

Niculae Feleagă and Liliana Malciu, in “Politici și opțiuni contabile” – *Accounting Policies and Options* (Bucharest, 2002), treats accounting policies and options pleading about sincere accountancy, focusing on the conceptual framework and on the specificity of these functions, such as economic – financial transactions.

Mihai Ristea, Corina Graziella Dumitru, in “Contabilitatea rezultatului întreprinderii” – *Accounting the Company's Results* (Bucharest, 2011), focus on the specific priorities regarding the financial-accounting result, in calculating and assessing the result.

III. Scientific Contents

3.1. Considerations regarding the specific problems of the romanian tourism

Aspects related to the place and role of tourism in the national economy, as a whole, represent an always actual topic of discussion, both at official level and in mass-media. Also the problem of opportunities offered by the tourist industry is a constant issue of public comments. Therefore, we see it rising two types of directions. An official one, having as common denominator the intention to use at maximum the touristic potential, which does not always have a sufficiently strongly consolidated support, and the other one, of the consumer of tourist services, which is strictly based on the quality/price (tariff) ratio.

Starting from here, it is easy to see that the pivot centre of these specific problems in tourism is the interest, which, in our opinion, should be analysed from triple perspective.

Thus, in the first place, the state is interested in the tourism becoming a performing branch of the national economy, which would contribute in a larger manner at the achievement of the gross domestic product (GDP). In the second place, the enterprises in tourism (investors) are permanently interested in profit maximization. In the third place (but not the least), this is about tourists, those who use the services in tourism and who decide eventually. Each of these three actors materialize the measures of interest achievement, by means of specific actions. (Fig.1)

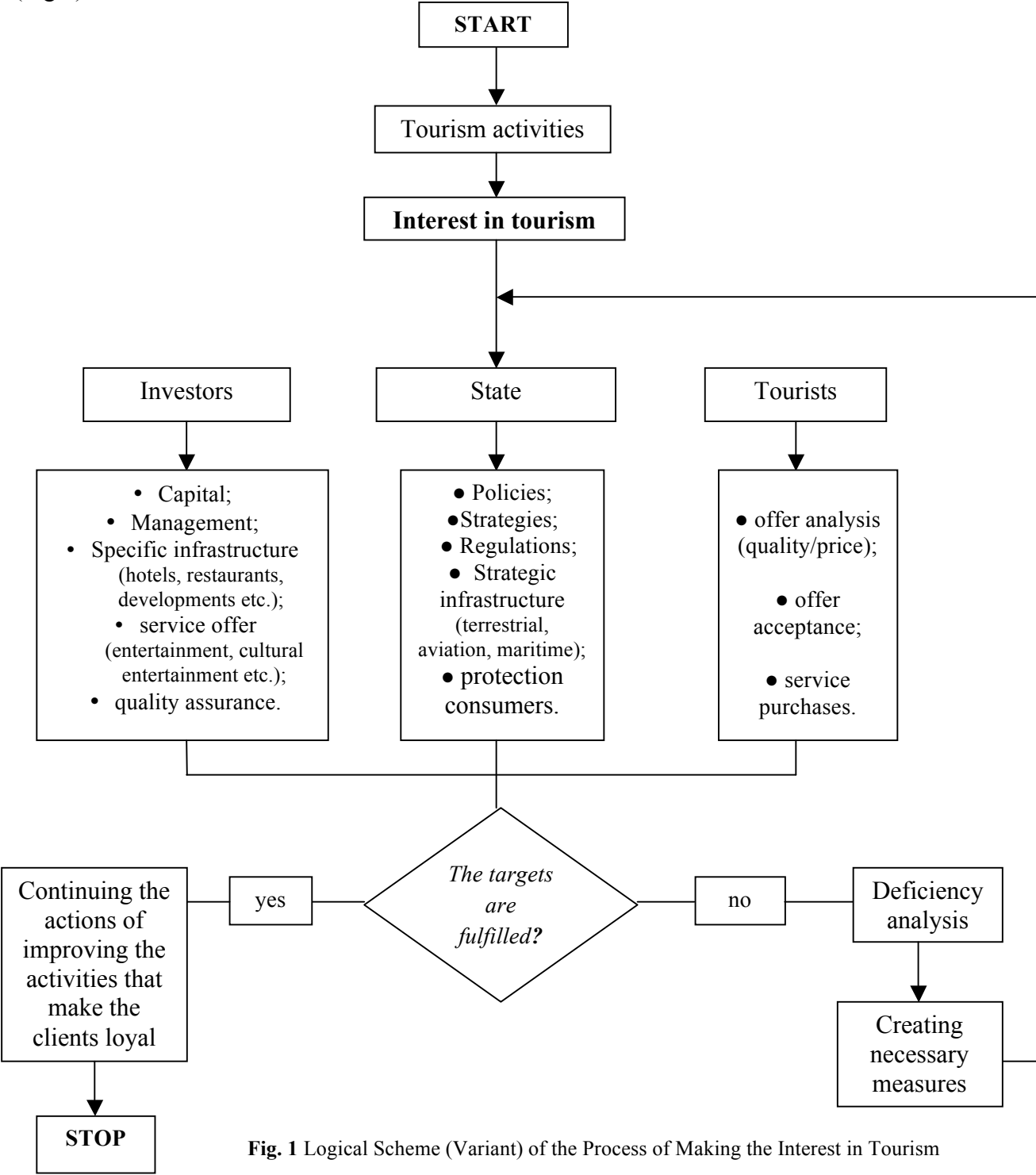


Fig. 1 Logical Scheme (Variant) of the Process of Making the Interest in Tourism

We see that the State may make its interest, mainly by drafting adequate policies that would be supported by realistic strategies, strongly consolidated, followed by providing all the conditions which would guarantee their performance. This require consistency, continuity and firmness in effective creation of the established targets, in other works, a strategic and highly efficient management. The State, also, by means of its qualified institutions, must permanently create and adapt the adequate legal framework which would contribute at the

making of interest or at obtaining as much money from tourism as possible, not only by means of coercion (restrictions, sanctions etc.) which should aim at the state of law, but also, and even in far a larger measure, by creating attractive and friendly framework, which would attract investors and tourists as well. In this regard, we refer at the facilities offered to investors (tax-related, inclusively), at providing efficient strategic infrastructure (easy access at highways, harbours, airports, railway stations, direct routes towards cities with a high potential of tourists etc.). Not in the least, we must consider an efficient protection of consumers of services in tourism.

As far as the investors are concerned, these should have enough capital in order to initiate and run (without interruptions) a tourism business, in corroboration with providing efficient and professional management, able to draft and guarantee the creation of the most efficient business plans. The existent capital, next to obtaining advantageous banking products (credits), should allow purchasing (building) and/or modernizing the necessary infrastructure (hotels, restaurants, entertainment facilities, amusement parks, means of transportation, equipment etc.) concurrently with strong training and motivation of the necessary staff.

Those mentioned so far are compulsory in order to create and provide permanent offers of services and products in tourism, which should be characterised by quality, in the first place, as this is a binding element of the process of making clients loyal and contributes at the creation (for the tourism agency) of an image of economic force, stability, seriousness and client orientation, but, it mainly represents the guarantee of performance. This means a positive response at the five forces of competition, which, in tourism, gets specific connotation (power of suppliers, power of clients, rivalry of entities, threatening of new entities, threatening of substituents) which I spoke about in the article *Impact of information organization on the performance in tourism* (2014).

We have seen so far that should mainly offer the State and the investors. Still, in my opinion, the requisite element is represented by tourists, as they are of which depends the finalization of the tourism activities. In this way, we refer at the fact that it is compulsory for a potential of tourists to exist, potential that should be configured both at local and regional and global levels. That is why policies and strategies at the level of the State and of investors must be in agreement with this very important aspect, in order to forecast business in tourism, inclusively by offering all the elements necessary to the offer analysis and, eventually, to purchasing them.

Still, the process described in Fig.1 emphasizes its dynamic character. Thus, each of the three factors under analysis fixes and follows the fulfilment of own targets. As shown above, the State tries to obtain as much income as possible at the budget, the investors wish to maximize their profit, and the tourists want to satisfy their need of vacation, amusement and entertainment in the best conditions and at the lowest prices. As a consequence, the fulfilment in good conditions of the targets by each of the three actors shall lead to the continuation of the actions of improvement of their activities, inclusively by making the tourists loyal. This is how we can explain the current of opinions among certain groups and categories of persons who prefer some touristic areas or event tourism agencies over others from Romania and abroad.

The deficiencies in fulfilling the targets by any of the three actors generate the necessity to analyse these deficiencies and to find proper measures. The State shall rethink their policies and strategies, shall act (in accordance with its powers) in order to improve the structure of the activities in tourism and also for a better protection of the tourism consumers. The investors shall analyse the opportunity of a capital contribution, shall correct the management deficiencies, and, certainly, shall modernize its own infrastructure which, eventually, shall be reflected in new improved offers. The tourists (clients), depending on the satisfaction degree over the received services and products, either shall become loyal or shall prospect other offers of other entities and from other touristic areas. In this regard, it is very well-defined the variant regarding the succession of the main activities in tourism that we present in Fig.2.

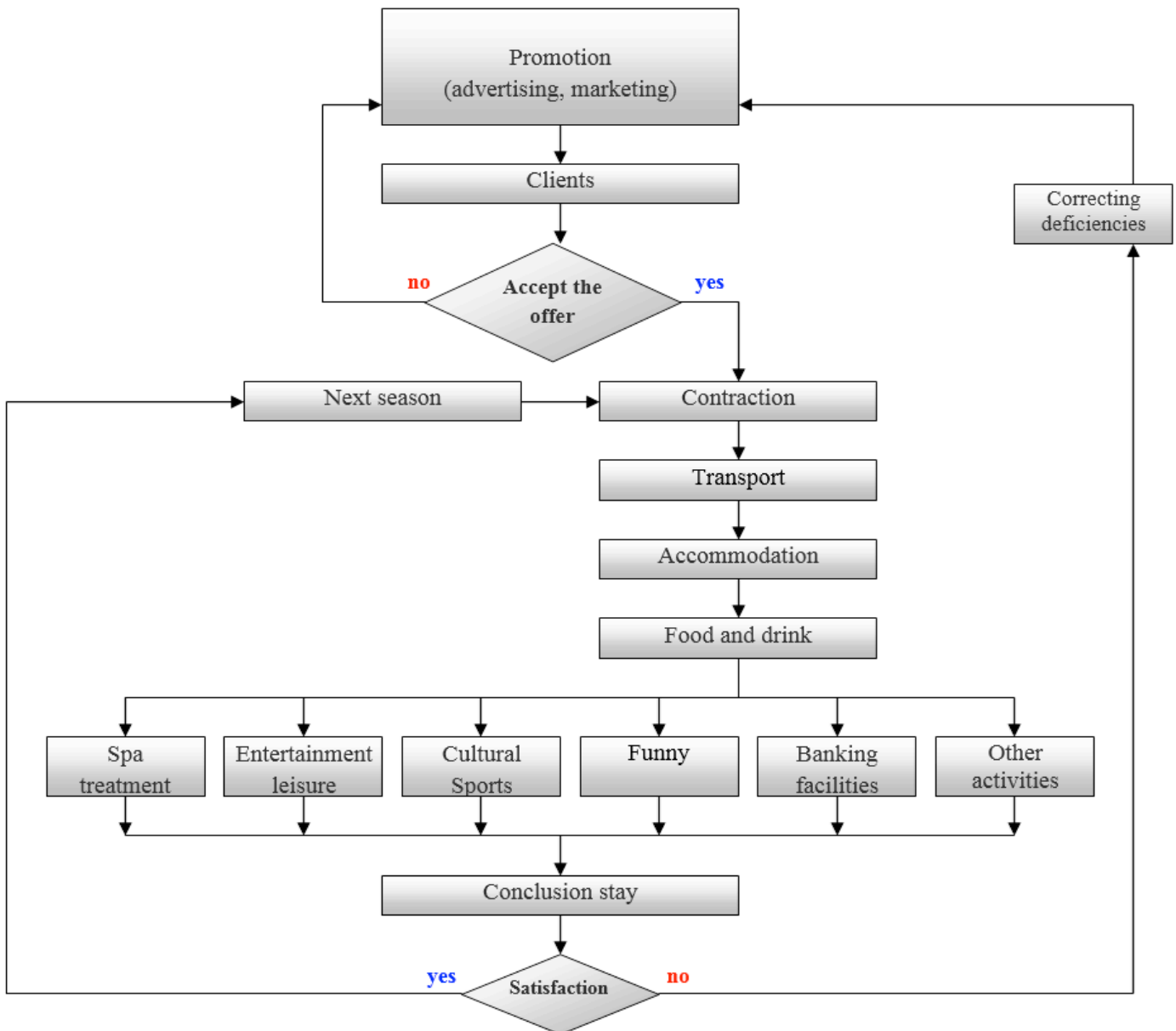


Figure 2. Option on the main sequence tourism activities (After Traian Ovidiu Calotă, Thesis of Doctorate as subject "Accounting information for management in tourism, hospitality and leisure", Bucharest, 2010, p.16)

Following those presented above, we have seen the main aspects aiming at the activity of tourism that should be considered at all the levels, starting from the strategic one (the State) and up to the client (the tourist). Still, the problems in debate should not be analysed only at national level and at regional level, European level and even global level, as tourism is one of the domains when the globalization phenomenon is very clear. That is why, we shall continue our approach, emphasizing what really happens in the Romanian tourism and we shall express our opinions on the main aspects.

3.2. Approaches Concerning the Main Aspects Affecting the Performance of the Romanian Tourism

As mentioned in the beginning, it is unanimously recognized the fact that the Romanian tourism owns an impressive potential Romania has mountains, sea, thermal waters, natural reservations, cultural and historical sites, sufficient resources of all kind and, what is very important, may exploit all the four seasons in touristic purposes. Therefore, tourism may represent for Romania an important source of achieving gross domestic product and, that is

why, all the governmental programs have considered it recently as a priority domain. Practically, such a desideratum might be the result of a process as the one configured in Fig.3.

We notice that the interest we have spoken before makes the State take measures of having the tourism developed, which must aim both at investors and as tourists. These measures must lead to the increase of the State's incomes, favouring the development of the touristic entities held by investors, and to the important increase of the number of tourists. The effects mentioned above shall materialize in the increase of the volume of the contributions of the investors at the budget, concomitantly to the economic contribution horizontally, stimulated by the increase of the number of tourists.

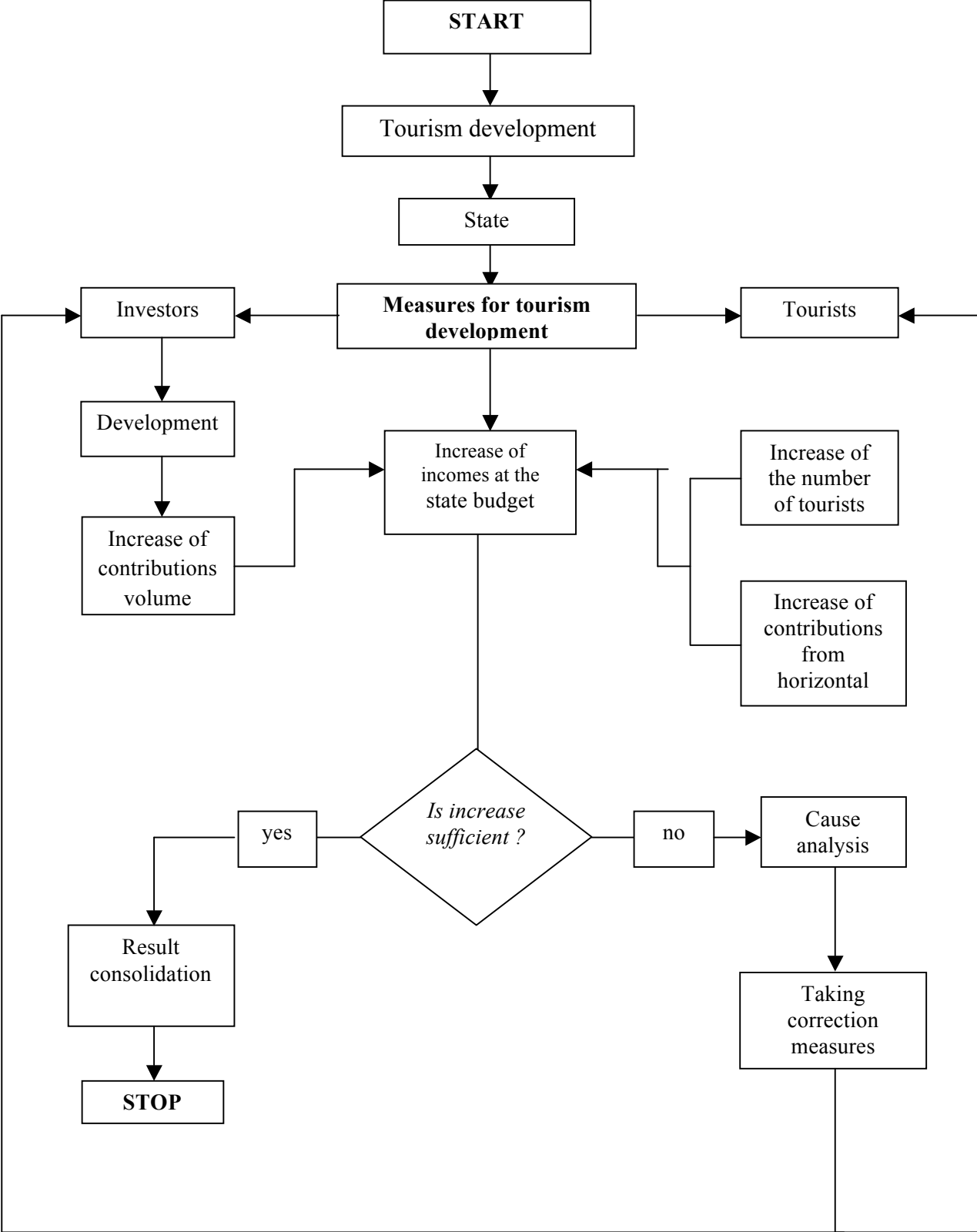


Fig.3. Logical scheme (variant) of the process of increasing incomes from tourism at the state budget.

The processes described so far, though apparently are very simple, in practice – the situation of tourism is very complex. In our opinion, this aspect is determined by a multitude of objective factors, but mainly, subjective ones. The objective factors may have a major impact in special situations, calamities, epidemics, social and/or military conflicts, economic, political crises etc. Obviously, these factors shall be the first ones to analyse when taking entrepreneurship decisions in tourism. But, generally, these manifest on limited periods of time and many of the negative effects may be prevented.

Still, in case of Romania, and not only, the major problems are, mainly, subjective, at the level of the State and of the investors. Thus, in our opinion, the first responsible for the deficiencies in the Romanian tourism is the State which, though when the Communism fell, had a unimpressive touristic infrastructure (spas and hotels, restaurants, complexes etc.), drafted and applied wrong privatization policies and strategies with the so-called investors, without a sufficient capital for maintenance and modernization . These deficiencies have been gravely accentuated by the corruption phenomenon, very largely commented by mass-media, and by public opinion, concrete responsibilities not being created for many of these even today .

Therefore, in time, very many touristic areas which are exploited only for immediate profit have degraded, phenomenon that may be also seen today (for example: Baile Herculane and, at the seaside: Venus, Saturn, Olimp etc.). Concurrently, major social mutations, characterized by fortune polarization, have led to the very huge decrease of the number of those who may afford long vacations and increased comfort.

The State, as seen in Fig.1 and Fig.3, is the one that must create and put into application clear and firm rules, not only organize and classify its tourist activities, but, in our opinion, be more coherent in preventing “friendly” measures with the investors . Thus, it shall gain a lot by attracting a larger number of investors, particularly from the category of those with representative capital , which are part of international tourist chains.

However, this is not possible due to other reasons, among which, very important is strategic infrastructure. The big investors and mainly the foreign tourists, shall not increase significantly without having airports and direct charters close to the tourist areas, and highways up to the main European corridors. Also, few measures, which lack firmness and legislative gaps as regards the protection of consumers keep quality very low in the Romanian tourism.

The second very important element in tourism performance is represented by investors, which, as shown above, must have sufficient capital, very efficient general and financial-accounting management and, not in the latest well prepared and motivated staff, certainly, all these next to highest quality tourist infrastructure. At the same time, the touristic offer still needs significant improvement of offers’ promotion and, particularly, the material support of the promises made.

Above all, the investors’ actions must be subordinated to the demand and offer law, however, for this, the State’s support is also necessary.

3.3 Conclusions and Suggestions

In my opinion, Romanian tourism performance is an important component of the national interest and, that is why, it should occupy the well-deserved place among the development policies and strategies. In this purpose, it is necessary to unify the efforts of the State and of the investors in order to create and provide optimum development conditions, to integrally achieve each one’s interest in tourism. Therefore, the configuration of policies and strategies must be the result of strong debates, where all the interested factors should take place, where political ambitions and controversies have no place.

The State must adopt urgently legal measures in order to correct whatever may be corrected from the negative effects of the actions done so far. For these, it is necessary for the tourism department from the Government to have adequate configuration, clear and self-containing procedures and responsibilities. Thus, in our opinion, when a domain, such as tourism, has a lot of problems, it should be found in a relevant position within the governmental policies and with increased competencies.

We are convinced that such an approach may create new possibilities of extending the beneficent collaboration abroad, particularly in the European area, and also at global level.

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