

THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESS TOURISM

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Abstract

In this paper, we investigated the relationship between business tourism and universities, as important factors in the development of a country's economy. Even though in Romania, business tourism takes place at a slower pace than in other European states, being at an incipient level, it represents a good opportunity for development, since it is the one of the growing and efficient component in the tourism industry, based on the income of urban hotels. Our case-study presents Suceava County having "Stefan cel Mare" University as a research pole that attracts tourists from different countries. The S.W.O.T. analysis we realized gave us the possibility to match strengths and weaknesses against the real threats and recommend some directions for the organization of impact events in the tourism sector.

Key words: *business tourism; university; sustainable development; meetings; Bucovina.*

JEL Classification: *L83, I23, I25.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, business tourism is one of the leading and most dynamically developing activities of world economy, as a successful organization or business is impossible to exist without partners, contacts, exchange of technologies and information, exhibitions, congresses, and business trips.

Business tourism is considered one of the main sources of income for the local hotel industry and for tourism in Romania. In recent years, along with the entrance on the Romanian market of the large foreign companies, the number of people who come to Romania on business purposes increased significantly. The positive effects are seen especially in Bucharest and in the big cities and, more recently, also in the resorts with important accommodation structures, equipped with conference rooms, able to host events such as conferences, seminars and workshops at a national and even international level. Of a greater importance for the transcarpathian lane is a newer form of business tourism practiced in Romania, but rapidly growing and enjoying great popularity, namely *motivation tourism* through which companies, usually private ones, organize in unique tourist areas (usually in mountainous areas) team buildings, both indoor and especially outdoor, taking advantage of the natural scenery of the destination localities (Dincă, 2013, p. 383).

Business tourism broadly concerns people traveling for purposes related to their work, more precisely, traveling with an official, commercial interest or one of another nature, as well as attending various events organized by economic enterprises or administrative bodies for their representatives (Minciu, 2004, p. 79). Although these trips can sometimes imply carrying out paid activities or activities seen as part of their job duties, they are treated as tourism, because they imply the use of the tourism facilities and consumption of some specific services. The intensification of the international relations and the economic ones reflected over time, both by increasing the demand for business trips and by the diversification of the forms it materializes in. Thus, in terms of content, which is also the most commonly used criterion for the typological demarcation of business tourism, the following can be distinguished (after Davidson and Cope, 2003, p. 3):

- *the individual business traveling* (delegations) which includes trips made by persons whose work requires traveling (eg. journalists, politicians, sales directors of multinational companies, etc.) and entails traveling long distances from home of the persons concerned;
- *the meetings and reunion tourism* includes a wide range of events, such as conferences, symposia, congresses, product launches, annual meetings, etc., which are held by companies and associations to facilitate communication with and between employees, customers, shareholders and members. Some authors consider

training seminars and teambuilding as part of this category. They can be however considered as specific forms of motivation and motivation tourism;

- *fairs and exhibitions*, known as merchant performances, are events in which sales people participate in order to present their products, and to sell them to the potential customers that participate in order to buy or get information about the exhibited products, usually, directly from the manufacturers.

- *motivation traveling*, called by some authors incentive traveling (Gheorghilas, 2008) - include those journeys - usually luxurious ones and in attractive destinations - which employees respectively customers, receive from a company as a prize for their achievements at work, individually or together with the team, respectively for the volume of products purchased, loyalty etc. They are individual or group trips, mainly for pleasure, but paid by the company, and include participants who are found to be the most discerning sub-segment of business customers towards the quality of the services. Motivation traveling began to gain momentum in our country as well and shall have as specific forms: motivational holiday or city break; teambuilding (outdoor and indoor); theme parties. In fact, although included in the wider area of business tourism, motivational tourism is distinguished by it, precisely by the coordinates that define it, that is the concept of motivation. Motivation is a topical issue in the largest companies and corporations, trying to motivate their employees or customers through various methods including through the tourism trips and includes policies and programs customized according to the target group, the results of which are intended to be obtained, etc. The motivational journey is therefore more than a business trip by its purpose, assuming unusual activities as well, entertainment in general (ex. extreme sports, horseback riding, creative cultural tourism, exotic and luxury tourism, etc.) and valuing, especially in low season, holiday destinations (ex. resorts, seaside, etc.).

In Romania, business travel is at an incipient level, but it seems to have good opportunities for development as more and more foreign companies (opening their offices and representations in Romania) and local institutions invite partners and employees from abroad to carry out receptions, talks, conferences, congresses, workshops and round-tables. That is why the number of tourist firms, hotels, transport and finance companies whose main focus is represented by services in the sphere of business tourism, is growing in Romania. They do their best to provide most comfortable conditions so that the businessman, during his journey, could be able not only to sign his contract successfully, hold speeches and visit an international exhibition, but to enjoy his journey, too.

II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BUSINESS TOURISM AND UNIVERSITIES

At the beginning of the third millennium, travel and tourism industry is, worldwide, the most dynamic sector and, at the same time, the most important generator of jobs. From an economic perspective, tourism is a major form for the recovery of national economies of those countries with important tourism resources that can be exploited properly.

The travel and tourism industry has outperformed the global economy in 2013 – growing faster than manufacturing, retail, financial services and communications. The tourism industry has reached 9,5% to world GDP through its total contribution and increased the number of jobs by five million to 265 million (World Travel and Tourism Council).

The knowledge based society is redefining the role of the university in regional and local development from the perspective of the interaction with the economic and technological environment. Thus the university not only has the function to educate, to transmit knowledge and to observe reality. It plays an important role in assuming a civic responsibility. According to the 2000 Lisbon agenda which sought to create the most competitive knowledge-based economy, the role of universities in education and training for the knowledge society is essential, the academic field occupying a primordial role in forming skills required for developing a knowledge-based society.

The relationship between universities and the economic environment is a key element in the implementation of regional development policies. Through its mission of education and scientific research, the university assumes responsibility to train specialists able to come up with innovative solutions for solving the competitiveness issues that the economic environment is facing with.

The cooperation between universities and the business environment, especially in the field of tourism, is an alternative to economic development. Through the services it provides, through its role of valorification of natural resources, but also through the significant contribution that it has in GDP formation, tourism can be considered one of the important pillars of regional development, as it helps to relieve imbalances between different regions of the country. On the other hand, the presence of a higher education institution within a region is becoming increasingly important for the sustainable development of the respective region because the university is no longer a simply beneficial element for the region in which it is situated, but also assumes a proactive role in responding to regional specific needs.

Therefore, support for large projects aiming at sustainable development is conditioned by the existence of an active partnership between the university and the other factors in the tourism industry.

The current economic context, characterized by instability and economic recession, requires taking into consideration some intervention through innovative measures for the sustainable development of a region.

In this context, the possible partnership between a university and the service providers in the tourism industry, taking into account the involvement of the public authorities, represents the solution for the implementation of an appropriate regional policy. In order to be connected to the reality of the Romanian tourism, a university may apply to projects in the field, so that the appropriate targeting of the results contribute both to assume its mission and for the development of business tourism.

In this respect, for the past 64 years, the Union of International Associations (UIA) has undertaken, for the benefit of its members, statistical studies on the preceding year's international meetings. The statistics are based on UIA systematic information collected and selected according to strict criteria over years, with the explanation of developments compared to recent years and outlining a number of trends set for the next period (www.uia.org - The Union of International Association).

Internationally, business tourism corresponds to very different areas, including the educational field that has a fairly high percentage. Thus, there are global diplomatic meetings, meetings between representatives of states, economic, commercial, scientific, educational, cultural meetings, meetings for research and development, sports, etc. The UIA Table no. 1 gives us information on the top 10 countries in the world organizers of international events that are part of the area of business tourism.

Table 1. Top international meeting countries in 2013

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of meetings</i>	<i>Percentage of all meetings</i>
1. Singapore	994	9.4%
2. USA	799	7.5
3. Korea Rep.	635	6.0
4. Japan	588	5.5
5. Belgium -tied	505	4.8
5. Spain - tied	505	4.8
6. Germany	428	4.0%
7. France	408	3.8
8. Austria	398	3.7
9. UK	349	3.3%

Sursa: Press Release June 2014 – Union of International Associations (UIA)

Locally, although it contributes to the increasing of the visibility of the institution, but also of the region to which it belongs, the organization of meetings, especially international ones, in the area of the county of Suceava, represents an opportunity, under exploited, having joint activities with the business tourism (accommodation, transfers and local transportation) but also a number of specific activities of professional meetings organization.

Component of the business tourism which completes the free tourism, meetings tourism takes place, especially in low season, in locations that provide both technical and material basis (specially equipped rooms, fitted with means of telecommunications, video and television and multiplication equipment), as well as specific services for accommodation, catering, aesthetic facilities, graphics etc.

Event tourism develops a social component arising from the need to comply with the need for training, communication and socialization. The formal exchange of views on issues of common interest is facilitated through conferences / debates / meetings offering thus the specialists and researchers the possibility to express their point of view and answer questions from an interested audience. University becomes a place of acquiring knowledge and of investigation, the place where teachers have the responsibility of disseminating knowledge by discussing and debating their investigative demarches. Universities serve multiple purposes in the development of business tourism since they provide the opportunity for social mobility, being genuine research centers in an organized environment.

Universities in Romania began to organize in recent years more and more international conferences, roundtables, meetings for communicating the results of international projects, meetings to exchange scientific and technical information, Erasmus placements, views of teaching, internships, cultural events, sports competitions, events that support the business tourism. Although these activities involve carrying out paid work, such as teaching visits within the various Erasmus projects, they are assimilated to tourism as their beneficiaries use tourist facilities consuming their specific services.

III. BUSINESS TOURISM IN THE COUNTY OF SUCEAVA - POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES THROUGH THE ROLE OF "STEFAN CEL MARE" UNIVERSITY OF SUCEAVA

The current trend for the business tourism implies meetings to be located in areas allowing alternative leisure activities through the knowledge of the natural, cultural and historical values of the respective region.

Bucovina is an attractive destination, rich in adjacent touristic packages that complement the event and business tourism, while "Stefan cel Mare" University of Suceava is a research pole that attracts foreign specialists from different fields.

As one of the most dynamic higher education institution in Romania, the "Stefan cel Mare" University of Suceava managed in the 50 years of activity to achieve quality development standards for education and research, almost at the level of the European ones. Located in a region that owns one of the last positions in the European Union regarding the GDP per inhabitant, the University has an infrastructure that provides premises both for a quality education for 10,000-12,000 students, as well as for an international level scientific research in the 48 accredited study areas. The values promoted by the university are values that do not need to be reformed, but stated through an active partnership with the economic environment, in general, and with important factors in the field of tourism, in particular.

We could say that the University is a junction between the demand and supply of tourism services. Under the name of *reunions* that take place within the university are included, both scientific events (conferences, symposia), student events (seminars, workshops), trainings, Erasmus mobilities as well as non scientific events (institutional assessments, visits of foreign delegations, meetings organized by companies in the fields of: medicine, statistics, accounting).

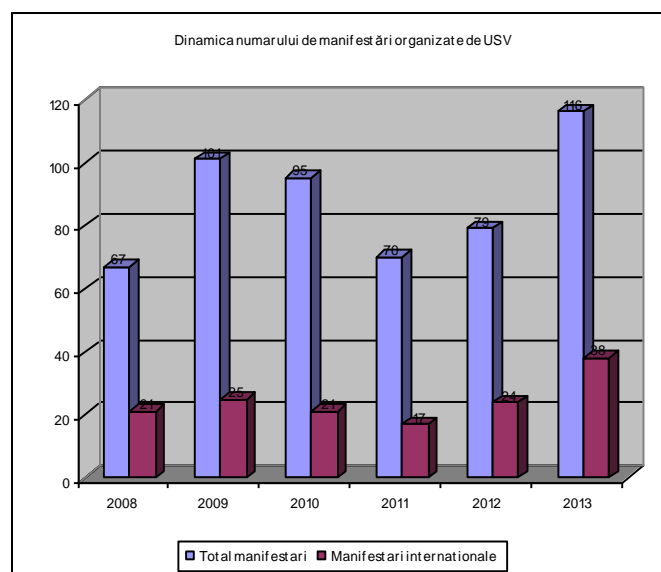
Business travelers are more demanding, less price sensitive and more concerned with the statute. They also have a particular program that must be respected. Therefore, transport services are of great importance: the used means of transport is fast, comfortable and appropriate to schedules, the punctuality and prestige of the carrier are of interest, the booking systems must be effective (Stănciulescu, 2004).

The exigency of the guests coming to scientific events organized by the university demonstrates, confers quality on this specific area of tourism, the negative consequences on the environment being smaller than in the case of classic tourism. Starting from the assumption that the requirement determines the quality, we can say that the university has the resources of intelligence and creativity, as well as necessary competence to organize specific events for the meetings tourism.

The immediate results of the organization of such meetings are reflected in the image enhancement earned by the university but also in the promotion, as a tourist destination, of the region to which it belongs. Although the number of events organized within the "Stefan cel Mare" University has seen a slight increase, the effects of economic crisis have been felt in 2011, when the number of meetings held was close to that recorded in 2008 (Chart 1).

Meetings with international character are generally the same, held annually, so their number has not changed significantly. There is a significant increase in the number of meetings that are proposed to be organized throughout this year. The international conferences organized within the university would constitute a good opportunity to show Bucovina region and promote the tourism offer in the area. However, only a third of the conferences organized included adjacent activities through which the guests have become tourists.

Graph 1. The dynamics of the events organized in USV



Graphic Source: *The University status report*

International partnerships and cooperation agreements concluded by the University "Stefan cel Mare" have as main objectives: broadening the exchange of students and teachers with partner universities, the organization of international scientific reunions, participation in collective publications (acts of colloquia, scientific journals) and transfer of technology and information. Therefore, the number of such projects undertaken by the university can be considered a relevant indicator for attracting potential foreign tourists in the Bukovina area. According to Table 2, through the implementation of the 18 projects in collaboration with universities within the European Union, from Central and Eastern Europe and other parts of the world, the University promotes cultural diversity, pursuing to enhance the capacity of international integration.

Table 2. Project carried out within the programs of education and culture of the European Union

No.	Project	Program	Applicant
1	Enhancing University Autonomy in Moldova	TEMPUS IV	Aalborg University, DK
2	Care for Public Greenery	LLP / ERASMUS - IP	Technical University of Zvolen
3	Student Support and Development Services	TEMPUS IV	Universita degli Studi Dell`Aquila
4	Using New Technology creatively and correctly in Education at school/ home/ work (UTE)	LLP/ COMENIUS REGGIO	Directorate of National Education on Aydin Providence Turcia
5	European Roma Integration Good Practice Exchange and Policy Network	LLP / Transversal Programme -	Municipality of Koprivnica - Croatia
6	Iseki Food 4: Towards the Innovation of the food chain through the modernization of Food Studies	LLP/ ERASMUS Network	University of Teramo – IT
7	Iseki Mundus 2: Internalization and Sustainability of Iseki Food Network	LLP/ ERASMUS MUNDUS	Catholic Univerity of Portugal
8	Validation of competences as pathway towards professionalization of the adult educators / Capitalizing a Valid pack: Going Europe Wide	LLP/ GRUNDTVIG – VISA	USV - FSE
9	European research development in horizons 2020	LLP / JEAN MONNET	USV – FSEAP
10	Self Smart: Self - Knowledge, personal development and adaptation to the European Labor Market	LLP / ERASMUS - IP	USV - FSEAP
11	CEEPUS network -“ Modern Trends in Education and Research on Mechanical Systems - Bridging Reliability, Quality and Tribology”	CEEPUS	University of Chemical Technology and Metallurgy - Sofia, Bulgaria
12	L’emigration feminine hautement qualifiee dans le secteur de sante roumain et bulgare vers la France: enjeux, defis et perspectives futures	AUF (Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie)	USV - (FLSC)
13	Methodologies et pratiques innovantes en didactique du fle	AUF (Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie)	USV - (FLSC)
14	Formative Training for Universities Graduates III - a multimedia approach to tourism	LLP / LEONARDO DA VINCI	University of Catania
15	Erasmus: Technical Office Management	LLP / ERASMUS	Katholieke Hogeschool Sint Lieven, Gent Belgium
16	Jean Monnet studies on European integration and Enlargement	LLP / JEAN MONNET	USV – FSEAP
17	Erasmus Institutional agreement – mobilities	LLP / ERASMUS	USV
18	The development of the teaching component of teachers debuted in pre-high school education through European experience	LLP / LEONARDO DA VINCI	USV - FSE

Source: *Report on the State of the University in 2013*

Special attention should be given to teachers and incoming students for which advantageous tourist packages must be designed so that so that the promoting of the touristic potential of Bucovina would have the expected outcome.

The organization of such tourist packages along with the research activity involves additional costs which, however, managed properly and professionally could be considered, actually as an investment in the development of the local tourism. For this goal it is required a good collaboration between the university and other service providers in the tourism industry in order to obtain an offer with the best available rates.

A S.W.O.T. analysis on the organization of meetings in the University of Suceava can draw lines of a proper development in the field of events related to various tourism activities.

S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS:**➤ STRENGTHS**

- The existence of intellectual capital in key areas for tourism development: economics, business administration, tourism, geography, etc;
- The location in an internationally recognized touristic region, easily accessible through the air links;
- The variety of the natural environment, historical and cultural heritage of the surroundings;
- The existence of adequate facilities to host such events (Auditorium "Joseph Smith" equipped with technique for translation, Aula, rooms equipped with video projector, sound systems, flip charts, wireless coverage);
- The possibility to ensure accommodation at the Șipoțel Chalet or at the hotel in Vatra Dornei intended for the Continuing Education Centre;
- Providing the transport and transfer with the vehicles in the university fleet;
- The existence of a segment of consumers of tourism of meetings consisting of teachers, researchers, delegates, students and representatives of the economic environment;
- The existence of a national strategy in the field of tourism;
- The development of cross-border cooperation projects aimed to improve and develop tourism infrastructure by increasing interest in touristic areas next to the border of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova;

➤ WEAKNESSES

- Lack of an entrepreneurial approach to business tourism;
- Research topics are focused mainly on scientific disciplines;
- Small proportion of doctoral theses focused on topics arising from university – economic environment cooperation;
- Lack of an efficient communication between the university departments (most of the teachers who organize conferences do not collaborate with colleagues from other departments);
- Lack of specialized structure for meetings tourism organization;
- Small number of rooms for the the works on sessions;
- Reduced collaboration between the university and the tourism industry factors in developing a mutually beneficial offer to be made available to the participants at the meetings;
- Low interest of media representatives to such events;
- Reduced exchange of views between the academic and professional tourism environment leads to the minimizing of touristic values existing at a local and regional level;

➤ OPPORTUNITIES

- The projects funded by the Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova;
- Promoting the educational and cultural areas relations between the "Stefan cel Mare" University of Suceava and universities from the Popular Republic of China;
- Consolidation of Romania-China relationship through the Romania-China Asian studies Club within the USV and encouraging the exchange of students and teachers between the two countries;
- Campus II project planning;
- Access to complex information that increase the level of reflexivity and responsibility for the problems faced by Romanian tourism;
- The POSDRU Project called "Project Scholarship" that is part of the priority axis "Education and professional training in support for economic growth and a knowledge-based society" in which entrepreneurial students are given the opportunity to turn their ideas into successful projects ;
- Establishing partnerships with tourism entities and further collaboration with the National Park Călimani;
- Attracting new collaborators from the country and from abroad and involving the media and local media in the promotion of the events carried out at USV such as the student competition "The accountancy profession - a successful career";
- Launching a new program of studies in the area of Events Management;
- The interest of guests to participate in other events organized by the university.

➤ THREATS

- Prolonged economic crisis may result in lack of funding necessary for the organization of such meetings;
- "Al. I. Cuza " University can be considered an element of threat due to the projects, events and initiatives that they carry out and which constitutes the point of attraction for Romanian and foreign partners;

- The lack of confidence of some potential participants concerning the performance and capability of the university teachers in organizing a certain event;
- The lack of funds allocated by USV for conferences, meetings and business meetings, as well as sponsorships which are becoming harder to obtain.

Knowledge of the strong points and the awareness of the weak points do not guarantee the success in the organization of such events, but may constitute a starting point to an approach that, well established, can become profitable. Profit is not only ensured by the participation fees, but must be completed with sponsorships. However, these sponsorships are the result of a good cooperation between the university and the various factors in the economic environment.

Fundamentals of the economic partnership between the university and the economic environment can be strengthened through the university graduates, them having an essential role in promoting the image of USV, but also in the dissemination of results regarding the quality level of the University. In this respect, it shall endeavor to permanently update the database of graduates within USV Alumni Association (founded in 2010). Many of the university graduates hold key positions in various companies which could help supporting the organization of scientific meetings by obtaining sponsorships and other services specific to business tourism. In the case of adhesion at the USV Alumni Association, the trend is decreasing, the recent graduates of the promotion of 2013 and 2014 being less interested and more undecided to join than those who completed in 2009 or 2010.

It is observed, therefore, the need to start a series of awareness activities about the role that a graduate of the university may have, while the university feedback can establish the lines of action that would find the purpose of its mission.

IV. COURSES OF ACTION TO BE FOLLOWED IN DETERMINING THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY AS A "PROMOTER" OF THE ROMANIAN TOURISM

The directions to be considered for the organization of some impact events in the tourism sector are:

- 1) *The establishment of a specialized structure in the organization of meetings and other events* composed of highly trained human resources for establishing the schedule of the event, for its promotion, for finding the financing sources and for ensuring the logistics needed for the event and its evaluation;
- 2) *Encouraging the training of specialists in the field of tourism by implementing a new specializations within the Faculty of Economic Sciences and Public Administration centered on tourism and business meetings;*
- 3) *Implementing a marketing strategy in order to maintain a favorable image of USV and strengthening the already won educational market position in the Northeast region;*
- 4) *Cooperating with other economic agents in the field of tourism in establishing a win-win integrative strategy;*
- 5) *Establishing a long-term vision* with immediate effect for both the academic community and the local community;
- 6) *Linking university visibility with the touristic offer of Bucovina;*

By outlining the main directions to be pursued by a university in order to contribute to the development of tourism, its role of cultural catalyst is also emerging. The university, through the spaces it provides, generates interest and participation not only among academics but also among other institutions organizing various cultural events (eg. conferences, summer schools, scientific sessions, symposia, festivals, instrumental and competitions creative, concerts, etc.)

For establishing an effective collaboration with the tourism industry factors, the university must play a proactive communicator, always initiating and maintaining ongoing public dialogue about the contribution which it may have in the development of business tourism.

Thus, its cultural character can be enhanced (both inward and outward) by organizing regular debates, conferences and workshops on current issues concerning business tourism with the participation of guests from the country and abroad.

The university may have a decisive impact on long-term tourism development by initiating media campaigns to promote Romanian tourism specific values, provided that the entire academic community to be involved in this process and not just a part of the teaching staff in the Department of Economics, Business Administration and Tourism.

Regarding the indicators that should be considered for engagement of all available resources in the development of business tourism, they could be:

- The number of partnerships between the university and the local and regional partners;
- The results of academic research related to regional development;
- The number of projects attracted by the university in the the field of tourism;
- The number of key companies in the field of tourism that could promote the USV brand.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Even if it was only recently that business tourism became established in both the tourism industry and in the research community in Romania, meetings are an important motivator of tourism and stand prominently in the development and of destinations such as Bucovina. To cope with the pressures and dynamics of a knowledge based economy, the university must have a great opening towards the private sector through the empowering of the entire academic community with active involvement of social outcomes.

The need for developing closer and more complex economic and social environment partnerships causes, among other things, a reflective approach for an optimal adjustment of the university mission to the requirements of the Romanian tourism market. Thus, the economic and social development, as an additional function of teaching and research, is part of the mission of a university that wants to be an entrepreneurial university. With the diminishing of funds, the university is obligated to operate in an entrepreneurial manner, and it would be recommended that profitable areas such as tourism industry to be taken into account. In this respect, we should encourage the establishing of collaboration relationships with the field of tourism factors to initiate joint projects, considering the fact that a university is able to innovate, recognize and create opportunities, to work together with different partners, to take risks and meet the challenges in the field of tourism.

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