ETHICS AND DEONTOLOGY WITHIN ROMANIAN TOURISM COMPANIES

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Abstract

Today we are facing the attempts of redefining the concept of tourism, especially in our country, since most people choose to travel to areas outside the country: Greece, Turkey, Italy, Spain, England, because they have relatives working abroad, where the costs of accommodation are lower, or they are simply not satisfied with the services provided by the accommodation units in our country. A particular aspect regarding tourism is related to ethical considerations: some people who would like to travel within our country believe that the services have hidden costs, which are not shown by the pension owners from the very beginning, especially where villages are concerned. Thus, one can say that many managers of tourism companies do not fully comply with the ethical and moral principles, which leads to the violation of the standards and norms in force.

Keywords:

tourism, ethics, company, ethical and deontological codes, professional ethics.

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Introduction

It is normal for the human individual to travel, discover new things, see the places where people from different cultures lived, etc. Whether we talk about spending leisure time or travelling for different purposes (personal or professional), or about discovering new landscapes, tourism arose from the individual’s need to relax or spend time in a pleasant way, away from the everyday activities of the daily life. Etymologically speaking, the word tourism comes from the English term “to tour”, which means to travel, or the French word “tour”, which means hiking, travelling or going outdoors. The content of the term tourism has been enriched with time and, starting with the beginning of this century, it means “a set of actions undertaken for tourism travelling”.

The most representative definition of tourism belongs to the Swiss professor W. Hunziker, PhD, who believes that “Tourism is the set of relationships and phenomena resulting from the movement and stay of people outside their residence, as long as the purpose of the stay and movement is not represented by permanent settlement or any gainful activity”.

Tourism – a way of life

Introductive notions regarding tourism

Tourism has emerged out of the need to relax, due to the increasingly more stressful everyday life. It emerged a long time ago in other developed countries of the world, and later on in our country. For example, the Greek used to travel during the Olympics; pilgrimages can also be considered tourism activities. Tourism was also practised by the inhabitants of the Roman Empire; they used to visit the thermal resorts of Italy in order to treat certain diseases, thus for curative purposes.

Even in the Middle Ages tourism had not totally disappeared; it was practised for religious purposes (pilgrimages to holy places). In most countries, the transformation of tourism into an economic and organizational activity was possible only in the second half of our century, which led to the emergence of the tertiary sector, that of providing services. Etymologically speaking, the word “tourism” comes from the English term “to tour” (to travel, to walk, to wander) and has the meaning of trip. Having been created in England, this term designates the action of travelling; it may also have derived from the
French word “tour” (travelling, going outdoors, walking or hiking); it was then taken over by most modern languages in order to express forms of travel, aimed at leisure, recreation.

Thus, the notion of tourism expresses the action of visiting certain places and major tourist attractions from a particular area, region or country. Therefore, we can say that tourism is a form of movement to another locality, area, region or country other than the locality of residence for one or more days, in order to relax, to rest or for other purposes.

**Types of tourism practised in our country**

The actual ways of practising tourism activities may vary according to certain criteria (the motivation to travel, the tourists’ place of origin, the tourism’s level of mobility, the participants' age, the moment of the demand, the population’s income, etc.) which generate a variety of forms of tourism, such as:

- littoral tourism, mountain tourism, leisure tourism, health tourism, business tourism, cultural tourism, sports tourism, gastronomic tourism, itinerant tourism, religious tourism, shopping tourism and agrotourism.

**Littoral tourism** - is a form of tourism whose motivational factors in terms of movement are the natural factors (sun, sea and sand); the tourism activities that can be practised in relation to these factors are: swimming, sunbathing, water sports, recreation and leisure (Textbook of tourism and food services - Ștefania Mihai, Carmen Ionești, Aurelia Turcescu, Florentina Costea, Valentina Capotă, 2010).

**Mountain tourism** - involves the movement to different mountain areas for recovery, rest, recreation, hiking, adventure and winter sports (Textbook of tourism and food services - Ștefania Mihai, Carmen Ionești, Aurelia Turcescu, Florentina Costea, Valentina Capotă, 2010).

**Leisure tourism** - is a form of tourism where the aim of the tourist’s movement is to participate in leisure activities practised in amusement parks, theme parks, safari parks and casinos (Textbook of tourism and food services - Ștefania Mihai, Carmen Ionești, Aurelia Turcescu, Florentina Costea, Valentina Capotă, 2010).

**Health tourism** – refers to health care through cures for treating or preventing a wide range of diseases by using the natural
factors: wellness programs, which aim at creating a state of well-being (Textbook of tourism and food services - Ştefania Mihai, Carmen Ioneşti, Aurelia Turcescu, Florentina Costea, Valentina Capotă, 2010).

Business tourism - is practised by the employees of certain companies for business purposes; it includes the participation in: congresses, symposia, meetings, trainings, business meetings, fairs and exhibitions, conferences (Textbook of tourism and food services - Ştefania Mihai, Carmen Ioneşti, Aurelia Turcescu, Florentina Costea, Valentina Capotă, 2010).

Cultural tourism is based on a cultural motivation and ensures the exploitation of the cultural sights of a city, area or country (Textbook of tourism and food services - Ştefania Mihai, Carmen Ioneşti, Aurelia Turcescu, Florentina Costea, Valentina Capotă, 2010).

Sports tourism is practised when certain sports events are organized (Textbook of tourism and food services - Ştefania Mihai, Carmen Ioneşti, Aurelia Turcescu, Florentina Costea, Valentina Capotă, 2010).

Besides these forms of tourism, there are other classification criteria, such as:
- The tourists’ place of origin: national and international tourism;
- The tourist’s level of mobility: long-stay tourism, medium-term tourism and short-term tourism; circulation tourism and transit tourism.
- Seasonality: winter tourism, summer tourism, contextual tourism;
- The means of transportation used: hiking, train tourism, road tourism, marine tourism, air tourism.
- The motivation to travel: leisure tourism, relaxation and recreation tourism, sports tourism, health tourism, shopping tourism, religious tourism, rural tourism, business tourism.
- The socio-economic characteristics of the demand: particular tourism, social tourism, business tourism.
- The characteristics of the main service: littoral tourism, mountain tourism, tourism practised in health resorts, special tourism (hunting, fishing).
- The age category: tourism for the youth, tourism for the working population, tourism for the retired.
The moment and the way of providing the services: organized tourism, unorganized tourism, semi-organized tourism.

**Tourism – a successful business**
We can say that in many developed countries such as Greece, England, Spain, Italy, Turkey, etc., practising tourism activities has become a business that is continuously growing from one year to another, which brings along great benefits for the country in question. That is why it is required to harness the natural and human tourism resources; these resources are necessary for creating the tourism products that form the tourism offer of an area or country. The way of promoting these tourism offers is also extremely important. Thus, the need for quality regarding the tourism services provided to tourists is also required.

**Ethical principles within tourism**
**Introductive notions regarding ethics**
Ethics – is a reflection of our moral beliefs and our own attitudes, through certain norms or moral principles;

Business ethics – an applied field of study belonging to ethics that regards the determination of the moral principles and the codes of ethics that govern the inter-human relations within organizations and the decisions of business men and managers.

**History and approaches to ethics**
The first approaches to ethics date back to the ancient times, more than 2400 years ago; thus, ethics is a component of the philosophical doctrines.

Socrates, who developed the theory of ethics by trying to ground the basic concepts such as good, duty, honour, virtue, honesty, Plato, his disciple and the follower of his meditation regarding the issue of ethics and Aristotle, who developed practical ethics – are resonant names in the field of philosophy and one of its disciplines - ethics.

A great contribution to the development of normative ethics belongs to Immanuel Kant, who believes ethics is based on reason, actually on practical reason, which requires certain universal moral laws.

Other notable contributions regarding morality belong to: Friedrich Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Bertrand Russell, Jean-Paul Sartre etc.
Many of the concepts and methods developed by philosophers over time are important for business ethics today. However, all the decisions are compromises between economic and social responsibility in the case of companies, or between desires and duties in the case of individuals. The moral standards of behaviour vary within the group, within the same culture.

**The need for ethics in tourism companies**

Every enterprise has a certain economic and social responsibility; this point of view is accepted by all the managers of the business world. However, this responsibility is perceived differently. As regards the economic aspect, one speaks about two approaches to ethics:

- **The classical approach** – firms exist in order to provide benefits to their owners or to reduce certain costs;
- **The socio-economic approach** - maximizing the firm’s profit is the second priority of the company, while the first one is ensuring its survival. Companies are legal entities registered in a particular country; thus, they must comply with the legal and business climate of the country where they carry out their activity. The company’s time horizon is long; therefore, it has to pursue long-term economic results and it will thus accept certain social obligations.

**Ethical principles in tourism companies**

Ethics is built based on certain principles:

- **The principle of equality before the norms**;
- **The principle of clarity and clarification of the concepts**.

**a) The principle of equality before the norms**

When we talk about equality between people, we do not refer to the intellectual, biological or aesthetic equality, but their equality before the moral principles and norms and their equality before the law, just as, in religious terms, we refer to the fact that, before God, we are all equal. For such equality to be possible, the moral principles and norms must be accessible in terms of their understanding, regardless of the person’s education level; at the same time, they must be practicable.
b) **The principle of clarity and clarification of the concepts**

In an open, pluralistic society, people can clearly determine their position regarding a moral issue and act accordingly.

Ethics studies the general standards that apply to most people during most of their lives. These features may be analyzed according to the thematic context (rights, justice and equality of opportunity for the members of disadvantaged groups: women’s rights, the rights of racial, ethnic, religious and sexual minorities). The general principles of ethics tend to overcome any differences.

Today we are facing the attempts of redefining the concept of tourism, especially in our country, since most people choose to travel to areas outside the country: Greece, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Italy, because they have relatives working abroad, where the costs of accommodation are somewhat lower. A particularly important aspect regarding tourism is related to ethical considerations: first of all, a lot of people who would like to travel within our country believe that services bare hidden costs, which are not shown by the pension owners from the very beginning, especially where villages are concerned. Thus, one can say that many managers of tourism companies do not fully comply with the ethical and moral principles, which leads to the violation of the standards and norms in force. Therefore, one can speak of professional ethics, which according to Sandu A. represent an adaptation to the specific of the profession in order to improve the professionals and ensure the beneficiaries’ interests. In almost all the fields of the social life, ethical regulations were introduced; they were institutionalized by including various ethical and deontological codes (A. Sandu, 2012). Ethical codes have been created in order to ensure the smooth development of the organization’s activity, both from the ethical, as well as the administrative perspective. They represent, in a more or less explicit way, rules to be complied with not only by the employees from the public system, but also by the employees of the tourism companies. All the employees of a tourism company must comply with certain principles and ethical and deontological codes. The need for ethics in tourism has been understood by many organizations, which have tried to promote the ethical principles in the tourist activity as well, inclusively by creating codes of ethics. The objectives outlined by these codes have often been similar to the ones that regard the development of tourism or ecotourism; however, they are important because they contribute to the
awareness of the moral issues that arise within the development and promotion of tourism and to the increase in the responsibilities of tourism managers (Gabriela Țigu, 2003).

**Responsibility towards employees:**
- Constant respect
- Employment decisions will be based on purely professional reasons such as qualification, skills, and accomplishments
- Harassment - abuses, harassment and offensive management are not allowed
- Safety and health – maintaining safety at work by complying with the safety and health rules and practices (Gabriela Țigu, 2003).

**Responsibility towards customers and consumers**
- The quality and safety of the product provided
- Sales and marketing: maintaining long-term relationships with the customers, business shall be done in a legal and ethical way, bribery and extortion are not allowed, the use of confidential information regarding customers is not allowed, and continuous concern for the company’s brand image (Gabriela Țigu, 2003).

These may be basic patterns regarding the behaviour of the employees within tourism companies; thus, the professional deontology of the worker in tourism is being outlined (Gabriela Țigu, 2003). Thus, the need for the prompt implementation of the principles of ethics and social responsibility arises.

Paraphrasing Luminita Oprea, Sandu believes that a responsible company must:
- Focus on the individuals (employees, managers)
- Build a “heritage” by integrating ethics into the learning and professional training process and by setting up processes whereby ethics is reflected within all the activities of the company;
- Put employees first, value them as the most valuable assets and the best ambassadors for the company;
- Build “wise” partnerships;
- Accurately measure the impact of its actions;
- Report the results outside the company as well, so that the information reaches all the co-interested groups. Therefore, ethics can become the basis for the improvement of the tourism activity:

Perseverance, honesty and care for the customers and the quality of the tourism services and products provided are several principles that should be complied with especially when it comes to competitiveness. Complying with the managerial principles, and the deontological and ethical codes improves the activity of the tourism company and hence its competitiveness. Social responsibility refers to the ethical behaviour within the workplace, the market or the community. In time, the constant contribution towards the society can bring benefits for the tourism companies, ensuring their long-term competitiveness (Costică Roman, Pavel Stanciu, Iulian Condratov, February 2008). When carrying out their activities, companies, particularly tourism companies, should take into consideration certain requirements imposed by the unwritten laws of common sense and by the respect for nature and humanity (Popa, Philip, 1999):

- Act so as to meet the basic values;
- Place honest contracts, which are beneficial for all the parts involved;
- Provide favourable conditions for the underprivileged social categories;
- Comply with the ethical norms when setting medium and long term goals;
- Give each interested part what they deserve (Costică Roman, Pavel Stanciu, Iulian Condratov, February 2008). The law does not always help us in such situations; it can only provide a minimum level of certain moral standards (G.Ţigău, 2003). Thus, all the organizations are required increasingly more often to turn their standards of ethical conduct public. With regard to solving the issues related to social responsibility and ethical behaviour, tourism companies will have to initiate and maintain a permanent dialogue with their staff, their clients and the government bodies. All these entail customer confidence and the ease of strengthening the relations with the external environment, thus creating what Sorin Tudor Maxim called “trust capital”. Therefore, in the context of economic
globalization, the aspects related to social responsibility and ethical issues have become major concerns for the tourism companies.

**In conclusion**, I can say that a particularly important aspect regarding tourism companies is related to ethics and deontology and therefore I believe that the subject I have tried to outline is of major importance. Whether we talk about discovering new things, new cultures, or new landscapes, tourism arose from the individual’s need to relax or spend time in a pleasant way, away from the everyday activities of the daily life. All workers in tourism and not only must comply with certain principles and ethical and deontological codes when dealing with customers. They must take account of these ethical principles in order to succeed in the national and international market. Honesty, perseverance and continuous care for the customers and the quality of the tourism services and products provided are several principles that should be complied with in order to win more customers and hence increase the tourism company’s profit and turnover.

Therefore, I believe that any company seeking to maximize their profit must first build a professional deontology.

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**Biodata**

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