

COORDINATES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN THE URBAN AREA

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Abstract: *At international level, urban tourism began to develop gradually from the '80s, nowadays being a distinct form of tourism whose importance is increasing. Thus, there were concerns about specific facilities for different categories of visitors and their harmonization with the demands of caring for the smooth functioning of urban settlements.*

By adding tourism to the local economy inventory activities of an urban area, it can be considered a catalyst and a reviving factor for strengthening urban cities especially because it represents an important source of income and it is responsible for creating thousands of jobs.

Given the need to adapt to the demands of tourists, this paper attempts to clarify some issues related to content, characteristics and influencing factors of urban tourism, but also the adoption of policies for exploitation through tourism of the specific elements of urban space and urban tourism prospects.

Keywords: *urban tourism, tourism planning, travel motivations.*

Classification JEL: *L80, L83, M31, O18*

1. Introduction

The manner in which towns are spatially organized and their historical evolution and growth stages have led to the expansion or coincidence of some architectural trends and artistic styles (Cândeia M., Bran F., 2001) which give them the status of patrimonial towns with real tourist qualities, therefore leaving their marks upon tourism as well, when we either refer to visiting the towns or only to using them as locations for other forms of tourism. Due to the fact that most tourist attractions are located in urban areas, cultural tourism is often associated with urban tourism (Richards N., 1999), since an urban cultural centre is a major element of a town's value, along with other elements such as accessibility, fiscal and human climate, stability which generate a town's competitiveness in a global economy (Van den Berg L., Van Der Borg J., Van Der Meer J., 1995).

In a very wide conception, urban tourism is spending the free time within towns for various reasons, in ways from viewing shows, visiting cultural sites to going shopping or paying visits to relatives and meeting friends (Ilies G., 2008).

2. Urban Tourism's Specific Nature

At present, specialized literature does not have a unanimously accepted definition of urban tourism, yet there are different perspectives having some common elements referring to the covering of the tourist and traveller notions on one hand and to the delimitation of an urban area on the other (Law, C. M., 1994, Page, S., 1995). Thus, it is mentioned that urban tourism refers both to tourists' movement within towns or urban areas, outside their main residence provided they stay in their destination for at least one night, and to travellers' movement in an urban area for less than 24 hours (Murphy, P.E, 1998, Page, S., 1995, Laws, E., 1991).

According to the opinions of specialists (Kotler Ph, D.Haider, I.Rein, 2004), urban tourism varies from other forms of tourism by the following two elements:

► *it takes place in towns having at least 20,000 inhabitants* and has as main feature short-term stays which according to the WTO definition mean the trips outside residence for 1-3 nights. Therefore, the only criterion for being different from the other

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forms of tourism is the demographic one, although in some countries (France, for example) the official statistics show the limit of 2,000 inhabitants in order to define an urban area;

► **the movement distance should be at least 100 km** observing the conditions regarding trips' duration and reason, also taking account of one-day trips.

Along time, the evolution of urban tourism has been influenced by a number of economic, social, demographic, juridical and technological factors. Among them, the following have had an important role in order to improve short-term stays ([Stănciulescu G.](#), 2004, Bramwell, B., Rawding, L., 1994, Hardy, S., Hart, T., Shaw, T., 1991):

→ **more and more free time** due to the gradual decrease of work time, the increase of studying duration, the retirement age which has become lower, the holidays which have grown longer etc., also due to the development of certain services that significantly contribute in reducing the time spent with chores;

→ **the increase in people's mobility** mainly due to the progress of transportation regarding higher travelling speed and lower travelling costs and also to certain social factors such as: the decrease in retirement age according to which old people's mobility diminishes, to which several facilities provided add, the increase in the number of unmarried people and families with no children;

→ **the transportation growth** registered by road and railway networks, high-speed means of transport, air transport deregulation and the openness to new destinations, the emergence of various tariffs;

→ **towns' attractiveness** equally generated by municipalities' efforts to diversify urban entertainment by rehabilitating historical centres, shopping centres, by improving the quality of urban areas through the development of general and specific infrastructure.

These factors have gradually contributed in increasing the importance of short-term stays within urban areas, a phenomenon manifested as a consequence of certain *defining features* of movements within towns (Ioniță I., 2006, Law, C. M., 1995, Loftman, P., Nevin, B. 1992):

➤ **the lack of seasonality** since urban movements take place all throughout a year irrespective of the season;

➤ **unforeseeableness** caused by the fact that decisions are often made spontaneously, without prior planning which is also encouraged by the progress in the field of information technology which gives one the opportunity to know any time the possibilities to travel and book accomodation in specific units;

➤ the short duration of trips is generated by tourists **on their own behalf and they are associated with certain events**: painting exhibitions, festivals, concerts, entertainment nights, crafts fairs etc.;

➤ **they trigger significant financial gains** as tourists spend a lot from the cultural point of view, they go shopping, have fun, which is something quite important to a town's economic growth;

➤ **they significantly influence the increase in a town's attractiveness**, the efforts made in order to promote the cultural patrimony, the hospitality, the elements of the natural and entertainment environment, thus contributing in a better image abroad and in order to attract tourist flows.

Knowing the peculiarities of the demand in urban tourism is a very hard process because of the national statistical systems that register the number of visitors in an urban area and of people's travelling motivations, they are extremely heterogenous systems which especially emphasize the stays lasting more than four days as compared to the short-term ones and occasional visits (Boniface, P., 1995, Selby, M., 2003).

3. Prospects of urban tourism

Modern society has been facing a boom of urban areas, especially since the Second World War, and town planning schools concerned with developing and modernizing urban systems have made a great step forward. Numerous architects and town planners are concerned with achieving new architectural styles in many European towns and cities, by maintaining the old historical centres along with the emerging modern districts. There is even a typology of cultural towns including the following types of urban settlements: capital cities (Paris, London, New York), historical towns/cities (Oxford, Cambridge, Venice, Canterbury), traditionally industrial towns (Bradford), culture and art towns/cities (Rome, Florence, Salonic, Avignon), renewed towns/cities (the old harbour and docks of London), etc. Some specialists believe that urban tourism can also occur in the towns known as balneary, mountain or seaside resorts where the cultural element is distinguished at secondary level.

A lot of changes have lately occurred in the structure of travelling habits and stay duration in a destination, which has led to more competition and has often been decisive to the future of tourist areas as investment efforts have become a major concern in order to bring new tourist attractions onto the market or modernize the existing ones.

Additionally, **events tourism** is **increasingly** becoming an essential constituent of all strategies to attract tourists and small-size towns have generally started to grow by launching a festival or an event to make themselves famous. These efforts are usually accompanied by tourism offices' actions with a view to make events, festivals and typical celebrations well-known on one hand and to ensure the proper infrastructure on the other (stadiums, transit systems, conference halls etc.), taking account of the fact that accessibly locating them by concentrating many attraction elements, rehabilitated areas and better services are a prerequisite in order to make a tourist destination famous.

Much progress has been seen over the last years in the market of hosting company-organized activities. In this respect, there are five activity categories that define the **market of reunions**: trade exhibitions, meetings, congresses, conferences and consumption exhibitions. Competition in the field of hosting generates a true "exponential race" with double dynamics: internal and external. Internal dynamics refers to expanding hotel capacities in order to meet potential demands in terms of meetings and commercial exhibitions. When the hotel booking level goes below 60%, more and more steps are taken to extend exhibition and conference areas as a method to increase booking levels in accomodation units.

Tourism and the market of hosting business events have always been present in local growth strategies, either benefiting or not from several options of hosting strategies to harmonize events with other types of activities within a general plan of economic growth. In this respect, a number of trends related to the sector of travel tourism can be listed (Kotler Ph, D.Haider, I.Rein, 2004, Murphy, P.E, 1998):

- towns' economic growth plans will increasingly emphasize the contribution of tourism and travel sector;
- better marketing informing will lead to a larger market segmentation, and strategic marketing and management in the field of tourism will have a more and more important role;
- travellers will more frequently combine movements on business purpose with those for personal needs, whereas their preferences will go towards cultural and recreational activities which will make host towns adopt mixed marketing;
- the high interest level in sports and recreational activities will trigger investment efforts in the rehabilitation of open spaces and recreation places.

While the competition phenomenon is growing, the decision-making factors of towns will have to pay attention to auditing the tourist areas' attraction elements and accordingly, to identifying the target-markets on one hand, classifying the prospective tourists segments and starting the elaboration of certain investment **marketing policies** (Kotler Ph, D.Haider, I.Rein, 2004) on the other, the latter meaning the allocation of funds to improve tourist infrastructure and the "set-up" of certain elements meant to attract new segments of consumers taking account of the fact that preferences to one form of tourism or another are highly variable throughout the years. On one hand, a place's attractiveness can be diminished by political instability, natural disasters, unfavourable environment factors and throngs.

Another aspect of competition in tourism is the entire process of **making an image** (Kolb, B., 2006), as tourist destinations are often strongly influenced by figurative and imaginary representations usually seen in cinemas, on TV, and sometimes heard in music. India has had an almost 50% increase in the number of tourists after the movie called "Ghandhi", the city of Atlanta has improved its image after the movie entitled "Gone with the Wind", the Australian tourism has grown based on the image of actor Paul Hogan playing in "Crocodile Dundee", the British Airways Company has hired actor Robert Morley, the city of Manchester has used the name of the "Beatles" band and Chicago is promoting its name by basketball player Michael Jordan. Thus, they all benefit from events, sports VIP's, actors, movies etc. in order to stimulate tourists' concern and to give their places a certain image. Once the image has been created, it is very hard to change. A significant example in this respect is the city of Las Vegas which is considered the "capital of vices" and whose main attraction is gambling which continues to hold 60% of the local economy. Yet, on the other hand, Las Vegas is also an important higher education city, high-technology service centre that has shortly attracted almost 90 companies in the field as well as facilities for sports, entertainment, recreation and artistic shows.

Local tourism in developed countries is increasingly based on **public-private partnerships** when planning, financing and implementing. Public authorities are concerned with clearing fields, systematization, assessing costs and making infrastructure investment, whereas granting fiscal incentives for private investment in tourism, accomplishing transit systems, taking restauration steps etc. are all undertaken by local administrations. In the countries of Eastern and Central Europe and in the developing ones, governments are those in charge with the planning and control of tourism development, as the boost of tourist activities almost entirely depends on public investment which is often inadequate. Yet, there are attempts to promote private investment by means of particular partnerships, by the property right granted to foreigners and by collective rent systems (time sharing). A good example in this respect are the resorts of Puerto Vallarta, Cancun, Ixtapa (New Mexican Rivière) by successfully combining mixed tourism investment where the state's investment in infrastructure is accompanied by the private investment in tourist endowment.

Another concern of local public bodies with renewing tourist areas is the **development of patrimony**, the preservation of places', buildings' and customs' historical background. For example, Winterset (the State of Iowa), actor John Wayne's place of birth, is visited by an average of 300,000 tourists every year, Seymour (the State of Wisconsin), the origin place of the first hamburger hosts "Hamburger Days" in August every year, and there are numberless examples of birthplaces of famous celebrities or places where historic battles were carried which thus have become important tourist attractions.

4. Conclusions

The development and advertising of tourism in urban areas must have the support of the tourism agencies and urban authorities because of their capacity of responding to expectations and increasing needs of those tourists attracted by the rich and varied objectives such as cultural, business, entertainment, shopping, sport and others. Local authorities must ensure that tourism is developed and managed so that the resulting benefits from improving facilities for keeping tourism on the competitive market do not contribute to deteriorating the urban environment, but to its improvement.

In order to do so, the development plan of the urban area emphasizes the importance of using urban marketing in creating an efficient urban economic structure and promoting the city as a center for tourism attractions. However, this does not specify any concrete action for reaching these objectives, which proves that the method of implementing urban marketing is relatively unclear. The fact that the marketing used extensively in the tourism sector is very well understood and exploited represents a promising starting point for a competitive tourist activity in the urban environment.

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