

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ATTRACTIVITY AND POPULARITY OF RURAL TOURIST DESTINATIONS

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***Abstract:** Rural tourist destinations know a multitude of forms and can say that there are as many destinations as many rural tourism types are, tourists being attracted by the natural and anthropic resources, climate, accommodation, the cost of visiting, local culture, events, facilities for carrying out specific activities at farms or businesses and not least the rural landscape. The popularity and attractiveness of rural tourist destinations can be affected by the accessibility in rural area, the cost of visiting some rural destinations, the availability of the attractions, the way of promotion and the management of the destination. The choice of a rural tourist destination must also be made according to the availability of the means of transport and their implications, the cost, time and services of the trip, the safety and security of the trip, the sustainable policies implemented in the area with rural tourism vocation.*

Key words: factors, popularity, rural tourism

INTRODUCTION

Some researchers have suggested that the definition of tourism is, conceptually, almost impossible due to the multidisciplinary nature of tourism research, the ambiguity of the terms "tourist" and "business tourism" and the overlapping of the concepts "travel", "hospitality", "recreation", "leisure" and "tourism". [1,7,9] From the aspects mentioned above, it turns out that defining the concept of tourist destination is equally impossible because some specialists define the destination as "the geographical space in which there is a cluster of tourist resources rather than a political barrier". There are thus three types of clusters of tourist resources from political perspective (Table 1.) [11,16]

Table 1

Types of clusters of tourist resources

Section of a political border	Political border	Beyond political border
French Quarter, New Orleans, USA	Gold Shore, Australia	Algarve, Portugal
Darling Harbor, Sydney, Australia	Rotorua, New Zealand	Inside Queensland, Australia
Fisherman's Dock, San Francisco, USA	Las Vegas, USA	European Alps

Source: Different authors

At the level of the European Commission, the tourist destination is defined as an area identified separately and promoted as a place of visit in which the tourist product is coordinated by one or more identifiable authorities or organizations. [2,4,8]

The World Tourism Organization defines the tourist destination as a physical space where a visitor spends at least one night. It includes tourism products as support services and attractions and tourist resources within a day's time. It has physical and administrative limits that define it:

- destination management;
- the image of the destination
- tourists' perceptions of the destination
- the competitiveness of the destination on the market. [3,5,17]

Some Romanian researchers [6,8] present the evolution of the concept of tourist destination distinguishing the following main types of tourist destinations:

- classic tourist destinations;
- natural tourist destinations;
- tourist destinations for business tourism;
- tourist destinations for short stays.

Depending on the adaptation of tourists to the tourist destination we distinguish the following types of tourists (Table 2):

Table 2

Type of tourists according to the adaptation to the tourist destination

The type of tourist	Number of tourists	Adaptation to the local destination	The impact of tourists decreases
Explorer	Very limited	It totally adapts	↓
Elite	Rarely seen	It totally adapts	
Eccentric	Unknown, but visible	It fits well	
For food, incipient	Constant flows	Seek Western comfort	
For food	Continuous influx	They expect western comfort	
Charter	Massive arrivals	Ask for Western comfort	

Source: Petroman I, 2014

The specialists in the field distinguish a variable number of categories of elements of a tourist destination:

- three elements:
 - basic elements: architecture, climate, natural conditions, geographical location, historical sites;
 - natural peripheral elements: the general environment, the surroundings, the local population;
 - peripheral elements created: food facilities, accommodation facilities, entertainment facilities, transport infrastructure, commercial services;
- four elements:
 - access roads;
 - facilities and services;
 - image;
 - points of attraction. [10,12,15]

When evaluating a tourist destination, we consider that the following elements should be analyzed:

- travel agencies;
- social attractions: culture, language, opportunities to establish social contacts, lifestyle of the local population;
- sports attractions: ice rinks, ski slopes, stadiums;
- shopping centers;
- transport equipment for access;
- infrastructure: airports, railways, bridges, ports, roads;
- old and new architectural heritage;
- cultural heritage: folklore, museums, music, theater;
- industrial heritage: elements of industrial architecture, factories, etc.;
- natural heritage: flowing waters, standing water, climate, natural parks, natural landscape, beaches, natural reserves;
- food services: bars, cafes, confectioneries, fast-food restaurants, restaurants;
- accommodation spaces: apartments, campsites, holiday homes, private houses, farms, hotels, motels, villas;
- transport to the destination: buses, airplanes, bicycles, rental cars, taxis, cable cars, chairlifts, trams, trolleybuses;

- other services: hairdresser, hairdresser, information, police, firefighters etc.[13,14]

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In this scientific paper, in order to highlight the attractiveness and popularity of some destinations, we carried out analyzes regarding the tourist flows in order to choose the destination according to the profile of the tourists visiting them, the availability of the means of transport and the implications of the infrastructure in their competitiveness on the tourism market.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Depending on the profile of tourists, the attractiveness and popularity of tourist destinations can be affected by a number of factors:

- accessibility;
- the cost of the visit;
- availability of attractions and other tourist facilities;
- political factors;
- image and promotion;
- destination management.

Depending on the profile of the tourists, the tourist destinations attract different types of tourists:

- couples;
- families;
- people traveling in business interests;
- elderly people;
- young people;
- visitors with special interests;
- visitors with specific needs.

The attractiveness and popularity of the destinations according to the profile of tourists can be higher or lower depending on the cultural, social, political and economic level of tourists, distinguishing the following categories of tourists who prefer a certain destination according to their attractiveness:

- history enthusiasts;
- passionate about local culture;
- genealogical travelers eager to know the roots;
- pilgrims;
- ecotourists;
- recreational trips;
- adventurers;
- entertainment practitioners;
- shopping tourists;
- gastronomic tourists;
- tourists seeking relaxation
- snobbish;
- interpersonal travelers.

The choice of a tourist destination is made, most of the times, depending on the availability of the means of transport and their implications:

- quality and comfort of the trip;
- the cost of the trip;
- the duration of the trip;
- services during the journey;

- the safety of the means of transport;
- travel security.

In order to remain competitive and popular, tourist destinations must adopt sustainable policies and constantly improve their management.

In order to improve the destination management and increase their attractiveness, several measures are required regarding:

- employing experts in disaster management as a result of the increase in the number of human tragedies and natural disasters caused by political instability;
- implementation of new policies regarding environmental protection and redirection of tourist flows to preserve the biodiversity of areas with high attractiveness;
- improvement of innovative advertising strategies, with changes in the consumer market;
- improving the management of the marketing of the destination;
- implementation of innovative forms of partnership.

We believe that changing the attitude of the population towards environmental factors will, in time, lead to:

- reassessment of existing tourist destinations;
- development of new destinations that apply the principles of ecotourism;
- increasing the supply of new activities in the urban environment;
- stimulating the use of sources of new resources.

The decline of tourist destinations can occur in any part of Europe where tourism has undergone a great development in the past and generally affects destinations with a certain tourist tradition.

These destinations are characterized by one or more negative tendencies:

- significant decrease of the defining elements for the popularity and previous quality of the destination;
- serious fall in the competitive success of the destination due to the failure to improve the management of the destination;
- not practicing sustainable tourism;
- increasing the tourist flows over the capacity of receiving the destination with effects on their sustainability.

CONCLUSIONS

The choice of any tourist destination according to the profile of the tourism consumers must be made according to its attractiveness and popularity created in time, the availability of the means of transport, the cost of the stay, the services offered to tourists and the policies implemented in the area with tourist vocation.

The attractiveness and popularity of a destination is influenced by a variable number of basic elements, natural peripheral elements and peripheral elements created to which the points of attraction are added, the image of the destination created in time, the access facilities and the tourist services offered.

In order to increase the attractiveness and popularity of the destinations, measures are needed to improve the management of the destination in order to reduce the tourist flows over the capacity to receive them in order to maintain a healthy environment. Measures are required to improve the marketing of the destination according to the profile of the tourism consumers and the popularity of the destination by reorienting the tourist flows to the areas with a lower popularity and which support certain tourist profiles.

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