

CONSIDERATIONS ON TOURIST MARKETING THEORY AND PRACTICE IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

Tourism marketing as a distinct field of marketing services has been and will certainly be a discipline that will be studied in greater depth by experts in this field of great interest. Tourist destinations lead a fierce battle to capture and maintain consumer interest in tourism products and services. For this reason tourist destinations and tourist entities operating in the tourism market should pay special attention to tourism marketing mix elements (product, price, distribution, promotion, people, physical evidence, processes). A key role in assessing the tourism services offered by a certain tourist destination lies with the universities that have as "task" superior human resource training in the tourism sector. This specific element of the tourism marketing mix has a key role in creating the image of tourist destinations.

Key words: *Tourism marketing, Tourism marketing definitions, Tourist destination, Tourism promotion organizations, Tourism university programs.*

JEL classification: *L83, M31*

1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing thinking has initially materialized in the trading of goods, but the spectacular development experienced in the field of services contributed to marketers' increased interest for characteristics in the field of services, including tourism. Apart from the numerous specialized works, the tourism marketing scale development is also supported by the existence of several international journals including: Annals of Tourism Research, Journal of Travel Research, Tourism and Hospitality Research, Tourism Management, Strategic Management Journal, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science etc. Among the most representative magazines at global level dealing with various aspects in the field of tourism I should mention: Journal of Tourism, Management & Marketing, Negotia, Theoretical and Applied Economics, The Young Economists Journal.

The purpose of this paper is a review of state of knowledge on tourism marketing and its role in the recovery of tourism potential as tourism marketing plays an important role in the recovery of tourism heritage of a particular tourist destinations, of a region or country, making an important contribution to the Gross Domestic Product.

1.1. Review of the specialized literature

Marketing has experienced impressive growth after World War II, becoming a scientific discipline in continuous expansion. As a result of the marketing deepening and specialization trend, tourism marketing arises as part of services marketing. As with many other fields in this case too, practice came before

theory, since the services providing companies already applied differentiated marketing approach (Ban, 2002).

In 1968, the paper *Marketing y Turismo* by G. Schellenberg is published in Spain, one of the first works dedicated to tourism marketing, and then, three years later, in 1971, in Switzerland was published the work *Marketing et tourisme* by Krippendorf J. dealing with the importance of marketing in tourism industry. It is not surprisingly the fact that the first works dedicated to tourism marketing were published in Spain, because it was one of the first countries to create a ministry aiming at analyzing information and dealing with tourism, particularly emphasizing the human resources, and having a team specialized in tourism issues, selected by competition from among university graduates (Henche, 2004).

As a distinct field of services marketing, tourism marketing has been widely analyzed by many experts including: Krippendorf Jost, Schwartz J.J. Tocquer Gérard and Zins Michel, Kovács Péter and others.

Among the most famous Romanian researchers in tourism marketing, it is worth mentioning: Nicolescu Eugeniu, Berbecaru Iulian, Stăncioiu Aurelia-Felicia, Balaure Virgil, Cătoiu Iacob, Vegheş Călin, Sabo-Bucur Mariana, and others.

Among the first works that tried to define the concept of marketing in tourism is J. Krippendorf's *Marketing et tourism*, considered to be the classic of this concept.

The Swiss author considers marketing in tourism as a systematic and co-ordinated execution of business policy by tourist undertaking whether private or state owned at local, regional, national or

international level, to achieve the optimum satisfaction of the needs of identifiable consumer groups and in doing so achieve an appropriate return (Krippendorf, 1971, p.46). This definition captures the essence of tourism marketing, which is nothing less than meeting consumer tourism needs for a profit by tourist services provider. However, the definition emphasizes the importance for carrying out systematic and coordinated activities specific to tourism, both locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

In its work, *Pour un approche marketing de la promotion touristique*, Schwartz JJ considers tourism marketing as a process of searching and obtaining the optimum market based on actual and recognized needs for the best interest of the company and consumer (Schwartz, 1984, p.1).

According to the definition above, tourism marketing is a process that can best meet both customer needs and maximization of the profit of the company providing tourism services. Another author, from the Romanian literature, Nicolescu Eugeniu in its work, *Marketing in tourism* considers that tourism marketing would be the policy promoted by the tourism enterprise or organization, which, by constantly studying present and future tourism consumption requirements, - by specific methods and techniques - aims at constantly adapting its offer to these requirements, for their best fulfilment and for achieving of a profitable business under the given market conditions (Nicolescu, 1975, p.40).

Berbecaru Iulian in his work *Modern tourism management*, defines tourism marketing as follows: tourism marketing is a management system, understood as a way to plan, direct and control activities through rational use of available resources, as a set of operations which provides scientific exploration of the market in order to adapt the tourism offer to tourists' needs and motivations (Berbecaru, 1975, p.181).

The two definitions identify the role of tourism marketing among the suppliers of tourism services, defining, at the same time, tourism marketing functions. Although the definitions provided had a very important role in defining tourism marketing, they are deemed to classify as incomplete definitions.

As a more complete definition can be regarded the one given by the Canadian specialists Tocquer Gerard and Zins Michel who provide the following definition of tourism marketing in their work *Marketing du tourism*: tourism marketing is a process in which the structure of tourism demand is anticipated and satisfied by the design of a product (service), physical distribution, establishment of the exchange value (price), communication between the tourism organization and its market, for the best interest of the company and consumers (Tocquer and Zins, 1987, p.40). This definition brings an additional aspect, offering a broader image of marketing activities the approach of the marketing mix, reported to the anticipation and fulfilment of tourism needs.

It is considered that the definitions of Romanian literature providing a comprehensive view of tourism marketing activities are:

Sabo-Bucur, Mariana in *Tourism Marketing* considers tourism marketing to be: a new perspective, a philosophy, and also a science and an art involving tourism market research as a starting point, followed by orientation, organization and exploitation of tourism activities in order to achieve higher satisfaction of consumption needs and profit maximization for the tourism company (Sabo-Bucur, 2006, p.34).

Balaure Virgil, Cătoiu Iacob and Vegheș Călin, three of the most famous Romanian researchers in the field of tourism marketing, in their work *Tourism Marketing* define the essence of tourism marketing as a managerial process by which enterprises (organizations) in the tourism industry identify actual and potential dimensions of tourism demand, communicate with demand carriers to know, assess the tourism needs and stimulate their desires, motivations and preferences for designing and adjusting the tourism offer (goods and services) for the best fulfilment of their requirements and exigencies while maximizing organizational objectives (Balaure, Cătoiu et al, 2004, p.16).

In the specialized literature many authors are concerned with identifying those features which distinguishes services marketing, the tourism marketing being part thereof, from the marketing of material goods (Vereș, 2005).

The authors Zeithaml V. A., Parasuraman A. and Berry L.L. in their work *Problems and Strategies in Services Marketing* have identified the four characteristics that define marketing services, thus formulating the so-called principle - HIPI (heterogeneity, intangibility, perishability, inseparability) (Zeithaml, Parasuraman et al, 1985).

In their paper, *Tourism Marketing*, the Romanian authors Nicolescu George, Răbontu Cecilia Irina, Surupăceanu Mugurel identify, in turn, the following features which distinguish the services provided by tourism industry from the other services: prevalence of the emotional factor in relation to the rational one in the decision of buying the tourism service, the complexity of tourism services, dependency of tourist services offered by complementary companies, influence of distribution channels used, the seasonality of tourism services (Nicolescu, Răbontu et al, 2005, pp.16-15).

1.2. Tourism marketing and tourist destinations

Tourism marketing and tourist destinations are two concepts that are closely interrelated, because without the existence of a tourist destination we can not speak of the existence of tourism marketing or a corresponding recovery of the tourist destination

without a thorough knowledge of the opportunities offered by this science.

According to the author Buhalis D. in his paper *Marketing the competitive destinations of the future*, destinations can be considered as complex networks involving a large number of co-producing agencies supplying a wide range of products and services. In author's opinion, destinations are an amalgamation of tourist products, offering consumers with an integrated experience (Buhalis, 2000, pp.97-116).

In the definition given by González Melian D. and Falcon García JM in their *Competitive potentials of tourism in destination*, destination resources are presented to be anything that is in a destination that can be used by organizations in a specific economic activity (González and Falcon, 2003, pp.720-740). According to this definition, the conclusion that any element within a particular destination can be considered a resource that can be exploited is drawn. These resources are also designated as destination capabilities by the Norwegian authors Haugland A. Sven, Ness Håvard, Grønseth Bjørn-Ove and Aarstad Jarle in the paper *Development of tourism destinations. An Integrated Multilevel Perspective* (Haugland, Sven et al, 2011, pp.268-290)

Destination capabilities, accounting for tourism potential in the opinion of Romanian authors Niță Ilie and Niță Constantin, consist of all natural and human resources which, together with infrastructure, represent the tourist offering of a destination, region or country (Niță and Niță, 2008, p.23).

In general, the natural landscape of a country or geographical area is one of the most important attraction factors, with a large share in the motivation of choosing one tourist destination or another (Balaure, Cătoiu et al, 2004, p.28).

Although the assessment of the recovery of the tourism potential is a difficult matter, Rodica Minciu says in her work *Tourism Economy*, requiring the consideration, in addition to the objective aspects also of subjective issues, difficult to quantify and express quantitatively, a conclusive picture can be obtained by comparing existing tourist attractions with tourist facilities and demand intensity. Under these conditions, most experts agree that, by using the indicators characterizing the equipment size and structure and, respectively, of the tourist traffic, the recovery extent may be largely determined. International comparisons are not irrelevant. Also, to all these elements, aspects on the diversity of tourism, structure and quality of services provided etc. could be added (Minciu, 2005, p.173)

The authors Haugland A. Sven, Ness Håvard, Grønseth Bjørn-Ove and Aarstad Jarle in their work *Development of tourism destinations. An Integrated Multilevel Perspectives*, also include the role of tourism marketing in the tourism potential recovery. These authors believe that tourist destinations should take into account the challenges in developing strategies - a distinct field of tourism marketing -

which involves a large number of firms and other actors, such as, for example local and regional authorities. (Haugland, Sven et al, 2011)

Building a tourist destination is not a simple thing because modern tourist seeks to have experiences, feelings, not to be subject of a tourist tour, a source of revenue. Success in tourism depends on counteroffer, the even temporary chance to escape from daily routine (Rotariu, 2009, p.30).

The authors Rodríguez-Díaz M. and Rodríguez-Espino T.F. consider that a major task for any tourist destination is continuing to integrate resources and competences distributed among a range of different actors and to change these settings in products and services required by customers, (Rodríguez-Díaz and Rodríguez-Espino 2008, pp.368-380) activities which also require knowledge of tourism marketing.

According to Rotariu Ilie, the concept of tourist destination can be defined as a philosophy of tourism, but a threefold philosophy: of the tourist as a subject, of local as beneficiary and of the intermediary as profiteer, but a unique philosophy, the same for all three. (Rotariu, 2009, p.31)

The increase of tourist destinations which involves diversification of the global tourism offer has as direct effect the deepening of the fight between tourist destinations, by default of the entities with a crucial role in assessing the overall tourism product. The primary objective of any tourist destination is attracting and keeping the consumer interest in tourism products and services as to the specific tourism potential (Ispas and Saraga, 2011, pp.5-12).

2. TOURISM MARKETING MIX ELEMENTS

The performance of a tourist company will depend on the one hand, on the way the tourist services provider effectively manages its resources and its patrimony, and on the other hand, on the extent to which it adapts its activity to its environment. Synthesis of such an approach will be found in how the tourism undertaking shall define its market policies and strategies and its marketing mix (Balaure, Cătoiu et al, 2004, p.260).

The deep and continuous analysis of the tourism marketing mix – both of the basics and of the specific elements - as a tool for tourism marketing theory operationalization, should be a basic feature of any entity operating in the tourism market. The deep and continuous study of the behaviour of tourist products and services consumer, is in the fact that activity without which no tourist company can provide to the most valuable part of its heritage (the tourist) an offer able to bring more value.

Tourism sector specific marketing mix consists of: product, price, distribution, promotion, people, physical evidence and processes.

Thus, the specialized literature grants very special attention, fully justified in terms of tourism marketing, to the concept of tourism product.

Shellenberg G. in his work *Marketing y Turismo*, argues that the main components of the national tourism product are: natural and human heritage of the country (geographical location, climate, landscape, scenery, various attraction specific natural elements, vegetation, flora and fauna, natural reservations and parks, cultural, artistic and historical values, language, folklore, hospitality, customs and traditions etc.), general infrastructure (general economic development, transport, trade infrastructure, municipal infrastructure, cultural infrastructure), tourism specific infrastructure (accommodation, restaurant facilities, health facilities, entertainment network, tourist transport categories, tourist information network, business of tourism consumption, travel agencies etc.), other components aiming at the institutional framework, directly or indirectly linked to tourism (Shellenberg, 1965, pp.133-134).

In turn, by tourism product Krippendorf, Jost means a bundle of tangible and intangible elements offered to consumption and which should bring some benefits to the buyer, meaning to satisfy it (Krippendorf, 1987, p.109).

According to Romanian authors, objectively, the tourism product is the heart of tourism marketing. Stăncioiu Aurelia-Felicia believes that, in fact, it consists of those benefits that the potential consumers expect. The author notes that unlike other products, tourism products developed include accessibility, climate, consumer's interaction with the service system, consumer's interaction among them and consumers' participation in its creation (Stăncioiu, 2005, pp.119-120).

Development of destinations as essential part of tourism product, is a present and important topic in tourism research. Recent studies have analyzed destination marketing based on collaboration (Wang, 2008, pp.151-166).

These studies also consider: strategic planning of the destination, (Formica and Kothari, 2008) strategic assessment of tourism destinations (Rodríguez-Díaz and Rodríguez-Espino, 2008) cooperation between competitors among hotels (von Friderichs and Gummesson, 2006), competitiveness of the destination (Mazanec, Wöber et al, 2007) and the image of the destination (Grovers, Go et al, 2007).

In these studies, particular attention is granted to the tourist destination image considered by Tocquer Gerard and Zins Michel as a basic element of the tourism product (Tocquer and Zins, 1987).

In the Romanian specialized literature, Postelnicu George, in *Tourism Economy*, states the following principles according to which tourist image shall be designed (Postelnicu, 1997):

- Must be visible, using intelligent forms of expression and well selected arguments;

- Must be noted, to arise interest;
- Must be clear, easily understood and retained.

Sabo-Bucur Mariana in her work *Tourism Marketing* argues that besides the product, price falls between fundamentals of tourism marketing policy. It is a particular variable of the mix, being neither a purely endogenous variable, which is at the discretion of tourist business, nor a totally foreign (exogenous) element (Sabo-Bucur, 2006, p.199).

Providing an appropriate tourism product, properly priced through an appropriate distribution channel is extremely important in the exploitation of tourism potential but the three mentioned elements of the marketing mix are insufficient to ensure proper sales of tourism product.

It also requires information of tourism customer on the tourism product offered. This can be achieved through a variety of ways and means, among the most important being: oral or written, visual or auditory, direct or indirect information (Lanquar and Hollier, 1993).

The promotional tools used in tourism include: advertisement, advertising (free), sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, fairs and exhibitions etc.

Tourism product can not be "seen", "tried", possibly checked before being bought, as with the other products. Therefore, tourism promotion activities should aim at creating a fully accurate picture, providing a clear and accurate description of the product offered its price and in terms of conditions of stay information (Niță and Niță, 2008, p.234).

Lewis and Chambers argue that word of mouth marketing is the most powerful form of communication in this regard (Lewis and Chambers, 2000).

Nedelea Alexandru in the work *Marketing policies in tourism* believes that a local tourism company to be successful in promotion must be: more creative and spectacular, limited to an essential publicity message, to repeat the advertisement (frequency is essential) and to use images (Nedelea, 2003).

A very good tourism image, but unsupported by quality services, and adequate material resources, is unnecessary and costly (Ban, 2007, p.304).

Tourism is a sector whose staff has a decisive influence on the perception of tourism product quality.

The specificity of tourist services is also reflected in the marketing mix applied in this sector. The first part of the extended marketing mix consist of the people as tourist activities involve besides the presence of natural and human and equipment potential, human resources existence, of the factor that actually provides the functionality of other components of the offer. The role of this factor grows with the increasing demands of consumers to services quality due to new developments in tourism. Therefore, initiation and successful development of

tourism activities within firms greatly depend on the extent to which human factor is understood, motivated and coordinated (Minciu, 2010, p.143).

Physical evidence also has a major impact on the assessment of the quality of purchased tourism services by tourism products consumers.

Processes, another element of the marketing mix specific to tourism marketing, are all methods, mechanisms, activities specific to tourist field that are meant to "distribute" the tourism service (Vereş, 2005, p.47).

3. CONCLUSIONS

Marketing contribution to the recovery of tourism potential manifests mainly in the form of its specialized form, as tourism marketing.

In the recovery of the tourism potential of a destination both international and national organizations play an important role. Among the best known international organizations that have a positive influence on the recovery of the tourism potential of a region there is: the World Tourism Organization, European Travel Commission, the International Association for Promotion of Danube Tourism, World Travel & Tourism Council. In Romania as national organizations there are: Association of Romanian Mountain Guides, National Association of Travel Agencies, National Association of Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism (ANTREC), Romanian Hotel Industry Federation (FIHR), Romanian Tourism Employers' Federation (FPTR). Staff in the tourism

industry also plays a significant role in the recovery of tourism potential. The educational offer in Romania is based on the current role that tourism plays everywhere. Tourism specific specializations are present both at high school level, colleges and university level.

Among top universities providing upper level training for tourism in Romania there are: Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Transylvania University of Braşov, Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies, West University of Timisoara, Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, 1 December 1918 University of Alba Iulia.

In faculties the educational programs are focused on theoretical and practical knowledge that the tourism specific activities require. Emphasizes is made on learning foreign languages, given the importance of such knowledge in this field of great importance for the economy. The knowledge fund achieved by licensed graduates in tourism and services field is intended to be comparable to that of graduates in the same specialization at universities in the European Union. Graduates are able to continue their studies within master programs and doctoral schools, to perfect their skills in tourism.

In conclusion, tourism marketing contribution to the recovery of tourism potential is manifested only when philosophy or marketing concept is assimilated and embodied by each of the entities acting in the field of tourism, when marketing becomes the determining factor for the orientation of the entire activity.

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