

GUIDELINES OF TOURISM GROWTH IN URBAN AREAS

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Abstract: Along time, towns have proven to be landmarks in travelling, meaning that either their endowment has been used as halt places during travels, or by the architecture of their buildings and assemblies, monuments, sculptures and bas-reliefs which have been used to decorate squares, public and private places, elements of decorative art, landscape painting, whereas the attractions they shelter have themselves proven to be some highly appreciated tourist destinations. Towns' growth and modernization on one hand and the manifold of their supplies on the other have led along time to the emergence of a typical tourism form which is urban tourism. Along with travels' increase, this form of tourism has acquired more and more substance, as it now benefits from the features of a distinct form of travelling with very diverse motivations. Taking account of the need to adapt towns to tourists' demands, this paper attempts to clarify certain aspects related to the contents, specificity and materialization ways of urban tourism as well as to adopt certain policies regarding the tourist valuation of elements specific to urban areas and the prospects of urban tourism.

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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 (Ilieş 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 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 accommodation 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. Ways to materialize urban tourism

As far as travelling motivations are concerned, the highest share belongs to cultural tourism and urban entertainment (almost 40%), followed by meetings with the family and friends (30%), business and professional reasons (10-15%), along with gastronomical visits, shopping, participation in events (Van den Berg L., Van Der Borg J., Van Der Meer J., 1995). By analyzing visitors' behaviour in towns, the following specific forms of urban tourism have been identified (Grofu M., 2005):

1. Cultural tourism means travelling that refers to:

- *visiting sights belonging to the historical patrimony* (archaeological and historical vestiges, monuments, castles, religious buildings, parks and gardens etc.);
- *visiting museums* (typical of archaeology, history, natural sciences, picture galleries, botanical gardens, zoological parks etc.);
- *participating in cultural events* (opera and ballet shows, drama, festivals of music, dancing, films, traditional holidays etc.);
- *industrial and technical tourism* (visiting economic sights, specific buildings, urban architectural assemblies etc.).

Surveys show that the tourists paying their first visit in a town are concerned with the historical monuments, museums, districts presented in tourist guides as opposed to those who come again and generally prefer walking in the parks, viewing cultural entertainment in the open, going to less known places, thus trying to integrate into the town inhabitants' cultural life (Chang, T. C., Milne, S., Fallon, D., Pohlmann, C., 1996).

2. Entertainment tourism also has a significant share in the movement towards urban areas as amusement parks are highly appreciated by tourists among entertainment means. If one takes account of the best tourist destinations at world level from the perspective of visitors' number, 12 amusement parks are among the first 25 destinations in 2007. According to a survey of IAAPA (The International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions), tourists prefer to spend more and more free time in entertainment assemblies, amusement parks, at carnivals, traditional manifestations, religious feasts, which are equally seen as ways to spend one's leisure in an urban area (www.iaapa.org).

3. Business tourism and professional activities refer to congresses, colloquies, seminars, fairs, conferences, exhibitions, reunions, meetings with business partners, training classes etc. Businesses generally prefer high-quality services, visiting commercial centres and traditional entertainment places; unlike them, participants in congresses and reunions are interested in walking through historical centres, visiting museums, exhibitions, they have intellectual concerns generally speaking. Business tourism currently comprises around 20% of total foreign travels and almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of total tourism revenues, with different values from one country to another, according to tourist equipment and the general level of economic growth.

As far as business travels' typology is concerned, their structure comprises (Davidson R, 1994):

- *general business tourism* referring to the activity of people working outside their regular workplace (delegations);
- *reunions and meetings* (meetings, conferences, symposia, colloquies, congresses);
- *fairs and exhibitions, incentive-trips* provided to a certain category of employees as a reward for their professional activity results.

According to international statistics, most congresses and reunions take place in Europe where around 60% of such actions occur, and a ranking by countries indicate the USA as a leader, followed by France, Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Spain and Japan.

The success of such events depends both on the organizational ability of specialized bodies in the host country, and on the development level of the respective national economy. Due to the versatile role of fairs and exhibitions, organizers permanently look for solutions to attract as many visitors and exhibitors as possible as there is more and more concern with manifestations that bring novelties in one field or another and with the set-up of new exhibition and business centres. In this context, "meetings at sea" as business cruises or the concept of "*boardinghouse*" (a combination between a hotel room and a study room) are novelties in this field.

4. Sports tourism is also an important motivation for urban tourist movement since most opportunities in the sports field are provided by events such as olympiads, tennis tours, world championships which except their cultural and educational goal generate significant financial flows and mean a strong incentive for the development of towns' economies where such events are held.

5. Going shopping is seen by some specialists as an important source generating financial revenues and is usually done in the large commercial centres located either downtown, or in a town's outskirts. Including shoppers in the urban tourism scope is not so much accepted by most specialists, because controversies are related to the difficulty in dividing tourists' flows from town inhabitants' and there is no possibility to quantify the amount of commercial services and goods purchased by tourists.

Generally speaking, the concern with shopping is also joined by the desire to have fun, that is why many commercial centres provide amusement services. Large multifunctional commercial centres have been real attractions in an urban area ever since the 80's by comprising commercial, sports, food, accomodation, entertainment etc. services in the same area.

6. Gastronomical holidays are duly planned and their organization supposes consulting certain specialists in the culinary field and aim at the participation in several gastronomical events, wine tasting, exhibitions etc.

7. Visits to relatives and friends are characterized by a longer stay duration in a town (4-5 days) and are paid twice, three times a year. Still in this category there are trips on family purposes which do not mean tourist consumption and usually refer to family members' movement to various towns when they live apart or to old people's visits (especially grandparents'), during which they prefer open spaces and quiet places to rest and relax.

The delimitation of these constituents in urban tourism along with town travelling reasons have been made possible subsequent to a favourable economic and social context referring to the improvement of transportation means and, accordingly, of urban area accessibility, the diversity of tourist product and service supply, the proportion of cultural, sports and business events.

In this context, the countries where urban cultural centres are located must set up and apply policies for the tourist valuation of existing cultural assets, policies oriented towards developing the main constituents of tourist products provided, namely (Ioniță I., 2006):

- ▶ **the development of internal and external transport types** ensuring easy movement, of which public means of transport are very widely recommended as they are less polluting; thus, there have been actions to support the increase in the number of taxis, rent cars, the expansion of pedestrian areas or small shopping centres;
- ▶ **the endowment with accomodation equipment and services** by diversifying luxury hotels, certain hotel networks, equipment for young and low-income people's accomodation;
- ▶ **the improvement of public food and gastronomy equipment** with a strong emphasis upon quick serving and traditional restaurants;
- ▶ **the provision of proper public services** accompanying the tourist ones: urban hygiene services, security services ensured by firefighters, police, medical emergency;
- ▶ **the set-up of multicultural centres** with multiple information opportunities for visitors; such centres can help set up programmes of tourist development and preservation of historical monuments with the purpose to durably value the latter (Davidson, R., Maitland, R., 1999);

- ▶ ***the support of cultural initiatives*** which include shows, festivals, short-term exhibitions and increase the stay duration in towns, as their amusement is to be found in district traditional manifestations, religious celebrations, open air theatre, evening walks;
- ▶ ***the research of tourist clientele*** which gets more and more importance as it gives the development and promotion dimensions of cultural tourist products; thus, along with visitors concerned with cultural sights, there are business clients who can in turn benefit from town cultural activities; continuously keeping and improving the relationships and collaborations with local public management – prefectures and town halls – with the aim to ensure good-quality urban services in the benefit of tourists and not only.

It is very important to mention herein the concerns of the World Commission for Culture and Development set up by the UNESCO and ONU in 1992 which includes specialists aiming at contributing in better cultural relations among countries, a richer universal cultural and historical patrimony by a number of actions decided at the Intergovernmental Conference of Stockholm on cultural policies (Selby, M., 2003, Van den Berg L., Van Der Borg J., Van Der Meer J., 1995): *developing the relations among various cultural and regional bodies, creating a data base regarding the cultural policies belonging to various nations; providing intellectual assistance with a view to make up cultural development policies and programmes, supporting national and regional training workshops regarding the management and administration of cultural institutions etc.*

4. 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 music¹.

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 administrations². 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)³.

Another concern of local public bodies with renewing tourist areas is the **development of patrimony**, the preservation of places', buildings' and customs' historical background⁴.

5. Conclusions

Identifying the prospective target-markets involves some additional considerations related to the type of local attractions and activities and of the development objectives in an urban community. Knowing the geographic location of a target-market is important if one takes account of the transportation possibilities and the travel cost up to the destination. Additionally, there should be an analysis of the demographic and behavioral features of market segments. These include travel reasons, target groups' value systems, their specific interests, age, sex, marital status, education, income level and occupation.

Tourist and accomodation service marketing will have to be integrated into the other urban marketing strategies, attracting economic agents by means of integrated marketing policies leading to attracting the tourists who travel on business purposes as well as promoting the respective destination as a placement of a company or a company constitutive unit. Thus, by harmoniously integrating marketing strategies with the other development actions, there will successfully be a place's image and the conveyance of proper messages.

Footnotes:

- ¹ 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.
- ² 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.
- ³ 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.
- ⁴ 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.

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