

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TOURISM PRODUCT

Silvia MUHCINĂ, Associate Professor, Ph. D.
“Ovidius” University of Constanța

Key words: tourism, product, characteristics

Abstract: Because of its complex structure, the tourism product has some specifically characteristics. Incorporating into its structure more categories of elements (environmental and human activity results' elements, that constitute tourism attractions, as well as specifically services suppliers), those characteristics represent cumulated features of its componentally elements.

As a marketing-mix basic' component, tourism product policy refers to product scale' management of dimensions, structure and evolution of its products or services composed elements.

Tourist services suppliers, tour operators, travel agencies follows some specify objectives concerning product policy.

The product' strategies must be accorded with there's own resources and the market trends and can be materialized by operational marketing' instruments.

In tourism, the product policy' content is determined by some specifically factors (Krippendorf, 1971):

- Natural factors (natural relief, climate, flora, fauna etc.);
- Human' existence general factors (socio-cultural factors);
- General infrastructure;
- Tourism equipments.

The tourism industry incorporates many different sectors, including transport (airlines, airports, cruise ships, train operators, ferry operators, car hire firms), destination management organizations (tourism offices, tourist information centers, public sector destination marketing organizations etc.), tourism products producers and distributors (tour operators, travel agencies), accommodation and food suppliers (chain and independent hotels, restaurants, fast-foods etc.), attractions (fair-parks, historic buildings, museums etc.).

As an economic process and phenomena, in an integrated conception, the tourism product is approached in a system vision, like tourism resources (tourism patrimony) and services associations or interdependences result (Snak, 1975, pp. 338; Barbu, etal, 1981, pp. 26,90; Bran, etal, 1998, pp 67).

The patrimony is the physical base frame and materialized it into the tourism products by basic tourism services supplied (accommodation, food & beverage, transport, leisure), supplementary or complementary services (organization and travel trade services, some entertainment services etc.).

On there's turn, the tourism attractions can be naturals (elements of natural or physic environment) or human existence, experience or action results (anthrop resources).

As tourism product' components, they can be assembled in various ways or tourism sub mixes, as to give tourists the maximum satisfaction.

As tourism product' components, they can be assembled in various ways or tourism sub mixes, as to give tourists the maximum satisfaction.

On some specialists' opinion (Tocquer, etal, 1999, pp. 157), the tourism product is composed by more specify elements which interaction allows to this assembly-product to offer satisfactions and benefits on market-share.

The elements that compose this assembly are the following:

- Basic constitutive elements (landscapes, climate, settlements, historical sits and buildings etc.);
- Proximity environment' elements (near landscape which can have a positive or a negative influence on attraction' interest level);
- Local population (that can influence tourists' perception by attitude, way of life, culture etc.);
- Entertainment and ambience;
- Leisure equipments (golf, yachting, riding horses etc.);
- Accommodation, bad & breakfast, food & beverage and commercial network (hotels, guest houses, fast foods and restaurants, shops etc.);
- Transport infrastructure;
- Product's image (tourists perception about the destination –exotic, cultural, night life etc.).

Other marketing specialists consider that tourism product' structure content (Balaure, etal, 2005, pp. 268-270):

- Tangible or material elements (which represent the tourism attraction support) like: natural and anthropol resources, general area infrastructure, tourist equipments;
- Intangible or immaterial elements (basic and supplementary tourism services);
- Marketing communication about the tourism product;
- Tourism product' image (tourists perceptions' result).

In other opinion, "... although the tourism product contains some tangible elements, the overall tourism product is an intangible experience" (Pender, 1999).

Going from the anterior opinions it can be concluded that resources and services, tangible and intangible elements, psychological and marketing communications elements assemble the tourism product.

The tourism services materialize the tourism product and confers it a specific content.

Each of basic tourism services category, approached in an individual way, can contribute to the product's forming process or be a tourism product segment.

The tourism product can be approached on two directions:

- On a global way, going from product' horizontal dimension, as a result of its component elements interaction (proper for tour operator or tourist);
- On an individual way, going from product' vertical dimension, from every type of supplied service.

As any other product, the tourism product represents the firm's answer to the tourism demand.

The tourism product is not equal with the tourism offer, because the tourism offer includes more tourism products.

As any other product, the tourism product has some characteristics, as a result of its compositional elements' interaction (Balaure, etal, 2005, pp. 270-271; Gherasim, Gherasim, 1999, pp. 33-34):

1. The tourism product is an assembly of elements that are “delivered” to the tourism firm by different services suppliers: transporters, accommodation, food & beverage, leisure etc.;

2. As a result of the process of including a lot various elements in several combinations (attraction elements and services), every tourism product is unique;

3. The product is delivered on tourists’ demand and is depending on time factor;

4. The tourism product can’t be stocked, so a good coordination of services suppliers and tourism products distributors efforts is absolutely necessary;

5. The tourism product it isn’t mobile, because its composition includes different tourism attraction, determinate by the existence of natural and anthrop resources; this is the reason because market moves to product, not the product moves to market;

6. From case to case, in buying decision’ determination process, its components have different levels of importance (some tourists prefers to travel to isolated places, where man action is not visible, other tourists prefers to go in famous and crowded resorts, with many entertainment possibilities;

7. Because includes some attraction elements which are situated on public domain, the tourism product is subjugate on various law coercions; these settlements are various from a local public administration to other or from country to country (and can refers to different aspects, from restaurants time-table to according visas system);

8. The tourism product has some quality characteristics, which allows to assure tourists’ satisfaction.

The tourism product’ quality express the concordance’ level between clients’ expectations and the performance of the firms and can be appreciated by two characteristics categories (Gherasim, Gherasim, 1999, pp. 36-41):

- Product’ image characteristics (result of tourists perceptions about the product));

- Functional characteristics, which its confers utility, more preciously the tourism needs satisfied capacity.

In the case of a destination approached as tourism product, even if defying tourism product quality is a difficult process, there are some elements that can allow judging it, going from its component elements quality parameters:

- Natural resources, fauna and flora’s quality characteristics (landscape’ beauty, pollution level, clime conditions, geographic accessibility, type of resources: sea, beach, sands, mountains, forests, rivers, lakes etc.);

- Material base quality characteristics (buildings and equipments wear and tear, access ways secure and placement, telecommunication means’ existence, reception and production capacity etc.);

- Management quality (way of organization, capacity to lead and to motivate, ability of crises managing and problem solving, personnel seasonality’ management, services synchronization etc.);

- Quality of marketing activity (the clarity of information obtained by marketing researches, correctness interpretation and results application, a correct market-segmentation, a good marketing-mix formulation, choosing the correct proportion in to dosage of composed element, choosing the most appropriate price in repport with the type of product, a good distribution and promotion etc.);

- Human resources quality characteristics (personnel’ number, structure, qualification, availability and kindly);

- Tourism product economically elements’ quality characteristics (prices levels, commercial network density etc.);

- Some macro-environment elements' quality characteristics, especially in rapport with local communities where acts (demographically, socio-culturally, law and politically elements etc.), which directly and indirectly influence the tourism product' image.

Because integrates various services in its structure, the tourism product directly depends on these services' quality.

As any other service, the quality of any service included in tourism product can be defined as "...the result of comparison between what consumer wanted or expected from that company and what he received..." (Cetină, etal, 2006, pp. 61).

To improve the tourism product quality, the tourism organizations must acting in various ways:

- Identifying the services quality determined factors;
- Knowing the tourists expectations;
- Determining the way in which tourists evaluate the tourism services quality, going from there's expectations;
- Reducing, if its possible, consumers' expectations and consumers' receive' difference.

As the marketing specialists underline, in case of a firm that is centered on quality, the management of marketing activity concerns two aspects: first, must contribute to formulating of the strategies and policies that help the firm to excel on quality chapter, and second, must contribute to realize a qualitative marketing, next a qualitative production (Kotler, 1998, pp. 97-98).

Going from the necessity of the total quality approaching and the approaching of general principles that guide the practice application of this concept (Hauser, Clausing, 1988, pp. 63-73; Morgan, 1984, pp. 61; Crosby, 1979; Kotler, 1998, pp. 97-98), the tourism firms must take into consideration the fallowing aspects:

- The quality must be perceived by tourists (the tourism product must be assembled going from tourists' needs);
- The quality must be found in any firm' activity, not only on product' level (in marketing-mix assembly);
- Quality requires all personnel implication (team work means a good collaboration of employees);
- Quality means quality partners' collaboration (all the services suppliers must appropriate the total quality concept);
- Always the quality must be improved (the Japanese "Kaisen" philosophy, which means that anything can be improved by anybody), going from competitors' performances;
- Quality improvements can be obtained sometimes jumping other stages (jumping progress);
- Quality costs nothing more;
- Quality is a necessary but not sufficiency element;
- The efforts that improving the quality process cannot save a weak product.

All marketing activities (market research, services supplying, marketing policies formulation etc.) must be realized on a high quality level and, on there's turn, must contribute to obtain a high final quality of all marketing activities chain, and based on that, to obtain a high quality level for all firms activity.

REFERENCES

1. Balaure V., Cătoiu I., Vegheș C. (2005) - *Marketing turistic*, Ed. Uranus, București;
2. Barbu Gh. (coord.) (1981) - *Turismul în economia națională*, Ed. Sport-Turism, București;
3. Bran F., Marin D., Simon T. (1998) - *Economia turismului și mediul înconjurător*, Ed. Economică, București;
4. Cetină I. (coord.), Brandabur R.E., Constantinescu M. (2006) - *Marketingul serviciilor. Teorie și aplicații*, Ed. Uranus, București;
5. Crosby Ph. B. (1979) - *Quality is Free*, MacGraw-Hill, New York;
6. Gherasim T., Gherasim D. (1999) - *Marketing turistic*, Ed. Economică, București;
7. Hauser J. R., Clausing D. (1988) – „The House of Quality”, *Harvard Business Review*;
8. Kotler Ph. (1998) - *Managementul Marketingului*, Ed. Teora, București;
9. Krippendorf J. (1971) - *Marketing et tourisme*, Lang et Cie, Berne;
10. Morgan L. (1984) – „The Importance of Quality”, *Perceived Quality of Products, Services and Stores*, Ed. Jacobi J., Olson J., Lexington Books, New York;
11. Muhcina S. (2002) - *Marketing în turism*, Ed. Muntenia&Leda, Constanța;
12. Pender L. (1999) - *Marketing – Management for Travel and Tourism*, Stanley Thornes (Publishers) Ltd., London;
13. Snak O. (1975) - *Economia și organizarea turismului*, Ed. Sport-Turism, București;
14. Tocquer G., Zins M., Hazebroucq J. M. (1999) - *Marketing du tourisme*, 2eme edition, Gaetan Morin Editeur, Europe.