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Theoretical Considerations Regarding the Tourist Activity

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Abstract: *In this study, the authors planned on doing a theoretical journey in the field of tourism. In this respect, the main theoretical approaches will be presented regarding the concept of tourism, its components - the tourist demand, the tourist offer, respectively their characteristics and the factors of influence. Last but not least, the forms of tourist activities will be addressed.*

The work ends with the presentation of the main trends of the tourist market in our country, by emphasizing the role of urban tourism and the preferences of consumers of tourist serivices.

Tourism is in a continuous evolution, and the preferences of the consumers in the matter of vacations change from year to year. Therefore, nowadays the tourists are much more informed about the holiday, they know very well what exactly they want and under what conditions. They have begun to analyze more companies from which they want to buy vacations, are increasingly turning to trusted brands, even if they will pay a higher price for the same services of the tourist package. They prefer trusted agencies, and this does not appeal to small and lesser known agencies.

Keywords: *tourism; tourist activity; demand for tourist services; offer of tourist services; forms of tourism.*

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1. The concept of tourism

Tourism is a complex activity, making it difficult to find a definition for it. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), tourism comprises „all the activities that people perform during their travels and stays in places different from the usual environment, for an uninterrupted period of up to one year, for leisure purposes, for business and other reasons" [1].

Tourism is an economic-social phenomenon that includes travel for recreational purposes or for other purposes, carried out either through specialized organizations or agencies, or on their own, for a limited period of time. The need for recreation, enrichment of cultural knowledge or spiritual life are just some of the motivations that contribute to the generation of tourism.

These aspirations are specific to any person, the tourism phenomenon dates back to ancient times, having a specific dimension and way of manifestation from one stage to another. In the last decades, tourism has become one of the most important economic activities in most countries of the world, by increasing the contribution of travel to the world economy. Tourism is a method of highlighting all categories of resources, especially natural resources [2], elements such as the beauty of the landscape, the medical qualities of mineral or thermal waters, climate conditions, monuments, historical relics, and popular traditions, all of which have the most good capitalization through tourism, in some cases being the only method [3].

Tourism is one of the main sources of job creation in many countries and contributes to alleviating unemployment, according to W.T.O. statistics, turism holds the first place regarding emplyed workforce, aproximatively 7% of world population. Due to this evolution, there have been significant increases in the number of those working in hotels and restaurants, transport, tourism agencies and recreational services.

The characteristics of the tourist activity that make it unique as a sector of the economy are [4]:

- brings an expense in a wide variety of tourist goods and provides income to the various types of offerers, in a destination area, an income is made for the benefit of hotels, restaurants, tourist attractions, while in a generating or passing area, those who receive the tourist income are the travel agents and the tour operators.
- involves large resources, especially land, financial resources and buildings, for tourist use and which cannot be easily transmitted to other activities. The offerers find it difficult to exit the tourism industry if they do

not find investors who want to replace them in this industry, on the other hand, these fixed assets can be a loss in the off season, if not properly exploited.

- the tourism sector is composed of a series of markets comprising different products, in different places, and the countries compete with each other as international tourist destinations, but competition can be made within the same countries, between different provinces or areas as tourist destinations.

- there is a wide and varied range of subsectors and bidders belonging to the tourism sector. It is unlikely that there will be a bidder whose business is tourism production, however, there are many organizations dealing with their own industrial product such as hotels, shops.

2. The tourism demand and offer

As a component of the tourism market, tourism demand represents the volume of tourism services offered by a company, which an individual or a group of individuals are willing to buy at a given time in exchange for price levels [3]. Therefore, the tourist demand is made up of all the people who want to move from their own residence for a limited period of time in order to enrich the experience and the culture by knowing new people and unique landscapes.

The tourism demand is determined both by market forces (product development and diversification, quality of services, level of workforce training, tourist advertising), and by many exogenous factors that are not directly related to tourism, but whose influence is determined [3].

The exogenous factors are:

a) **Economic factors** - the main element is the income which is the financial support of any consumer act, including tourism. Tourism manifests itself as a concern in the life of the individual or social group once its financial resources exceed the critical threshold of satisfying physiological needs such as food, shelter, maintaining health.

The level of income varies in time and space, because the structure of individual consumption is closely linked to the degree of economic development, the mentality of the people, customs, culture, traditions. With the increase in revenues, the part destined to cover vital needs will also increase [3].

Another category of economic factors to stimulate and develop demand is represented by prices and tariffs [4].

Prices can influence the tourist product either as a whole or only in one of its components: transport, accommodation, leisure, manifesting differently in relation to the internal or external market and can produce qualitative, but also quantitative changes.

Tariffs - generally high tarrifs limit the number of tourists, length of stay, travel distances and frequency of vacations. And when the rates are very low they can generate a distrust of the tourists regarding the quality of the services and can cause the reduction of the requests for the respective tourist services. Consequently, the price-quality ratio plays an important role in the formation and manifestation of tourism demand.

b) **Demographic factors** - For the tourist demand the individual is the central element in its development. The importance of the age structure of the population and the changes that have occurred in this plan worldwide are supported by the participation, in different proportions, of the age groups in the tourism movement. A segment of the population that has seen a spectacular growth is the young age group, which represents 30-35% of the total population worldwide. Youth, compared to other age groups have more free time, the desire for fun is much greater, as well as reductions in some places for pupils and students [3].

Another important segment is the age group over 65, which has quite high incomes and long time off, for this group is needed biological recovery, health care achieved through curative tourism, which allows the tourist season to be extended outside the holiday periods.

Besides the age structure of the population an important role is constituted by the population structure by socio-professional categories, so it can be observed that people with a higher level of training show a much greater interest for tourism consumption, representing about 80% of the total category, as a result of greater financial possibilities. At the other end of the scale, the rural residents and the agricultural workers with a modest interest in tourism represent 20% of the total category, the causes of this behavior are determined by the lower money means, the fact that they live in an unpolluted environment, the low level of education and training.

c) **Political factors** - in this category is the state that influences the activity in the field of tourism through legislation that mainly targets consumers, protecting society, can often contribute for a short period of time to the affirmation or restriction of tourism activities through the regime imposed between the states in conflict. They have an influence on the tourist activity through the conflicts between certain states of the world, which have disastrous consequences on the tourist infrastructure. The direct policy of the states, directly influences the tourism by liberalizing the payments, by

simplifying the formalities of crossing the state borders, through the customs banking facilities, through the system of granting the visas.

d) **Social factors** - are based on the free time of the population and urbanization [4].

Urbanization is a consequence of industrialization, which implies a certain economic structure and development, which generates the necessary motivational impulses and material availability, which is reflected in the tourist demand. Urban areas are emitted by tourists who want to escape from the polluting atmosphere, in quiet areas, for rest, relaxation and fun. This need for escape leads to the mobilization of the population, contributing to the intensification of the tourist circulation.

Free time is a determining factor of the tourist demand, since most of the trips for tourist purpose are made during leisure time (holidays, weekends, vacations) [5].

e) **Psychological factors**

The motivation that generates the tourist demand is influenced by perceptions, past experiences that determine the tourists to have certain behaviors that are manifested in a positive way by the attraction towards certain tourist places or negatively, they are manifested by rejecting some destinations.

According to the personality researches on the behavior of tourist consumption, five major psychological types of tourists have been identified in the specialty literature: psychocentric tourists, quasi-psychicentric tourists, mid-centric (mediocentric) tourists, quasi-centric tourists, allocentric tourists [3].

Psychocentric tourists are more concerned about personal things and have a limited interest in the others, they prefer organized vacations, in known places that are near the residence where they live, while they resort to organized arrangements that offer them more safety and are limited to the consumption of services offered in the vacation package [5].

At the opposite pole are the tourists allocentric, they are curious to discover the surrounding world, they like to travel alone, prefer to travel long distances to the house looking for adventure in hard to reach places.

It can be said that psychocentric tourists once they will gain more experience in travel, will turn into opportunities for vacation destinations in allocentric tourists.

The tourism offer

The tourism offer represents the quantity of a certain tourism product that the economic agents holding are willing to offer to the buyers at a given moment, in exchange for different levels of the price. It is

characterized by the fact that it gathers a set of material and immaterial elements offered to the consumers in order to satisfy their needs, namely [6]:

- natural and anthropic tourists' objectives;
- the general factors of human existence (language, culture, customs, folklore, hospitality);
- general infrastructure - network of transport, communications, telecommunications, water supply, electricity, sewerage, sanitation, etc.
- tourists' equipment, accommodation, public catering, treatment, sports and leisure facilities;
- tourists' services - the activities provided by the personnel working in this sector, as well as the level of training.

The tourism offer is divided into: primary tourism offer, which includes all natural resources and the secondary tourism offer that includes all the resources created by man.

The most important characteristics of the tourism offer are the following [7]:

- It is addressed to a large number of potential consumers, due to the existence of a tourist market both nationally and internationally.
- The tourism offer is a complex made up of a set of elements that differ in terms of content, which refers to attractive (natural) and functional tourists' resources such as tourists' equipment and services.

Depending on the motivations of consumers, the tourism offer is classified into 4 major groups [1]:

- business tourism offer: congress tourism;
- cultural tourism offer: religious tourism, festivals;
- holiday tourism offer: sports tourism or family tourism;
- spa tourism offer: health care through treatment tourism.

The tourism offer presents a certain rigidity by the fact that the tourists' products cannot be sent for tourists' consumption, to be consumed it is necessary to move the tourist, and this can cause a series of problems especially in the case of international tourism, by the impossibility of storing the products for the purpose meeting future needs [3].

3. The forms of tourism

The natural and anthropic potential is the main source for the various forms of tourism, all of which are brought together in an extremely wide sphere. In the specialized literature there are different classifications of the forms of tourism practiced, following a grouping as appropriate of the structure of the tourists, the reasons for the trip, the interval of departures

on holidays. Thus, according to the specialized literature the main forms of tourism practiced in Romania are [8]:

The seaside tourism - has seen a continuous increase in all countries that have specific natural conditions, the coastal areas are a great attraction for tourists, expressing about 50% of the total number of vacations. Although the tourists' activity in this area is seasonal, the coastal tourism is considered the most important form of tourism in Romania. It offers opportunities for spending time by practicing water sports, each resort has recreational bases, the existence of amusement parks, but also a balneo-climateric potential that attracts a significant number of Romanian and foreign tourists every year [9].

The balneo-climateric tourism - Romania has over 160 spa resorts, many of which have become of general interest through their therapeutic efficiency, but also through the facilities of the hotels, respectively the increased degree of comfort. The richness and diversity of these natural factors have made Romania one of the first places in the world in terms of the spa circuit, many tourists of all ages come to resorts for rest or relaxation or to restore health through certain treatments. In the resorts of the country are treated various conditions such as those of the locomotor system, cardiovascular diseases, inflammatory, gynecological diseases etc. [1].

Mountain tourism - it has developed a lot in the last years, the mountain being one of the main holiday destinations today, both during the winter when the winter sports season turns the mountain resorts into favorite and crowded destinations, as well as into the other seasons, where tourists escape from cities to relax, enjoy the beauty of the landscapes and the fresh air or for fun.

The development of mountain tourism was based on major investments as a result of the increased demand for accommodation and leisure conditions, thus a special material base was set up as accommodation units (hotels, villas, cabins, camping, boarding houses), food units, leisure bases, ski slopes, cable transport (chairlifts, skilifts).

Sports tourism - in this form of tourism, performances and sensations of risk are the main elements. It takes place in a natural environment or in the rural area through activities such as archery, skiing and paragliding. One of the features that make it different from the other forms of tourism is the type of accommodation, usually carried out outdoors in places far from the roads, tourists preferring accommodation in tents or mountain shelters.

Business tourism [5] - involves the movement of people to places other than those of residence, in the work interest, where during the trip are consumed both the services common to tourism (accommodation, food,

leisure) and some specific services offered by those who organizes vacations (rental of conference facilities, audio-video equipment for conferences, publication of brochures, catalogs and leaflets). At this moment, the business tourism holds worldwide about 20% of the total international travel and almost a quarter of the tourist revenue, which have different rates depending on the tourist endowment and the level of development of each country.

Adventure tourism - it is practiced in the natural environment being an attractive form due to the danger and risk situations that tourists are exposed to, this form of tourism is of particular interest to young people, especially those in whom school education and society give a great importance of sports activities and physical condition [3].

Cultural tourism - refers to the culture of a country or a region and focuses on traditional communities that have different customs, traditions, values, which differ from one culture to another. It takes place both in urban areas, especially in large cities with historical value, as well as in rural areas through a variety of cultural heritage values through memorial houses, village-specific architecture, customs and traditional rituals, which give a specific identity to local communities, personalize them and offer them certain tourist values [5].

Agrotourism is a segment of rural tourism, which involves staying in the peasant farm (cottages, farms), where the tourist is offered the opportunity to participate in various specific agricultural activities, but also in the consumption of the products from the respective household.

Ecotourism - is a way to travel, to spend leisure time, which consists of moving the individual to the natural areas for relaxation, knowledge and information, without affecting in any way the environment [10].

Rural tourism - is tourism in which rural culture is the main component of the recreational tourism product. The specific feature of the rural products is given by the fact that the visitors can enjoy the physical environment, the people from the rural area and will participate as much as possible, in the activities, traditions and lifestyle of the local population.

Besides this classification of forms of tourism, there are others, which offer well-defined structures with a high degree of rigidity, thus [11]:

1. Depending on the origin of the tourist it is distinguished: domestic or national tourism (practiced by the population inside the country) and international tourism (it implies both the departures of people outside the country of residence, as well as the arrivals of foreign tourists in our country).

2. Depending on the period of the year in which the tourist activity is carried out: continuous or permanent tourism and seasonal tourism.

4. Conclusions

Currently, the tourism industry in our country is undergoing a process of change. Aspects such as quality, care for the environment and cultural values have become more important for tourists. They began to show a special interest for quiet areas, away from the crowds of cities, where there is contact with nature far from technology, in quiet places. There is a growing demand for simple vacations, where the focus is on regions or corners, rather than on countries.

If in the past more and more Romanians chose to spend their holidays on the Romanian coast in the summer season, today the interest for long-distance holidays, which have a direct effect on increasing the importance of air travel, has increased. Every year, an increasing number of Romanian tourists go on vacation on the coast abroad in countries such as Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, because of the affordable prices, but also the services offered.

Increasingly, there are also trips made for shopping or other purposes than tourist ones, carried out both in the country and abroad. In terms of price, there is an increase in the share of cheap vacations, in order to attract those with average incomes, to be close to the needs of customers.

Tourism is in a continuous evolution, and the preferences of the consumers in the matter of vacations change from year to year. Nowadays, tourists are much more informed, I know very well what they want. They have begun to analyze more companies from which they want to buy vacations, they are going more towards trusted brands, even if they will pay more for the same services of the tour package, they prefer the trusted agencies and they do not like unknown small agencies.

However, tourists' demands for holiday comfort have also increased, they prefer packages that include air transport and ask for good hotels, which offer quality services, and in cultural circuit type vacations they want guides to be better prepared.

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