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The Evolution of Tourism Destination: A Review of Literature

Ioana Maria TRIPON[1], Smaranda Adina COSMA[2]*

Abstract

Tourism is about places and attractions embedded in the culture, economy and lifestyle of communities. The concept of destination is at the heart of tourism activity, being one of the most important and complex aspects of tourism. There is an intense competition in the tourism sector to establish tourist destinations as the greatest brands in the tourism industry and the fundamental element of any tourism model.

This paper aims at presenting the progress of research on tourism destination term by conducting a methodological review on more than fifty research based articles (empirical studies), literature reviews articles, case studies, books, conference proceedings, conceptual papers and so on outlining the importance of the tourism destination concept.

The research concludes that there is currently no definition of the term "destination", generally accepted and the concept of tourist destination has evolved mainly because of the increase in competition, the impact of new technologies and the changes in quantitative and behavioural demand. Such a review will provide researchers with a good understanding of the evolution and significance of the concept.

Keywords:
Tourism, Destination, Tourism destination, Methodological review, Destination awareness

1. Introduction

The concept by which people travel from home to a tourist destination where they stay for a limited period of time and then return is

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known as tourism. The notion of destination is at the heart of tourism activity, being one of the most important and complex aspects of tourism. Tourism is about places and attractions embedded in the culture, economy and lifestyle of communities. When constructing a brand, when developing marketing strategies or cooperation strategies between stakeholders, one must first know what the term of tourist destination means [24, 39].

The tourist destination is one of the main areas of interest and research, a key concept of the tourist industry, over which researchers and practitioners have not yet reached a consensus on how it should be defined [40].

The term of tourist destination is used on a large scale, both in the professional and academic environment, as most activities take place at destinations. World Tourism Organization defines the destination as "the basic unit of analysis in tourism" [53]. According to Morgan et al., the destinations became "the largest brands in the tourism industry" [33]. Therefore, tourist destinations as well as marketing of tourist destinations have become the central element of tourism research [5, 14, 52].

This main purpose of the study is to identify and analyse the progress of research on tourism destination term by conducting a methodological review on more than fifty research based articles (empirical studies), literature reviews articles, case studies, books, conference proceedings, conceptual papers and so on outlining the importance of the tourism destination concept [8, 51].

2. Tourism Destination between Past and Present

Although tourist destinations are the key element in any tourism model, there is currently no definition of the term "destination", generally accepted [20, 37].

The analysis of the literature revealed the existence of several types of approaches: the economic-geographic approach, the approach from the perspective of marketing and management, the approach from the perspective of the client [16, 28, 40].

The literature recognizes the contribution Neil Leiper had in formulating many of the tourism concepts in current use, in whose model the destination represents "the place the consumer travels to temporarily, from the place of residence, within a period of time, generating a touristic flow (demand) in both time and space" (Leiper, 1979 in [37]), [31, 44]. Subsequent attempts to define the destination complement this concept, identifying the critical role that the destination marketing organisations have

in promoting the destination, in an effort to achieve a closer relationship between tourism supply and demand in order to maximize the use of resources [2, 4, [36].

The tourist destination is, according to S. Pike and S. Page "a complex and varied mix of businesses and individuals, who have a good interest in contributing to the prosperity of the local community" [37]. According to Leiper "individual or collective success depends to some extent on the competitiveness of the destination and the governance of the mixture of stakeholders related to the tourist industry" [27].

The destination represents the link that unites, maintains and stimulates all sectors of the tourist industry, namely transport, accommodation, food and recreation, being a complex element and specific to tourism [47].

Destinations are physically limited, political or market created places [22-23].

Morgan, Pritchard and Pride claim that destinations are not a sole product, but a compound, which includes accommodation, dining places, tourist attractions, art and cultural institutions. The entire atmosphere of the place, the hotels where tourists stay, the hospitality of the locals and the general impression are essential for creating a successful brand for the tourist destination [33, 38].

The concept of tourist destination has evolved mainly because of the increase in competition, the impact of new technologies and the changes in quantitative and behavioural demand, moving from the "place where people spend their holidays" to "an area where tourists decide to spend their holidays, with the outcomes of their activities", including elements such as access, quality of supply, sustainable development, territorial planning, policies and tourist strategies, relationship management and coordination processes between local actors [26].

The destination means a well-defined geographical area, able to offer one or more tourist products due to the existence of natural or created attractions, managed and controlled by well-coordinated agents under the surveillance of a macro level entity [3]. The tourist destination is a place that the tourist wishes to visit due to natural or created attractions, existing or ad hoc produced.

Increasingly, the term of destination is perceived from the tourist perspective. In essence, from the tourists' perspective, destinations are places they visit and where they spend some time.

Destinations are a mix of tourist products, experiences and other intangible assets promoted to consumers [10, 35].

Thus viewed, the concept of destination is not a very new one, as long as the resorts and other areas (parks, protected areas, regions, etc.) that created and developed the mass tourism phenomena between 1980 and 1990 have used guides, posters, brochures, etc. in order to stimulate travel and promote an integrated tourist product.

The concept of destination is supported by several basic elements [30]:

a) a well-defined geographical place;

b) the existence of tourist demand;

c) integrated tourist services offer;

d) a system of resources, organizations, activities, agents who manage the offer

A place becomes a tourist destination if there are tourists who see a purpose of their journey to that place, so if there is a demand. The tourist plays an important role in creating the tourist product, through the combination of individual products he chooses [15, 44, [48].

From the tourism offer perspective, the destination can be defined, accordingly to Pike and Page [37], "as a political boundary, ranging from a continent, a country, a region, to a city or even a specific micro scale place, where there may also be competing groups seeking to promote a place or products of a place "[37, 46]. However, according to Ryan, the destination can be perceived differently from the tourism demand perspective, respectively "as a geographic space in which a cluster of tourism resources exist" (Ryan, 1991 in [37]). In tourism, production, consumption and the accumulation of experiences become interconnected in a given location. The process of production and consumption is relatively complex and depends on the destination: it can be a single community with its surroundings, a region or a country [9, 40, 45, 50].

Another approach is that of Jean-Marie Hazebroucq [18, 29] who perceives the tourist destination as a tourist "macro-product" leaning on a complex system, composed of various actors, spread across a perimeter. The Scandinavian researcher Framke [13] considers the destination to be the "tourist identity of a place". It encourages the use of this term only in relation to marketing. From a marketing standpoint, destinations are considered a traditional product consisting of public or private facilities and services designed to meet the needs of tourists [1, 7, [40]. More recent studies, however, change the perception towards the co-creation and co-production, in the sense that tourists can get more involved with businesses and destinations [43]. Guests and hosts interact and thus experience the co-creation phenomenon. As most activities are carried out in tourist destinations, destinations can be described as the place where visitors

stationed temporarily to take part in activities and tourism-related interactions [53]. Therefore, the tourist destination represents the main reason for tourism and the ultimate end of tourism [27].

Kadri, Khomsi and Bondarenko have tried to analyse the term of tourist destination in particular from a semantic point of view, trying to synthesize several definitions found in the literature. The approach they proposed regards the destination as "the territory of a project or several tourist projects, since many agents are involved in the construction of the destination, in addition to the already acknowledged meanings: the destination as the direction of travel and the destination as an area used for touristic purposes" [20]. In this context, the tourist destination can be analysed through the viewpoint of the various actors contributing to the tourist project: from the tourist perspective, who frequents the tourist places; from the actors involved in the development and in the economic activities, accommodation and tourist attractions owners, all who participate in the creation of the tourist destination. Analysis from the perspective of the institutions that run tourist attractions, that create or emphasize an identity that is more institutional rather than cultural or geographic; analysis from the management of the destination viewpoint, which can be carried out by one or more different organizations; analysis from the point of view of locals participating in defining the project of a community in which they will be in the companionship of tourists [20].

To better illustrate the variety of tourist destination definitions, we have selected some of the most representative, presented in Table 1 in chronological order:

Table 1. Tourist destination definitions

Author	Definition
Leiper (1979)	Tourist destinations are places that attract tourists, influencing them to remain for a period of time. Destinations incorporate in general those attributes that inherently support that attraction. In this context, the tourist attraction can be seen as an anticipation of several features that are missing from the place where the visitor comes from and which he wants to experience.

Middleton (1988)	Tourist destinations consist in the following five components: 1. the natural and man-made attractions of the area; 2. facilities and services offered; 3. the infrastructure and ease of access; 4. the images used to attract tourists; 5. total cost of the stay.
Hu & Ritchie (1993)	Like any other consumer product, the tourist destination represents a package of tourism facilities and services composed of a number of multidimensional attributes.
J.-P. Lozato-Giotart (1993)	What makes a place to be a tourist destination is the combination of natural conditions (geography, climate, landscapes), cultural and historical heritage, technical potential and economic environment.
Laws (1995)	The tourist destination is the place where people spend their holidays.
Seaton & Bennett (1996)	The tourist destination is presented in the form of a complex and unique socio-cultural structure, both exact and intangible. Destinations not only exist physically but also mentally, in the minds of tourists or potential tourists. People want to visit other places where they are offered transportation, accommodation, food and entertainment.
Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, & Wanhill (1998)	The tourist destination is the sum of services and facilities designed to satisfy the needs of tourists. The destination brings together all aspects of tourism including demand, access (transportation), supply and marketing.
Murphy, Pritchard, & Smith (2000)	The destination is a combination of products and opportunities to accumulate experiences, in order to obtain the final experience of the visited place.

Framke (2002)	All interests, activities, facilities, infrastructure and attractions create the identity of a place – the destination. The destination is the tourist identity of a place.
J.L. Caccomo (2006)	A resort or a city represents a tourist destination if the tourists are already there. Frequency is the one that gives value to a destination.
Saila & Kylanen (2010)	The destination represents an ensemble of institutions and actors, located in an area, where marketing activities and operations are carried out, complementing the traditional production-consumption approach.
World Tourism Organization (WTO) (2016)	The tourist destination represents a physical space with or without administrative and/or analytical boundaries in which a visitor can spend an overnight. It is the cluster (co-location) of products and services, and of activities and experiences along the tourism value chain and a basic unit of analysis of tourism. A destination incorporates various stakeholders and can network to form larger destinations. It is also intangible with its image and identity which may influence its market competitiveness

Source: Own elaboration based [19, 21, 25, 29, 35, 41, 42]

In order to understand and further develop tourist destinations it is important to take into account the many aspects of tourism, the complex relations between producers and consumers, local communities and authorities and the co-creation of tourist experiences based on significance. Tourist destinations are a key concept that contributes to understanding the complex and abstract universe of tourism.

3. Concluding Remarks

There is an intense competition in the tourism sector to establish tourist destinations as the greatest brands in the tourism industry and the central element of any tourism model. The key learning outcomes of this paper are to enhance understanding of the fundamental issues relating to the multidimensional nature of tourist destinations.

The findings from this study have both theoretical and functional implications. From the theoretical standpoint, the study confirms the need for researchers to better understand the tourism destination concept and to describe the contextual setting. Although tourist destinations are the basic unit in any tourism model, there is currently no definition of the term "destination", generally accepted. The results show that the tourist destination can be examined from the geographic – economic perspective as a physical area with or without administrative boundaries, and can range significantly with the context, to the link that unites, maintains and stimulates all sectors of the tourism industry. Also of considerable relevance are the opinions of several researchers that look at the tourist destination from the marketing - management perspective: ranging from nominating it the tourist identity of a place to labelling it as macro-product (from offer's viewpoint there may be competing groups seeking to promote a place or products of a place and from demand's viewpoint there is a cluster of tourism resources). This indicates that some perceive it in a different manner depending upon the context: from a sole product to a compound of services and facilities designed to satisfy the needs of tourists. Finally, more recent studies advance the perception of the tourist destination seen from the client's perspective, where guests and hosts interact and thus experience the co-creation and co-production.

The information from this study is also important from the functional, managerial perspective. The findings also indicate the need to be sensitive to visitor expectations. This paper tries to provide a general framework that could be easily expanded to further develop tourist destination.

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