

BASIC TOURISM CONCEPTS IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

Tourism represents a social, cultural and economic phenomenon regarding people's mobility to unfamiliar places, beyond the borders of their conventional residence, being usually motivated by pleasure or other personal interests and, therefore, gaining a high-level of economic impact, as well as a natural and built environmental influence. The present study is intended to provide a comprehensive framework for a few of the frequently used tourism concepts. While most studies focus on the economic perspective of concepts like visitor, tourism types, official indexes, ratios or other indicators, this research will focus its attention on five notions which have different but also similar meanings, in a triangular contextualization governed by geography, economy and legal sciences. The present study, might be useful for both students and faculty members interested in the acknowledgment of a structured and more accessible tourism taxonomy, considering the peculiarities of each of the three fields of research.

Keywords

Tourist attraction, tourism potential, tourism heritage (patrimony), tourism resources, tourism region.

JEL Classification

A12, L83, K39, Z30, Z32

Introduction

Tourism represents a complex of dynamic activities strongly defining the economic performance of the 21st century. Given the fact that tourism is the main object of study for both geography and economy, inasmuch as a legal context, a deeper analysis is required in order to understand the particularities of each specialized section of terminology. Therefore, the following analysis will encompass not only the specific standpoints of geographers and

economists on explicit theoretical concepts, but is also going to enclose the legal approach, as all these concepts are subjects prone to specific regulations.

Tourism geography was established relatively late as a distinct branch with its own particularities, as it was in the economic literature. This process occurred after the Second World War mainly because many specialists had unilaterally looked at the processes and phenomena carried out in a seemingly marginal area of human existence, namely: the recreation and the physical-psychological recovery (Cocean, 2005). Thus, the work of N. A. Rădulescu, *Asupra geografiei turismului* [On tourism geography], from 1946, constitutes the first paper in this field of research, considering that tourism geography studies "...relations between the tourism phenomenon, the geographical environment and the social environment". In fact, until 1950, tourism was almost exclusively an economic domain due to its contribution to the economic development of the country. Moreover, the attention over this subject has increased after 1960, when tourism activity was expanding, being strongly connected to the environment.

Geography studies tourism as a spatial and temporal phenomenon, which takes place in an environment in interaction with social and environmental factors, but also as an activity that has an indisputable impact on the environment (Glăvan, 2010). The complex of natural conditions contributes to the formation of material support to all tourism activities and consists in motivations that trigger tourist flows, mainly when its characteristics have unique aesthetic values (Cocean, 2005).

Literature review

After an ample process of studying Romanian literature and regulations, several approaches have resulted, and while there are voices that accept some concepts, other researchers try to enrich the definitions of these concepts with their own vision and knowledge. These divergent opinions have created more often than not confusion among geographers and economists, each researcher taking over theories from the opposite field of research. This phenomenon can also be explained through the fact that some tourism disciplines are taught by geographers in economics-profiled universities or the other way around. In this case, we assist to a custom-made adjustment made to each study program by using a roughly common terminology in order to best meet the students' needs.

In pursuance of analyzing the selected tourism terminology, an extensive process of studying was carried out following the subsequent sources of information: the current geographic literature at national level related to tourism (tourism geography, tourism potential, etc.), the terminology used in different forms of oral discourses (it refers more to scientific sessions and conferences), but also official statements of specialized forums, such as the Ministry of Tourism, as well as geographical or economic glossaries of tourism and the updated legislation in this field of study. Hence, considering glossaries' contents, which are in part object of the present analysis, the terms: tourist attraction, tourism potential, tourism heritage, tourism resources and tourism region have been found in *Dicționar de geografie umană* [Dictionary of Human Geography] (Erdeli ed., 1999), *Dicționar de terminologie turistică* [Dictionary of Tourism Terminology] (Stăncioiu, 1999), *Dicționar poliglot explicativ de termeni utilizați în turism* [Polyglot dictionary explaining tourism terms] (Stănculescu et al., 1998) or in *Dicționar esențial de afaceri și servicii* [Essential Dictionary of Business and Services] (Ionciță et al., 2014), with particular approaches to each specific domain.

Tourism resources are analyzed in works of tourism geography written by Cocean (2005), Glăvan (2006), Căndea et al. (2012), in which are presented alternative terms, such as attractive resources, starting precisely from a territory's attractiveness elements. The tourist attraction is illustrated in particular works belonging to Cocean (1996, 2005) and Căndea et al. (2012). On the other hand, the tourism potential enjoys a broader analysis, in numerous

works and studies, such as: Cucu and Iordan (1984), Neguț (2003), Cocean (1996, 2005), Glăvan (2006, 2010), Ielenicz and Comănescu (2006), Căndea et al. (2012), and tourism heritage can be found in works belonging to the researchers like Ielenicz and Comănescu (2006), Căndea et al. (2012). The tourism region are approached by Cocean (2005) and Ielenicz and Comănescu (2006).

Regarding conferences and public presentations or speeches, the problems of tourism geography have been on the table of numerous scientific communications, which were presented at international congresses of geography, starting with the Warsaw Congress in 1934 or at the International Congress of Geography in London (1964) when Japanese professor Jukio Asaka presented the main problems of tourism, in general and, in particular, the problems of the Japanese tourism industry, among which we find, first of all, the examination, preservation and stimulation of tourism resources use, as in: natural monuments, historical relics, cultural attractions (Șandru, 1978). Undoubtedly, numerous recent manifestations address a multitude of aspects, which hold onto the evolution and diversification of tourism activity, both on a national and international scale.

Methodology

The present study aims at creating a brief glossary of tourism concepts from Romanian literature, analyzed from a geographical, economic and legal perspective. In order to reach the previously mentioned goal, the empirical methodology was adopted, by analyzing the content of various tourism articles published in special editions of the scientific journal *Amfiteatru Economic*, dedicated to the tourism issues, in close connection to CACTUS Conference research objects.

The initially stage consisted in developing a comprehensive list of tourism concepts by investigating mainly the Romanian academic literature and legislation glossaries, as well as national or international scientific researches. Subsequently, by reviewing the extant literature and body of law, we erased the concepts which were not in accordance to the object of this paper, thus remaining five key concepts and their subsidiaries.

Therefore, the main concepts that resulted were: tourist attraction, tourism potential, tourism heritage (patrimony), tourism resources and tourism region. Starting from the identified terms, we have added a few items that are used in the literature due to their similarities or having a similar meaning, without being explicitly mentioned in the keywords of the paper, but which are considered suitable for the scientific research.

Results and discussions

Tourism, regardless of its diversified forms, takes place in a geographical environment and is determined or influenced by some natural, economic and social components.

The Romanian literature on the subject has presented various concepts and terminologies regarding the concepts of potential and tourism heritage. From a taxonomical point of view, the following important units can become subject for a deeper analysis: tourism region, tourism area, tourism centers and tourist attractions (Cocean et al., 2005). Before starting the following analysis, it is important to mention that considering the legislation in force, Emergency Government Ordinance (GEO) No. 58/1998 regarding the organization and development of tourism activities in Romania, presents the main aspects defining tourism terminology.

A tourism region is a comprehensive category, represented by a large territory (generally geographical units) where the main practiced activity is tourism and its other complementary activities (Stăncioiu, 1999). It is characterized by an indisputable concentration of tourist attractions (Cucu and Iordan eds., 1984), and has a wide variety of unique landscapes boosted by the means of: specific relief forms, unique climatic elements,

which determine stable tourist flows and where various tourist activities with social-economic significance are carried out (Erdeli ed., 1999).

From an economic approach, a tourism region represents a territory within an extensive area, where tourism activities are constantly developed, having a considerable influence over the territory's economic and social development (Stănciulescu et al., 1998).

Considering the European Union (EU) integration process, for the first time since 1989, in Romania was adopted the Law No. 151/1998 regarding the regional development, creating eight territorial regions and, at the same time were introduced concepts like "region" or "regional development", a regulation supplemented subsequently with the provisions of the Law No. 315/2004. According to the GEO No. 58/1998 regarding the organization and development of tourism activities in Romania, article 2 explains the basic tourism terminology, but does not provide a proper description, nor definition of the concept subject to the present paragraph analysis.

A tourist attraction defines more the emotional side of the variety of elements composing tourism potential (Glăvan, 2006), referring, especially to what requires the full attention of people and produces highly intensive, aesthetic or even cognitive impressions (Cocean et al, 2005) as the beach, mountain, historical land, festival, trip or various sports competitions (Stănciulescu et al., 1998). In this case, might be as well elements of a pre-existing landscape endowed with attributes of attractiveness (Cocean, 1996), directly influencing certain segments of the tourism demand (Câdea et al., 2012). The tourist attraction considered by some authors identical to the tourism resource (if they benefit from a series of arrangements meant to introduce them in the touristic circuit and to promote them on a commercial approach), represents the basis for tourism development (Cocean et al., 2005). Cocean (2014) divides these tourist attractions into two main categories: primary and secondary. The cultural-historical, technical-economic and even some of the natural components - landscape, places, plants, animals, can be designated as tourist attractions (Erdeli ed., 1999, Glăvan, 2010). Alongside transport, accommodation and leisure, they are the essential elements of the tourism product (Stăncioiu, 1999).

The legislation in force does not insist on defining the concept of tourist attraction, but in accordance to article 2 from GEO No. 58/1998, the national concept of tourism *objective* is defined as a constituent element of the tourist resource, individualized and introduced in the tourist circuit. In other words, the legislation defines the tourist attraction by the means of the tourist objective, having basically the same meaning.

The concept of **tourism resources** speaks for all the attractive elements of a territory, regardless of their origin and their conjunction. It is one of the basic categories of tourism geography, representing the basis for the tourism phenomenon emergence and development, being its raw material, as in a basic input. There are two major groups of attractions that make up the tourism fund (meaning tourist resources), namely: those belonging to the natural environment (landform, climate, hydrography, vegetation, fauna, and lithological structures) and those of anthropic origin (historical vestiges, religious temples, museums, ethnography, etc.) (Cocean et al., 2005).

Our domestic literature and researches illustrate several concepts used to designate the tourism resources. Cocean et al., (2005) adopt more the concept of attractive resource than the tourist fund. While the notion of tourist fund includes also elements of infrastructure (Cocean, 1996), the term attractive resource invariably refers only to pre-existing landscape elements, endowed with the attribute of attractiveness.

The concept of tourism resources, which can be either natural or anthropic (Erdeli ed. 1999) is much more complex and complete, including, in addition to the tourist attractions suitable for visiting, natural or anthropic elements that can be used directly in tourism activities as "raw material".

Stricto sensu, economists consider tourism resources, as a sum of natural and anthropic elements embedded with tourist interest, which can be exploited in the process of tourist activity (Minciu, 2004). Economists state that, unlike tourist attractions, natural resources are perceived more as raw materials for the economic activity, respectively for tourism production (Stănciulescu et al., 1998). Lato sensu, besides the natural and anthropic elements, other additional resources, such as human capital, are considered resources (Minciu, 2004).

According to article 2 from GEO No. 58/1998 by tourism resources the legislator retains all the components of natural and anthropic environment, which according to their characteristics and specificity are recognized, registered and valorized by tourism, insofar as they are not subject to a comprehensive protection regime.

Tourism heritage (patrimony) represents a set of natural, social, economic, cultural elements, but also the sum of all facilities (communication lines, base of accommodation, treatment, meal, amenities for entertainment and instruction, etc.), specially designed for a territory's tourism activities (city, county, region, country, etc.) (Ielenicz and Comănescu, 2006). Tourism heritage represents the fundamental factor for tourism offer and consists of public and private goods, capitalized and protected under the law (GEO No. 58/1998). It represents the whole of the tourism resources and the structures realized for their valorization through tourism activities (Câdea et al., 2012).

The tourism heritage remains at a stage of tourism potential or natural and /or anthropic tourism resource if it is not augmented via new tourist settlements (Câdea et al., 2012).

From an economic point of view, the tourism patrimony represents the equivalent to the concept of tourist offer, understood on an extensive sense (Minciu, 2004). In extenso, Stănciulescu et al., (1998) illustrated the tourism patrimony as a synonym for tourism potential, being considered a potential tourist offer.

Considering the Romania's Civil Code provisions (article 31), any individual or legal entity owns a patrimony that includes rights and obligations that can be valued in money. Thus, while the Civil Code talks about a sum of legal rights and obligations with pecuniary value belonging to a subject of law, the tourism heritage, according to GEO No. 58/1998 is defined as an aggregation of tourism resources and other structures created for the purpose of promoting tourism activities. Therefore, GEO No. 58/1998 makes a specific reference to the active side of a patrimony which includes civil rights with economic value, such as the property right (ownership) and its dismantling rights. According to Article 3, a tourism heritage (patrimony) is made up of public and private property and is severally protected by the rules of law. The legislator insists on the valorification of tourism heritage that can only be developed within the context of the Tourism Development Master-Plan (2007-2026). Emphasizing tourism's heritage legal acceptance, in order to protect and implement a process of sustainable exploitation of local tourism, certain settlements, areas or even resorts will be declared protected areas, or, they will be conserved according to the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO, 1972), by which the signatory states designate them as having "outstanding universal value", committing to ensure their undeniable protection.

The tourism potential results from the spatial association of the tourist fund on the related technical-material basis. It is an indicator of maximum importance, being synonymous with the concept of tourist offer (Cocean, 2005). The tourism potential includes, besides the tourist fund, the technical- public facilities and the tourism services. Neguț (2003) considers the tourism potential synonymous to the tourist fund. The tourism potential comprises all the natural and anthropic elements of a territory that stimulate tourists' interest leading to the creation of touristic settlements for visiting and leisure activities (Minciu, 2004). The foreign literature often defines the tourism potential as the tourism destination (Ielenicz and Comănescu, 2006).

Tourism potential was explained by the United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and EU institutions as being a convergence between natural, cultural and socio-economic components that offer possibilities of touristic valorization and provide a specific territorial functionality, having an indispensable role in tourism activities development (Cândea et al., 2012). Moreover, the tourism potential of a given territory or resort, is defined as a set of natural, cultural, historical, socio-demographic with technical and economic components, scientifically recognized both on a quantitative and qualitative basis and presenting various possibilities and functionalities for tourism (Erdeli ed., 1999, Glăvan, 2006).

According to economists, the tourism potential is synonymous to the tourism heritage (patrimony), representing all the natural, anthropic, cultural-historical resources that, together alongside infrastructure, constitute the tourist offer of a destination (Stăncioiu, 1999).

Conclusions

Over the past five decades, the increasing volume and complexity of tourism offer has led to the development of a prolific tourism industry, which justifies treating the tourism phenomenon as a distinct and significant branch of national economy development, and, by all means, of the tertiary sector. According to its nature, this phenomenon has proved to be extremely complex, with geographical, social, cultural, legal and economic implications. Considering the fact that, unlike other service sectors, the tourism industry represents a branch whose development is closely correlated with other branches and domains, we have decided to perform our research considering the geographical, economical and legal approaches and implications.

While the economic and geographic approach have encountered many similarities regarding definitions and contents, the legal approach has either proved to be inadequate in accordance to our subject of study, or has briefly presented the legal implications of concepts already extensively investigated in Romania's literature.

From both a geographic and economic point of view, a tourism region represents a large territory, structured according to legal provisions, in geographical units specific to our country, where the main performed activity is tourism and other related activities. Our current legislation does not refer to the concept of tourism region but details definitions and purposes of an administrative-territorial region.

The tourist attraction is usually perceived by geographers as a concept that illustrates elements of tourism potential which have a considerable impact over tourists perception, referring, in general, to natural elements such as the beach, mountains or historical lands, while economists conclude the definition by adding anthropic, but business-oriented elements such as transportation, accommodation or other additional services as part of the final product provided to possible clients. The Romanian legal provision does not explain the concept of tourist attraction, but, it refers to an "objective", having the same meaning as provided by economists.

Tourism resources partially consist in natural resources, elements which exclusively define the geographical environment. Adding the economic practice and approach, we realized that tourism resources are considered social-economic activities by which resources acquire new meanings, especially from a business perspective. Geographers consider two main types of resources: natural and anthropic, but economists added the element of tourist interest considering that those resources could be perceived as input for the process of tourism production. Also, they emphasized the impact of human resources implication over the entire process of producing and consuming a tourism product. Our national legislation reiterates the information mentioned above by highlighting the importance of tourism valorification, in accordance to the local provisions. Hence, the legislator seeks to induce the

idea of legal accountability or responsibility within the process of production and consumption of tourism products.

The concept of tourism heritage (patrimony), according to geographers represents a set of natural, social, economic and cultural elements, but also the sum of additional elements that facilitates the consumption of tourism products, specially designed for a territory's tourism activities. As legal provisions suggest, tourism patrimony represents the ground for tourism offer, an element that consists both in public and private goods, illustrated and protected under the rules of law. On the other hand, economists illustrate tourism patrimony as in tourist offer, or even in tourism potential. The natural, anthropic and additional elements get a unique relevance while being used in the process of creating new tourism products. Hence, while the geographic approach is mostly focused on natural and man-made attractions, the legal and economic approaches add the infrastructure, accommodation, transportation and other elements considered essential to the material and infrastructure base, in order to facilitate tourists activities.

The final analyzed concept, tourism potential, comprises mostly all the natural and anthropic elements of a territory that stimulate tourists' interest, being often confused with tourism destination. On the other hand, economists usually agree upon the fact that this concept represents in fact the tourism patrimony illustrated above.

The purpose of the research was to clarify, for further deep analysis or scientific debates, the national meaning from a geographical, economic and legal perspective of certain tourism concepts, rather than to enforce the international approach of those meanings. Therefore, the items depicted in the present study represent rather a sample of concepts. Finally, considering that the paper was informed and expanded based on existing sources, it also reflects the authors' opinions.

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