

MARKETING OF DESTINATIONS: A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

Capitalizing tourist destinations is a complex and lengthy process whereby resources are gradually transferred within the area of trade relations. Marketer's proficiency is a key factor to accelerate this process, but also for making better and fuller use of existing touristic attractions of a destination. Other factors of influence are the involvement of the local population, general infrastructure, valuable and unique attractions, tourist preferences etc. Among the influences identified as positive while marketing a destination, we could name social trends monitoring that can supply information on consumer preferences evolution trends, valuable enough to gain a vital competitive advantage; maintaining conventional promotional activities, even when using internet based promotional channels and the need to quantify of as many processes possible that could have any impact on the destination image.

Keywords: tourism destination, marketing, EDEN, promotion

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MARKETINGUL DESTINATIILOR: O PERSPECTIVĂ EUROPEANĂ

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Rezumat

Valorizarea destinațiilor turistice este un proces complex și de durată prin care resursele turistice sunt transferate treptat în sfera de cuprindere a relațiilor comerciale. Competența marketerilor este un factor cheie pentru accelerarea acestui proces, dar și pentru utilizarea cât mai completă a atracțiilor turistice existente la nivelul unei destinații. Alți factori care influențează acest proces sunt implicarea populației locale, infrastructura generală, bogăția și unicitatea atracțiilor, preferințele turiștilor ș.a. Dintre influențele identificate ca având efecte pozitive pentru marketingul destinațiilor amintim monitorizarea tendințelor sociale care poate furniza informații privind tendințele evoluției preferințelor consumatorilor suficient de importante pentru a câștiga un avantaj competitiv hotărâtor; menținerea activităților convenționale de promovare, chiar și în condițiile utilizării canalelor de promovare bazate pe internet și necesitatea cuantificării a cât mai multor procese care influențează imaginea destinației.

Cuvinte cheie: destinație turistică, marketing, EDEN, promovare



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1. INTRODUCTION

Choosing the marketing strategy to promote tourist destinations is an important decision for which numerous factors shall be taken into consideration following a specific tourism marketing methodology. The major application of this methodology to the case of a tourist product is that, in the case of tourism destinations, multiple tourism products are being promoted, combined with their availability in the same geographical.

Choosing the marketing strategy to promote tourist destinations is an important decision for which numerous factors shall be taken into consideration following a specific tourism marketing methodology. Developing the marketing plan begins by analyzing the current situation, usually divided according to the limits established between influencing factors related to the destination and the factors that act as external influencers for the destination.

2. MARKETING IN TOURISM – CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES

In the first case, the method most commonly used is the SWOT analysis. Strengths stand for cases when the destination is relatively well known and has a status in relation to the main targeted audience, while enjoying a good reputation. Other strengths are the numerous and the variety of tourism resources, available tourism products that meet to a very large extent consumer preferences, a harmonious relation between stakeholders, a high degree of awareness and community involvement, general well-developed infrastructure, a brand and image identity, etc. Weaknesses can be low profitability of tourism service providers, poor quality of the basic services, low diversity leisure offers, a low level of staff training, poor accessibility due to infrastructure or social and political restrictions, touristic attractions damaged or undeveloped, loss of authentic travel experiences, sources of pollution, strong seasonal tourist travel (Rațiu et al., 2011).

To analyze the influence of external factors most frequently used is PEST analysis which requires micro and macro marketing knowledge, consumers and competitors analysis and how to position the destination or some of its products.

Validating a marketing strategy for a tourist destination is finalized by developing a marketing mix for each market segment (Cândea and Bogan, 2014). Because there are restrictions in terms of price and distribution, destination marketing mix focuses especially on promotion.

In these circumstances the destination marketing mix will focus on: creating a brand; marketing; products and promotion opportunities and public relations.

3. EUROPEAN TOURISM TRENDS AND CROSS COUNTRY DIFFERENCES

Annual tourism growth is estimated at 4.0-4.5 %, exceeding the one billion international tourists. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), in 2013, tourism's contribution to global GDP was about 10%, representing 6,600 billion USD. The size of the sector is confirmed by the large number of jobs that it creates, in the same year it was reported that over 260 million people have worked in this sector. The growth trend is expected to continue, so that by 2020 the sector size is expected to double. The strongest factor in this respect is the growth of BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) which strongly stimulate both outgoing tourism to neighboring areas and also those to more distant destinations.

The European Union is an internationally important touristic destination. Among Member States, five are the destinations that fall in the top 10 worldwide locations. Tourism has the potential to contribute to economic growth and job creation and the development of rural and disadvantaged areas. In 2012, the European residents have made 1041 trips, of which over half were short trips of 1-3 days. The most wanted country level tourist destinations were Spain, Italy and France, which hosted almost half (47.6%) out of the whole overnight stays in Europe. Other attractive destinations were the United Kingdom, Austria, Germany etc. (fig. 1).

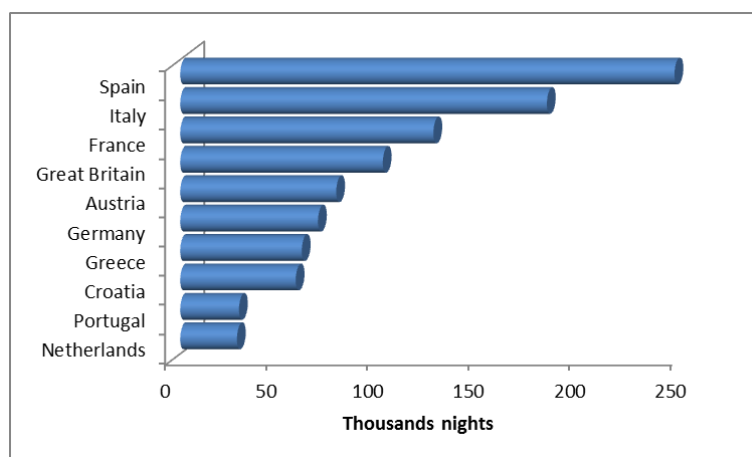


FIGURE 1. THE MOST IMPORTANT EUROPEAN DESTINATIONS IN 2012

Source: personal representation using Eurostat data

The structure of destinations per country outlines the country's size and geographical position. Thus, small Nordic countries tend to rely more on outgoing travel; while in southern countries with high tourism potential local destinations are preferred (Scarpato et al., 2014).

Of the EU population, more than half participate in tourism activities, but even for this indicator important differences between countries can be noticed. The indicator ranges from 10% in Romania's case to 78% for Sweden.

Tourists stay in almost half a million accommodation structures (545 000 accommodation units) with a capacity of 13.1 million people. Of these, over half are concentrated in four Member States: Italy (2.3 million seats); Spain (1.9 million seats), Germany (1.8 million seats) and UK (1.6 million seats). - Eurostat data

Among member states, Germany and UK are leaders in outgoing tourism as the number of overnight stays of tourists from these countries account for over half of all overnight stays of tourists from EU. Number of nights spent abroad in relation to the number of residents was highest for Luxembourg (22.6 nights /capita), Cyprus (16.3), the Netherlands (12.1) and Ireland (12.0). Conversely we find Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Portugal for the same indicator is subunitary. -Eurostat data

The most popular foreign destinations were Spain, Italy and France, which accounted for almost half (48.7%) of all overnight stays made abroad. Tourist intensity ratio between arrivals and the destination resident population was highest in Malta, Cyprus and Croatia, and in alpine areas and cities in Austria.

4. NATIONAL TOURISM TRENDS

In relation to tourism state in EU member states, Romania has a significant gap, being far behind them. However, Romania has a remarkable tourism potential, but this was not enough to turn it into a competitive tourist destination.

Romania's tourism potential on the natural component line is characterized by spectacular scenery, favorable climatic conditions, variety of landscape, ecosystems well preserved on a large scale with high biodiversity and resourceful spa tourism - salt springs, thermal sulphurous sludge, lakes, etc. (Bran et al., 2013). The anthropogenic potential includes traces of many civilizations that have succeeded in the country, monuments of art, religious sites, museum collections, customs and traditions well preserved, to which prestigious achievements can be added.

The high potential allows the organizing of many forms of tourism, of which the most important are tourism stay (sea, mountain, spa), itinerant tourism with cultural values, ecotourism, hunting and fishing.

In Romania are over 6000 units in the region, with a total capacity of 305.000 people (Popescu and Corboș, 2012).

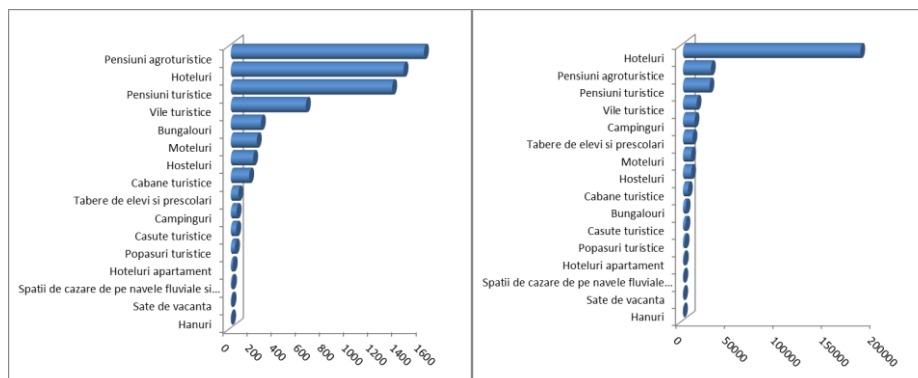


FIGURE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF TOURIST UNITS AND THE ACCOMMODATION CAPACITY ON UNIT CATEGORIES

Source: personal representation using NSI

Over half of the accommodation capacity is distributed between two tourist destinations: Seaside area (27%) and Bucharest and surroundings (26%). Next, in order, other towns and tourist trails (17%) mountain resorts (16%) spa resorts (13%) and the Danube Delta (1%) (fig. 3/10).

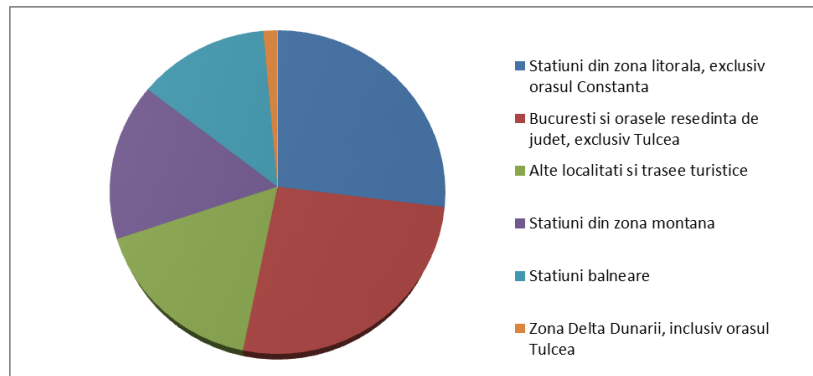


FIGURE 3. ACCOMMODATION STRUCTURE ON TOURISM DESTINATIONS

Source: personal representation using NSI

The structure of accommodation capacity on turistic destinations indicates the predominance of seaside tourism and cultural tourism, while mountain resorts and spas are less attractive. Also the remarkable potential of the Danube Delta is underrepresented in relation to the seaside destination, situated in the vicinity.

More than 7 million tourists arrive annually in Romania, the growth trend is quite obvious in recent years. Romanian tourists dominate in terms of accommodation capacity fill, representing 78-79% of the

total. Foreign tourists that arrive in Romania are, mainly, from neighboring countries, the first three places being claimed by Hungary, Bulgaria and Moldova (fig.4).

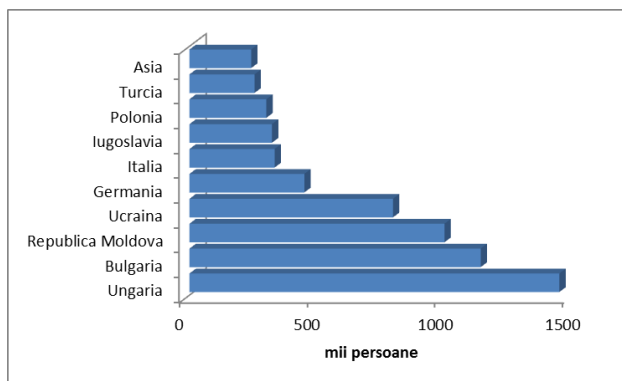


FIGURE 4. FOREIGN TOURISTS IN ROMANIA (PLACE OF ORIGIN)

Source: personal representation using NSI

Nationally, the relatively low degree of coordination in tourism planning of the territory led to an unbalanced development, the overuse of certain destinations and insufficient exploitation of others. European tourist traffic trends are noticeable in Romania, perspectives can be outlined based on the indicators, being favorable in general. Low uptake of accommodation capacity, decreasing of incoming tourism, the concentration of tourists in Bucharest and cities are items that can be considered problematic, while the correlation with European trends, master plan existence and of strategies for all forms of tourism, international enhanced promotion and further investment in the development of tourism structures can be considered favorable developments.

5. PROMOTING DESTINATIONS AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

The Variety of tourism offers shall be achieved by encouraging intra-European tourist flows. Thus one can follow the developed at European level of thematic tourism products, focusing on a number of heritage elements: cultural heritage (including cultural itineraries), contemporary culture, protected areas, health (including spa tourism), education, wine and food, history, sports, religion, agritourism, rural tourism.

At European level there are already a number of cross-border initiatives such as cycling and pilgrimage routes. For these and the like an European label guaranteeing the transnational character shall be created. The quality of tourist destinations depend heavily on the natural and cultural heritage. To ensure sustainability, European policy should take into account a number of concerns, among which the most important are:

- tourism seasonality; / environmental impact of travel transport;/ quality of travel tourism jobs;/ maintaining and improving the welfare of the local community ;/ minimize resource use and waste;/ conservation and enhancement of natural and cultural capital;
- increased accessibility;/ using tourism as a tool for sustainable development.

Tourist destinations is a key element in the European tourism policy. European destinations promotion is being made by use of several actions, the most common being: *Network of European Region for a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism* (NECSTouR) and *Destinations of excellence* (EDEN).

6. CONCLUSIONS

Romania is a complex macrodestination whose promotion can be achieved compared to many segments of the tourism market. On the other hand, Romania includes many and varied microdestinations, which in turn can be promoted both on local and international markets. Defining territorial units for microdestinations is a complex process, with different results depending on market segmentation. North Dobrogea shall be a real challenge in developing a consistent marketing strategy and effective integration in the context of policy development at national and European level.

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