Development and Diversification of Tourism Services. A Strategic Approach in International Context

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Goal and objectives of the dissertation

Goal

The goal of the thesis is to emphasize the necessity for strategic approach in tourism services in Romania, their constant development and diversification being the only option for good tourism potential valorisation, for destination competitiveness growth and maximisation of benefits.

Objectives

- To emphasize the tourism services importance within national economy;
- To define and comparatively analyze the two concepts - "development" and "diversification" - applied to tourism services;
- To identify and detail the key factors in strategically approaching tourism services development and diversification process, in the present international tourism context;

- To determine the manner in which tourism services specific features impact strategy implementation;
- To position the strategic process focused on tourism services within tourism environment and evolution of tourism activity in Romania;
- To substantiate the development and diversification strategies for tourism services;
- To identify the strategic options focused on services which can be applied by tourism organizations;
- To identify trends and directions for development and diversification of tourism services in Romania;
- To particularize the tourism activity and future trends at regional level, focusing on the Romanian seaside;
- To identify and study tourists' opinion regarding development and diversification of tourism services on the Romanian seaside.

Methodology

In order to meet the objectives and test the theories emerged from the first four chapters of the thesis, a case study focusing on the Romanian seaside tourism services was developed. In the case study, a descriptive research of quantitative type was conducted on a population formed of tourists who visited the Romanian seaside in the 2009 summer season.

A series of objectives and hypotheses were formulated; they referred to identifying tourists' motivations and opinions related to the seaside tourism services and testing the impact of development and diversification level of tourism services on tourist satisfaction, visit frequency and length of stay. The survey was conducted between 15 of July and 31 of August 2009, in 16 tourist towns and resorts on the Romanian seaside, using a questionnaire, compiled of 27 questions, as a main research tool.

Having considered the complex character of the research proportional stratified sampling was used. The population was layered function of the holiday town/resort and their nationality, and from each layer sub-samples were extracted using simple random sampling.

The questionnaires were distributed in 16 tourist towns and resorts on the Romanian seaside and, after eliminating the ones being incomplete or under the suspicion of untrustworthiness, 408 questionnaires were subject to analysis using SPSS (Statistical Data Analysis, version 17.0).

Results

Analysing the results of the survey, several conclusions, regarding most frequent tourist motivations, tourism services commercialization methods, frequency of visits, length of stay, preferred means of transport to and at destination, hospitality services and entertainment, emerged.

Significant differences between the two groups of Romanian and foreign tourists were validated regarding entertainment services

assessment; the Romanians appreciated them as satisfactory, while the foreigners found them inadequate.

A direct influence between tourist age, travel motivation and holiday resort on one hand and entertainment services on the other, was validated. Also the opinion on entertainment services impacts length of stay.

Generally, the opinion on tourism services diversification level is satisfactory, but there are differences in opinion between the two tourist groups, the foreigners being more demanding. The tourism services diversification level has a direct influence on visit frequency and impacts the intention to repeat the visit during the next three years.

Theoretical conclusions

In the present economic conditions, it is clearer than ever that tourism services, given their proper place, may act as catalysts for destination development. Given the magnitude and dynamism of tourism, a continuous process of tourism services development and diversification can easily be observed.

In Romania, tourism activity does not reach the level allowed by its valuable tourism potential, a strategic approach at tourism services level being called for. Development and diversification of tourism services as strategic approaches are recommended by services intrinsic characteristics and are sustained by a series of considerations related to international context reshaping, influenced by economic instability and uncertainty, the possibility to increase tourism competitiveness, sector dynamics, fierce competition on tourism market, and also consumer behaviour changes.

After analysing the tourism environment and activity evolution in Romania, and considering the suitable strategic approaches, a number of strategic orientations for tourism services development and diversification in Romania were identified: strategic options at a business level, and those related to the marketing mix respectively. The differentiated implementation of strategies at every tourism

service category level led to the enrichment of tourism services ensemble, function of each category peculiarities. At the same time, common paths of these strategic orientations are represented by quality improvement and increased attention paid to satisfying consumer needs through tourism services personalization.

Practical application of the dissertation

Its main trait refers to the descriptive allure of the case study offering a real and timely, up-to-date image of tourists' opinion regarding tourism services in Romania. It is an attempt to raise awareness on the importance of tourism services for the development of national tourism and further more, for the development of the country's economy. The results of the survey and the recommendations formulated based on these results bring to light several issues of contemporary Romanian tourism, both from well-known and newer, modern angles.

Content of the dissertation

Abstract of chapter one

In the first chapter the importance of tourism services in the national economy is presented by analysing representative indicators. The presentation of tourism services content, as well as the structure of theoretical approaches on development and diversification concepts has been essential for the theme substantiation.

We have considered necessary the argumentation of strategic approach of tourism services development and diversification processes, the presentation of conditions to be met, given the present economic and geopolitical situation, and the identification of major factors impacting these strategies; these aspects were discussed at the conceptual level and reported to the realities of Romanian tourism.

Abstract of chapter two

The second chapter aims at the accomplishment of a transparent image of the environment and the tourism activity in our country, and the results have been synthesised in the form of a SWOT analysis.

The competitiveness of the country as a tourism destination remains low, highlighting the obvious need for a radical transformation of the country's image as a destination by implementing measures to revive the tourism and by promoting strong and consistent associations with characteristic positive elements, being related especially to the extremely valuable anthropic and natural potential.

Abstract of chapter three

The third chapter aims at highlighting the role of the strategy within the tourism activity, the concept development and the professionals' concerns, underlying thus their great importance, and subsequently at the application of methods and instruments for the substantiation of strategies, identifying the strategic options oriented towards the development and diversification of tourism services.

Abstract of chapter four

The fourth chapter aims at the implementation of strategies identified with specific tourism services. Differential implementation of strategies, depending on the particularity of each category of services, led to multiple open opportunities. There may be also identified common directions for all categories of services, namely the opportunity offered by quality increase and raising attention given to consumer satisfaction through personalized services.

Abstract of chapter five

The fifth chapter has two main coordinates: a) an overview of the Romanian seaside, highlighting its natural and anthropic tourism potential, analysis of the general and specific technical and material basis, of tourism activity conducted in recent years, as well as of tourism services, and b) a research on tourists' opinion which, based on results, led to formulation of conclusions regarding their perception on the tourism services offered on the Romanian seaside and allowed the enunciation of suggestions for improvement.