

TENDENCIES AND THE MANAGEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL TOURIST MARKET CHANGES

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Abstract

At present, international tourism tends to become a new way of life and, why not, a point of reference with respect to the social status of tourist product consumers. Specialists in the field state that, in most cases, the new forms of tourist consumption superpose over social classes, tourism becoming thus a socio-cultural barometer.

Taking advantage of the media support it has - documentaries on tourist issues, TV shows, video series, newspapers and magazines, in a world where internationalization and integration become increasingly heightened, tourism is the industry with the highest degree of success in cultural exports.

Tourists and tourist evolution affect almost every country, with a strong impact on communities, the environment and the economy. At the same time, tourism is a continuous source of relaxation and entertainment for hundreds of millions of people and creates contacts among them.

At the same time, tourism and the economic activities involved represent at present the most significant sector of the world economy. Nowadays, the tourism industry has become the field with the strongest dynamics, involving various fields of activity, being thus a global economic stimulator. On the other hand, tourism is also the greatest employer of the world economy and will continue to be, against the current recessions caused by terrorism and by other turbulences that have affected international travels lately.

The tourism industry is in an ongoing process of globalization. We witness a more and more obvious phenomenon where global players dominate the market, while local partners depend on them, on their strategies and preferences. The competitions among tour operators, hotel chains, airline companies, agencies etc are increasingly high. Consequently, enterprisers/managers must assess current tourism with its needs and requirements and, through managerial excellence, must acquire the ability to draft and implement strategies and plans that will guarantee the success on the more and more internationalized market of tourism.

- Is tourism internationalization a real problem or not?
- Modern technology affects the profile of the international tourism market;
- The changes in the structure of tourist consumption affect the evolution of global tourism or not, etc.

All these are only a few questions to which we hope to find answers in this paper.

Tourism evolution over time has generated a series of mutations not only from the viewpoint of the manner in which they have been created, distributed and sold, but also from the perspective of the fields involved in creating the finished product, since the entire economic and cultural community is involved. Practically we witness major changes especially with respect to the increase of the total volume of time dedicated to tourism, the

fragmentation and intensification of tourist consumption; which is why one can state that people become tourists for a large portion of time, and the limits between tourist consumption and other forms of consumption become increasingly insignificant.

The above-mentioned issues are obvious especially in countries with developed economy and become more and more frequent in developing countries because, when we talk of spare time, people have often the tendency to imitate those belonging to classes with a superior social status.

It is interesting to approach the manner in which literature in the field treats the topic old forms of tourism or the so-called ‘mass tourism’ and new forms of tourism, which certainly involve a series of characteristics, but which will be disqualified in the future, being able to enter easily the category ‘mass tourism’.

Mass tourism is characterized by the participation of a large number of consumers who usually look for standardized products with relatively low costs and which is promoted in already known destinations on certain tourism forms, such as, for example, the seashore. Similarly, the international market of tour operators is also segmented, since they have become more and more specialized, given the addressability of the mass consumer, and operating on highly requested pre-established destinations.

Another category of consumers, many times identified among people with high income levels, is represented by those who tend to consume those products which usually generate the accumulation of cultural capital, focusing thus on searching traditional, authentic or exotic aspects, which, most of the time, generate authentic, exclusive, high-priced products.

From among the tendencies registered on the international tourism market it is obvious to note the one related to the emergence and use of credit cards which stimulate the growth of tourist products consumers, issue that is visible on the Romanian market as well. To this, one might add the use of the Internet, online bookings, as well as last minute offers launched by the bidders of tourist products which lead, to the same extent, to stimulating travels.

Current tendencies also include the fragmentation of holidays and the development of short-term tourism, usually with stays of 1-3 nights in accommodation premises, which represents approximately 50% of the total amount of bought holidays, according to current statistics.

The desire to acquire interesting, unique experiences is also another tendency, which addresses ‘the senses’ in particular and which may be, in their turn, divided into four categories:

1. as experiences;
2. as information;
3. as classification of the consumer depending on what s/he consumes;
4. as socialization means.

Last but not least, we also have to indicate the **factors** which, in time, have influenced international travels (income levels, prices and fees, tourist offer, demographic evolution, spare time, psycho-social factors) which continue to affect tourism market, but they have undergone changes from the perspective of their relevance with respect to the buying decision, changes generated by the multinationalization of the phenomenon.

Thus, the hierachic order of factors influencing international tourism acquires a new form, as follows:

- time ;
- the system of values and lifestyle;
- services.

A. Time.

Not long ago, analysts forecasted that the use of high-tech information means will make possible the reduction of the labor week and, as a result, the increase of the time spent outside working hours. Unfortunately, companies have diminished the number of jobs, granting more and more tasks to current employees. The managers whose number has considerably increased during the last years have extended their working schedule even more than the rest of the employees. The time they used to spend shopping or in the company of friends is now spent in companies or at the office, the hours or days off work being extremely valuable. Therefore, two-week holidays have been replaced by escapes of 2-3 days throughout the year, and the request for such weekends spent usually in the great cultural centers of the world become more and more popular.

B. The system of values and lifestyle

One of the significant tendencies on the American continent and which becomes increasingly popular in Europe, too, is the preoccupation for a healthy diet. The lack of cholesterol and fat in food, associated with experiencing new flavors and dishes, the increased interest for eating in restaurants, for exceeding the limits of national cuisine and the internationalization of dishes will give a new dimension to the mentality and desire to act at the level of restaurant management, regardless of the part of the world they are located.

C. Services

The pressures of the competition make a hotel or a restaurant more and more difficult to spot from its rivals, especially at the level of international chains. As soon as a company offers a product or a service to attract customers, the competition launches it much improved on the market. The result is the presence on the market of rather uniform basic products and services, but with a very high quality.

In this respect, we may exemplify with the fact that banks provide checks and deposits with the same terms and conditions, airline companies propose passengers the same types of service classes, hotels make available the same basic services. However, what sets them apart one from the other is care for details and the ability of the people involved to meet the needs of a wide array of customers' requirements. At present, this is the field, in fact, where the battle for obtaining supremacy takes place.

Customized services and care for details dictate the hierarchic order of the best hotels, restaurants, airline companies. Restaurants register in their own data bases information related to the consumer's preferences in food, drinks and position of their table, and hotels ensure rapid check-in, storage of the guests' personal data and respect of the proposed lifestyle, of the schedule, of the hours to serve meals, of consumptions habits.

In broad lines, the internationalization points of reference are the same: quality, high degree of comfort and services. Consequently, on a competitive market, building and maintaining a respected name on the market is a top priority. Customers stay generally loyal to the brand and, thus building and maintaining a respected name in the field acquires a greater significance than ever before.

With respect to the **forms of tourism**, it is difficult to count data regarding the increasingly high importance of new forms of tourism. A great deal of the existing information comes from certain sites and, as a result, general figures are difficult to gather. However, some authors have commented upon the emergence of new forms of tourism, identifying a number of key types:

- cultural tourism;
- ecotourism;
- adventure tourism;
- visits to theme parks/large-size malls;
- black tourism.

As to the above-mentioned forms of tourism, certain specialists suggest that they may sometimes be contested, because of the fact that under certain circumstances, their border lines cannot be clearly set.

The emergence of new forms of tourism is the result of the growth of the so-called ‘middle class’, for which mass tourism is no longer satisfactory. They wish to spend their spare time and their holidays trying valuable experiences that would give them the opportunity to develop their cultural capital.

The new forms of tourism and the manner in which they are displayed are deemed to offer all the benefits envisaged by tourists.

In a broader economic context, specialists state that there is a “movement away from the service economy towards an economy based on experiences, where goods and services are no longer sufficient in themselves and are appreciated depending on the experiences they provide. Such experiences are based on the consumers’ involvement in creating a customized, unforgettable product, which addresses senses in particular”¹.

In the end, we cannot omit the issue related to the fact that tourism is a complex field of activities, determined by a variety of factors. In the study carried out by OMT named **“Forecasts regarding tourism for the year 2000 and later”**, specialists group these factors into two categories:

- exogenous factors, which are directly or indirectly related to tourism and whose influence, size and structure is necessary in tourism;
- the market forces, represented by the need of the existence of tourist product and service supply and distribution.

From among **exogenous factors**, the following have been analyzed:

* *economic and financial factors*, indicating that:

- the consumption volume depends on incomes and prices;
- limiting the tourist resources determines the option for one holiday, not far away from home;
- during periods of economic growth, there is a tendency opposed to the previous one;
- the highest impact upon the costs of travels abroad belongs to the level/fluctuation of various fees.

¹ Rhodri Thomas, *Small Firms In Tourism:International perspectives*, Centre for tourism Management, Leeds metropolitan university, UK, 2004, pag 167

* *social-demographic factors*, reaching the following conclusions:

- the age group of potential tourists between 36-54, a group with high income levels;

- the market segment represented by retired persons is raising; the improvement of communication means has contributed to a better information of the population, which resulted in a market with requirements for many and varied tourist products and services.

* *technology*: the large-scale use of information technology in the field of tourism and travels has generated a series of changes in the producer-consumer relationship, since the customers have now the opportunity to obtain information on travel variants and conditions; another developing technology which will have a strong impact upon tourism is virtual reality, which registers pros and cons (the potential consumer may experience 'live' what happens in a trip; at the same time, there is the risk of diminishing the interest for travels).

* *natural environment* is an exogenous factor that has to be considered as a priority of sustainable development; at present, there have been drafted 'codes' of tourists' behaviour in nature, which are a superior form of accumulating nature-related knowledge (natural environment), the travel safety and security; at the same time, they represent compulsory quality components of tourism.

The market forces refer to:

- the changes in tourist consumption (the demand for nonconventional products will increase by 10% / year, the ecotourism demand will increase by 25-30% / year, while cultural tourism increases by 10-15% / year.);
- the development and diversification of tourist products in a very alert rhythm;
- globalization – as feature of the current economic evolution – in tourism will be represented by the vertical integration of the private sector in order to form groups of companies with joint interests (airline companies, hotel chains);
- the development of human resources – it has been proved that professional training at all levels has a strong impact upon the development of tourism industry.

We may conclude that international tourism and travels represent a very dynamic market, with well-defined features and particularities, but, as can be noticed, it is subject to many debates, since it is the market with the highest degree of sense involvement and this because spare time and spending it in a pleasant and useful manner must perfectly match quality and excellence in services.

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