

TOURISM POTENTIAL AND THE WAY TO ACHIVE SUCCESS ALONG THE DANUBE REGION BASED ON THE DATOURWAY PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the paper is to highlight the tourism potential of the Danube region and the findings/conclusions of the Datourway project, that is the first tourism strategy prepared specially for the Danube.

There were 7 countries (Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia and Italy) participating in the project in the period of 2009-2012 and all 7 countries agreed on a common strategy, i.e. how the tourism could be developed along the Danube considering the tourism potential of each country.

The paper shows the results and gives answer how the different (economically and organisationally) regions can cooperate with each other to achieve their common goal. At the same time also will be highlighted how and why the Datourway project could and will contribute to the sustainable development along the Danube.

The paper is highlighting the requirements of tourism development, how the tourism potential might be used considering the present expectations of the visitors and tourists.

Key words: Danube, attraction, development of destination, image, brand, sustainability, tourism potential

Acknowledgments: The author expresses his acknowledgment to all participants but wishes to highlight the lead partner of the project i.e. VÁTI Hungarian Nonprofit Ltd. Company for Regional Development and Town Planning and its main partner Scientific Association for Spatial Development that worked out the strategy and on behalf of which the author has been participating in the process.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism, specially nowadays needs sustainable solutions ie. development that is contributing to the economy. Over the past six decades, tourism has experienced continued expansion and diversification becoming one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world.

As a matter of fact despite of the world wide economical crisis tourism after a slight decrease contiues to grow and went back to the foreseen tendency, reaching 940 million tourist arrival in 2010.

Appr. 50 % of the tourist arrivals and international tourist receipts is realized in Europe. Within Europe in the European Union tourism is playing a very important role because there are 1.8 million enterprises having relationship to the tourism, providing 9.7 working places and contributing indirectly 10 % the GDP.

The Danube provides 2,800 km long water route in Europe going through 10 countries to reach the Black Sea. In the last years there were several European projects with the aim of developing the Danube Region (Europeanization of the Danube Region: The Blue Ribbon Project, European Danube Strategy, Donauregionen+ and Donauregionen++) but the Datourway project is the first with the aim to develop tourism.

The Datourway projects one of main achievement is that the concept of tourism is interpreted in a broad sense. It is regarded as a complex activity either at short or long term, oriented towards recreation, resort and leisure, cultural enrichment, enjoyment of natural beauty as well as physical exercise.

At the same time the Datourway project shows a way for effective transnational cooperation of countries engaged in developing tourism along the Danube and using Danube as a natural attraction meantime highlighting various exesting not yet used touristic potential of the river and its neighborhood.

The main aims of the project were:

- setting up a GIS based information system
- to integrate national, regional and local statistical data
- to carry out national targeted analyses and also to synthesize evaluating the findings
- to carry out pilot projects (showing best practices)
- to collect information and complete a database of attractions

The Datourway project is an outstanding example of cooperation of the participating 7 countries and the paper is intended to show how the tourism potential of the Danube region along the middle and southern region can be utilized in the future using the tourism potential.

The paper is showing that how the presenting and showing that the participating countriesThe DATOURWAY project presents an outstanding example of transnational cooperation committed to the development of tourism along and on the middle and south-eastern section of the Danube River, while paying particular attention to the protection and enhancement of the natural and cultural resources linked to this area of the great European waterway. It is not the aim of the projects to create new institutional structures. The intended transnational co-operation shall be based on common agreements on the working structure without institutional settings. In DATOURWAY the principle is to reach a transnational agreement on a common tourism strategy and integration of policies and pilot projects into national, regional and local as well as European plans and policies.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study is prepared partly with the help of the internet and also with the help of those documents and workmaterials, presentations that were prepared during the Datourway project. At the same time research is carried out to investigate the tourism potential. There is a special desk research is carried out in order to outline the issues that are considered developing tourism.

TOURISM – AIM AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMY

Tourism has several definitions. There are several tourism experts, scientists giving definition for tourism: Kaspar, Hunziker, Krapp, Freyer, Cohen, Krippendorf, Pernyez etc. The definitions given by the experts, aim to cover all fields, and forms of tourism therefore the outcome somehow philosophical.

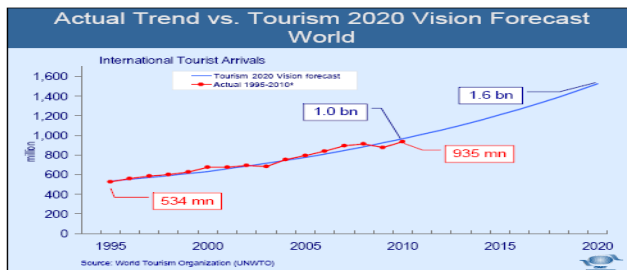
According to Pompl (2000 p. 17) Tourism Society gives the following definition of tourism: "Tourism is deemed to include any activity concerned with the temporary short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work, and their stay at these destinations."

Tourism is a world wide industry playing very important role in the economy having connection to the several fields of the economy. Its importance is clear and understandable because receiving a tourist we need 8 workplaces. The tourism system is complex at the same time. The tourism system is complex because there are 7 industrial fields which is the base of tourism states the UNWTO according to Babu-Mishra-Parida (2008, p. 44.) and the US Standard Industrial Classification System lists 35 different industrial components (Roehl 1998) mentions Babu-Mishra-Parida (2008, p. 44)

The A United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) in 2010 showed 935 million tourist arrivals. It is 22 million more than the figure of 2008 (913 million) just before the crisis when in 2009 the tourism suffered a decrease (877 million tourist arrivals). This figure of 2010 already shows that tourism is going back to the level before the economic crisis and continues to grow, showing the UNWTO tendency to reach 1.6 billion tourist arrivals by 2020 as shown on Figure No.1.

Trend of tourism

Figure No.1



34

Source: John G. C. Kester (2011 UNWTO Madrid) p.34.

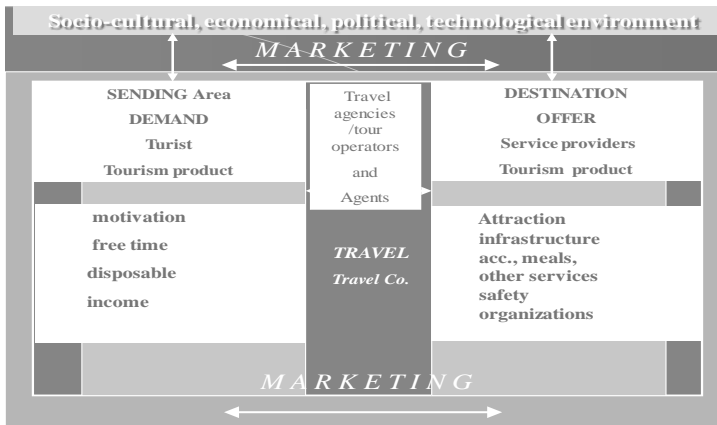
The tourism as of this aims to satisfies the participants i.e. tourist creating value for them providing quality service. The touristic product is complex containing different services. The services are fitting to each other and they are never on its own but in the “space” where the infrastructure surrounds. As of this the product itself is part/element of the destination to which the tourist would like to travel. It means that the touristic product is dependent on the local possibilities that makes the destination attractive. Therefore the attraction is the key and is the start of the tourism but there but the service providers and the environment – hotels, restaurants, transportation companies, travel agencies, tour operators etc. – the complex infrastructure is also required.

The attraction means on local, regional and country level the potential of tourism. Not the attractions mean the potential only but accessibility and the entire infrastructure must be evaluated too.

The system of tourism and success of touristic service providers based on the attraction and also how is it communicated as Figure 2 shows it.

The complex system of tourism

Figure No. 2.



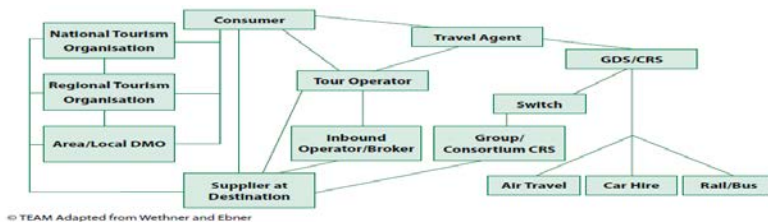
Source: prepared by the author based on Pompl 1, 2000 p. 21 p.60 and Bridging¹ 2010, p. 4

It is obvious that tourism is a complex system with a number of participants and an intensive marketing activity, communication is a key factor of this industry having a huge competition. In this environment it is not surprising that quality plays important role in the success because the tourists perceive quality.

The participants of the system are shown on Figure No.3 by UNWTO.

The travel system

Figure No. 3



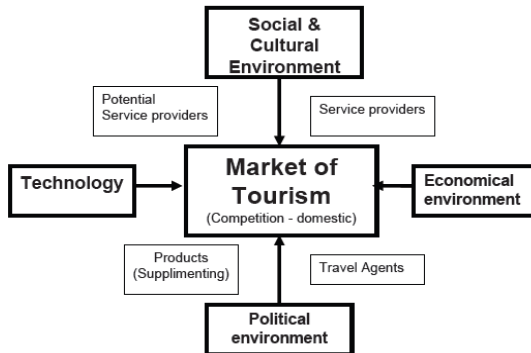
Source: UNWTO 2007 pp 73

¹ The author is the owner of Bridging having prepared a number of tourism related research and strategy for region, small region

The situation of the competition within the tourism industry can be explained by the model of Pompl based on the Porter model (Figure No.4).

Market of tourism based on the Porter model

Figure No. 4



Source: Pompl 1 (2000 pp 60)

In the 1970s the companies more and more focused on reaching the customers not by the product directly but communicating to them a certain image. It means that the customer receives a lots of information that changed the customer (Fabricius 2002).

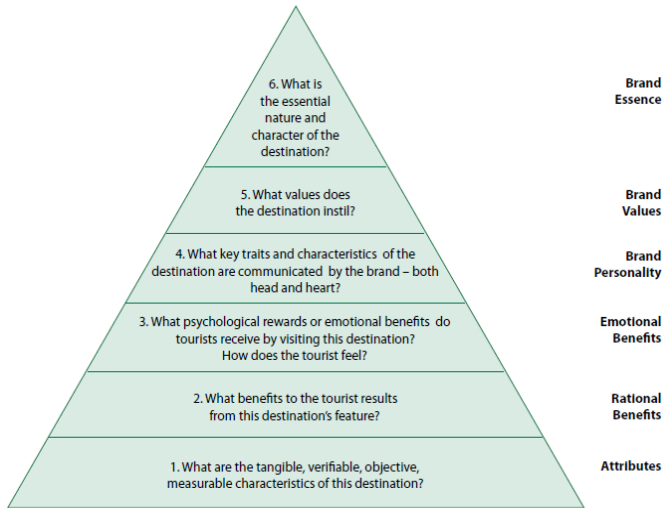
The result is that the customer and as of this the tourist aims to receive not the product directly but aims to have and receive experience. The new tourist aims to have good experience that he/she will remember for a long time so a kind of *brand experience* must be communicated because this makes the customer to return.

The geographical place chosen/visited by the tourists has special, individual historical cultural characteristics meaning the experience (Aubert 2006 after TH Bieger 1997 pp 369). The key is to provide i.e. communicate the information with outlining what is the Unique Selling Proposition, what means the unique experience.

In this sense the key is to built up a brand and image for the destination. How it should be built up explained by the Brand pyramid (Figure No. 5.)

The brand pyramid

Figure No. 5.



Source: UNWTO 2007 pp 49

Today in the global market of tourism in the decision making process the communication and the cooperation of the participants is the key element. Only those regions, destinations can be successful that are able to define and are aware of their own attractions and are able to built up image and brand for themselves. This is not a question in those countries where tourism is successful like Austria, Switzerland, Great Britain etc.(Hoffmann-Semsei 2012)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The strategy defines that for the Danube in all countries developing a brand should be an overall vision carrying the message, that the Danube is an attractive and unique destination. Creating a Danube “brand” is the tool to achieve economic development of the region too.

Considering all the above and the fact that the Danube region can be attractive by connecting tourism and culture by defining a quality riverside brand based on the heritage of Danube and identity the strategy defined that is accepted by all participating countries: .

„ Attractive and unique Danube region (by the connection of tourism and the Danube culture)”

„In the Danube countries of the DATOURWAY project area there are ample potentials for short

term as well as week-long or even longer tourism. These *potentials are not fully exploited, at some places they are not used* at all, although all national governments and the majority of local governments are eager to attract visitors and benefit from tourist activities.

In the DATOURWAY region of 6 countries there are altogether 384 tourist accommodations.

Nearly 47% is in Romania, 40 % in Hungary. The rest of 13 % is share by the other four

COUNTRIES IN MORE OR LESS ACCORDANCE WITH THE TERRITORIAL DISTRIBUTION.” (Datourway Strategy 2012)

In order to achieve the brand touristic products must be identified based on attraction, infrastructure, services and transportation. The attraction is the main element that creates motivation that makes the tourists to visit the places of interest.

Nowdays, in order to achieve success that is tourists visit the places and spend overnights there, the role of internet is obvious. It means that the places of interest must make the information available about themselves in order to motivate the potential visitors to come spend overnights, trying and having good experience.

CONCLUSIONS

In DATOURWAY the principle is to reach a transnational agreement on a common tourism strategy and integration of policies and pilot projects into national, regional and local as well as European plans and policies.

It was not and it is not the aim of the projects to create new institutional structures. The intended transnational co-operation shall be based on common agreements on the working structure without institutional settings. In DATOURWAY the principle is to reach a transnational agreement on a common tourism strategy and integration of policies and pilot projects into national, regional and local as well as European plans and policies.

There are pilot projects defined that have all the information in order to start the project as a tourism development.

The final document - DATOURWAY Strategy: Transnational Strategy for the Sustainable territorial Development of the Danube Area with special regard to Tourism – focuses on developing destination and attractions as it is required for the future economic development. Therefore it is important to mention that together with collecting the data Investment Guide Book was also prepared giving suggestions. The main outcome of the project is finding the common way for development in the heterogenous region.

The future of the Danube Region tourism means that the aim of the strategy defined must be systematically carried out. There is no new institutional set up suggested but the existing one must be used in an effective way. In those countries where the tourism is not managed by a destination organization it is suggested to develop and established. In this sense within the Danube region and

the participating countries Hungary can be an example of the “Good Practices” because there is a tourism destination management both on local and regional level. These Tourism Destination Management Organizations help in the clusterization and in the branding process

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