

# THE TOURISM SYSTEM – MAIN DIRECTIONS IN EVALUATING ITS OPERATION

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*Key-words:* tourism, tourism science, functional structure.

**The tourism system – primary directions in evaluating its operation.** Tourism represents a complex system, with dynamic, geographic, temporal and unitary structure and functionality. It has various components of different influences according to the human interest determined by the social, economic, scientific and political conditions of the moment. Tourism implies special investigation and valuation on the crossing point of representatives from different fields of activities and diverse levels of the system hierarchically arranged. Tourism activities also imply quantitative and qualitative evaluations for the use of authorities, tourism operators, communities and tourists (influencing their decision-making process). Minute investigations, quantification and selection of tourism patrimony elements are essential in its valuation programs and regional socio-economic development programs. The paper deals with these considerations, providing a synthesis in tables and figures to analyse tourism activity.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism should be considered a complex system, fitted together and positioned in an area of interference of the essential components of the natural, social, and economic environments, whose development inherently led – theoretically – to the affirmation of a new interdisciplinary field of research which could be named the science of tourism), – and practically – to a variety of different activities which on the one hand engages part of the population as service providers, and also beneficiaries of tourism products, and on the other hand lead to the economic, social, spiritual development.

Tourism is, among other things, a system of distinct activities and studies (knowledge), whose complexity is strongly influenced by both the variety of its components, and the level of influence of those, against the human concern imposed by social, economic and political conditions of the moment. Hence, its distinction as an area of investigation and capitalization in the interweaving field of different branches of activity (scientific, economic, communicational and educational, political, etc.).

The expansion – both territorial and in time – of tourism activities, as well as their multiplication, led to diversification of the aspects (landings) of touristic domain (Fig. 1). Passing from local aspects of organization and limited deployment, for a small number of tourists to more comprehensive concerns involving interference of interests towards capitalization of touristic background, both from those who sought the economic side, as well as the beneficiaries of natural, spiritual, scientific properties, recreation, sports, etc. This led to the individualization of different directions within the system which, by multiplying the links between them, and also with external elements, imposed tourism as a distinct field, paternal, unitary, structured and with a separate organisation.

At first, we can separate these few steps having a functional destination more clearly ranked at international level (World Tourism Organization – WTO), at national level (ministries, departments, ANTREC, etc.) and regional (agencies, associations, travel clubs, etc.). Second is rendered more (on a

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local and national level) towards investigation, analysis, and quantitative and qualitative feedback, including the selection of touristic heritage items. Related to this expanded the design and realization of various facilities with a role in carrying out touristic activities and thus establishing a touristic heritage.

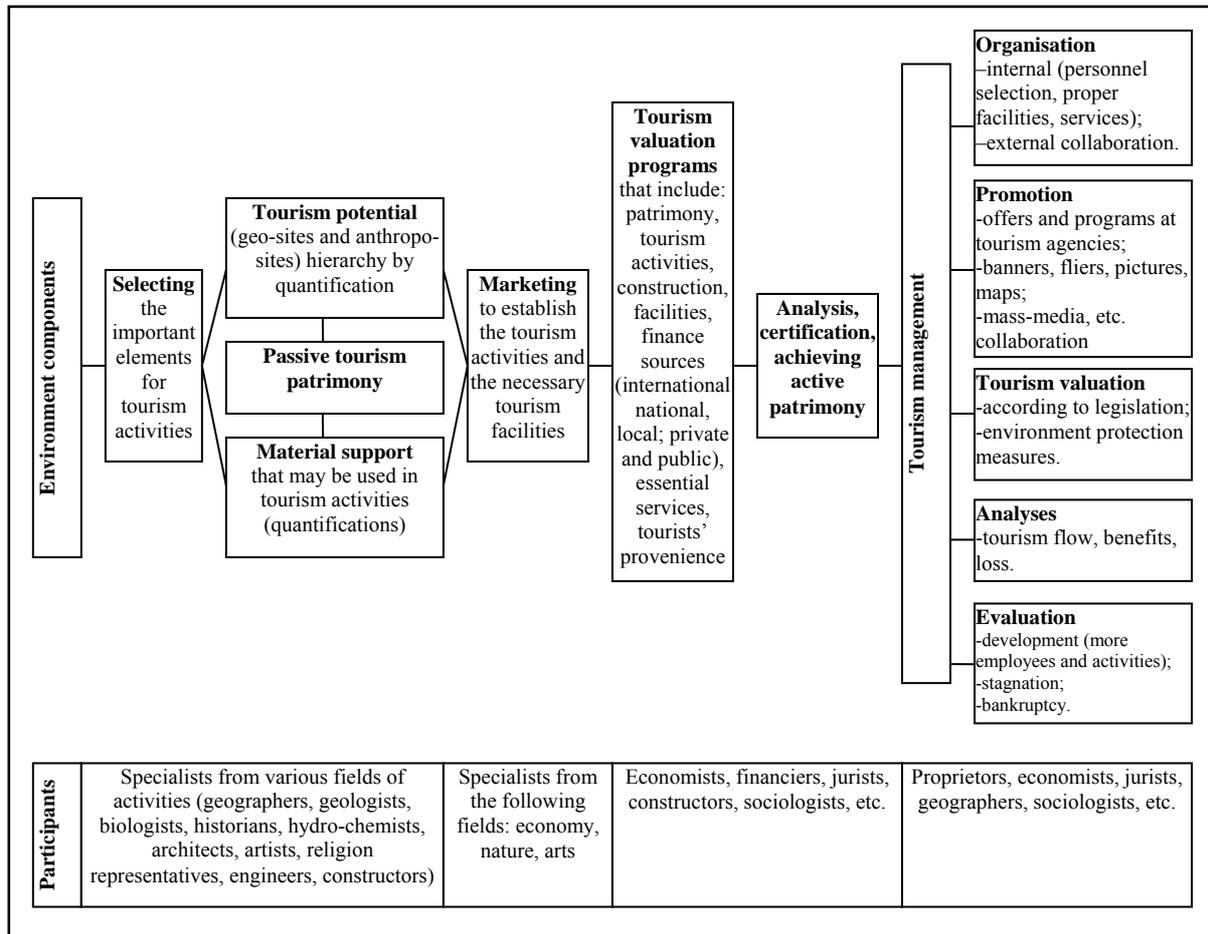


Fig. 1 – The sequence of activities and functional levels in tourism.

These are but a few guidelines providing a basis for the analysis of the role that research and capitalization of the touristic heritage has, imposing touristic field as the object of tourism science. They have the documentation to support both European and national level, but also a long theoretical and practical work in this direction.

## 2. A COMMON LANGUAGE IN TOURISM, AN IMPERATIVE

Theoretically is absolutely necessary to achieve a unified theoretical background leading to a proper understanding of intentions and ways to develop tourism heritage, and on the other hand to extend marketing and management tasks to achieve possible forecasts.

It has been created gradually a specific language of tourism activity, definitions with a mixed content, much influenced by the views of those who develop practical activities in various sectors of tourism. But as subsequent cooperation between them and debates in national and international level

meetings (organized under the WTO), the situation has been partially adjusted, especially in basic terms (remain differences in scope of understanding, in the use of parallel terms of close significance). In this respect, in our opinion, is necessary from the beginning the definitization of those terms with distinct role in understanding the composition and functional structure of tourism.

The basic components of touristic area fall directly into a hierarchical and functional unit, which is the subject of a **tourism** science.

The concept of **tourist** has been considered since the 19th century, but also today, as a participant in types of activity, leisure, rest, knowledge and even some forms of hazard. It gradually extended its sphere of understanding and use to many other concerns required by various reasons, but also the ways in which it is practiced, some of them stimulative (adventure, extreme sports, business, etc.), restrictive (constrained to a duration exceeding one day or a space outside the residential area; service performance leading to monetary gain, etc.) or inappropriate (strictly professional, political, electoral travels, erotic exotism, begging, etc.). The real meaning – in line with current requirements – should be reported to at least three requirement, as follows:

- *a distinct movement motivation* (tracking, relaxation, rest, adventure, knowledge, etc.);
- *leisure in spare time* (outside work hours) from a few hours (one hour tour and visit to a museum, etc.) to several weeks;
- *travelling outside professional concerns*.

**Tourism**, regardless of the option as sense related to basic training, is a broad term that refers to a complex but unitary system, in which the components are inter-related in variable proportions, and the analysis of which (in the last decades by quantization) leads to the establishment (through a primary marketing) of both the level of knowledge and exploitation for tourism (a region, zone, axis, center, etc.), as well as shaping of an evolving direction which is profitable for both visitors and servicing personnel, and to ensure economic and social development of the region. In the accomplishment of these goals the support and the ideas of projects related to all specialists trained in different directions must be unanimous.

### 3. TOURISM – FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE

Tourism has to be integrated within the unitary system of the economy. From the macroeconomic point of view, tourism organisation implies a proper framework, a sequence and connection of tourism components that ensure its optimal functioning. Statistics proves the economic importance of this sector in using labour, or in export and import. The increasing need of capital makes governments to involve more in supporting tourism.

Systematic and permanent information on demand and offer of tourism (national, regional, local) destinations are essential in making an efficient tourism policy. Legislative, organisational and administrative measures represent the institutional support of tourism activities. Tourism organisations and authorities may be public or private, commercial companies or professional associations with international, national or regional (local) activities.

Tourism organisation system is made up of three hierarchical levels: central (coordinator) authority, regional (local) authorities and sectorial organisations (Minciu 2000). The central authority may be the national administration and is often correlated with the international authorities and their structures. Its main attributions are: to coordinate tourism activities nationally; to prepare the strategy of tourism development; to promote tourism internationally and domestically; to initiate and promote rules and specific regulations; to be a representative within international tourism organisations. The regional organisations prepare and coordinate the tourism strategy on local level, cooperate with municipalities, and carry out marketing actions in tourism by providing information and lodging services and a wide range of promotional activities. The regional organisations usually have functional

autonomy and own budgets, and may be non-governmental organisations (for example ANTREC, Asociația Mărginimii) and foundations. The sectorial organisations represent the elementary cells of tourism system: commercial companies or professional associations, direct producers of holidays and tourism service providers.

Within this analysing, conceiving and forecasting system, geographers have precise tasks in many chapters of the projects, but especially in investigating and quantifying the tourism patrimony, evaluating the human resources as providers and beneficiaries of tourism acts, studying and forecasting tourism flows, specifying the types of tourism activities that can be done according to the regional patrimony, directing to certain prior offers, etc (Table 1).

Such system would provide noticeable results as: hierarchical appreciations of tourism patrimony' components; a realistic direction in establishing the tourism activities of immediate efficiency or future valuation; the type and volume of tourism facilities included in plans of tourism development; market research and management forms.

In order to achieve these goals, some methodological and methodical requirements are mandatory:

- to account (quantified selection) and sequence by value and by tourism activity the natural (geo-sites) and anthropic tourism potential (anthropo-sites), as well as the existing tourism facilities, in order to establish the passive (starting) tourism potential and direct it toward certain profitable tourism activities;

- research (preliminary marketing) in order to appreciate the viability of prospective tourism products for the existing facilities, as well as the future facilities and their necessary financial and human resources;

- a management system proper to the achieved (active) tourism patrimony, according to tourism activities, demands and services (it refers to organisation, leadership and cooperation with product suppliers, transporters, and promoters);

- to know the stimulative and restrictive factors of tourism flow in order to improve the ability to interfere effectively;

- ensuring environment and patrimony protection for the present or future tourism valuation of the respective territory;

- humans should be regarded not only as consumers of tourism products, but also as developers of tourism objectives and structures, tourism managers, main factors in increasing local and regional revenues, or in exchanging cultural experience.

Table 1

Tourism – functional structure

MAIN COMPONENTS	SECONDARY COMPONENTS OF DIFFERENT CATEGORIES			
<b>I. Tourism patrimony (real touristic offer)</b>	Tourism potential (potential touristic offer)	Natural tourism potential (geo-sites)	geomorpho-sites, hydro-sites, eco-sites, etc.	
		Anthropic tourism potential (anthropo-sites)	cultural-historical, sportive, recreational, technical and economic, social	
		Social and demographic tourism potential	population and tourism labour, human (urban, rural) settlements	
	Tourism technical and material support (tourism facilities)	Basic tourism facilities	accommodation units, food and beverage units, means of transportation (including lift transport)	
		Auxiliary tourism facilities	amusements and treatment structures, recreational activities (cultural, artistic, sportive)	
		Supplementary tourism facilities	diverse rental units (car, sportive gear), photography services, souvenir stores, tourism information units	

	General infrastructure (technical and material support)	Means or transportation and communication (accessibility)	road, air, rail, naval, public transport, telecommunication	
		Technical and urban network	water and gas pipes, sewerage systems, electric energy cables, ecologic waste systems	
		Commercial units and service providers	diverse commercial units, medical and pharmaceutical services, postal services, bank services, etc.	
<b>2. Resources to use the tourism patrimony</b>	Financial	Budget	European, national, county programs, etc.	
		Private	private programs	
	Economic	Budget	European, national, county programs, etc.	
		Private	private investors	
	Human	Full-time employees	specialized, unqualified	
		Part-time employees	specialized, unqualified	
<b>3. Types of activities according to different criteria</b>	Environments	Regional	local, national, international tours	
		Anthropic	urban	
			rural (agritourism, rural tourism)	
		With human interventions	mountain	
			aqua-tourism	
			seashore	
			parks with facilities for tourism	
		Natural	mountain	
			natural preserves	
			national parks	
		Duration	A few hours	to one or two tourist sites
			A day	local, regional tours
	More days, weeks		tours	
	Motivation	Cultural-artistic	architectonic	
			artistic	
			ethno-folkloric	
			religious (pilgrimage, church dedication day, etc.)	
		Historical		
		Voyage	curative: spa cure, climatic	
			recreation, rest (camps, weekend, hiking)	
		Leisure (recreation)	seasonally (wintertime, summertime), occasionally or recurrent events (festivals, fairs, anniversaries, scientific events etc.)	
			adventure	
			sports	
			hunting	
			fishing	
			horse riding	
			business	
		recreation		
	Training, creation	training		
		research		
lucrative assistance				
Education	hobby			
	ecotourism etc.			
Economic	visiting industrial, agricultural tourist spots, constructions, traditional equipments			

	Number of participants	Individual		
		Familial		
		Groups	heterogeneous by age and education	
	Others	Tourists, travellers, political activities, etc.		
	Means of transportation	Hiking	trips	
		Auto touring	trips, weekend holidays, tours	
		Bicycling, motorcycling, auto touring, etc.	trips, weekend holidays, tours	
		Cruising trips (with different types of boats, used permanently or by groups)	cruises, navigating through gorges and bays, etc.	
		Air-voyages (by plane, helicopter, balloon, paraglide, etc.)	transfers, tours, adventure	
	Organisation	Individual	trips, hiking, etc.	
		Tour operators, different organizations or associations	trips, tours, cruising trips	
	Destination rank	Local	trips, hiking, etc.	
National		trips, tours, etc.		
International		tours, cruising trips, etc.		
<b>4. Tourism management</b>	Tourism organisation Management, evaluation in unitary systems Programs on different levels (international, national, county, agencies) with opportune partners	Central (coordinator) authority	national tourism authorities with different administration forms: tourism ministry, direction or secretariat within a ministry, public department, governmental office, committee	
		Regional or local authority	non-governmental organisations, associations, foundations	
		Sectorial organisations	commercial companies or professional associations – holiday producers and tourism service providers	
<b>5. Tourism flow analysis</b>	Yearly, seasonally, different periods	Locally, regionally, nationally By activity type By age or profession		
<b>6. Economic benefits</b>	For the participants to different tourism activities	Individually Homogeneous groups (students, adults, retirees, etc.) Heterogeneous groups (specific activity)		
	For tourism service providers	Companies and employees in different structures focused on various tourism activities		
<b>7. Evaluation and forecast</b>	Diverse final analyses	Marketing environment analysis: market, competitors, product and service portfolio, market shares, SWOT analysis Marketing objectives Marketing strategies (of market, product, price, promotion) and the marketing budget Marketing programs (promotion, distribution) Evaluation and control	Favourable elements for tourism activities Restrictive elements for tourism activities Sustainable development in local, regional, national territories Environment and human creation protection and conservation Tourism characteristics sequenced by value from a certain region, city or axis Stakeholders' responsibilities toward tourism	

Though specialists from various fields of activities contribute differently, they agree with the tourism importance on local and regional development and consequently their language and thinking is unitary. There are different programs in content and size:

– *projects of local tourism valuation*, generated by certain characteristics of the natural, historical, artistic, architectonic, religious components, proper for education, information and knowledge tourism activities, leisure, adventure, hobby, photo-safari, etc.; these are villages or cities, mountain areas, sea shores, white waters, steep slopes, caves, etc.;

– *projects for facilities located near large cities*, climatic resorts, spas, or on areas of convergent transport routes; they generate important tourism flows and resources for tourism activities (amusement parks, aquatic complex, ski resorts, commercial or recreational facilities, etc.);

– *projects of complex tourism development for large regional areas* in which the social and economic requirements are correlated with the natural potential and the protection of environment equilibrium, human protection and community rights, so that an efficient and sustainable development may be achieved.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Therefore tourism should be regarded as a field with complex dynamic, geographic, temporal and unitary structure and functionality, and not reduced to a simple economic sector (“tourism industry”) producing revenue. This characteristic may be confirmed if each component of the system is given a proper significance and the connections between them are identified properly. Hence the system as a whole functions appropriately and each category of participants in the tourism process finds its rightful place.

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Received February 11, 2013

