

Stimulating the development of experience products in order to make destinations sustainable

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Abstract

This article makes an analysis of the sustainability of tourist destinations, considering the characteristics of tourist destinations and, consequently, of the tourist products that comprise it. Returning to the discussion on the sustainable development of tourist destinations, it addresses the need for the joint participation of experience economy in the context of cruise tourism and the role of gambling tourism as part of the sustainability of destinations.

Keywords: tourism, experience economy, development, destinations.

1. Introduction

Tourist destinations, with the various tourism products that compose them, to be sustainable, must necessarily seek to define indicators that allow them to manage their sustainability effectively and consider precaution in decision-making as a very relevant aspect for proper development of tourism destinations. Strategic planning and management of the sustainability of tourism development must be considered as necessary elements to guarantee the long-term perspective of the destination. One aspect that must be clearly and consensually defined is the role of stimulating the development of experiences products in order to make destinations sustainable. The role of the economy of experiences in the formation of sustainable tourism in destinations is undoubtedly significant, mainly due to the conscious experience of tourists and their desire to actively participate in their development in the future.

2. Sustainability of destinations and gambling tourism

The concept of sustainable development of destinations must be the basic philosophy of any planning, development and management of tourist activity (destinations / products / companies), always considering it as an instrument / model of development, which relates socio-cultural, environmental, economic and social aspects, participation of the local community, seeking both the satisfaction of visitors and those visited, as well as the conservation of the environment as a way of allowing the continuity of its long-term use. (Manoel J., Gandara G. 2015)

In one way or another, sustainable tourism is defined as an economic development model designed to: improve the quality of life of the local population, that is, of the people who live and work in the tourist destination, provide a higher quality of experience for the visitor, maintain the quality of the environment on which local people and visitors depend, the achievement of higher levels of economic profitability, of the tourist activity for local residents and to ensure that the tourism entrepreneurs obtain benefits, that is, it must be ensured that the sustainable tourism business is profitable, otherwise the entrepreneurs will forget the commitment to sustainability and alter the balance.

We have to emphasize that the theories advocate the practice of what they call sustainable destinations, as opposed to the unsustainable situations already reached. However, most of these studies serve as the basis for tourism developments that are about to start, that is, they are “learning” from mistakes previously made elsewhere. There are still very few cases of seeking to reconvert current unsustainable destinations into sustainable ones (Chirivella, E. 2019). This reconversion is increasingly necessary for these tourist destinations, as well as the search for quality in all its senses and the preservation of the economic bases on which the community relies. Such elements are essential for the transformation of the aforementioned destinations into sustainable ones. It is important that the management of sustainable tourism is local and that there is permanent collaboration between the municipal administration, the private initiative and the local community.

With the aim of facilitating the management of tourism development in a sustainable way, it is important that indicators are established that allow "understanding" the situation in which the tourist destination is located, and in this way, obtain information that allows the decision-making of a more conscious way. By highlighting the fundamental reasons for the use of indicators, the World Tourism Organization (2019) highlights that, through indicators, tourism managers will be in a better position to:

- 1) identify emerging issues, which will allow its prevention or mitigation;
- 2) identify impacts, which will allow action before they cause problems;
- 3) support the development of sustainable tourism, identifying limits and opportunities;
- 4) foster the responsibility of managers, promoting responsible decision-making based on knowledge.

From the long list of possible indicators, which can respond directly to the needs of decision-makers, some key indicators can be highlighted that constitute the basic level of information necessary to manage sustainable tourism in practically any tourist destination. They are: protection of the destination, pressure on the destination, intensity of use, social impact, existence of development control, waste management, existence of a planning process, existence of critical ecosystems, level of tourist satisfaction, level of satisfaction of the local population and contribution of tourism to the local economy. It is also possible to highlight some composite indicators that are largely formed by the specific variables of the destination, such as: the tourist capacity of the destination, the pressure on the destination, and the level of attraction exerted by the destination. For specific types of destinations, such as coastal areas, mountainous regions, natural parks, unique ecological sites, urban environments, cultural sites (heritage), cultural sites (traditional communities) and small islands, they must use some specific indicators. It is essential that there are alarm indicators, that pressures and aggressions are evaluated, that the state of the natural resource base (product) is evaluated and the quantification of its demand, that the impacts and their

consequences are evaluated, that they are evaluated management activities and efforts and their impact. It is equally important to establish and implement standards and to compare the results with those of other destinations. In relation to urban destinations, the main indicators are those related to the lack of security, dirt, congestion, degradation, threats to health (air, noise and water pollution) and the determination of tourist capacity (OMT, 2016).

Gambling tourism is the main reason for the sustainability of the tourist destination due to the large tourist flow of foreign tourists and their solvent balance. Data on the global gambling industry show that revenues continue to fall. For 2018, it is estimated at 449.3\$ billion, which on an annual basis the road is about 4.1% since 2014. It is expected that in 2022 it will reach 565.4\$ billion. (<https://www.economic.bg/bg/a/view/igralnata-industriya-prodolzava-da-raste-114325>)

The gambling industry is a concept that encompasses all enterprises, services and organizations that promote or offer gambling as a commercial activity. In addition to casinos, gambling sites and bookmakers, the industry also includes travel services, advertising and marketing companies, regulatory and legislative activities, which are actively involved in providing games to the public (Гайдаров, 2018).

Respectively, the product of the gambling tourism includes, in addition to the specialized activities offered in the casinos and gaming premises in the respective sites, it could also include products offered by accommodation establishments with similar premises and offering activities as per the different types, games and activities related to tourist services.

The gambling business solves a number of economic and social issues, the geography of gambling depends on the specific development of the economy, its current tasks, managerial and religious paradigm and stimulating the development experiences products. A number of authors address the topic of the economic and social impact of gambling, as well as the factors to be taken into account when analyzing this impact.

Based on a study conducted in 2012 from the "American Gaming Association", significant revenues are found as a result of the development of this type of tourism in some states in the United States. The development of this type of tourism can be considered as a reason for the high level of sustainability of tourist destinations.

However, the actual degree of localized economic impact must be regulated by calculating the share of economic effects that arise. Depending on various factors, both direct and secondary impacts may or may not lead to economic effects of the respective economic region or location. For example, it matters whether the suppliers with whom the hotel that offers casino products works are local or non-local companies. It is also important that the workers who are employed in the respective site, whether they have a permanent residence in the respective area and spend the funds received from their work in it or not, from the point of view of assessing whether there is "Leakage" of income from a tourist area or not.

Another factor that is analyzed in this study concerns the relationship between the effects of casino facilities and other types of business in the local economy, such as the creation of a hotel offering casino products with the presence of a restaurant in it, can lead to a loss of the business of the existing restaurants in the location. Also, locals can spend part of their income on such sites that would otherwise be spent for other purposes. Assuming that consumers tend to have a relatively fixed budget in terms of their time and financial resources, it logically follows that there may be a shift from other leisure activities to the relevant gambling tourism experiences. According to some authors, the transformation of the cost of tourism activities in

the community is not insignificant, but is compensated to some extent by the total return in the tourist area, in terms of local taxes and fees from all market participants in the location. (Rose, W. 2013)

According to the study by the “American Gaming Association”, certain factors can be identified that affect the economy as a result of the activities of the casino industry. The first factor they associate with casino sites located either in a specific tourist location or in a particular hotel complex, which is why they are respectively an attraction for foreign tourists who generate income for the tourist area as a result of consumption of tourist products on a specialized gambling product.

We can also identify two other factors, one related to the ability of casino establishments / hotels to hire labor from the area concerned and another factor related to the opportunities for ancillary activities that are created in the tourist area, which are directly or indirectly related to tourism.

Other ancillary facilities and supporting industries can be set up in the tourist area. If the casino site is not sufficiently developed and vice versa, if the hotel is very large, it will reduce the growth of other businesses in the area, related to catering, shopping and more.

Casinos can produce significant economic effects in the communities and regions in which they are located, although the effects vary widely. The magnitude of the local or regional impact depends most on how many visitors to the casino are attracted from places outside the area, thus reducing the displacement of existing economic activity, and the number of jobs it generates within the area, which in turn leads to an increase in the multiplier effect of the casino.

Here is the place to note that the specialized products related to the casino sites find a place in the regional development of tourism. According to the existing ordinance for tourist zoning and the main types of tourism and complementary ones, it is necessary to seek the combination of casino products with other types of tourist products so that tour operators can prepare the most competitive and sought-after tourist packages.

Economic effects of the activity of the casino industry for the tourist destinations can be mainly expressed through the creation of jobs, both in the destination and in the specific tourist sites and respectively the tax revenues for the local economy. Last but not least, the differentiation of the offered tourist product in the specific tourist site and respectively the packaging of tour operator programs in order to satisfy more consumer motives for sustainability and construction of year-round tourist destinations.

Gambling tourism is a combination of the travel and games sectors. Casino resort hotels play a major role in gambling tourism, attracting visitors to relax for an experience that includes gambling, entertainment and more. Gambling tourism also includes players who visit another place to gamble because they are restricted from playing in their national state or seeking diversification and change.

3. Experience economy in the context of cruise tourism

The development of the modern world is proceeding at a very fast pace, which affects not only technological progress, the rapid growth of innovation, but also such areas as economics, sociology, marketing, tourism industry, etc. In the conditions of the modern market tendencies the economy of the products and services has been moved into the background. Leading

positions were taken by the experience economy, in which products and services are not sold in order to satisfy the customer's needs, but products and services are offered with the help of the emotions that arise when interacting with these products and services. Today, the consumer pays virtually no attention to functional characteristics, convenience, or quality as a material expression. In the first place it is not even the recognition of the brand, but those feelings and impressions that can be experienced when consuming the product or service. A new type of user has emerged, which is characterized by high requirements for comfort, level of service, individual attitude, orientation to an active lifestyle, constant striving to experience new emotions and impressions and more. (Малафий, А., Фатуева, А. & Промышлова, К., 2019).

Experience economics is an approach to the production and supply of products and services, based not on the satisfaction of specific needs, but on the creation of positive impressions, both from the production and supply itself, and from the consumption of products and services, as well as from subsequent sensations. This statement is fully valid for the field of tourism, which is based on the experiences and perceptions of tourists. The economics of experience is not a new industry or production, it is a paradigm shift in the relationship between seller and consumer. Today, offering any product or service is inherently an experience. It is obvious that the emergence of the economy of experiences is associated with changes in the nature and level of needs. (Нувичков, 2013). The economy of experiences is aimed at creating positive memories of the product or service in customers, complementing the economic category: raw material - product - service - impression. The economy of experiences is becoming a priority for a number of tourism organizations, including for tourist destinations and regions.

The economy of experiences is practically the work of the digital generation - young and active people who prefer to spend their money on an experience that they can share on social media, rather than just for a night or an "all inclusive" package. This in turn leads to new challenges for tourist destinations. If before their focus was the differentiation and uniqueness of their products or services, then - the provision of value-added services to already established products, today tourist destinations have begun to focus on creating unforgettable experiences throughout the stay of the consumer. It is the application of this approach that has contributed to the sustainable positioning of some destinations worldwide, such as Singapore, Portugal, Slovenia and Croatia. The last three destinations also fall into the Best of Europe category, part of the "Top 100 Sustainable Destinations" competition, which is being organized for the sixth time to show the stories of sustainable tourism and good practices in local and regional destinations as inspiring examples of hotels, tour operators and travelers. The competition is organized by ITB, Travelife and Green Destinations. By publishing an annual list and sharing good practices for destination management and success stories, the initiators aim to disseminate initiatives that make tourist destinations more sustainable, responsible and more attractive in terms of the experience of the visitors. Participation is open to cities, islands and protected areas where there are qualified individuals, teams or organizations responsible for the management of sustainable tourism. Recently scholars have turned their attention to sustainable experiences as a means of obtaining competitive advantages while enhancing destination sustainability and experience value demonstrate the importance of tourist experiences related to sustainability issues and suggest that in the long run, environmental awareness may lead to changes in tourists' travel intentions. Liu et al. (2016) focus on the relationship between sustainable experiences and satisfaction in natural resource conservation zones. They find that if tourists feel a sense of "novelty" about a tourist

destination, it can increase their sustainability experience and further enhance willingness and satisfaction towards sustainable tourism. Lu et al. (2017) found that feeling “awesome” is an important emotional experience in sustainable tourism within a mountain destination. Poudel and Nyaupane (2013) found that positive changes in attitude and behaviour indicated that environmental interpretation (e.g. by a tour guide) can serve as an effective tool to minimize environmental and socio-cultural impacts. However, it is of note that despite the increase in interest and publications on this issue, the concept of sustainable experiences remains vaguely defined and empirically operationalized.

Therefore, it is important for destinations to identify their uniqueness, which is considered to be a key factor for tourists’ travel decision making. In addition, Pine and Gilmore (1999) argued that the growing competition among experience providers will lead them to develop their offerings to a new stage of economic value creation-transformations, allowing the participants to develop their own narratives and draw upon their own imaginative potential, rather than providing ready-made storylines for them. In the transformation economy, the consumer not only experiences, but is also changed by the experience. The desire for experience, or “experience hunger” that characterizes modern society has always been a major driver of tourism, especially for the postmodern tourists.

Researchers such as Richards and Wilson (2006) proposed the idea of developing creativity in tourist experiences as a solution to avoid serial reproduction of indistinctive destinations. Here, creative cultural capital could be seen as the software to create a distinctive place image or experience for tourism product development. However, it is also vital to look at the hardware-physical characteristics of destinations such as architecture. The architectural environment of a city tells its distinctive characteristics. Tourists’ interactions and experience with the physical features of destinations provide the opportunity to construct their own narratives about themselves.

The modern tourist market is affected by new trends, reflecting the changes taking place in the economy and socio-cultural sphere. The economics of experience is being studied and analyzed by a number of researchers as a new stage in economic development, in which, along with products and services, an "offering of experience" appears on the market, interest in which will inevitably increase. All areas of experience that are distinguished by B. Joseph Pine II & James H. Gilmore (2013) - entertainment, education, "escape from reality", aesthetics³ - can be used in tourism and in particular, in the promotion of such products for sustainability of destinations. In the first place, this is related to the development of specialized types of tourism, attracting travelers with the uniqueness of their proposals (Тимофеева, Стрельникова & Вагапова, 2019).

Such an opportunity is offered by the development of the cruise industry. Cruise tourism is one of the fastest growing specialized types of tourism in recent years. The main reason for this is related to the innovative ideas that cruise companies introduce when offering it through various quantitative and qualitative characteristics (Мишева et al., 2017). The so-called "floating" cities have different amenities and a variety of services, many attractions and the advantage of sightseeing, which makes millions of people around the world choose this format for vacation. But positive aspects open up not only for the countless tourists, but also for the regions and destinations that choose to develop cruise tourism. Most often, the advantages are related to increasing revenues, providing jobs, promoting less recognizable destinations in the interior of tourist areas. One of the most important meanings of cruise

tourism is that in parallel with its development it supports the development of other specialized types of tourism, including religious/pilgrimage, cultural, culinary and others.

The cruise industry is one of the most innovative in the field of tourism and this applies not only to mobile technology, but also to the construction of the ships themselves, the entertainment offered to tourists and the experiences on board. Very often cruise liners are presented as the most luxurious, modern and innovative examples in the development of the tourism business. The so-called "floating cities" offer all the amenities and entertainment that tourists would find in luxury hotels and restaurants on the coast. Cruise companies have successfully used this formula in practice to build relationships with consumers, turning the cruise liner into a producer of experiences and a tool for gaining tourist experience in any form (Безрукова, 2018). The services of modern cruise ships are designed to create an "indelible" first impression in order to resemble new users and increase the level of loyalty of regular users. We can say that the flight with a rope from one side of the deck to the other, free sailing in a wind tunnel, glass capsule with 360 ° view, ice and bionic bar, virtual reality and karting tracks, shows and many other services are the main emotional component of the service, which turns the thinking of the passenger. Encounters with celebrities on self-improvement ships are part of the cruise product offered on thematic cruises, in which the user is provided with a range of communication services at the lingo level, which in itself leads to the experience of strong feelings and emotions. For example, the thoughtful traveler seeks to communicate with the nature and culture of a destination. It is expedition and adventure cruises that are gaining more and more popularity among wealthy users of cruise products.

As a distinctive feature of cruise tourism we can point out its direct impact on the development of coastal areas and port centers. In the framework of the EU Blue Growth Strategy (Blue Growth is the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy's contribution to achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth), the coastal and maritime tourism sector has been identified as an area with particular potential to help build a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe.

The economic benefits of cruise tourism for each destination arise from three main sources (Маринов, В., Асенова, М. and Николова, В., 2014):

- Expenditures incurred by land-based travelers, which are concentrated in shore excursions and retail purchases of clothing, jewelry, etc.;
- Expenditures incurred by onshore crew members, which are concentrated in food and beverage purchases, local transport, clothing retail, electronics, etc.;
- Costs incurred by cruise lines for deliveries, such as food and beverages, port services, such as navigation and utilities, port dues, which include quay and port dues, etc.

The cruise market in Bulgaria has potential if the demand for cruises on the Black Sea coast increases. In this case, Bulgaria has the opportunity to become an important cruise destination, although this will always depend on the development of other cruise terminals on the Black Sea coast. For example, in 2014, the port of Varna welcomed 36 ships due to the crisis in Ukraine and the failures of Odessa, Yalta and the ports of the Crimean peninsula. The courses were redirected to Varna, Burgas and Nessebar. Since 2015, however, the two main ports - Varna and Bourgas - are not part of the cruise routes. Sustainable interest can be expected, however, if historical routes along the coast and inland are included. In recent years, the area around the passenger terminal in Varna has been renovated, and the vision has been

completely changed. Although the lack of cruise ships does not bring major financial losses to ports, it is a very serious problem for tourist sites and business in general, which directly affects the sustainable development of the destination.

Of interest is the study of the dependence of tourist impressions and experiences on the image of the destination. As the competition in the tourist market increases, it becomes clear that the competitiveness of the destination depends on whether it can cause unforgettable tourist impressions for its visitors. (Александрова, 2019). Cruise activity may provide destinations an additional benefit of establishing longer-term customer relationships, as thousands of people may return as independent land tourists. Customers may also recommend the destination to relatives and friends. This argument is generally used by policy makers to give incentives to the cruise lines to be a port of call on their cruise routes (Jugović, A. 2020). However, attracting cruise passengers to return to a destination is not an easy task, for example: cruisers stay in the destination for just a few hours (six on average); cruisers are, in general, repeat cruise travelers; the cruise experience consistently exceeds expectations on a wide range of important vacation attributes, and, as pointed out in FCCA (2011), cruise products deliver unparalleled customer satisfaction.

Income and satisfaction can be improved by increasing the number of passengers using organized excursion services, making them more interesting and attractive, making the offer of domestic products more accessible, improving the port infrastructure, marking the local sights more comprehensively, and attracting tourists within the limited time available. The implementation of these guidelines will improve the overall offerings of the destination, and therefore will have a greater positive impact on the economy, on the local community, and attract more cruise ships. To implement an even greater level of monitoring of cruise tourists' requests for future research, it is suggested that an extended survey be conducted to ask what travelers expect from a particular destination, and what would make them return or recommend the destination.

4. Conclusion

As has been identified, the indicators provide us with information that makes it possible to make decisions seeking the sustainability of the tourist destination. By identifying the experience economy, gambling tourism and emerging issues of the tourist destination, it will be possible to develop the tourism activity within the principles of sustainability. It is important to bear in mind that, for an adequate development of tourism activity, both its impacts on the environment and the effects of environmental alterations on tourism must be understood, since, only by understanding this permanent relationship, one you can act with the objective that such a relationship is positive.

Before being a tourist destination, localities must exist for their local population, since this is the only way for a tourist destination to develop in a sustainable way. Only if the locality is adequately prepared economically, environmentally and socioculturally for tourism development, can the positive impacts be maximized and the negative ones minimized.

We can note that, by their nature, the economics of experiences and the specialized products it creates have a direct impact on the development of destinations and, above all, on their sustainability. stimulating the production and supply of podium products contributes to the development of destinations in conditions of high competition and the need to protect tourist resources.

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