

## ISSUES OVER THE TAXONOMY OF TOURIST FUNCTIONAL UNITS: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF THE TOURIST SITE CONCEPT

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### **Abstract**

*In both Romanian and foreign literature of tourism geography there are used several concepts to describe different elements with tourist valences. The taxonomy of tourist functional units is complex, but yet the concepts are clearly defined according to the elements encompassed, therefore there are no confusions to be taken. There is one concept that is more often used, but there is a lack in its defining. This concept is tourist site. The aim of the present paper is to present and to understand the concept of tourist site having the tourist functional units as a start point.*

**Key words:** taxonomy, functional units, tourist territory, tourist site

### **THE TAXONOMY OF TOURIST FUNCTIONAL UNITS**

The taxonomy of tourist functional units is very rich, there can be distinguished the following: the tourist objective, the tourist sight, the tourist centre, tourist area or region (Cocean, 1996), and the tourist locality and tourist axis (Ielenicz & Comănescu Laura, 2009).

In the Romanian literature for the tourist functional units are giving the following meanings:

- the tourist objective is any natural element, economic, social, cultural knowledge that are of interest or used by a mass of people in order to carry out a tourist activity. It can be natural or anthropic.

- the tourist sights summarizes both resource and infrastructure (Cocean, 1996.), and in another sense is a place outside their settlements or in which there are one or several touristic objective grouped which are thematically linked.

- tourist centres are the urban settlements encompassing several touristic objectives having adequate infrastructure and human resources specialized in tourism (Ielenicz & Comănescu Laura, 2009). They can individualize as independent entities in the area as tourist resorts

- tourist locality is a small settlement in which there are one or more tourist attractions, but missing or reduced basic tourism equipment in order to allow the deployment of sustainable tourism activities.

In order to be considered a tourist region, a territory requires the presence of a massive tourist flow, adequate tourist facilities and equipment (Cândea et al., 2006), and a well-diversified heritage in a large space (Cocean et al., 2005) generally overlapping the major relief units.

### **THE RELATIONSHIP TOURISM AREA – TOURIST REGION**

The relationship tourism area - tourist region is only valid in one sense, any tourist region can be considered tourist area, but the reciprocity is not valid. A tourist region is recognized as its own brand image built according to the elements of attractiveness it holds. (Ielenicz, 2006; Cocean et al., 2005). Area or tourist area is characterized by the presence of certain forms of tourism attractions and homogenous facilities concentrated over a smaller area. Ielenicz M. explains tourist area as: "*a well-defined area of importance for tourism because of a significant touristic objectives, touristic sights, and places connected by appropriate infrastructure in which one or more tourist centres are polarizing the tourism activities*" The most important area or tourist regions can be the touristic axis. It constitutes an area with potential for tourism and travel arrangements that allow some rich tourism activities recorded along a valley or in a depression or major thoroughfares (Ielenicz & Comănescu Laura, 2009).

Thus, it can be considered that tourist area overlaps geographical area and is delimited according to the complexity of tourism the following: specialized tourist areas and polyvalent tourist areas (Câdea et al., 2006). The difference between these two types of areas, according to the authors mentioned above is the scale tourism activities carried out. Therefore, the specialized tourist area is the within tourism is the main economical activity, while within the polyvalent tourist area the tourism activities are of a lower share being carried out in parallel with other activities. Tourism area is defined as: "spatial-temporal system generated by the existence of tourism potential natural / anthropogenic, the presence of a base reception and tourist flows, which interact and condition each other in the presence of economic and social and cultural factors specific factors governing and influencing the development system" (Câdea et al., 2006). Specific characteristics such as geographic components generating tourist flows, tourism traffic intensity, characteristics of various tourist facilities and equipment, specific tourist area itself (specialized or polyvalent) form outlining conditions of different tourist areas such as tourism resorts, spa, lacustrine areas, urban, suburban or rural areas, etc) .

Cocean Gabriela (2007) consider the tourist area as the area "that brings together the structure and functions of the entire overview of elements that encompasses the landscape gathered under the appellation of tourist resources, and the material support of the tourism phenomenon of perspective itself understood as a territory free of attractive vocation, but indispensable do to its position and role to the action of enhancing the existing tourism fund." Human resource plays a major role in organizing tourist area because it determines the optimum deployment of tourist act.

Organizing involves establishing a pattern that identifies all elements that contribute to the transformation of geographical area into a tourist area in this case.

#### **ISSUES OVER THE CONCEPT OF TOURIST SITE**

Mac I. (2000) considers the site as a portion of territory (space) of a certain size and a certain form that has content material, energy and information. Petrea D. (2005) identifies the site with a portion of land bearing significance. The works of the authors mentioned above put a delineation of the terms of the site and place, giving different interpretations to the terms. Therefore, the site is considered the *"area around which the structural and functional graft model originally whose attributes are settlement, size, contents geographic area, specific spatial structure change over time, space, content and functions"* ( Mac, 2000; Josan & Ilieş, 2009) .

The first work of foreign literature regarding site and explaining the concept to which we had access, belongs to the French author Edouard Bonnefous. Passionate of history, demography and ecology, Bonnefous gives a first interpretation of the term site in his work *"Man or nature?"* What is a site? he asks himself, and the answer is unequivocally shaped: "a site is a whole, a totality, a space that has a unit, it is judicious use almost artistic nature by man". Therefore, making an analogy we may raise the question *What is a tourist site? What are the attributes that define a tourist site?* If we consider the above definition the site is viewed as a space that has a judicious use, thus the tourist site can be considered an area preserving attractive valences harnessed by and for human beings. Making these personal considerations on the concept of tourist site we may somehow overlap the tourist site over the tourist space, but only if the tourist sites are generating tourist flows.

Another interpretation of the term site we can extract from the law no 422 form 2001: land topographically delimited including the natural human creations that are cultural and historical evidence in terms of architectural, urban, archaeological , historical, artistic, ethnographic, religious, social, scientific, technical or landscape.

Ielenicz (2009) addresses the issue of relationship sites from geotopes - geosites. Geotop term designates a small geographical unit which is formed as an indivisible whole; hierarchically organized system that can be the basis of all systematic complexes and geosite is the term that depends on the evaluation criterion. Extrapolating the tourism phenomenon, Ielenicz believes that the right term to be used is tourist site, and its inclusion within a comprehensive and taxonomic nature geosites involves interpretations of the term geosite. Thus, are identified three taxonomic interpretations: first interpretation is restricted to geographical geosites, the second includes

disciplines in the field of geosciences, and the third is considering sites with different genesis, but have tourist value. "Using the concept of geosite in tourism must have a complex character, so that the term may designate a tourist site whose value is dictated by the amount of the features, as a result of symbiosis between natural and anthropogenic heritage that is added to the endowment and exploitation" (Ielenicz, 2009). According to the classification made by Ielenicz (2009), each type of geosite corresponds to the following:

1. Antroposite:
  - 1.1 caused by human settlements, can be: settlements in mountainous areas, hills, plains, valleys, plateaus or settlements scattered, linear or compact
  - 1.2 Sites with economic value: abandoned quarries or mines
2. Hidrosituri: lakes, karst springs, mineral springs, waterfalls
3. Ecosites: national parks, natural parks, parks dendrologic
5. Geomorfosites:
  - 4.1 River: keys, defile, natural nooks, fords
  - 4.2 Glacial: glaciers, cirques, moraines, masses of debris, glacial valleys
  - 4.3 Karst: caves, sinkholes, springs, springs
  - 4.4 Eolian sites: dunes, barchan dunes, erg, hammada
  - 4.5 Coastal area: deltas, lagoons, estuaries, beaches, cliffs, sea coasts, etc..
  - 4.6 Volcanic sites: hot volcanic cones, plates eruption volcanic neck sites
  - 4.7 Sites with geomorphic processes: landslides, mudflows, pipping
  - 4.8 Sites with vapour and gases eruptions: mud volcanoes, geyser
  - 4.9 Geomorfosites resulted from the action of the snow: avalanche, nivation cirques, nivation niches
  - 4.10 Frost sites: mud crack, pingo, ridges, scree
5. Other geosites
  - 5.1 History: archaeological sites, medieval sites, places where major battles took place
  - 5.2 Cultural and Artistic: inspiration places, places where activities with specific cultural, artistic and religious places
  - 5.3 Sites of adventure: climbing places for trekking, rafting, canoeing, etc

It should be emphasized particularly the important contribution of the geographers Nicolae Josan and Dorina Ilieș placing geomorfosit concept in the literature of our country by the Italian branch in 2009. Basically, their works such as: *Preliminary Contribution to the Investigation of the Apuseni Mountains geosites (Romania )published in 2007*; *Some theoretical aspects regarding the genesis of geosites* (2008); *Geosites-Geomorphosites and Relief* (2009) are pioneering studies in our country in the geomorfosite issue and their studies were the starting point to build the concept of tourist site.

## CONCLUSIONS

The present paper aimed to give a personal interpretation of the concept of tourist site as it is more and more used in different contexts. Sometimes, tourist site address to tourist objective as singular element of attraction. This is not correct as we analyze the etymology of the word site. Thus, site is defined as: landscape considered from the point of view of its picturesque appearance or configuration of a particular territory, preserved in its natural form (DEX, 2000). If we extrapolate the concept to the tourism approach, a tourist site can only be a territory having a picturesque landscape of tourist attraction, capable to support the tourist flow in terms of well defined tourism infrastructure. Therefore, the concept of tourist site needs a much more attention when it used in different contexts as it requires various elements to design a territory as a tourist site. As well, Human resources play an important role in organizing tourist area because it determines the optimum deployment of tourist act. Organizing involves establishing a working pattern that identifies all elements that contribute to the transformation of geographical space tourist space

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