

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE ANALYSIS OF AGRITOURISM INDICATORS

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The activity in the tourism field is measured by different indicators, and the national economies are classified according to them in international rankings. At the same time, the tourism and travel industry is characterized by a series of specific aspects, from which we have selected the ones considered relevant.

The source of data for developing the system of macroeconomic indicators is the statistical research for tracking the results and the degree of competitiveness of companies in tourism.

The concept of competitiveness continues to constitute a wide field of confrontations of visions and opinions on a theoretical, scientific and pragmatic level, of industrial policies that have as their central objective the significant increase of competitiveness at the level of national industries and their sectors, as well as strategies of companies pursuing the same objective at the microeconomic level.

The analysis of competitiveness in tourism is based on a series of eight indices, such as: the price competitiveness index, the Human Tourism index, the infrastructure index, the environment index, the technology index, the human resources index, the openness index, the social index, whose value on a scale from 0 to 100 shows the performance of each country compared to other countries. The value 0 represents the lowest value of the index, and the value 100 the highest.

The data sources for these indicators are mostly represented by the development indicators developed by the World Bank, but also by UN and WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council) reports.

Keywords : indicators, competitiveness, agritourism, tourists

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INTRODUCTION

The activity in the tourism field is measured by different indicators, and the national economies are classified according to them in international rankings. At the same time, the tourism and travel industry is characterized by a series of specific aspects, from which we have selected the ones considered relevant.

The source of data for developing the system of macroeconomic indicators is the statistical research for tracking the results and the degree of competitiveness of companies in tourism. According to the official publications of the National Tourism Institute (INS), the indicators are classified as follows:

- indicators for evaluating tourist accommodation capacity (minimum installed accommodation capacity, existing-installed accommodation capacity, operational-available accommodation capacity);

- tourist traffic evaluation indicators (tourist action, total number of tourists, total number of days/tourist, average daily number of tourists, average length of stay, density of tourist traffic, relative preference of tourists);

- financial indicators (revenues and their structure, applied tariff policy, time structure and the ratio between working time and free time).

The analysis of tourism competitiveness at microeconomic level extended and developed at the level of tourism agencies, is carried out based on the following indicators:

- tourist demand (actual demand, potential demand and forecast);

- tourism offer (natural and anthropogenic tourism potential, material base, accommodation capacity, labor force structure by categories: socio-professional, sex, age, use of working time, labor productivity, distribution, evolution and dynamics of the labor force requirement in tourism);

- the demand-offer relationship (the actual demand, the degree of use of the accommodation capacity, the evolution of overnight stays, commercial activity);

- the quality of the tourist activity (number of visitors, number of tourist objectives visited);

- financial indicators (turnover, added value, profit, profit rate, rate of return, volume and level of expenses, labor productivity, value of investments).

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MATERIAL AND METHOD

The methods used in this study were different: the historical method, the comparative method, the sociological method, the logical method and the analytical one, their aim was the systematic analysis of the information selected from the sources studied in order to develop personal points of view and conclusions about the stated objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The concept of competitiveness continues to constitute a wide field of confrontations of visions and opinions on a theoretical, scientific and pragmatic level, of industrial policies that have as their central objective the significant increase of competitiveness at the level of national industries and their sectors, as well as strategies of companies pursuing the same objective at the microeconomic level.

A tendency that manifests itself vigorously in the efforts of countries and companies to

increase competitiveness is that of the superior exploitation of location advantages, a form of advantages that joins the competitive ones.

World experience has shown that ensuring on a sustainable basis the increase in competitiveness of countries or regions where TNCs are attracted, foreign investors in general, is conditioned by the nature of the local resources involved in the economic development process, as well as the nature of the transferred activities. With regard to the nature of the local factors that determine the location advantages, it is obvious that the preponderance of the intangible ones - innovative, managerial, organizational, marketing capacity, assimilation of technological know-how, the level of qualification of the labor force, the national culture or organizational - provides a much more solid basis for the sustainable growth of competitiveness. Regarding the nature of the transferred activities, if they require lower qualifications and are not dependent on the presence of the other intangible factors mentioned, it is very likely that they will be lost in favour of other locations, as wages increase and cost advantages decrease.

In the context of the previously mentioned factors, OCED specifies that rural tourism must present the following features: be implemented in the rural environment (rural location); to integrate elements characteristic of rural life - small households/farms, nature, cultural heritage, traditional practices (rural functionality); to integrate buildings with specific architecture and facilities (rural spatiality); to integrate all social, economic and cultural aspects of the rural family (traditional character); to pursue the preservation of rural society, to integrate the environment, economy and local history (sustainable character).

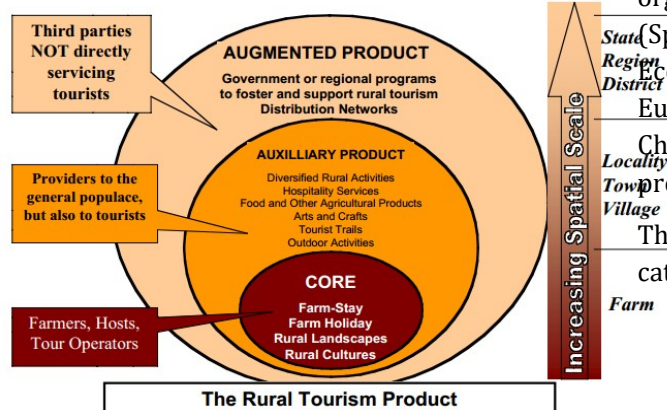


Figure 1 Definition of the rural tourism industry

Integrating all the mentioned features, the role of tourism in the achievement of rural development can be delimited as follows: rural tourism determines the obtaining of income that can stabilize the local labor market and leads to an improvement in the lives of the inhabitants engaged in agriculture in particular; the development of the rural tourist infrastructure is a source of creating new jobs (guides, translators, etc.); the development of rural tourism often induces the development of the additional services sector (traditional product shops, transport networks, etc.) and the implementation at the level of the rural population of the pluriactivity concept (tourism becomes a support sector for agriculture if it integrates local agricultural products, labor part-time from farms, etc.); through the promoted tourist products, rural tourism has a direct role in the conservation of nature, landscapes, cultural heritage, etc.

Understanding competitiveness in agritourism is a major issue for policy makers and a major challenge for professionals providing evidence to better inform decision making. Different indicators have been developed by different organizations over the years to address certain aspects of competitiveness, but they are little or not at all used in Romania.

That is why, for the prioritization of the indicators, it started from the 42 indicators developed by the OECD. Survey responses were received from 30 member and partner countries.

Contributions were also received from various organizations including UNEP, WEF, Exceltur (Spain), International Center for Studies in the Economy of Tourism (CISSET), Northern European Tourism Research Institute (NIT), Chemonics, OECD Monitoring Units welfare and progress.

The indicators are organized around four categories:

- ✓ Indicators that measure the performance and impact of tourism;
- ✓ Monitoring indicators of a destination's ability to offer quality and competitive tourist services;
- ✓ Indicators for monitoring the attractiveness of a destination;
- ✓ Indicators that describe economic opportunities.

At the industry level, there are some significant initiatives to monitor competitiveness in tourism. At the international level, the most important indices remain the WEF Travel and the Tourism Competitiveness Index. Several countries also use the Brand Nation Index, which measures a nation's image and reputation in the world, and tracks their profiles.

Since a questionnaire with a large number of indicators cannot be submitted in the field study, an attempt was made to reduce them. In order to obtain results as close as possible to reality, the quality house method was used. The use of this method was made using the results published by the OECD.

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The competitiveness of the destination depends on:

- ✓ the capacity to increase tourism revenues,
- ✓ the ability to constantly attract tourists
- ✓ providing pleasure and experience
- ✓ profitability

- ✓ ensuring the quality of life for local residents and protection of the natural environment

According to these parameters, a methodology was developed. The OECD model identifies 42 attributes of competitiveness grouped into four main factors. Using the statistical data, the House of Quality was developed, in order to prioritize the 42 elements.

The analysis of competitiveness in tourism is based on a series of 42 indices, such as: the price competitiveness index, the Human Tourism index, the infrastructure index, the environment index, the technology index, the human resources index, the openness index, the social index, whose value is on a scale from 0 to 100 shows the performance of each country compared to other countries. The value 0 represents the lowest value of the index, and the value 100 the highest. The data sources for these indicators are mostly represented by the development indicators developed by the World Bank, but also by UN and WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council) reports.

The methodological base used is known as the House of Quality, which also involves the use of the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP). This method of quality management can also be successfully used in the case of designing a service, being very useful in the competitive development of a study program and its orientation towards market requirements.

Quality Function Deployment (QFD) is a method used in the field of quality planning, in order to create products whose quality characteristics correspond to customer needs. The method proposed by Yoji Akao was implemented at the Mitsubishi company in 1972, it spread in Japan, in the USA where it was popularized by the American Supplier Institute (ASI), nowadays it has increased importance in Europe as well. The principle of the method is the satisfaction of the customer's needs regarding the product (we also mean the service provided) in each of the stages of the product's realization. Specific to the method is the fact that all activities related to the product, to the

existing stages of the product are analyzed from the perspective of the customer and not of the manufacturer. The starting point of the method is the identification and evaluation of customer requirements, requirements which are then transposed into specifications based on which the activities for the production of the products will be carried out.

The quality house consists of six matrices: the customer requirements matrix, the technical characteristics matrix, the connection matrix, the correlation matrix, the technical evaluation matrix and the market evaluation matrix.

In the application of the method, it has been proven that the most difficult thing is to complete the matrix of customer requirements, because for this a large number of data and information, which come from different sources, is required.

Within this matrix, the customer's requirements related to the company's product/service are recorded, as well as the degree of importance given to them by the customer.

After the application of the House of Quality, out of the 42 competitiveness attributes examined, the eight most important proved to be, as shown in figure 2:

- ✓ Physical Geography and Climate
- ✓ Culture and History
- ✓ Tourism Superstructure
- ✓ Safety and Security
- ✓ Cost / value
- ✓ Accessibility
- ✓ Quality services
- ✓ Good infrastructure

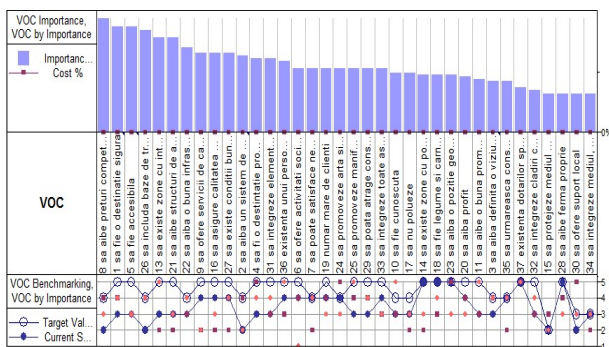


Figure 2 Prioritization of indicators

Six of these attributes form the group of attributes known as core resources and attractors.

Destination physical characteristics and climate have long been considered to be particularly important to the tourist attractiveness of a destination, and this result is not surprising.

Culture and history also proved to be very determining attributes. While physical geography and climate represent the "natural" qualities of a destination, Culture and History represent the primary tourist attraction of a destination that is the product of "human" rather than "natural" processes.

Another determining attribute proved to be the existing leisure structures (Tourism Superstructure). The quantity and quality of the environment must meet specific tourist needs, such as accommodation facilities, restaurants, transport facilities, recreation facilities, attractions, theme parks, museums and art galleries, exhibitions and convention centers, resorts, airports, etc.

The quality and price of tourist services are the dominant aspects that influence the choice of tourist services. The prices and tariffs are established in relation to the tourist destination, respectively the area, the period of the year (depending on the season-zone), the comfort category of the tourist reception structures or the means of transport used, etc.. In generally, higher prices and tariffs limit access to tourist services, leading to a decrease in the number of tourists and tourist-days, to a reduction in the average length of stay and the range of tourist services purchased by tourists.

In addition to the physical characteristics of the units and their placement in space, the quality of the accommodation service and, accordingly, the option of the tourist are influenced by the atmosphere in the unit, the attention of the staff, the speed of reaction and its efficiency, the clientele, the image and the reputation they enjoy. In this sense, research undertaken on the factors of competitiveness in agritourism have demonstrated, along with the importance of the material ones, objectives such as: the level and diversity of facilities, staff qualification, cleanliness, comfort, social spaces, the growing role of subjective elements, such as the ambience, the level of clientele, the personalities who visited the unit, the history of the unit, etc.

Special attention is paid to specialized studies regarding the location of accommodation units. It is, first of all, the choice of the destination and the positioning of the objective within it, depending on various elements: the distance from the means of access (airport, train station, highway) and from the tourist attractions; the beauty of the landscape; Quiet. Secondly, the location must meet some economic criteria, namely: investment value, operating costs, ensuring a high level of occupancy.

CONCLUSIONS

Integrating all the mentioned features, the role of tourism in the achievement of rural development can be delimited as follows: rural tourism determines the obtaining of income that can stabilize the local labor market and leads to an improvement in the lives of the inhabitants engaged in agriculture in particular; the development of the rural tourist infrastructure is a source of creating new jobs (guides, translators, etc.); the development of rural tourism often induces the development of the additional services sector (traditional product shops, transport networks, etc.) and the implementation at the level of the rural population of the pluriactivity concept (tourism becomes a support sector for agriculture if it integrates local agricultural products, labor part-time from farms, etc.); through the promoted tourist products, rural tourism has a

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