

URBAN TOURISM – FORM OF TOURISM WITH REAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE FOR CITIES

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Abstract:

Combining a rich tourist potential, an important material basis of accommodation, food, entertainment and transportation, numerous facilities for business and services of good quality, the city offers optimal conditions for conducting tourism, which is true nodes on the convergence of national and international tourist flows.

As far as it is properly planned, developed and managed, tourism can bring significant benefits to urban communities: stimulating local production of goods and services, creating many jobs, increasing income and improving standards of living, achieving revenue to local budgets, construction / improvement of basic infrastructure, rehabilitation of historic centers, improving the quality of the environment, improving the city's image and reputation of forming a business location.

Key words: tourism, urban, development, economy

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While other forms of tourism have experienced spectacular growth in the '60s – '70s, during which tourism was associated with the movement of residents from urban areas into tourist resorts and to rural areas, urban tourism has enjoyed the specialists focus only since the '80, when it became clear that many cities have turned into major tourist destinations.

Late occurrence of this form of tourism can be explained by the neglect treatment of urban tourism. Unlike other destinations where tourism is more easily identified in the multifunctional urban system functions identifying urban tourism is much more complicated. This research area to identify the role of tourism and tourists in the urban space is increasingly dynamic, making the subject of numerous studies over the past 20-30 years.

If until recently urban tourism was seen as a result of population mobility, for which the city was only a brief stopover, at present due to significant behavioral changes, and due to extensive changes that took part, the city turned into a cultural center, relaxing place where people shop, meet friends and spend a pleasant time. Therefore one can say that urban tourism is not just a form of tourism, but an integral part, a traditional feature of urban life⁷⁰.

According to consulting firm IPK International⁷¹, urban tourism is one of the most dynamic forms of tourism, for example in 2005 over 2004, city breaks segment increased by 20% compared with only 3% as increased season seaside tourism, 8% summer mountain tourism and 12% mountain winter tourism season, and in the future it is expected that this trend will continue. Currently, tourist visits of short duration in the cities (city breaks) hold a share of 38% of all international travel by Europeans, by various percentage from one country to another.

It is estimated that approximately 80% of visits in cities represents pure urban tourism (motivation is specific, exclusive) and 20% is complementary tourism - visiting urban settlements

70 Frank Howie, *Managing tourist destination*, Thomson Learning EMEA, 2003, page 93

71 IPK International, *ITB Convention Market, Trends and Innovations*, 9 ian. 2006

are associated with other forms of holiday spending (seaside, mountains, rural areas, circuits, etc.).

As regarding distribution by countries, urban tourism has a large market share in France, Germany, Great Britain, Sweden and central European countries and lower in Spain, Portugal, Greece, due to competition and other tourist destinations, mainly to the seaside⁷².

In Europe, due to high accommodation capacity and number of nights spent are notable London, Paris, Rome, Vienna, Berlin (cultural and business tourism), Barcelona, etc.

In the Central European countries (Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia), urban tourism has contributed to national development of tourism as a whole. The most eloquent success was registered by the capitals (Budapest, Prague, Warsaw, Bratislava), who became poles of attraction for international tourism, due to growing cultural and architectural traditions (attracting prestigious network hotels Hilton, Four Seasons Hotels, Marriott etc.) and other famous cities (Krakow, Karlovy Vary, etc.)⁷³.

1. Conceptual Specifications

Specialized literature does not provide a widely accepted definition for urban tourism. However there are common factors among different authors on including the concept of tourist, excursionist and delimitation of the urban area. It is clear that urban tourism refers both to the movement of tourists in cities or urban agglomerations of at least 20,000 people outside their main residence, subject to remaining at least one night at the destination and the tourist movement to less than 24 hours in the urban area, provided that the travel distance to be at least 100 km⁷⁴.

OMT⁷⁵ considers the fact that urban tourism refers to travels inside cities or areas with a high population density.

Other authors characterize urban tourism⁷⁶ from the point of view of a sphere of extremely wide coverage - leisure time (the holidays) in the cities to visit them and to conduct activities of a very diverse nature, such as visits to relatives, meeting friends, watching shows, exhibitions, shopping, etc.

The city has become the center place for a wide range of tourism activities, and municipalities are increasingly concerned with the organization of recreational areas, conservation and protection of touristic objectives in order to attract a large number of tourists.

Urban tourism is seen as a field of interference of the various major types of tourism⁷⁷. Forms of tourism characteristic for the urban area, with particular importance to the economy of tourism in this area are: cultural tourism, business tourism, and other forms of tourism such as shopping tourism, sports tourism, visits to relatives and friends etc. Also of particular importance is the leisure tourism, with its established bases inside the city and suburban area. They are intended for both tourists and residents who spend the weekend here.

72 Rodica Minciu, *Economia turismului*, Uranus Publishing, Bucharest, 2004, p. 85

73 Mihaela Dinu, *Geografia turismului*, Didactic and Pedagogic Publishing, Bucharest, 2002, p 259

74 G. Cazes, Fr. Potier, *Le tourisme urbain*, PUF, Paris, 1996, pag. 10

75 UNWTO, *Tourism 2020 Vision*, Volume 7, Global Forecasts and Profiles of Market Segments, pag. 103

76 Rodica Minciu, *op. cit.*, 2004, pag. 85

77 Aurel Gheorghilaș, *Turism urban și turism cultural*, Credis Publishing, Bucharest, 2004, pag. 12

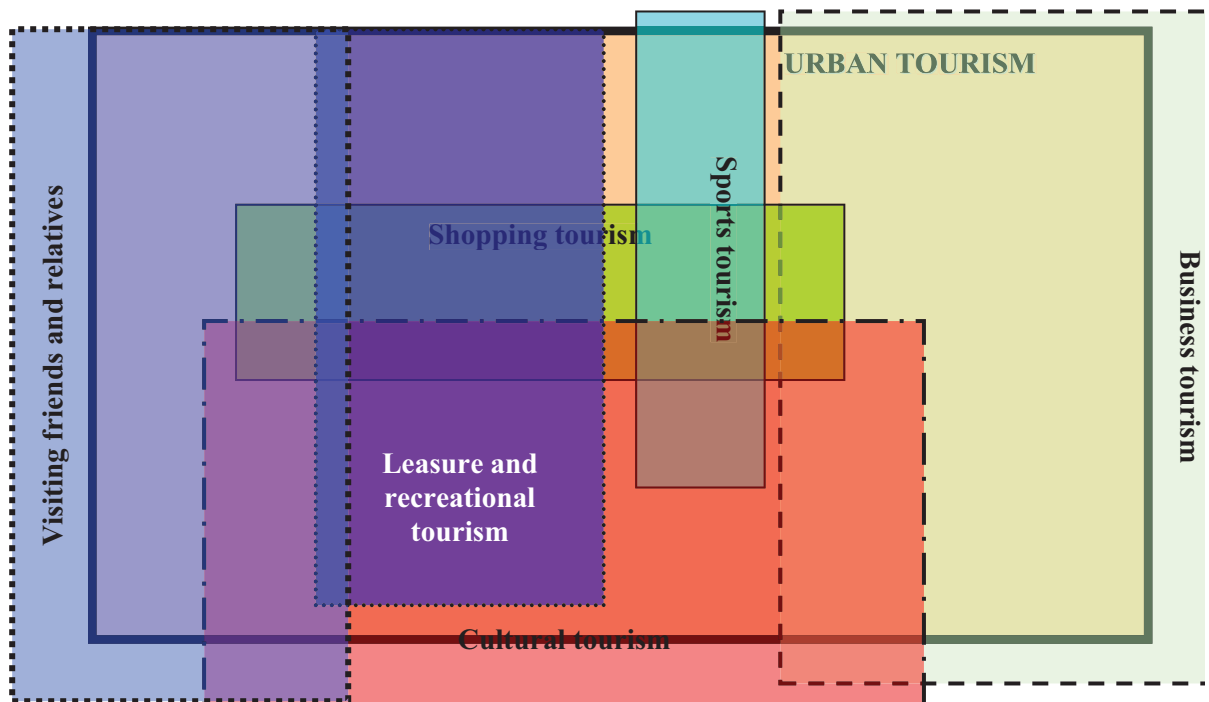


Figure no. 1 – Urban tourism interference with other forms of tourism⁷⁸

The existence of mineral springs (Budapest, Karlovy Vary) and the location of certain cities on the banks of Seas / Ocean (Barcelona, Nice), or at the foot of the mountain (Innsbruck) have fostered in these cases the development of these additional forms of tourism (health tourism, seaside tourism) with a significant contribution to increasing the attractiveness of these cities.

Spatially concentrated, the city is seen as a "spectrum of opportunities for tourists," having as its main competitive advantage the existence of many historical and cultural attractions, numerous sports facilities and leisure activities and a multitude of events.

Cities are becoming more and more popular, offering visitors a vigorous, sophisticated and exciting atmosphere, which is very different from other tourist destinations.

Synthesizing, Van den Berg, Van der Borg and Van der Meer (1995)⁷⁹ have introduced the concept of "touristic product" which introduced the factors that determine the competitiveness and attractiveness of urban tourist destinations: primary (basic) tourist products, secondary (complementary) touristic products, accessibility to foreign destination, internal accessibility within the destination and destination image.

Within the basic elements are contained a unique mix of attractions that have the power to attract tourists to that destination. Among these may be mentioned: the location of the city (urban morphology, urban heritage, green areas, water fronts) and the offer of diverse cultural and artistic facilities and leisure activities (anthropogenic cultural resources - museums, theaters, exhibition halls - facilities for sport and entertainment (casinos, theme parks, etc.), festivals, cultural events etc.

Among the complementary elements shall be included a number of urban facilities that have the support role for business and tourism and that are hospitable facilities (hotels, restaurants) or commercial (malls, souvenir shops, bazaar, markets) and bring value surplus to the tourism experience. In some cities shopping opportunities are part of the basic elements, when they are

⁷⁸ Doru Tudorache, Caracteristici ale cererii turistice din municipiul București, Tourist notes nr. 2, june 2008, page 16

⁷⁹ Leo van den Berg, Jan van der Borg, Jan van der Meer, Urban Tourism Performance and Strategies in Eight European Cities, Ashgate Publishing Company, Aldershot, Hampshire, UK, 1995

the main reason of the journey and in this sense, such offers appeared even on the Romanian market like "Shopping in Istanbul" or "Shopping in Vienna".

2. Key Factors Of Urban Tourism Evolution

It is estimated that urban tourism has evolved under a complex of factors, some of which had great influence:

- **Increased leisure time**, determined by reducing the working week, increasing the number of leave days, reducing the retirement age, increasing duration allocated to studies, and development of services that help reduce the time spent for household activities.

- **Population revenue growth**, in particular the remaining revenues after the satisfaction of basic needs.

- **Transport development** has led to increased mobility of population promoting tourism related travel. A strong impact on tourism is the emergence of road, rail and air networks, the emergence of the high-speed transport, air transport deregulation. Occurrence of low-cost flights and high-speed trains have had a strong impact on the development of short visits in the urban area (short breaks).

- **Socio-demographic changes** - in the last period it is observed that the age of establishing a family is increasingly , and in these circumstances youth groups can organize their holidays and during the school year, leading in this way to extend the tourist season. For these tourists the city is the ideal destination for holiday spending.

- **Changing travel motivations** - with increasing level of education of the population, also grew the desire of knowledge, of discovering something new, to interact culturally. In these conditions it is seen increasingly evident transition from flows like "sunlust" (determined by natural conditions) into streams of "wanderlust "(tourism-related knowledge). This increased the tourists interest for architecture, for cultural heritage, to participate in artistic and cultural events, which have a large representation in the major cities and the rapid growth of short visits to the major cities (city break) are a direct result of this interest.

- **Improving city image**. Although in the past the city had a negative image, being seen as a crowded place, polluted, ugly, insecure and full of ill people, being considered a realm of prostitution and drug abuse, however, there are numerous positive images that can be associated, newly, to the city. Thus it is lively, exciting, full of cultural opportunities (theaters, concerts, art galleries, a variety of publications, etc.) Opportunities to meet other people with a very sophisticated social life, the city offers many opportunities for entertainment , to make sport and to participate in sporting competitions, numerous shopping opportunities; in short the city provides numerous attractions for tourists. This image could be changed through the efforts of municipalities to diversify urban entertainment centers by arranging historical centers, commercial centers, development of general and specific infrastructure. Tourism is for the local authorities as one of the most interesting forms of urban revitalization of the area and especially of the old city.

- **Increased demand for business trips** - one of the major factors that led to the development of urban tourism is the "explosion" of business tourism in all its forms: individual business trips, participation in fairs and exhibitions, conferences or conventions, and stimulant travel (incentive). The volume of business travel has grown rapidly since last years of XX century, once with stressing the process of globalization, cities and large towns in general, representing the suitable area for development of this form of tourism.

- **Request for personal interest visits** - visits to relatives and friends are an important segment of urban tourism, even though it's volume may not always be recorded in the touristic indicators. The number of tourists traveling on personal interest is usually directly proportional to the size of the city.

Although in most cases the favorable factors are significantly superior, there are situations where certain limits occur into valuing the tourist potential of the urban area. Thus, there are cities endowed with excellent tourist attractions, but due to a restrictive set of factors are valued well below normal limits. Among them we can identify⁸⁰:

- *urban environmental degradation*, representing actions of vandalism, overloaded infrastructure, the destruction of premises for accommodation and alimentation, green areas, undermining of cultural values. Also very important is the aesthetics pollution, namely the implantation of new construction that does not fold within the traditional architecture of the urban area, problem increasingly present in Bucharest urban landscape;

- *terrorism*, in recent years turned into a global phenomenon. After the events of September 11 2001 it was a strong alarm signal on the consequences which they may have, including on tourism. There are more numerous cases in which this phenomenon affects the important tourist destinations: Bali, Istanbul, Djerba, London, Madrid, Casablanca, etc..

These restrictive factors leaves a deep mark on the image of that destination, with repercussions often serious over the prospects of future development of tourism. Therefore local authorities should endeavor to prevent these phenomena, or as appropriate to remove the effects of these factors and to improve the image of the destination.

3. Tourism Impact Over Urban Communities

Tourism is a huge potential and challenge for development of cities. In general, stakeholders have identified this opportunity and decided to get involved in developing this potential, however, maintaining a balance between the needs of tourists and the local population. Tourism provides financial justification for the restoration of old buildings and the creation of general infrastructure that can be used by the local population. Tourism can play a role in administrating physical and economical of old cities or districts thereof, may stimulate the development of cultural facilities and new and improved commercial facilities⁸¹.

Thus, insofar as it is properly planned, developed and managed, tourism can bring significant **benefits** to urban communities:

- *is stimulated local production of goods and services*, providing new opportunities for selling certain products. It is undisputed that the activities of certain industries is determined largely by the tourism needs and deserves mentioning here: work in hotels and restaurants, cultural and recreational services, transport services and travel intermediation, producing crafts, etc. Moreover tourism stimulates business in a wide range of other related areas such as construction, financial services, trade, food industry, light industry, cultural artistic activities or general nature services, which benefit tourists also (local transport, mail, telephone, currency exchange etc.). Therefore tourism brings an important growth of production for major cities and finds that tourism has a very important share in GDP (12% for London, 8% for Budapest);

- *many work places are created* directly, in hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, retail businesses, transport, and of indirect jobs created in the local economy by the expenditures expenses made by employees from the travel sector which in turn give rise to other jobs. To highlight the importance of tourism in the economy of large cities, we should remember that only in London tourism creates almost a million jobs (13% of employment), that in Paris are created around 150,000 jobs directly in tourism (12% of employment), in Budapest the direct employment in tourism has reached 100,000, in Barcelona 60,000, and examples may continue;

- *international tourism stimulates local exports*, and by type of applying, consumption of goods and services near the production area, this is an extremely effective export mean, being eliminated transport costs, customs duties and various other commissions;

80 Aurel Gheorghilaş, op. cit., page 9-11

81 Gabriela Stănculescu, Managementul turismului durabil în centrele urbane, Economic publishing, Bucharest, 2004, page 94

- as a result of increased local production and employment results in *increasing population revenues* and *improving the living standards*, with the chain effect of increasing consumption expenditures;
- creating *revenue to local budgets*, especially coming from taxes on income from entrepreneurs in the tourism sector and related sectors, but also charges from tourists (hotel fee, fee to enter with the car in city etc.). They can be used to improve community services, infrastructure and services, etc;
- tourism development perspective provides arguments for the *construction / improvement of basic infrastructure* (roads, power systems, water works, electricity, telecommunications, waste management) for the *rehabilitation of historic centers, construction of cultural and leisure facilities, upgrading local transport network, the development of cultural and sporting events of international importance, etc.* From these investments benefit both tourists and resident population;
- *improving environment quality*, because tourists prefer to visit attractive places, clean and unpolluted;
- *improving the city image and forming a business location reputation.*

On the other hand, desire for higher gains, led by the often to a chaotic development, unplanned of tourism in some locations, creating **numerous problems** in the area: the increasing urban density, the construction of new giant structures in the vicinity of architecture monuments, excessive request by visitors of some tourist objectives, air pollution, traffic and noise, are just some of the dangers that can affect the value of a tourist town⁸².

However it may be said that tourism can contribute to sustainable development of urban areas by improving the competitiveness of businesses / companies, through liability to social needs and preserving cultural and natural environment.

Many perspectives on economic development occurs as a result of urban tourism. As a result, many cities seek ways to develop tourism as a way to stimulate and diversify the urban economy. For some cities that are involved in a wider process of economic restructuring and industrial compacting, tourism offers many opportunities for development of the area.

It may be said that the vast variety of things that can be seen and done on a relatively reduced area, plus a wide variety of accommodation facilities, food, transportation and entertainment experience support the development of tourism in urban area.

Therefore, local authorities together with the interested economic operators have begun to make efforts to profit from this activity. They gave cities life, by organizing all kinds of events, began rehabilitating historic centers, created new objectives (museums, zoos), have achieved new features for tourists (access cards), have introduced special buses for them, leading a fierce campaign to promote the city, have created facilities for business tourism, have developed an extensive commercial network, etc.

Basically, the responsible factors for the development of the tourist product locally should consider a global development of the existing tourist product, watching all the 5 components of it. Thus, according to the needs resulting from a SWOT analysis, and funds available, can focus on improving the primary or complementary tourist products, reinforcing the image of the city, on improving access to the city or a combination them.

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⁸² Rodica Minciu, *Amenajarea turistică a teritoriului*, Sylvi publishing, Bucharest, 1995, page 32

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