

# **TOURISM DESTINATION MARKETING STUDY WORKPAPER – AN OPERATIONAL WORKING INSTRUMENT FOR GEOGRAPHERS\***

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*Marketing is an essential domain for tourism, being recently more and more theoretically approached and conceptualized by research papers (especially in the Anglo-Saxon literature). An economic term by excellence, marketing is as well adopted by geographic literature and by the geography of tourism, one of the major specializations of Romanian faculties of geography as numerous students opt for it. Consequently there is a great need for geography students and geographers to study tourism oriented concepts even if mainly coming from other domains such as economy, social sciences, etc. and to elaborate appropriate studies without getting far from their topic of interest. In this respect the development of methods and instruments of research and study is a necessity already underlined by bibliographic references in the domain. They represented the departure point of this paper which enlarges the debate upon a tourism destination marketing study work paper developed as an operational working instrument for geography students.*

**Keywords:** *geography, tourism, marketing, study work paper.*

## **Introduction**

Marketing is an essential domain for tourism, being recently more and more theoretically approached and conceptualized by research papers (especially in the Anglo-Saxon literature). An economic term by excellence, marketing is as well adopted by geographic literature and by the geography of tourism, one of the major specializations of Romanian faculties of geography as numerous students opt for it. Tourism geography is considered a successful specialization in our country as an important volume of geography students demand for and are offered through bachelor and master degrees by almost all state and private universities education programs oriented towards this field. Consequently there is a great need for geography students and geographers to study tourism oriented concepts such as the one of *marketing* even if coming from other domains such as economy, social sciences, etc. and to elaborate appropriate studies without getting far from their topic of interest. In this respect

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the development of methods and instruments for marketing research and studies in geography is a real necessity of the moment. Numerous authors (Tribe, 1995; Godfrey and Clarke, 2000; Grotters, 2007) make reference in their studies to methods, surveys or paper works destined to elaborate marketing studies seen also from a spatial, geographical perspective (Ashworth & Voogd, 1987; Inskip 1991; Heath and Wall, 1992; Godfrey and Clarke, 2000; Horner and Swarbrooke, 2005). They represented a departure point for this paper which presents and enlarges the debate upon a tourism destination marketing study work paper developed as an operational working instrument for geographers.

### **Geographical Marketing – A Theoretical Approach**

According to Kotler (2002) „marketing deals with identifying and meeting human and social needs”, the author splitting between stages through which marketing practice may pass in terms of models and life cycles of marketing according to the dimensions of actors, their experience on the market and the way they act on it (e.g. entrepreneurial marketing, formulated marketing and intreprenurial marketing) and enumerating 10 types of entities that might be involved in marketing such as: goods, services, experiences, events, persons, places, properties, organizations, information and ideas. Tourism marketing would refer by excellence to trading services and places in form of tourism destinations but more and more nowadays the accent moves towards the tourism product, towards events, experiences and even persons perceived as both tourism attractions and contributors to service quality. However we may already consider as a main difference between the economic and the geographic perspective on tourism marketing the fact that the first focuses on services provided by a tourism unit and on tourism business itself whereas tourism geographies would be more concerned about space and its selling as a tourism destination. According to WTO (1994) tourism system is based on the interaction between the demand and the offer. It may be considered that tourism market would refer though to tourism offer and tourism demand in terms of invested capital and as clients providing a profit if buying tourism products from the economic perspective whereas the geographical perspective would be interested in natural and human tourism resources on the one hand and on visitors fluxes within and towards an area on the other. Moreover within the sustainability perspective the local community interferes as an increasingly visible stakeholder on tourism market, consequently involving an increasing space oriented dimension for marketing. Grotters (2007) was mentioning even terms like local, regional or national marketing, starting from the idea that tourism market is to be located in an area and a geographical space is to be perceived administratively at different levels of extension. Tourism geography

appeals mostly to the regional level and the regional marketing approach would be the most appropriate one in geography. Once with the general embracing of sustainability paradigm tourism market is seen nowadays more than ever as an interaction field among different stakeholders and geographical marketing is to enforce even more this perception as it is ultimately concerned about the study of market components in order to optimize planning of tourism destinations and tourism activities at a regional level. According to Inskeep (1991) regional planning for tourism would refer to:

- Regional policy;
- Regional access and the internal transportation network of facilities and services;
- Type and location of tourist attractions;
- Location of tourism development areas including resort areas;
- Amount, type, and location of tourist accommodation and other tourist facilities and services;
- Regional level environmental, socio-cultural, and economic considerations and impact analysis;
- Regional level education and training programs;
- Marketing strategies and promotion programs;
- Organizational structures, legislation, regulations, and investment policies;
- Implementation techniques including staging of development, project programming, and regional zoning regulations. (Inskeep, 1991, p. 35; Grotters, 2007)

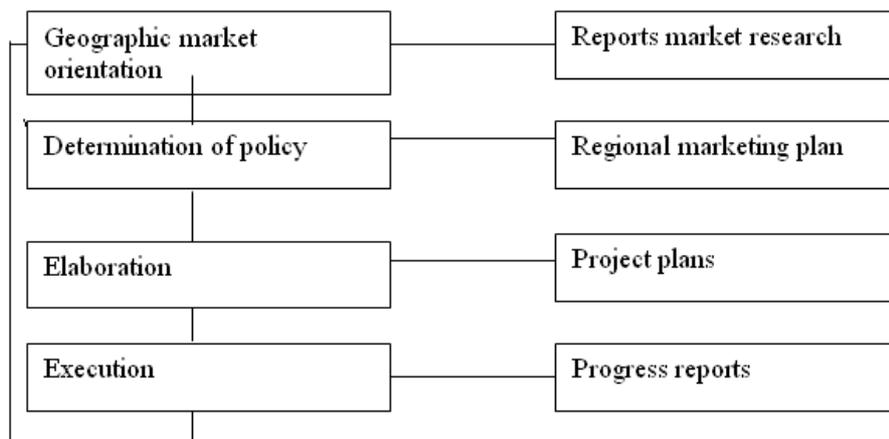


Fig. 1. Geographic market cycle (Source: Ashworth & Voogd, 1987 in Grotters, 2007)

The geographic, destination marketing would be consequently “a process” of reaching a consensus among different stakeholders involved directly or indirectly in tourism industry (Swarbrooke, 1999) in order to reach a development sustainable “optimum” (Howie, 2003, Lozato-Giotard, 2003) ideal in planning. Ashworth and Voogd (1987 in Grotters, 2007) were identifying several steps necessary for the accomplishment of a geographic market cycle (*Fig. 1*).

Heath and Wall (1992) will develop later on the model putting an accent on the regional marketing planning in tourism. According to these authors at the basis of the regional marketing plan a situation analysis should be performed oriented both towards an environmental and a resource analysis. Then a goal and objectives must be formulated according to which the regional strategy and its target will be elaborated further on. The position on the market should be evaluated as the regional marketing mix and the strategy organization and design would be adapted accordingly. In the end management supporting systems are to be allocated in order to have a feasible action plan for the designed strategy. Godfrey and Clarke (2000) emphasized even more the stakeholder vision and the importance of management systems for marketing and tourism development plans in their *Tourism Development Handbook* whereas Grotters (2007) talked about a geographical marketing procedure embracing the concept of geographical marketing which on his opinion should be based on (1) market exploration, (2) policy determination, (3) policy elaboration and implementation and (4) policy evaluation. On our turn we agree that a marketing study is essential in order to formulate a realist, effective and coherent tourism development strategy for a tourism destination. The study should contain an analytical and a synthetic holistic approach and should be based on real territorial indices and statistics regarding key components of tourism market and leisure industry for a reference territorial level.

### **The Parts of the Tourism Destination Marketing Study Work Paper**

Starting from the above mentioned models and theoretical approaches on regional marketing we designed a study work paper for tourism destinations intended to help geography students to analyze tourism areas within a marketing perspective. Conceived in view of regional marketing and geographic marketing concepts and designed for geographers the object of this tool of analysis would be though a geographical area (region, settlement) already perceived or intending to become a tourism destination. Consequently the paper work contains six parts analytically referring to: the accessibility of the tourism destination, tourism offer both in terms of resources and of tourism infrastructure, present tourism demand both from quantitative and qualitative point of view, actual promotion of the region/settlement and the analysis of the

internet site as an important promoting tool, the actual position of the tourism destination on the market according to its recreational products and strategic perspectives and proposals for the optimization of the leisure products offered by the studied territory. Each of them will be discussed separately and parts of the model work paper will be presented below as follows:

- the *accessibility* of the destination is a key point for a tourism study as mobility is a vital element for tourism demand, characterizing the essence of tourism services which are to be consumed at the destination through the recreational act. Godfrey and Clarke (2000) considered access an important element when characterizing the inventory of resources and services. Accessibility is consequently a component of the tourism offer and it is particularly important for tourism destinations in Romania, being considered often a weak point of the tourism product in general, as numerous settlements located in tourist attractive areas lack motorways and often railway stations. Consequently the model work paper proposes as a first chapter the destination accessibility and students are asked to make precise reference to the type and importance of access ways and transport infrastructure points (*Table 1*). Moreover following the table which asks for quantitative data there is a line of observations asking for statements regarding the qualitative aspects of access roads and points or for information regarding future or on progress projects meant for their extension and development.

Table 1

**I. Destination Accessibility**

Way of transport					The destination has access to:	
Road			Railway		Railway station	Bus station
europaean	national	county	main	secondary		

**Observations**

(qualitative):.....

- the *analysis of tourism offer* named by Godfrey and Clarke (2000) “the resource inventory” is generally the basis of every tourism study and follows in our work paper the accessibility issue. It refers in the first place to tourism resources resumed by the term “tourism fund” in the Romanian scientific tourism geography literature (Ciangă, 1998) and continues with references to tourism infrastructure, generally perceived through units offering accommodation, catering and entertainment facilities, the last category with different types of units according to the theme of the tourism area and consequently of the recreational space (e.g. mountain, littoral, etc.). Consequently in our paper model tables that

try to structure the information according to the available statistics for Romanian territory were conceived (Table 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). A first table referring to tourism resources proposes their classification in primary and secondary resources no matter their type, either natural or human made elements. The hierarchy was based within a marketing point of view on the rationale that primary resources are capable to generate tourist attraction on their own through the objectives that they include (either in the present or possibly if valued in the future) whereas secondary resources are to generate recreational activities for citizens or a small number of visitors at most. Moreover a connection between the type of resource, the tourist objectives it includes and the tourism forms and products that generates is requested within a tourism marketing perspective on resources and their characteristics which direct towards resulting recreational activities. The tables regarding tourism infrastructure as the one for accessibility ask mainly for precise quantitative data. They are followed by lines of observations on the qualitative aspects regarding the structures conditions and their functionality. In the case of both tables for accommodation and for catering structures data referring to different years (e.g. 1990-2000-2012) are requested in order to express an evolution trend. Entertainment infrastructure was developed in further tables for every type of destination as specific structures could be developed in destinations for littoral tourism, spa tourism, mountain tourism with its summer and winter component, business tourism and for urban or rural leisure activities.

Table 2

## II. The Analysis of Tourism Destination Offer

Resource type		Main tourism objectives	Tourism form / product
<i>Primary</i>	natural/human made		
<i>Secondary</i>	natural/human made		

Table 3

### The Analysis of the Destination Tourism Infrastructure Accommodation Structures

Year	No of units	No of bed places	No of hotels	No of bed places in hotels	No of bed places according to the comfort category		
					1* and not classified	2*-3*	4*-5*

*Observations* (qualitative estate of accommodation structures):

Table 4

**Catering Structures**

Year	No of units	No of places	No of restaurants with specific		No of units except restaurants	
			Romanian	Other	Fast food units	Cafes and bars

*Observations* (qualitative estate of catering structures):

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Table 5

**Entertainment Structures  
(specific for each type of destination)**

Tourism destination has entertainment structures specific for:						
littoral	mountains	winter sports	spa tourism	urban areas	rural areas/ agritourism	business tourism

Table 6

**Littoral Resorts**

The destination has:							Periodical events (festivals, competitions) (e.g.)
Beaches (no)	Water sports (e.g.)	Open air pools (no)	Theme parks (e.g.)	Sport fields (no, type)	Entertainment spaces (clubs, discos) (no)	Cultural spaces (theatres, cinemas) (e.g.)	

*Observations* (qualitative estate of entertainment structures):

.....

Table 7

**Mountain Resorts**

The destination has:						Periodical events (festivals, competitions) (e.g.)
Paths (no, difficulty altitude difference)	Panoramic points (e.g.)	Sport fields (no, type)	Extreme sports (e.g.)	Entertainment spaces (clubs, discos) (no)	Cultural spaces (theatres, cinemas) (e.g.)	

*Observations* (qualitative estate of entertainment structures):

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Table 8

## Winter Sports Resorts

Ski runs no	Infrastructure for other winter sports	Ski lifts				Ski runs / ski lifts ratio
		Gondola lift	Cable car (no)	Chair lift (no)	Ski lift (no)	

*Observations* (qualitative estate of entertainment structures):

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Table 9

## Spa Resorts

Thermal pools (e.g., no)	Planned springs for internal cure (type – no)	Treatment structure (no, e.g.)	Planned paths for open air walks	Other types of structures	
				Entertainment spaces (clubs, discos)	Cultural spaces (museums, show halls, etc.) (e.g.)

*Observations* (qualitative estate of treatment structures):

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Table 10

## Business Infrastructure

Conf halls	Conf halls in accommodation units	Support conference services: videoprojector, flipchart etc.	Suppliers for:				Other entertainment services (e.g.)
			Extreme sports (mountaineering, bungee jumping)	Horsing	Paintball	AIV	

Table 11

## City Infrastructure/Urban Destinations

The destination has:						Periodical events (festivals, competitions) (e.g.)
Parks, public gardens (e.g., no)	Zoos, botanical gardens (e.g.)	Theme parks (e.g.)	Sport fields (no, type)	Entertainment spaces (clubs, discos)	Cultural spaces (museums, show halls, theatre, cinemas, etc.) (e.g.)	

*Observations* (qualitative estate of structures):

.....

Table 12

**Agri Tourism Infrastructure/Rural Destinations**

The destination has:					Traditional and other periodical cultural events (e.g.)
Boarding house units (no.) from which homologated (no)	Boarding houses built in traditional style (no)	Boarding houses built from traditional materials (no)	Households which offer accommodation services (no)	Households which offer accommodation services and which still practice traditional activities (no, e.g.)	

*Observations* (qualitative estate of structures):

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– the *analysis of tourism demand* follows the one of tourism offer being a key element of a marketing study. Tourists represent the second component of the tourism market, the element which ensures the success of the offer and orients the future tourism products and services which should correspond to client’s needs and motivations. Consequently the customer study is an essential part of marketing in general which reorients the marketing mix in order to answer the needs of consume and to generate attraction and business profit. On our turn we considered necessary for a tourism destination marketing study both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis of tourism demand. If for the first one several statistic indices are available at local level for Romanian settlements as mentioned in the table 13 (students are asked to chose data from different years in order to emphasize the evolution trend) reference qualitative tourism studies are missing, demanding for particular surveys and questionnaires to be applied personally by the author.

Table 13

**III. The Analysis of Tourism Destination Demand**

Year	Arrivals	Over night stays	Average stay	Occupancy rate

*Observations* (qualitative characteristics of tourism demand based on survey results)

– promotion is another essential component of the marketing study as one of the main Ps of the marketing mix beside product, policy and price and is referred holistically as *the marketing communication* (Horner and Swarbrooke, 2005). Promotion is to be performed through a variety of means and ways, one of the most important being nowadays the internet site. In case of geographical marketing or of marketing and promotion performed for geographical areas and places the internet site is to be considered as the most effective and representative way of exposing the regional tourism offer for the general public. We propose consequently through the tourism

destination marketing work study paper model a critical analysis of a destination promoting site in which one should comment on:

- the site owner (there is an obvious difference among sites owned by public administration authorities, by tourist information centers or by accommodation units);
- the place of tourist promotion on the internet site;
- the images of the destination and their position on the internet site;
- the way in which tourist information is presented on the site (directly, indirectly through connection to another site or the particular site of a tourist accommodation unit);
- the structure and the content of tourist information and of the site (tourist attractions, accommodation units, prices, etc.);
- if the information is updated;
- useful tourist information that is missing;
- an useful structure of the site for tourists and proposals for redesigning it.
- the position of the destination on the tourist market is another key element of a marketing strategy and consequently another chapter of our destination marketing work study paper model. In order to fulfill this analysis a first task is to define the type/subtypes of the tourist product/products a destination might offer (e.g. spa tourism, winter sport tourism, etc.). On each product local, regional, national and international competitors are to be defined according to the case. Further on the position of the destination on the market should be established compared to its competitors in terms of tourism resources (e.g. there are settlements with valuable unvalued resources compared to their local competitors that benefited from tourist investments); of tourist infrastructure (statistic should offer a clear image for this point); of present tourist demand (tightly related to the volume of accommodation capacity and of the tourist offer); of price (for the same type of service/package with a similar degree of comfort – e.g. the price for a double room in a three star hotel in the same month during the week or the weekend period); of tourism promotion (through the number and types of communication ways and means).
- in the end all this complex analysis should conclude through the proposal of strategic measures for the optimization of the tourist destination and of its leisure products in order to be better placed compared to its competitors on the tourist product market. Strategic measures should regard all the above mentioned and analyzed components of the tourist market (e.g. the amount and type of resources valued through recreational activities or their degree of exploitation, the creation or redesign of tourist products, the infrastructure development,

the concentration on different demand segments or on different ways and means of communication and promotion, etc.).

### **Conclusions**

The above analyzed and presented destination marketing work study paper model was conceived as an operational working tool for geographic marketing studies. The paper work model has been already applied by over 400 students in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of their university studies during the seminar of tourism marketing on Romanian territories studied as a topic for their final bachelor thesis. Most of the students (over 70%) considered it useful for the elaboration of their thesis and some of them integrated the above analyzed work plan as a separate chapter in their work as it comprised a research methodology appropriate to their study theme (the majority choose to study tourism resources and their valuing through tourism activities on different geographic Romanian territories). We consequently consider the above presented work study paper model a useful tool for geographers enterprising marketing analytic studies. The paper work model is a centralizing instrument of tourism Romanian statistics, adapted to the reality of the autochthonous tourist industry and is at the same time easily applicable with minor changes to another territorial context.

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