The Importance of Tourism Research; Examples of Research in Tourism Activities in the Czech Republic

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Abstract: The objective of the paper is to highlight the importance of coordinated relations among individual elements of tourism systems and to describe trends influencing the demand for tourism-related services. The paper summarizes author’s own experience gained in foreign countries. The author then applies these to tourism in the Czech Republic and points out to the necessity of further structured research in tourism. Upon the analysis of publicly available information sources, author’s own working experience, and in line with economic, political and socio-cultural characteristics, issues for further research are being proposed.

Key-Words: Tourism, Research, Tourism System, Management System, Social Trends, Tourism Demand

1 Introduction
During the last decade tourism has experienced huge development. This calls for a revision of information we have from research projects performed in the past. The complexity of tourism makes researchers develop new research methods, which would provide high quality data, such as structure and variety of visitors, residents and all other subjects concerned.

The author points out the fact that it is necessary to coordinate individual characteristics of tourism, and suggests issues for further research, resulting in an availability of new data on the society and tourism-related activities.

The author has been inspired by activities of and information provided by the International Association of Scientific Experts In Tourism, the organization being a real catalyzer of scientific-research activities in the field of tourism.

The author also analyzed information from different tourism-related sources, especially those having sociological aspects.

2 Theoretical Framework of Tourism System
2.1 Tourism and Tourism-related Research
Generally, research can be described as an organized (research is planned, intended) and systematic (there are methods and procedures) process of gathering information relating to particular issues. This conception can be used for any activity or theme – therefore also for tourism.

The importance of organized and systematic research can be demonstrated on research activities of many subjects, such as the International Association of Scientific Experts In Tourism (AIEST, more at http://www.aiest.org/org/idt/idt_aiest.nsf/). The AIEST organizes annually a number of tourism-related conferences, such as: Marketing Efficiency in Tourism - Coping with Volatile Demand (in 2006), Productivity in Tourism (2007), Real Estate and Destination Development in Tourism (2008), Management of Change in Tourism (2009), and Tourism Development after the Crises (2010). The association in its work thoroughly exerts a system approach to problems of tourism, e.g. analysis dealing with impacts of terrorism and natural disasters to the global tourism development.

In line with the above mentioned characteristic and with emphasis on the use of systems approach, the object of tourism research should be searching for relations among public administration, tourism institutions and clients with the aim of analyzing problems of tourism management in a given destination (Fig. 1).
Fig. 1: Relations among tourism subjects

Research

Clients

Public administration  Tourism institutions

Source: author’s own compilation

The requirement to do research of relations among individual tourism-related subjects may appear slightly exaggerated at first sight. At close examination, however, a huge diversity of relations and mutual interaction of subjects becomes apparent. That lays considerable requirements for understanding and solving their problems. See the following relations for example:

- **Public administration v. clients**: to form safe environment relating to various risks, climate changes, “critical” infrastructure (energy, water and food supply), interaction of development with crime – so-called CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design), etc.,

- **Public administration v. tourism institutions**: analysis, evaluation and support of tourism infrastructure (PPP projects - Public Private Partnership, analysis of energy demands, etc.),

- **Institutions of tourism v. clients**: understanding clients’ behavior, their needs and interests, market structures, providing tourism services.

Besides standard marketing procedures in research, other methods can be used, e.g. sociological methods to analyze tourism trends, application of EMS procedures (Environmental Management System), decision-making systems, project management, etc.

### 2.2 Management System in Tourism

Tourism management is usually focused on efficient destination promotion, time allocation to individual services, and understanding of supply v. demand to minimize economic, environmental and social benefits for a particular destination. The whole tourism management process is closely linked to what is also called a destination management. There are many definitions of a destination management, however. According to Palatková [14, p. 6], “destination management can be viewed as currently most advanced generation of tourism management in a destination, especially as a result of increasing requirements of visitors, and growing global competition”.

In the context of sustainable development, tourism can be regarded as a complex system with many diverse elements (diversity of organizations and variety of operating styles) and interactions (interactions of a system with its surrounding, interactions within the system). As a consequence, there may be a conflict of interests between individual components of the system. It becomes apparent that the diversity of components and mutual interactions requires interaction and coordination of the whole tourism system [5].

Regional management, which covers issues such as managing visitors, determination of carrying capacity, application of sustainable tourism indicators (modeling of still-acceptable impacts), effective use of cultural, historical and natural potentials in a destination, is nowadays in focus of many subjects. These subjects are very often called tourism organizations (TOs), and represent subjects which initiate and manage the whole process of tourism development in cooperation with commercial subjects, state sector, as well as local inhabitants [9]. Their primary task is to effectively coordinate activities of all subjects concerned in a particular destination, and react to market conditions. As Királ’ová also states, there is currently no general approach in the Czech Republic to determine relevant model of TOs. However, similar to what we see abroad (in Austria, or Slovakia), cooperation of subjects in tourism in the Czech Republic might also be solved by legislation.

An example may be found in the concept of local tourism system (Sistema Turistico Locale - STL), being a result of effective legislative reform of tourism in Italy (Legge Nazionale No. 135, 29 March 2001). More specifically, in section 5 of the law (L.N. No 135), the STL is described as an organizational model, which shall:

- **support processes of aggregation and integration** between subjects of the public administration and the private sector through mutual cooperation and setting-up associations or other forms of participating subjects,

- **put into practice infrastructural interventions** necessary for qualified tourism-related services,

- **support technological innovation** to improve quality standards of tourism-related services,

- **support re-qualification** of institutions in tourism with regard to safety, ecological certification, quality certification, and local tourism protection,
- support telematic marketing of products representing tourism, help their commercialization in Italy and abroad.

The above mentioned law also defines key components of the whole tourism system: locality, local community and development plan.
- Locality
Tourism should be viewed from the territorial marketing perspective (i.e. locality is a product of tourism itself).
- Local community
Local community consists of, besides local inhabitants, also of public administration and private sector, all these then share the responsibility of administration and development of the particular destination.
- Development plan
This is primarily about planning of tourism development from the service-supply perspective, while all subjects concerned are involved.

It is important to notice that the law is not specific about management approaches to be used. It is simply because a particular destination shall find it own best solution according to its own specific conditions. In this context it is necessary to understand the fact that tourism must be able to react to permanently changing market conditions. These may be economic conditions (low-cost airlines increased availability and affordability of air transport services), demographic (increasing number of seniors in good physical and economic condition, who like traveling) or safety (the world has become less safe due to dangers such as epidemics, terrorist attacks, regional wars, polluted environment etc.).

However, besides always changing market conditions, there are also certain trends in consumer’s (traveler’s) behavior. This shows that besides research in tourism management systems, it is also important to analyze social trends and their impacts to tourism.

2.3 Social Trends and their Influence to Demand of Tourism
The beginning of changes, in particular in the Euro-Atlantic society, lies in the transformation from the “calvinistic” society (to work hard with no fun making and no leisure-time) to the hedonistic society (to work simply to gain necessary finance means for satisfaction of essential needs, but also for leisure-time activities). In particular, these activities represent change of individuals – from personal economic satisfaction to search for a high-quality lifestyle. It become more and more apparent that material prosperity has great influence on human behavior as it changes from simple “consumer-client” to “hybrid individual” [16]. That is a person who is rather critical and relies on his own as only he knows his own needs and desires. On the other hand, his dreams and real needs are usually in conflict, because he acts rather by his emotions and status of soul. Such consumer-client behavior is much more diverse and unpredictable (the person can be described as a chameleon). Their behavior could be described according to fore mentioned authors using these features (Seitz and Meyer In [16]):

1. Value of money
Hybrid client wants high quality but for low price.
2. Luxury/ new modesty
Client has no problem with saving money on daily expense to afford quality and luxury.
3. Anti tourism
Anti-tourists want to be different from ordinary, standard mass-tourists. These clients want to choose “their places”, “their destinations”.
4. Individual differences
Those who decided to travel do not want to be members of a group, do not want to be categorized. Such client likes originality, authenticity and the feeling of: “no one but me”.
5. Generation of those “forever young”
The number of seniors in tourism increases. They want entertainment and enjoyment, traveling.
6. “Fantasy adventure”
A client investigates or searches for emotive experience (such as entertainment, excitement). For tour operators it means that they have to also sell sophisticated services as an addition to a regular “wrapped product”, because it is not only about traveling (wrapping) but also about taste and emotion (inside of the box).
7. Democratization
Value changes in society resulted in the past in some democratization of life. Social differences and structure have changed, as well as customers’ needs increased with the rise of material wealth. A supply of financial products on the market and their relative easy accessibility allowed people to fall into debts often without understanding of their future revenues and savings. However, what was seen as a luxury in recent past becomes part of everyday life today.

Note: In relation to contemporary financial and economic crises, this is, however, rather questionable issue. Originally, it was based on assumptions which may not be valid any more, i.e. the authors expect favorable social conditions and availability of financial means for everybody.
Changes in social climate result in motivation and expectations of tourist clients. This may be shown in behavior of so-called "new" clients (see table 1).

Table 1: Comparison of the old and the new clients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>&quot;Old&quot; clients</th>
<th>&quot;New&quot; clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homogenous,</td>
<td>Heterogeneous (diverse)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>predictable</td>
<td>Spontaneous, unpredictable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware of their</td>
<td>Require diversity from the others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>financial status</td>
<td>Want to have things under control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prepared and paid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in advance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveling is a</td>
<td>Traveling is a choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new thing</td>
<td>Destination is the reason for traveling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination is</td>
<td>Quality shall reflect price paid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not too important</td>
<td>Desire to try something else, unique</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service quality</td>
<td>Holiday as a life extension</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is not too</td>
<td>Travel for the pleasure of traveling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun seeking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape from</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home and work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important is to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speak about</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>places visited</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Here today,</td>
<td>Entertainment without destroying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tomorrow somewhere else</td>
<td>Evaluation of diversity, variety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The west is</td>
<td>Know how to behave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better</td>
<td>Understanding is better</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intruding of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>western values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superiority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunbathing</td>
<td>Be active</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love attractions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Poon In [16, p. 159]

As we can see in table 1, different characteristics, motivation, attitudes and interests of old and new tourists, result in different demand for tourism services. Some signs of transformation from the mass tourism to so-called post-modern tourism (sometimes called sustainable or alternative) are already visible.

This post-modern approach has a specific feature: it is a quality of services that clients demand, very often through the following attributes:
- uniqueness/individuality,
- aesthetics/resemblance,
- ethics/fairness,
- protection/safety,
- possibility voluntary/free elections,
- genuineness/honesty.

2.4 Research in the Area of Social Impacts of Tourism

Tourism on one side carries along huge economic "benefits" [1], on the other, however, significantly contributes to environmental degradation, fragmentation of rural areas and is a source of many negative socio-cultural effects [4], [8], [11]. Many times in the past tourism that turned out-of-control had damaged or even completely destroyed natural and socio-economic environment of many tourist destinations [7], [13].

Currently, many research projects are dedicated to social impacts of tourism. In Deery et al. [4] the authors analyze tourism-related social impacts on host community and suggest conceptional framework of research as an alternative to currently often used quantitative methods used in this field of research. The authors point out to the lack of qualitative methods, upon which a list of social impact evolution could be made. They suggest a new approach to social-impact research, which might provide better understanding of negative impacts of tourism on residents. The authors also call for marketing to be made among residents of tourism resorts. In order to do that it is important to define a target group among the residents, for which the research would be designed. It is advised to focus on individual layers to better understand negative social impacts. In using Rousseau's terms (Rousseau In [4]), it is possible to examine social impact perceptions in relation to the: Artifacts: social impacts such as crowding, disruption to normal ways of life, environment damage. Patterns of Behaviour: e.g. resident avoidance of tourist areas. Behavioral norms: e.g. acceptance/rejection of tourists. Values: shared values of tourist and community needs. Fundamentals assumptions: quality of life.

Mentioned here should be also other works. For examples Stoeckl et al. [15] examine community impacts of different types of visitors on tourism development in the North-west Queensland. According to their analyses, there are different types of visitors (called a visitor mix) that generate different economic and environmental impacts on the local nature as well as community.
Haley et al. [6] present opinions of residents to tourism development in Bath, Great Britain. Lankford and Howard [10] describe the Tourism Impact Attitude Scale – TIAS. This model examines level of attitude to tourism-impacts. By using a multiple regression model, residents’ attitudes towards the tourism development in the Columbia River Gorge region of Oregon and Washington, USA, are analyzed.

The already mentioned study of Haralambopoulos and Pizam [7], shows project results, performed at the Greece island of Samos, of socially pathological phenomena on tourism. In here, respondents state that increase of negative phenomena, such as high prices, drug addiction, vandalism, brawls, sexual harassment, and crime were increased because of tourism. The authors conclude that “the social impacts of tourism are never universal, the intensity and direction of the impact depend on a variety of sociocultural and economic factors related to local areas and destination communities”. The tourism impacts “closely associated with the nature of tourism activities, the personal characteristics of tourists and the rapidity and intensity of tourism development” in the region. But the authors inspire that “only through the accumulation of knowledge that results from the conduct of such comparative studies in various regions of the world can one better understand tourism’s social impacts” and their perception of tourists and residents. [7, p. 523]

3 Monitoring of Tourism
Development in the Czech Republic

As Palatková [14] states, tourism-related research in the Czech Republic is very often based on statistics. It is monitoring of supply v. demand in tourism performed by the Czech Statistical Office, CzechTourism, Czech National Bank, MagConsulting, Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Prague Information Office, and regional organizations, or commercial business subjects and agencies. From foreign sources the following may be used: Eurostat, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), European Travel Monitor (ETM), European Tourism Commission (ETC), etc.

On the supply side it is information such as accommodation capacity (accommodation providing min five rooms, or 10 beds) used for tourism activity and are run on commercial basis. Other supply-based statistical data, such as accommodation-based services, catering, transport, guides, culture, sport, and other free-time-based services are practically not available. An exception is data of The National Information and Consulting Centre for Culture (NIPOS, more at http://www.nipos-mk.cz/), which in its statistics monitors cultural activity in selected theatres, museums, galleries, and historical points of interest. Monitoring of accommodation and catering providers, as well as financial performance of trade, accommodation or catering providers is performed by the Czech Statistical Office in its Tourism Satellite Account of the Czech Republic. From this, one can get a picture of the economic strength of tourism and its importance for the national economy.

The Office also monitors tourism-based demand in the Czech Republic (i.e. from abroad as well as from domestic subjects), mainly through the following indicators [2]:

1. **Number of overnight stays** in collective accommodation establishments – data on the structure of demand of Czechs as well as foreigners (i.e. persons who used accommodation for short-time stay for recreational activity – not due to business reasons). Such data are available by individual regions in the Czech Republic, types of accommodation establishments, bed/room utilization.

2. **Domestic and Outbound Tourism** – data on expenditure of Czech tourists on domestic trips and abroad (such as mode of transport, type of accommodation, purpose of trips, length of stays, other expenditures).

*Note: There used to be a detailed monitoring of border crossing in the past, providing data on tourism activity of Czechs and foreigners by neighboring states, type of transport, visa.

Besides the Czech Statistical Office, another monitoring activity is performed by the CzechTourism agency. To name just few, it is Monitoring of foreign visitors in the Czech Republic (provides an analysis of perception of the “Czech Republic brand” by foreign visitors), or Monitoring of visitors in Czech regions (provides an analysis on visitor structure and their experience with tourism in the Czech Republic, more at www.czechtourism.cz).

Economical-statistic information service in business, gastronomy, hotels and tourism spheres including processing of marketing pursuits and business plans is provided by MagConsulting (more at http://www.magconsulting.cz/).
4 Conclusion
The paper shows the necessity to coordinate relations among individual elements of tourism system and react to new trends that have effect on behavior of visitors and subsequently also demand for tourism-related services. According to some experts, tourism-related research done so far lacks qualitative-based performance that would provide large number of data. Experts therefore call for further research to be undertaken. When we have precise and up-to date information from different destinations, we will be able to understand tourism-related impacts and the way how these are viewed by tourists, residents and all other subjects involved.

The reform of tourism we see (e.g in Italy) and its permanent analyses by experts became a great challenge for the Czech Republic, i.e. general public as well as public administration, because only a symbiosis of political and qualified decision-making can set up a functional competitive system in tourism. As the author notes, it is necessary to find an agreement of qualified public on further research in tourism. As an example, the author suggests the following topics:

- vulnerability analysis of a particular locality (to deal with tourism-related risk management system),
- definition of an environmental management system in tourism (environmental stress testing, finding sensitivity level of the environment to different stress in relation to destination’s attractiveness and safety),
- implementation of appropriate methods for decision-making, development of models for destination management system, etc.

References:

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