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STEREOTYPICAL FACTORS IN TOURISM

Literature review

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Abstract

International tourism has grown rapidly nowdays, contributing to the growth of the global economy. The purpose of this essay is to identify and analyze stereotypical factors in the development of strategies concerning the offer for the tourism industry: the image of a tourist destination, brand, country of origin and customer behaviour. Documentary study was the research method used: representative articles were analysed, as recent as possible, to determine the factors mentioned above. Professionals in the industry of tourism need to understand cultural differences between tourists, as well as those of the host country, to be able to create tourist reception offers that live up to the standards expected by clients.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural differences influence the behaviour of tourists in different aspects and have a significant impact on tourism policy: planning, development, management and marketing [13, p. 340]. The success of a company operating in the field of tourism and which shall give priority to customers' satisfaction, but also to their own staff, depends on the quality of the staff (out of the point of view of the staff preparation), as well as a continuous improvement/growth of this quality [8, p. 424].

A somehow inexplicable phenomenon is taking place currently in the tourism industry: *dark tourism* or *black tourism*. This consists in

the desire of some tourists willing to visit *dark* places where tragic events took place, disasters with human victims (e.g., *The Zero Zone* in the United States of America, place where the Twin Towers existed before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001). These *bizarre* wishes of tourists to visit cemeteries, places where crimes have occurred, fights, wars, led to the development of this form of tourism in the less-known destinations or tourist spots, which weren't tourist attractions (e.g., the sinking of the ship *Concordia*, near the coast of the *Giglio Island* in Italy, from January 13, 2012, has brought a lot of tourists in the area even if it was considered a tourist destination only during the summer period) [5, pp. 74-75].

Tourists' unpredictable behavior, their wishes more or less bizarre, lead to the creation of new forms of tourism (e.g., black tourism) or to the development of those already existing. The tourist became very difficult to please in this era. These allegations led to the idea of opening to new, weird, unusual, experiencing new sensations. This can be considered a very difficult task for tourist companies that should periodically renew their offer, depending on the requirements of the market and new trends in the behaviour of tourists, to be able to raise to the expectations of clients and to please them.

International research has shown that the new disease of the 21st century is the addiction to labor [1, p. 1]. Thus, during the holidays, tourists should receive the best services to refresh after intense periods of work and stress. Recently appeared modern spa centers is a measure taken in this respect, whose aim is to contribute to the relaxation. Therefore, when a tourist decides on choosing a destination, he can be influenced by many factors: destination image, country brand, country of origin and customers' general behavior. These factors will be analysed further in this presentation.

2. STEREOTYPICAL FACTORS IN TOURISM

A *stereotype* is a generalisation about a particular cognitive social category that brings together members of a group with a particular attribute. These cognitive associations can be formed at any time and it is not necessary for them to rely on a specific culture [16, p. 1364]. Basically, the stereotype is related to the common traits of the members of a group. For example, the *Japanese* consider vacations or travels a right and not a privilege. This kind of tourists consider tourism a normal episode of their lives, not something exceptional [9, p. 346]. This perception of the Japanese reveals the emphasis on the quality of life that is based on what you see, experience throughout the life and not the material side of life. There may be a problem when the financial resources allocated to holidays are limited or even non-existent and people can't afford that and leave it, waiting for it.

The existing studies show that *French* tourists tend to interact less with tourists of other nationalities during the holidays, due to the difficulties of communicating in English [6, p. 175]. Although experiencing this difficulty in communication, they are not willing to make any effort in trying to communicate in a language, other than their native one. Taking this into consideration, I myself think that this behavior of *French* tourist is closely related to the history of their nation, particularly with the military victories of Napoleon Bonaparte in the early 19th century, when France virtually dominated the continental Europe. The *French* believe that any other nation should speak French, but for them is enough the knowledge of the native language, not being interested in learning other languages.

On the other hand, the *Germans* enjoy qualitative services and they focus on emphaty, sensitivity and understanding from touristic unit staff. Germany has built a brand in time, so that when talking about *Germans*, one immediately think about quality products, thoroughness, attention to detail, reliability. This is a reason of their high standards. *Indian* tourists appreciate the quality and safety during the voyages [6, p. 175]. Compared to other categories of travelers, *Indian* tourists prefer safety, competence, professionalism. Comfort matters a lot for these types of tourists during the holidays.

Developed countries (especially Europe), which have older population, are among those who can initiate opportunities for certain industries: tourism industry. This ageing population has the advantage of financial prosperity, as well as the necessary time to travel. The purpose may be: socializing, relaxing, participating in certain activities, discovering new places [13, p. 262]. Considering this category of population, tourism companies have in mind that the older persons get more time and financial resources. These persons need socializing, communicating, making new acquaintances with persons that are alike them. I have in view those persons who

benefit by financial necessary resources in this kind of getaways, because the older population cannot afford the luxury of prolonged vacations. However, there is a lot of commitment concerning these clients. The tourism companies that offer these services have plenty of implications. When telling you this, I have in mind the fact that, after a certain age, people want to gain control on everthything, they become extremely demanding and difficult to please, requiring detailed, supplimentary explanations. Being experienced, they used to find faults in everything, this fact raising certain difficulties for tourism companies. The staff who takes care of these ageing persons during a cruise, had to be endowed with limitless patience, being also capable to offer satisfying support.

2.1 Categories of Stereotypes

The stereotype is a mental structure, a prefiguration that selects and stores the information. Also, stereotypes can be considered those patterns that influence our perception and response to certain issues. They have a strong meaning value, being loaded by feelings and marked by tradition [10, p. 334]. The stereotype is a *set of images required to deal with the information issued by our environment*. These are determined by the information that we receive from the environment as a way to order and simplify the reality we live in. It is much easier to generalize and to automatically assign a number of features of a person who belongs to a particular group, instead of treat him/her as an individual and to try to know.
According to Walter Lippmann, stereotypes have four main features:
much easier than the reality;
acquired from cultural mediators, rather than through its own experience;
false by their very nature;
when acquired in childhood are very hard to change and remain obstinately in our minds, contributing to the formation of our behaviours and perceptions [10, p. 334].
Cultural Stereotypes are particularly resistant to the action of time. They are bound to the national image. The disadvantage cultural stereotypes have consisted in the fact that this type of stereotyping leads to prejudice and negative opinions about others and may become an obstacle in communication. The stereotype can be a variable in the configuration structures of tourism.

Certain studies should be made for the potential tourists who prefer a certain destination. Cultural stereotypes should be taken into consideration when conceiving touristic offers. For instance, if a certain tourist destination is visited by *German* tourists, the touristic offer will be based on quality: hotels, hostels with a particular assertain, classical or specialized restaurants and modern means of transport. The staff should be very well prepared and able to respond to all requirements. Irrespective of the economical status of a certain destination, the tourist must be offered a minimal of services that the client should enjoy during his/her holiday. In the case of a tourist who comes from the third world countries, there is a possibility that his expectations might not be acquired. The tourist will be happy to benefit from a certain type of services but, at the same time, his cultural stereotype shouldn't determine him to be too fussy because of his modest lifestyle.

Autostereotypes refer to the way members of different social groups represent their own group [6, p. 10]. They basically reflect the self-image of a group: for example, the *Romanians* consider themselves hospitable towards tourists, regardless of their nationality. In the case of autostereotypes, particularly, internal assignment involves predominantly positive qualities [20, p. 49].
Autostereotypes often determine *Romanians* to create various and rich touristic offers. For example, these days the agro-touristic pensions represent a popular trend with foreign tourists but also local. The complexity of the supply consists in services in the traditional units, but still retains the quality standards (at least up to a certain level), abundant meals with different kinds of traditional dishes, special means of transportation (horse-drawn carriages), a variety of recreational opportunities (participation in household chores – stall-feeding animals, the preparation of special dishes, assortments, nature sports, fishing, hunting, skiing and other ways of spending free time in a pleasant way). *Romanian* tourists are expected to benefit from complex touristic offers, which have resulted in companies working in the field of tourism to diversify tourist offerings in all areas of interest.

Heterostereotypes refer to the evaluation of traits and specific characteristics of members of a certain community. They are complex, mostly on the basis of negative foreign and special assignment, as a rule, faults and negative features of the group referred to [20, pp. 49-50].

Romanian tourists make certain associations with different nationalities and their features that are many times negative. For *Romanian* tourists the *Norsemen* are considered churls, egocentrics, the *Germans* are considered too fussy and meticulous, the *Arabs* are rich but too religiously fanatics and sometimes even terrorists (although it has been demonstrated that the vast majority of terrorists are not *Arabs*), the *French* are romantics and adventurous, the *English* are distant and boring.

Each tourist has certain expectations regarding the structure of the touristic services offered by the establishments of touristic reception. Activities according to their preferences should be included in the touristic offer, some of them conforming to the age and type of tourist. For instance, elderly people in Europe have mostly been interested in cruises along the Danube, considered to be fully compatible with their physical condition. The incoming supply should be adapted according to the age of the tourist and to the purpose of the journey.

The stereotype – as a receiver of touristic services, may be explained by the following examples: *Romanians* are considered hospitable; it may be possible that this aspect may vary depending on the personal characteristics of the individual or host. There is the risk that the entire staff of a hotel is not helpful, cooperative. In this case, the first impression of the foreign tourist will not be a positive one and, consequently, the tourists will make certain adverse association between *Romanians* and the providing of a certain hotel services. If this would happen in the case of a *Romanian* tourist, surely his anger shall be forwarded to friends/family and returning to that touristic establishment will no longer take place. All tourists, regardless of their nationality, income, financial situation, are expected to benefit from quality service, as long as they pay for this.

The stereotype – as a beneficiary: a *French* tourist, for example, may find that he had a warm welcoming, a pleasant stay, high-quality tourist services, while a *German* tourist might be under the impression that he wasn't being given enough attention, or that the services provided were not adapted to his personality. All these aspects are different not only due to the stereotypes influence, but also to their character traits.

2.2 The Image of Tourist Destinations

The image of tourist destinations may help one in making the decision to achieve a touristic product. If the destination has a good reputation or if the tourist, besides his experience, knows that in this place he receives all the services he wants, when considering that, if the tourist doesn't want to try something new, he may choose the same destination, diminishing the uncertainty in choosing an unknown location.

Culture represents the values, ideas, attitudes and symbols of a society. Regarding to the behaviour of tourists, *Japanese* tourists tend to travel in groups, to spend and to take photos to anything. They prefer to travel for a few days (choosing short holidays) for not being separated too much time from their families. *Chinese* tourists prefer group travel, especially in unfamiliar environments [13, p. 341]. Culture is one of the factors that make the difference between groups, especially groups that come from different countries. It has an important role in the formation of the image of a country. The importance of cultural values should be reflected in daily activities, behavior and attitude in the hosts' and visitors' behaviour in order to make a correct assessment, as close as possible to reality, and similarly cultural differences [2, p. 37]. Different types of personality lead to the decisions- making. The image of a destination is a factor of influence that has no effect on the current situation of the destination, but on the behavior of the visitor, on a general level [4, p. 3].

The *Romanian* tourist's behavior will be different when choosing Los Angeles or Cairo. In the first case, he will be surprised by the grandeur, luxury, while in the second case he will be shocked by the way in which history blends with poverty. The tourist will be faced with the economic development (Las Vegas) and stagnation, both in time and in space (Cairo).

The image of a country is often created through stereotypes, by ranking of nations and people in categories. Although stereotypes may be superficial, they can cause certain attitudes or orientations [9, p. 17]. Stereotypes may lead to wrong or false perceptions regarding a specific destination. This happens mainly when the tourist is marked by unpleasant events during his holidays. The tourist, being outraged, will create a negative advertising of a destination, which can change friends' and relatives' perception to the analyzed destination and, as a result, they won't visit that destination anymore. Stereotypes in tourism should not be generalized; for

example, I mentioned above that the *Japanese* tourists spend less time on holidays because they do not want to be separated for too long from their families, but what can we say about the *Japanese* tourists who do not have a family? For these tourists, definitely, the length of the holidays will not be influenced by the quick return in the bosom of the family. Also, if a tourist baggage is stolen during the holidays, that does not mean that all the tourists' luggage will be stolen during the holidays and it will be taken as part of an experience.

Kim Sangkyun and Noëlle O'Connor found that a factor that determines the choice of tourist destination can be watching a particular TV series/movie, at the international level (e.g.: Korean series *Daejanggeum* – translated as the *Jewel of the Palace*, has attracted millions of tourists eager to discover more about the history and culture of South Korea) [12, p. 145]. Basically, the tourists feel attracted to places where some famous internationally productions were filmed, which are distinguished by outstanding landscapes and powerful impact. By visiting these destinations, tourists try to enter into the atmosphere created by the cinematographic production.

The image of a country was defined by Nagashima in 1970 as an image, as a stereotype that consumers have in mind regarding a specific country; this photo can be shaped by historical and economical variables. The image of a country can ease the process of making a decision to achieve a travel product or service [19, pp. 207-208].

2.3 Country Brand

The brand of a country suggests that, by its name itself, a country can accomplish the most varied wishes of tourists or that the country is already renowned for the quality of services offered to tourists along the time. At the same time, a brand has credibility to the quality of services a country gained over the years.

When choosing a destination one may be influenced by motivation and perception of a brand personality. Country brands are different from the image of a tourist destination (tourist destination may be also a country) because they provide reliablility, emotions, feelings for their social values, emotional and uniqueness for users [17, p. 50]. The brand stands for ideas, feelings, values, combinations of words or images: the brand is identified with the identity of a country. The brand of a country is organized

around economic and tourism potential of that country. Every nation wants to promote its history, culture, values, traditions, to create an attractive, easily recognizable image among tourists [21, p. 939]. The main objectives of a country are: developing tourism and other business sectors, boosting investment, creating different perceptions and attitudes on the target market [9, p. 15].

The image of a country brand, defined as the sum of all opinions and impressions which people have about the country, plays a significant role in the choice of destinations by tourists. This image is based on previous knowledge of the people, beliefs or experiences on the stereotypes people of that country, but also on the social, political and economical aspects. Personal experience of tourists and other categories of visitors is vital in terms of forming loyalty among customers. Positive experiences improve the image, but a negative one might destroy it. The effect of negative experiences may have a bad influence on a person who hasn't chosen that destination, yet. Stereotypes can start the building of a national brand, emphasizing the positive aspects and decreasing the possible negative aspects. Cultural elements (folklore, customs), might have a major impact on the perception of national stereotypes and this may be used with the purpose to promote that country [9, p. 17]. All the analysed authors (Hakala, Murphy and Chelsea) have similar opinions about what the brand signifies in terms of its importance for a country's economic wealth.

2.4 Country of Origin Effect in Tourism

There are several parameters taken into consideration by the consumers when they want to achieve a product, as well as the brand, the country of origin (this is often used for the assessment of products). This factor influence consumers' behavior and their intention to purchase a tourism product [20, p. 204].

The effect of the country of origin is a stereotypical attribute which connects a tourist product from positive or negative emotions that can be assigned to certain nations. The effect of the country of origin may vary depending on what offers the tourist area/country in terms of tourist products, traditions, customs, architecture [3, p. 58]. Harun Amran et al. argue that the assessment on the basis of the country of origin is irrelevant in the context of existing marketing,

corresponding to the effect of globalization. The researches people made on the effect of the country of origin have shown that the perception of a country is vital to the evaluation of a product or brand and for the intention to achieve that product [13, p. 282].

Taking into consideration the previous arguments, the conclusion is that the effect of the country of origin should be analysed out of two perspectives: from the point of view of the country of origin of the visitor and from the point of view of the country of origin of the tourist product. Thus, using the examples discussed in the previous sections, the *Germans* will always emphasise quality service – the host country will have to adapt the services to their preferences; the *Chinese* want to visit unfamiliar places – the host country will look for them those areas that do not alike with the landscapes of China; the *Japanese* want brief holidays – the host country will have to find those complex tourist products that *Japanese* tourist will be able to visit representative places as soon as possible.

2.5 Customers' Behavior in Tourism

Globalisation and fierce competition that characterize nowadays environment have produced significant changes in consumers' behaviour in tourism. Consumers' behavior is defined: that behavior that customers show in searching for, achieving, using, evaluating the products and services that satisfy their needs. Customers' behavior focuses on the way the individuals decide to consume available resources (time, money, energy) and the demand for specific products or services [7, p. 757]. It differs depending on the nationality of the tourist, personal preferences in terms of tourist destinations, required services, preference in terms of accommodation - the option for a tourism establishment with a specific ranking, tourists' income, type of practiced tourism, the purpose of the journey, the people who accompany the tourists etc.

3. CONNECTIONS BETWEEN STEREOTYPICAL FACTORS in TOURISM

Hereinafter, I'll try to create certain connections between stereotypical factors in tourism introduced in the previous sections.

3.1 Connections between Tourist Destination Image and Country Brand

I will take the example of France. The country has built over time an image which suggests historical spirituality, unique landscapes, romantism, food experiences and worldwide famous wines. Due to a certain trust and emotion, France has become a brand. The tourist offer is extremely variate, the guidelines in this matter being made for different categories of tourists. Basically, these issues are very attracting for many tourists, by adaptability to the requirements of clients, through the creation of appropriate tourist products for all social categories. People are considered to be equal, that's why tourists are not treated in a different way, strangely, during a holiday.

3.2 Connections between Tourist Destination Image and Country of Origin

As I have already mentioned, the image of tourist destinations may influence the tourist in making a decision to purchase a tourist product. Also, the country of origin influences the behavior of tourists and their intent to acquire a specific product or not. If we take into consideration a tourist who comes from an island country, such as Hawaii, the image of a destination as the Canary Islands might not suggest anything special to the potential tourist, because this implies moving from one place to another with the same characteristics: fine sand beaches, sunshine, exotic landscapes. On the other hand, if we consider, for example, a *German* tourist who wants to visit Romania, the country of origin influence him to ask qualitative services which focus on details. In other words, the image of a tourist destination may have two semnifications for the tourist: a positive one – by associating a unique destination with traditions and a negative one – by associating the aspects of the behavior of people (outside the country).

The link between the tourist destination and the country of origin might be analysed out of the perspective of double citizenship. It may be Germany the country of origin for a *German* even if he comes from a turkish family. Even if that person grew up and lived in Germany, this aspect might not make him too fussy concerning

the image of a tourist destination as Romania. Thus, for such a complex offer, tourist destination may implement different tourism products (e.g.: for rich people who come from more or less rich countries). For instance, Monaco is a famous tourist destination, being known for the large number of rich persons who live in this country. It is obviously that tourists' expectations are very high in this place, as well as the prices.

3.3 Connections between Tourist Destination Image and Customer Behavior

I think this link is best supported by the example I gave at the beginning of this presentation: the *Romanian* tourist that behaves differently in tourist destinations as Las Vegas (where he will be impressed by the luxury, grandeur) and Cairo (where he will be shocked by the contrast between history and poverty). The behavior of a tourist also depends on his age (a child of 3 years old will not remember much from such touristic getaways – possibly he will be fascinated for the moment by the places seen). A tourist destination as Ibiza imposes practically different behavior from the tourists who associate this place with fun and daily parties. Taking this into consideration, tourist offers which include many forms of entertainment will be created.

3.4 Connections between Country Brand and Country of Origin Effect

The brand reflects the credibility of a quality service that a country gained over time. A *Romanian* tourist visiting France will always find something new, fascinating, which will impress him. On the other hand, a *German* tourist might not be impressed by this country; he might even feel disturbed by the prevailing romantism accents in France. This so-called hate itself might be due to conflicts for the territories that took place between Germany and France. Therefore, in the design of a tourism offer, there must be taken into account the target market audience, its characteristics and consumers' preferences. Somehow, the notion of brand provides to the tourists the safety in receiving services of high standard, if we talk about accommodation, food, means of travelling or recreation. Practically, there will always be an appropriate offer for each category of tourists.

3.5 Connections between Country Brand and Customer Behavior

Starting from the principle that you can be a tourist in your own country, *French* will feel proud knowing that their native country is a popular brand within many tourists. This may bring some self-respect of all those who appreciate the significance of a brand, because there is some difference between mentioning *I visited France* and *I visited Papua New Guinea*. Of course, it depends on the tourists' perception of certain destinations, as well as the preferences for a particular country, a specific culture. When talking about a brand, customers will pay much more attention to the quality, respect for the culture, traditions and food art. Tourism offers already existing in a country become brand should be created in a differentiated way, taking into account the stereotypical behavior, individually for each customer, both categories accordind to the social class, age, nationality, income.

3.6 Connections between Country of Origin and Customer's Behavior

A tourist from Egypt will not manifest a different behavior in a country like Morocco, Tunisia or Libya. This would be thanks, in principle, to the Islamic religion which prevails in countries from the North of Africa, but also somewhat common to this region's history: the fact that all the countries mentioned above, adding Algeria, were colonised by French during the time of Napoleon Bonaparte. Instead, the same tourist from Egypt may feel inferior, frustrated, both cultural and intellectual overwhelmed, acting shyess, without standing out in relief, in a country like Germany, precisely due to the cultural differences of the extreme country of origin and visited destination. A tourism offer should contain means adapted to all categories of customers, so that they should not feel any kind of frustration or inferiority among tourists who visit popular destinations, but who originate from more remoted areas, less developed economically. Thus, there should be various establishments of tourists' reception with functions of touristic accommodation, various ways to go out for a meal (in fine restaurants, but also in fast-food locals) and entertainment for all tastes.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Depending on the consequences of the connections between the factors analysed above, tourist accommodation establishments must be created without giving the impression of generalizing. The purpose of creating various accommodation establishments is to fulfill all categories of tourists. Tourists should feel that they benefit of custom services, particularly for individual preferences.

Customers mainly focus on integrity and respect, authenticity, originality of the services offered by the friendly, polite and eager to help staff, so that they will feel welcomed every time, on the opportunity to learn something related to that destination or deepen already the knowledge held regarding that area, on the safety of services.

The tourist product should be designed in a differentiated way, taking into account the main segment of tourists which addresses to the respective tourist destination. For older people will be created tourist products which should contain affordable means of transport (cruise ships, luxury buses or trains, if they are going to be covered relatively short distances), hotels endowed with automatic elevator (in order to facilitate their movement), possible treatment centers, recreational opportunities for their age and needs (to socialize, to know certain places loaded with exciting traditions or history). The adjustment of certain establishments to customer needs should be implemented as early as the design stage, in order to avoid further investments and subsequently amendments which might stop the activity of the establishment or that could be unpleasant to tourists who planned to stay in those surroundings.

The staff of the establishments serving aged tourists should be endowed with a lot of patience and caring, to be able to provide the requested information to clients in a fine way. Socializing, relaxing, culturalization and medical recovering should be used by tourism companies to promote messages for this kind of tourists.

People who travel for business purposes will always choose those tourist structures which fulfill the conditions required for their activities. The plane is frequently used as means of transport, due to reduced time to reach the desired destination. Tourists will choose hotels with modern conference rooms, with sufficient number of places. They also will request those services that provide full service, even if we talk about business (accommodation, meals,

conference room, recreation – relaxation through sports such as golf, tennis). In this case also, it is advisable that the establishments of tourists' reception with functions of touristic accommodation to be designed taking into consideration the target segment that focuses the tourist area or place where the hotel is located. Promotion for this category of people will focus particularly on services they need: access to the conferences and opportunities to spend time with business partners.

All means of transport may be used by families traveling with children as long as no one has health issues or a specific fear. As regards accommodation, the rooms should be designed according to specific dimensions, because it is possible that parents and children may stay together in the same room during their holidays. The hotel inclusive restaurant should have in menu dishes for children. The promotion will focus on various children's hobbies, personalized services for families with children and the feeling of safety.

Young people are expected to benefit from entertainment services. They are not very fussy when talking about means of transport. According to their income, they prefer those cheap means of transport to afford them the travelling in a larger group. Regarding the food services, they prefer eating fast food, not having the necessary patience to have lunch in a restaurant. They concentrate more on recreational opportunities: walkings, extreme sports, parties. Simple establishments of tourists' reception with functions of tourist accommodation are preferred, at acceptable prices. Luxury is not the main criterion for the selection of an tourist accommodation. In their cases, the promotion will bring on the desired leisure services, at the appropriate pricing.

All in all, when conceiving a tourist product, factors as: tourist destination, country of origin, country brand, customers' behaviour (including the consequences resulting from the connections between these factors) and least but not last, the features related to the tourists' stereotype, but also their expectations, should be fully taken into consideration by tourism companies.

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