

From Tourism to "tourisms": Destination Management the key factor

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A Tourism sector: some basic remarks on its evolution and development'

Tourism in the modern world is becoming more and more a crucial factor of change in the patterns of development especially in the retinal and local level After the 60'S when most of the International Organizations which were involved in the restructuring and economic development of the world economy which was coming out of the war urged -together with the governments of the Developed Countries- the less developed countries to adopt a specific pattern of tourism development based mainly on Vacation mainly those of the summer. This pattern of tourism development was applied then without any careful consideration of the impacts that the -very quick - massive organized vacation tourism could create in the "receiving" regions and countries of the World the number of which was growing very fast because of the foreign exchange earnings which were crucial for many of these countries in the period after the war. The adaptation thus of this pattern of development - and this is the first remark -was also an adaptation of a specific type of demand which is still the biggest portion of travels worldwide every year. Of course after more than fifty years of a continuous development of tourism this pattern of demand has changed and we have different types of travels within this pattern (more autonomous concerning the modes and characteristics of clients) and less organized through the Tour Operators purchasing channels because of the use of the internet. But this changes did not affect the developmental pattern which is still massive -in terms of infrastructure- and with vast impacts on the Environment , Society, Economy and Culture.

The first scientific studies in the 70's regarding the issue of Impacts of massive tourism development in many - and in different parts of the world -tourism regions revealed -and this is the second introductory remark - a vast number of very crucial and in many cases very abrupt changes in all the above mentioned issues (Environment, Society etc). This was the reason that a vivid and interesting discussion begun concerning on the one hand the impacts and on the other the necessary measures which should be taken to change this developmental pattern. The core issue of this scientific but also political discussion was the need of more concrete, and more integrated developmental pattern in the local level and with long term benefits for the tourism regions. This brought about the need for legislative policies and measures the basic characteristic of which were: limits to tourism development, measures - especially environmental - to decrease the impacts of massive tourism development, policies to promote a pattern of development more integrated with the local culture and society. The term Sustainable was than adopted to describe this new pattern of development which on the other hand engaged - for the first time really - both offer and demand or local and tourists in the procedure of developing and planning in Tourism Regions. The turn to a more sustainable development of tourism underlined the need to create new tourism products - and this is the last remark - which would be able to create a different and more "qualitative" demand for tourism regions as the answer to the "quantative" demand that we had because of massive

tourism development. This was a difficult task for all stakeholders involved in Tourism: Tour Operators, the Hotel Industry, Tourists, Locals, Planners but it was more than obvious -especially after the 80's-that this was a totally new era for tourism because this "new" products (Special Interest Tourism) created a new and perplexed market with dynamic demand and positive impacts on the sustainability issue. A huge turn both in offer and demand was thus the result :beside the traditional massive vacation tourism product we had a vast number of tourism products related to a demand for totally different motives: Environment, Education, Rurality, Heritage, Culture, Sports, Health, History, Congresses, City breaks, Hobbies of all sorts, Casinos, Profession, Experiential travels, Adventure Travels, Thematic Museums ,Thematic Parks etc. This evolution posed a large number of issues for the tourism regions and first of all to create the necessary and specialized infrastructure for this new type of demand. We could now - and we still do - talk for a turn from Tourism to "tourisms"....

Changing the pattern the pattern towards Special Interest Tourism (SIT): some major trends²

The overall development of a new and rapidly growing and extremely diversified market -regarding especially motives and infrastructures-was the result of some major trends mainly in demand (tourists and tourism businesses) but also in the supply side (locals and local planners). The major trends of this enormous change in the overall development of Tourism the last 30 years are the following:

Tourists become more multimotivational. Tourists especially after the 80's started traveling for more than one reasons or for more than one major reason which was the case till then. This was the result of a change in motives: tourists wanted to do more things than just have a vacation in their trip. So we had to deal with a multimotivational new type of client which wanted to have different tourism services and infrastructures in the Tourism resort he /she was visiting. This also forced local governments and local entrepreneurs to develop this new products in order to diversify their supplies so they could meet this new type of demand (Agrotourism, Ecotourism, Cultural Tourism etc). So in many tourism regions we have now beside the traditional vacation tourism infrastructure a number of services provided for this new products which may have different characteristics in their organization and management.

Tourists prefer more autonomous types of travels. In the same period tourists started questioning the major characteristic of massive vacation travels: the type of organization which did not left many levels of freedom to the tourists which choosed this pattern of travel. Tourists started seeking a more autonomous type of travel in many aspects by choosing: the timetable, the destination, the hotels, the travel means, the prices, the sites visited etc. Plus all these the internet has contributed heavily towards this trend because it provided information, different prices and also booking to this type of clientele a big percentage of which were Tourists which choosed different types of travels during the year.

A bigger number of travels in relation with higher income spending in Tourism Travels. Tourism travels became slowly a kind of social and economic pattern of the middle class clientele in the Developed Countries. This evolution supported two major trends regarding the growth of the SIT market: an augmentation of the number of travels both within the countries and abroad the last thirty years and a significant proportion of family income spend in travels every year. So the tourist is now traveling more and naturally chooses different types of travels (in terms of duration price and motive) and thus is boosting this new market (SIT). In that process he is making difficult choices and chooses different products and regions to visit because of the income limits but still he is the client of many different products.

Tourists are now choosing a more active and rich travel experience. Tourists seek more an experiential way of travel and by that we mean that they and also expect in their trips from the one hand to know more about the history, culture, environment and society of the area they are visiting and on the other hand to have an active trip regarding the activities offered in the region (in comparison to the passive type of travel experience that the Organized Mass vacation Tourism is offering). Both of this trends are the real essence and characteristic of the SIT market which evolved exactly by offering more active vacations and travel experiences by urging the tourist to seek for a different relation with all the aspects and the resources of the region they are visiting.

The notion of "locality" and the bottom up approaching planning affected positively the boost of the SIT Market. Following the Sustainable development principles we witnessed in many Tourism countries and regions a huge turn to procedures were locality and the bottom up approach in planning were adopted as the basic tools for a more integrated to local conditions approach. The locality issue was raised by Tourism scientists, local planners and inhabitants of the Tourism regions and the basic arguments are: a development plan should take into account the specific local characteristics of economy, society, environment, culture. This approach was in contrast with the massive vacation pattern of development where the impacts caused by the huge infrastructure and the «Touristification» of the society were negative for the region as a Tourism Destination which can host many and different types of Tourism (Vacation Tourism and the SIT markets). In that framework the planning procedure chosen was the bottom up approach which ensured the locals involvement in planning and the implementation of basic sustainability principles. Though these changes the SIT market has now a more severe presence with infrastructures and services in many Tourism Regions.

Everything can be a tourism resource if there is a demand: the SIT market lessons. When we mention Tourism Resources we usually refer to the climate, the infrastructure, the environment, the culture etc and getting more specific we talk about the beautiful beaches, the luxurious hotels the ski slopes etc. From the SIT market we have learned two major "lessons": a) totally different things can be a tourism resource b) study carefully the motives to understand the markets segmentation and thus the demand. Some examples of the first

“lesson”: volcanos tours, cycling tours, runners tours, local gastronomy, music festivals, thematic parks for children, visiting old mining installations, winneries tours, cruise congresses etc. We have an almost unlimited number of a new type which we either had but we did not promote them as a tourism resource or we did not have but we can create as a tourism product. And this brings us to the second lesson: that we should study the motives of the tourism market because beside vacation we will find in most of the cases a huge number of travel motives which are related with infrastructure and services that we have or we may easily create thus becoming more comprtitive both in the Vacation and the SIT markets. So we are dealing the last decades with a totally new and much more perplexed picture in the development and management of Tourism Regions. A diversified market of a large number of different -regarding their motives-products needs the application of a destination management plan the main principles of which should be related with a long run sustainable growth.

Destination Management in the new era of “Tourisms”: two basic issues³

Formulating a DMO in Tourism Regions in order to promote and manage a highly diversified product. One has to admit that the management of massive vacation Tourism was an in many cases a rather easy task for tourism regions planners. Most of the decisions regarding demand were taken outside the regions, the "product" was organized and thus easily managed. Two issues than had to be deaed with: promotion and the management of impacts. This is not the case with the new era of having a usually big number of Tourism products in tourism regions with different characteristics, season, clientele, management needs etc. The formulation of a DMO which will operate both as an observatory of Tourism (Demand trends, Supply needs etc) and a management and promotion tool for the region is of a crucial need in a much more competitive international environment. The role of the DMO will also be that of an autonomous body reflecting, merging and promoting both the Stakeholders and the Local Governments opinions regarding Sustainable Tourism Development. The principles of Sustainability are besides these which require the operation of a DMO as the proper tool for sustainable local development in an area which has different tourism resources and thus products (Vacation Tourism and SIT).

The “Nexus” as a tool for a successful Destination Management Plan

The large number of SIT products in a region and the fact that the market share each one of them represented was not enough to boost a strong demand for the region were the two reasons which resulted in the implementation of the Nexus as the basic tool for a Destination Management Plan in the tourism regions which dispose different SIT products plus -in many cases -rich resources of Vacation Tourism The notion of the nexus is based on the registration ,development, promotion and management of the resources which can be used as "common ground " for the interrelated development of a number of SIT products Through this interrelation process you develope and promote not just one SIT product which may create just a small or medium market demand but a number of them p.e. Agrotourism, Ecotourism, Cultural, Rural, Mountain,Sports Tourism as a nexus of SIT products that the area possesses The market demand created through that approach is much bigger and more steady In the long run and can more easily be interconnected with the demand for the Vacation Tourism Product

On the other hand the Nexus is closely related to the sustainable use and management of resources in Tourism Regions.

As a concluding remark in the new era of Tourisms with a number of totally different products in a Tourism Region, Sustainable Tourism Principles interconnected with a careful Destination Management Plan should be applied in order to a long run positive developmental effect.

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