Destination attractiveness factors as a constituent of tour planning

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Abstract – The current work comprises national and foreign experience on definition and evaluation of the destination attractiveness factors as a constituent of tour planning.

Key words – tourist attractions, attractiveness, tourist resources, grading approach, comparative evaluation.

Due to their specific features that attract the tourists and motivate them for visiting tourist attractions function as the main resource for the development of the tourism territorial system. Destination attractiveness evaluations take place to determine the priority of different territories with various attractions for the tourism development.

The expertise of numerous scientists (Gunn, Lew, Mihalich, Vengesayi, Pikkemaat, Ritchie and Crouch, Kim & Agrusa, Yoon & Uysal, Um, Chon & Ro, Kresich, Omerzel & Mihalich, Cracolici & Nijkamp, Leask) proves that destination attractiveness is a determining factor in tourist resources demand formation. Destination attractiveness factors have a considerable impact on the tour planning and sequence of tourist movements during the tour.

The word *attractiveness* originates from the Latin verb "attrahere", meaning - to attract. A variety of tourist attractions, generic by their nature and characterized by a high level of homogeneity, in other words similar with regard to their attractiveness characteristic, are termed attractiveness factors of a tourism destination. The need to consolidate numerous tourist attractions into particular attractiveness factors originates from the need to simplify a very complex tourist system consisting of a large variety of tourist attractions which are, in view of their characteristic features, very heterogeneous (a range of tourist attractions can vary from attractions defined by their characteristic nature-climate features to those defined by family and friendly ties with a tourism destination) [1].

As a rule location of tourist resources within a certain territory is of inhomogeneous nature. For example in the territory of Ukraine greater part of attractions are located in Kyivska, Khmelnytska, Vinnytska, Chernigivska, Sumska regions and in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. However the quantitative index of these attractions is unable to give the idea of the level of their educative value and attractiveness, as well as of their availability for educational recreational activities or inclusion into corresponding tours.

Apart from defining different destination attractiveness factors, the majority of authors are also engaged in a systematization and classification of the same. One of the most important classifications is the UN- WTO classification (McIntyre, Hethering- ton, & Inskeep), which classifies destination attractiveness factors into the following groups:

- natural tourist resources,
- cultural and historical heritage in tourism,
- climate conditions,
- infrastructure and
- tourist services and facilities.

N. Polinova proposed the approach which included the following attributes for educational value evaluation: the level of attractions organization for demonstration and tourist's location in relation to the tourist attraction. Depending on the organization level all historical-cultural attractions are divided in this case into attractions well-organized for demonstration and non-organized; as to the tourist location in relation to the attraction there are interior and exterior historical-cultural attractions. The author utilized the above-mentioned terminological expressions as well as the concept of the time required for sightseeing of the historical-cultural attractions when developing rating scales of the proposed grading system of the tourist attractions evaluation.

The essence of the grading approach to the historical-cultural resources evaluation rests on the fact that rating scales are built on the further structuring of specific components in relation to the historical-cultural importance of their specific phenomena and the time required for sightseeing. The time required is determined by experts. The more time is required for examination of the attraction the higher educational value it enjoys and, i.e., the more points it scores.[2].

As a result of the N.Polinova's approach all destination attractiveness levels are divided into: unique, highly attractive, medium attractive, less attractive and non-attractive.

Somehow different approach to the destination attractiveness determination is proposed by I. Kartashevska. Destination attractiveness according to I. Kartashevska [3] is determined as the combination of the aesthetic value and the scope of information on the given attraction. Rating of different regions depending on the priority of their intended purpose for tourism and recreation development is based on the comparison of destination attractiveness indexes as to the cultural potential and taking into account natural specifics and settlement pattern. Furthermore the destination attractiveness is in accordance with 3 classes: 1 – specially favorable conditions; 2 – favorable conditions; 3 – less favorable conditions.

The most attractive regions are regions of classes I and II, where valuable tourist attractions are abundant and concentrated in few places allowing comfortable sightseeing and pedestrian connections; besides the most attractive are the destinations where picturesque landscape complexes are located. Regions of class III relate to reserve ones where complex restorative activities are to take place to prepare both architectural and nature reserve attractions in order to use them for tourism purposes in the future.

V. Danilchuk proposed to utilize the comparative evaluation of tourist attractions in order to determine the attractiveness of recreational resources. The evaluation methodology is based on the determination of various specific features to have crucial importance for the comparative evaluation. Specific features selection

depends as a rule on the purpose of the attractions evaluation. Selection of specific features and their grouping into blocks, evaluation constituent directions, is important for achieving the purpose in view. The given methodology is based on the works by the group of researchers with P. Oldak at the head, the group of researchers of Donetsk institute of tourism business, as well as K. Yatu and M. Bulai, two Rumanian scientists.

According to E. Kusen (2002), all attractions are divided into potential and real attractions. In KuSen's classification potential attractions are the characteristics of a destination with attraction potential, which, for some particular reason, has not been adequately exploited in tourism. On the other hand, real tourist attractions are those attributes of a destination to which the tourist has assured access and which have been entirely exploited through tourism. According to the criteria of their genesis and original dedication, tourist attractions may also be divided into natural or inherited, and created or produced tourist attractions. It is important to underline that for some characteristics of the destination it is obvious that they are real tourist attractions (geographical and climatic characteristics, the historical and cultural significance of an area, events and manifestations), while for certain other tourism destination characteristics it is not so obvious that they are tourist attractions, regardless of their possible high influence on the popularity of an area (destination). These are factors that can have a very strong influence on the number of visitors to a particular area, but still they cannot be identified as tourist attractions, and this may depend on the following: economic factors (exchange rates, costs of living in a destination), socio-cultural factors (hospitality of local inhabitants, courtesy of employees in public services), natural factors (earthquakes, floods, droughts, tsunamis, and similar) and political factors (political stability of the destination, danger of terrorist attacks, and similar). Therefore, sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between attractions and non-attractions, which additionally complicates a clear definition of tourist attractions.

The main problem of the given methodology rests on the difficulty to determine (objective) values of variables divided into blocks (levels).

F. Leno Serro, representative of the Spanish academic school, considers it necessary to take into account the nature and specifics of certain attraction when determining destination attractiveness; he proposes the following formula:

$$Vri = Jpi * \mu i,$$

where Vri = tourist value of i-attraction; Jpi = primary hierarchy of i-attraction; μi = weight assignment that takes into account the nature of i-attraction.

Therefore attraction tourist value depends on place of the attraction in the hierarchy based on its importance or uniqueness as well as on the weight assignment recording its nature.

It may be concluded that, no matter how many researches have been undertaken with the aim of defining the attractiveness of destinations as well as factors of attractiveness, these terms are still not unequivocally defined. The reason for this is the extremely complex and heterogeneous nature of the tourism product. Therefore, it is very hard to encompass all the characteristics of destination that may be characterized as attractiveness factors within a single definition. Nevertheless, it is possible to extract certain common elements from research carried out so far that are pertinent to destination attractiveness factors, regardless of the destination in question and the main types of tourism product that the particular destination offers. These elements are as follows:

• A destination should have particular characteristics which are interesting for potential tourists;

• Groups of characteristics (attractions) which are interesting to tourists, and which are by nature generic or homogeneous, are termed tourism destination attractiveness factors;

• The existence and definition (identification) of attractiveness factors are a prerequisite for the development of organized tourist activities in a particular location (destination);

• Attractions may vary significantly from destination to destination, according to their characteristics and the intensity of their appeal;

• Tourist attractions, as well as attractiveness factors, which they constitute, are distinctly spatially characterized.

In our country historical-cultural attractions are hardly evaluated as tourist resources; important attractions are mainly not included into tourist tours which results in their restricted usage. This fact is of significant importance for the development of the national tourism.

It should be noted that tourism development within a certain region is to be considered taking into account the possibility of active development of certain types of tourism to have the most favorable conditions within the given territory.

Development of comprehensive system of the tourism types classification in order to determine the potential of the regions of Ukraine concerning each of the main tourism directions and classification of tourist resources as tourist attractions requires generation of new evaluation methods to be the basis for undertaking the attractions inventory and creating the catalogue dividing tourist resources into ranks (of world-wide, national, regional, republican and local importance).

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