

THE NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF RISK FACTORS IN TOURISM

These risk factors are a positive or a negative influence, and consequently

the likelihood of unfavorable results.

For example, factors are those factors that by their direct and indirect

influence contribute to the management, preservation, promotion of

tourism in specific factors in tourism, that is not a concern in the

analysis and structure of the factors favorable to the development of

tourism.

1. Introduction

Generally, specialised literature in our country, as well as European and world literature on the subject, has amply analysed the positive contributions of tourism.

This approach was objectively justified by the fact that this field of social life, which is old, but has greatly expanded over the past 50 years, needed an encouraging environment, not one that would induce fears. At the same time, production factors have drawn most of the attention and have been extensively analysed and documented.

We will better understand this reality if we examine the period of over-planned economic policies in our country when information, control and results were the main focus. However, practice has shown that no matter how scientific and accurate the planning of social and economic life is, the numerous variables (many of which are random) cannot possibly capture and control complex phenomena. Since tourism is one of the very complex fields of the social and economic life, this approach had to be applied to it too.

The nature of risk factors in tourism has received little attention, restricted to collateral and unilateral treatment, such as the problem of pollution factors. In recent years, nevertheless, national tourism authorities as well as some international organisations have shown interest in this issue. We will only mention, as an example, the actions of The World Tourism Organisation and of the European Union. [1]

Our premise is that in tourism and not only there, exist many risk factors that consequently make tourism one of the most risky activities.

2. Favourable factors – risk factors

Since by factor we generally understand the cause of a process or a condition for its occurrence, which influences it by causing some changes these can therefore have a positive or a negative influence, and consequently be favourable or unfavourable, respectively.

Favourable factors are those factors that by their direct and indirect influence contribute to the emergence, preservation, and development of tourism. In specialised literature in Romania there is not a consensus on the number and structure of the factors favourable to the development of tourism or on their place and importance, therefore no hierarchical organisation. However, these particular factors can be classified in five main groups, as follows: economic, demographic, social-psychological, political and natural factors.

When we consider their relevance for development, there emerge certain differentiations specific to the point of view adopted by the disciplines used in the analysis. Thus, more and more geographers increasingly place more importance on demographic factors, starting from a reasoning that has been refuted by practice, namely that the bigger the population of a locality, region or state, the more extensive tourism is. However, so far, the tourism industry has developed widely and beneficially in the US, Germany, France, the UK, in industrialized countries then, and not in China, India, Vietnam or Brasil, states with large population. This fact reveals the importance of the economic factor that represents the crucial condition for holiday activities. If one does not have the money to cover the costs of the trip, despite one's available time and desire to travel, one is left to contemplate their unfulfilled dreams.

A profound and correlated analysis of factors favourable to the development of tourism will reveal the way in which, under certain circumstances, they can become unfavourable factors for the tourism industry. Among economic factors, crises represent a serious obstacle for tourism:

- the demographic factor, through the reduction of the birth-rate and of life-expectancy, can become a restrictive element for tourism;
- the social-psychological factors, present in crises, group interests, pollution, disinformation, etc., can also be major impediments;
- political factors, by legislation, the internal economic and social policies related to the effects of tourism can become risk factors;

– natural factors, such pollution, catastrophes and cataclysms of any kind have a negative contribution on the intensity of the touristic activity in the areas where such undesirable events occur. [2]

3. A possible classification of risk factors in tourism

Starting from certain characteristics or indicators, we can draw up up a classification of risk factors in the tourism industry.

1. If we consider the place of origin and of influence, we can refer to:

- Endogenous factors;
- Exogenous factors.

2. According to the type action/ functioning, we shall distinguish between:

- Factors having direct action;
- Factors having indirect action.

3. With reference to their temporal repetition, we will identify:

- Factors having immediate action;
- Factors having medium-term action;
- Factors having long-term action.

4. According to their nature, there can be:

- Management factors;
- Economic factors;
- Natural factors;
- Technical factors, etc.

As can be noticed, risk factors have an heterogeneous content, and are some having relatively interdependent content.

4. Short particularisation

The action of these factors is to be detected both at the most general level of the tourism industry as well as in the structure and types of manifestation and practice.

If we consider the influence of these factors on particular types of tourism, we shall distinguish some very interesting aspects, which, once they are identified and known, can help to grasp the phenomenon or diminish certain negative, undesirable effects.

Thus, international tourism in a particular area, country or geographical region is influenced by both domestic and external elements, relating to the tourists' country of origin and to the countries they transit in order to get from their residence to their destination.

If we refer to balneary tourism, risk factors will be found in the respective area, and are mainly connected to: the capacity to preserve the quality of natural healing factors and of touristic services, the countermeasures adopted in order to limit the effects of aggressiveness of some homeopathic cures, and, last but not least, general and even external issues.

We can then establish the elements that constitute risk factors by taking into account a particular type of tourist activity.

So as not to dwell too much on this vast, complex, topical and important issue, we will only demarcate some of the main elements of a particular group of risk factors, outlined in the third part of this study.

Thus, the *endogenous factors*, emerging from within the tourism industry, are:

- the unscientific exploitation of touristic resources;
- incorrect positioning of some elements of specific technical and material facilities;
- the intensive use, beyond the limits accepted by science, of certain places and areas, which contributes to the degradation of resources;
- deficient management and its repercussions;
- inadequate promotion unsubstantiated by reality.

Exogenous factors can emerge both from outside tourism and the limitations of the territorial reach of the Romanian state, and from outside the country, namely from the country of origin of the tourists and the countries they have transited.

These factors include:

- social and political factors;
- economic factors;
- demographic factors;
- psychological factors.

Factors that do not emerge from the effects of tourism, but have an extremely strong impact upon it, also enter this category:

- pollution (phonic, of the air, aesthetic), the degradation of forests (through pollution and deforestation), of natural reserves and also of historical and cultural sites;

– the process of settlement, urbanization and industrialization of touristic areas.

The second category of risk factors, pertaining to their action is significant by the range of its effects. The following aspects have a rapid and direct impact on tourism:

- pollution under its various forms;
- social unrest of any type;
- economic crises;
- political and military crises, etc.

Risk factors having an indirect action include:

- demographic factors (decline of the birth-rate, rise of mortality, reduction of life-expectancy, etc);
- psychological factors induced by disinformation that ruins the real image of a particular touristic offer, etc.

As regards risk factors having repetitive action, their negative effects can be unimaginable. For instance the recurrence of certain natural catastrophes (floods, avalanches, landslides), ecological disasters, of certain social movements, military actions or terrorist attacks has disastrous effects on tourism. This category includes dynamic factors that repeat at certain intervals and static factors that occur and have negative effects but do not repeat.

There is a proportional, direct relation between the duration of risk factors and their effects. For example, risk factors with immediate action include:

- pollution, regardless of its form, has immediate negative impact on tourism;
- natural catastrophes (such as the avalanche that took place in Austria in the winter season 2000/2001);
- military and interethnic conflicts;
- social unrest, etc.

All these have direct, and most unfavourable, effects on tourism.

Factors having medium-term action include:

- deficient management;
- legislation;
- an economic crises, etc.

The factors having long-term action are:

- ecological disasters;
- overpopulation of accommodation facilities;
- restrictive legislation.

According to their character, risk factors can be simple or complex.

Simple factors, by their content, make an impact once and on one holiday site, area or region only, on one type of tourism or even on a single holiday season.

Complex risk factors, on the other hand, repeatedly influence several units, areas, types of tourism, and seasons.

If we consider their nature, there can be management, natural, social-political, technical factors, etc.

In the current context, when information travels at lightning speed, the role of organisational factors in ensuring the success or failure of tourism is tremendous.

The changes and advances in the expression and content of the advertising and promotion system, in the booking and payment methods have shed new light on the issues surrounding tourism, the role of management becoming crucial as a result.

In a short time deficient management can have disastrous effects on tourism. For example, bad management becomes a risk factor, as it is unable to have an influence on the legislation of the field, which should be balanced and permissive.

Natural factors play a special role among risk factors in tourism. Paradoxically, precisely the factors that are greatly beneficial to the development of tourism in certain areas can become, under certain circumstances, real risk factors. This is very possible the history of tourism has often offered evidence for this definite possibility, especially when pollution, overpopulation and hyper-industrialisation affect tourism, its essential elements.

For instance when we speak about, balneary tourism based as it is on mineral springs, thermal waters, mud treatment, sulphur and carbon dioxide emissions, the decrease of their natural qualities causes the slow demise of these resources.

Technical factors can also become risk factors under certain circumstances such as:

- a certain contribution to the pollution of natural resources used in tourism (mineral waters, muds, in the treatment facilities);
- the degradation of certain balneary and environment-protection facilities as well as the failure to regularly modernise them lead to lags in relation to those units that constantly modernise their health, accommodation, gastronomic and transport equipment.

As these facilities have a recilying rate of 3 to 5 years any failure to act accordingly, represents a further risk to the tourism industry.

References

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