

BETWEEN THE TOURISM “INDUSTRY” AND PERSONALISED TOURISM. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract: The multiple combinations of the development variables, have generated in space and time different stages of evolution in the human society, and consequently different types and levels of tourism. While some territories have reached the phase of “tourism industry”, others are merely at the beginning. Therefore some areas have experienced a slower economic development, thus unwillingly managing to preserve a patrimony that carries a great load of regional specificity. Other areas have reached the highest level of development, generating touristic activities on a large scale, but with multiple negative and positive implications on the human communities. This paper has as purpose to emphasize the essential aspects typical for the “tourism industry”, in well developed spaces as references for the initiation of development strategies destined to spaces rich in primary touristic resources, but only at the beginning of the touristic road.

Key words: tourism “industry”, personalised tourism, human resources, development

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Most settlements and regions in Romania wish to develop by means of tourism.
How can this be done?

What is the touristic attraction of the future meant to look like?

Which way is the region wanted to head for, on a cultural, educational, social,
economic level?

Las Vegas – the system of touristic management and organisation

Starting from the idea that Las Vegas represents an important landmark in the tourism “industry”, a short identification of the streamline of the amenities and services generated by this international location will be attempted as follows (fig. 1.).

The fact that any touristic destination must have touristic motivational elements is well-known, which means that it either has to be a brand or it has to own brands capable to influence the decision of the potential tourist. Since the entire situation is highly advanced, this location manages to generate numerous other types of related activities (business reunions, science, culture, etc.), and it can be considered a point of attraction for pseudo-tourists.

Once with the existence of the elements of touristic attraction comes the problem of ensuring the basic services, represented by meals and accommodation. The overall

number of accommodation places in Las Vegas is of approximately 130,000, as compared to a total of 290,000 places of accommodation available on the whole of Romania. As an important measure of drawing the highest possible number of tourists, accommodation offers attractive for all types of consumers – in matters of incomes, have been launched – a formula known as “tourism for all budgets”. The basic services have been supplemented by eating services- also for an extremely wide range of consumers.

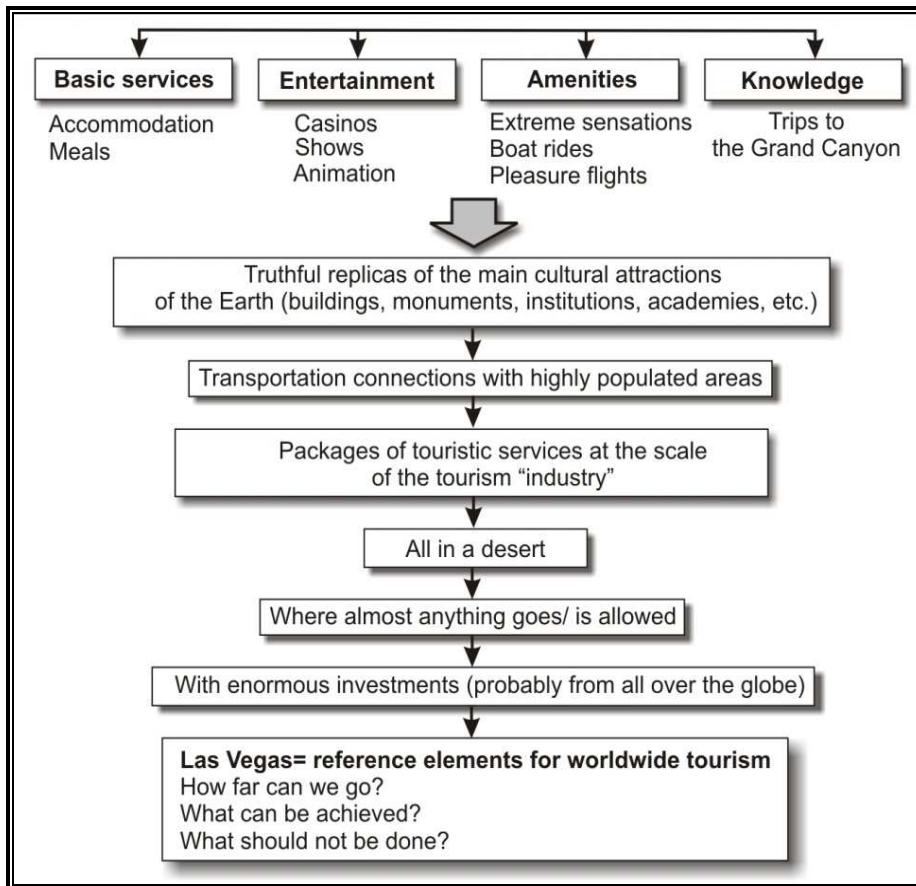


Figure 1. Las Vegas – one extremity of the world tourism “industry”

The greatest attention is granted to the entertainment arenas, represented by a huge number of casinos for gambling. In 2007, tourists spent in casinos approximately 10,868,029,000 \$, which is about 26 % of the total expenses for the entire stay, with an average per tourist of about 277 \$.

The entertainment component is completed by the leisure one, mainly consisting of services that produce a high level of adrenaline (slides placed on sky-scrappers- the Stratosphere Hotel 400 m, Montagne-Rousse), rides in small planes, and even by boat on artificially created aquatic surfaces.

One attempt to offer a positive image of this touristic destination is represented by the themes adopted by every accommodation structure. Consequently, there have been built, on the entrance of each casino, truthful replicas of the great touristic objectives of the Earth (The Doger Palace – from Venice, the Roman Coliseum, the Eiffel Tower from Paris, Cheops’ Pyramid from Egypt, palaces, academies, etc.)

Assuring a permanent input of tourists relies on a very well set up circulation infrastructure. The dominating access means are the air routes (46 %) and the roads (43 %), connected to all areas that have the potential to send tourists.

The touristic packages are commercialised at the scale of the tourism “industry” by using the most efficient ways.

On a simple analysis of what the amenities and the organisation of receiving structures mean in terms of accommodation, food, and entertainment, the following aspects can be noticed (figure 2.):

They almost always have a theme construction placed at the entrance (the Eiffel Tower, the Doges Palace, The Coliseum, etc.);

Behind it there is an enormous accommodation structure, functionally tied to the first construction;

Underlying both constructions, on very large surfaces are the casinos, the restaurants, the entertainment halls.

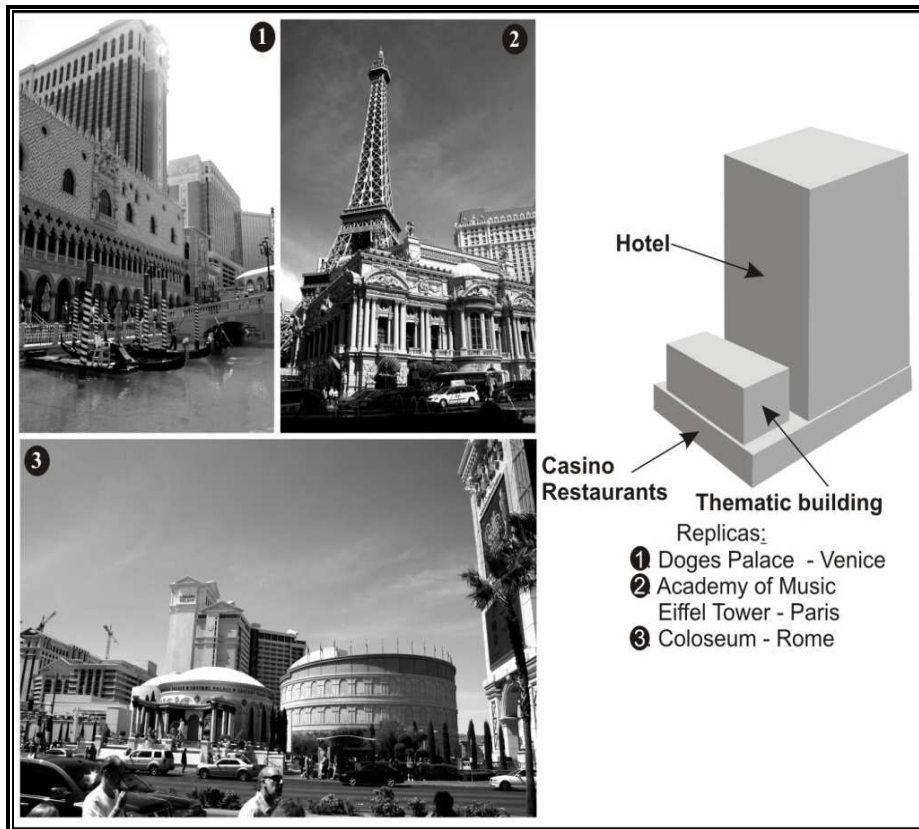


Figure 2. Las Vegas. The planning system of touristic buildings

Although this destination is placed in the desert, the investments are enormous and probably come from all over the world. The fact that in Las Vegas come yearly approx. 39,000,000 tourists, where they spend approx. 41,578,079,000 \$, all this reported to a population of approx. 2,000,000 inhabitants, clearly shows the fact that the level of tourism “industry” has been reached. Setting this as a world landmark, the populations of various regions of the globe can easily ask themselves: *How far can we go? What is it that we must do? What is it that we should not do?*

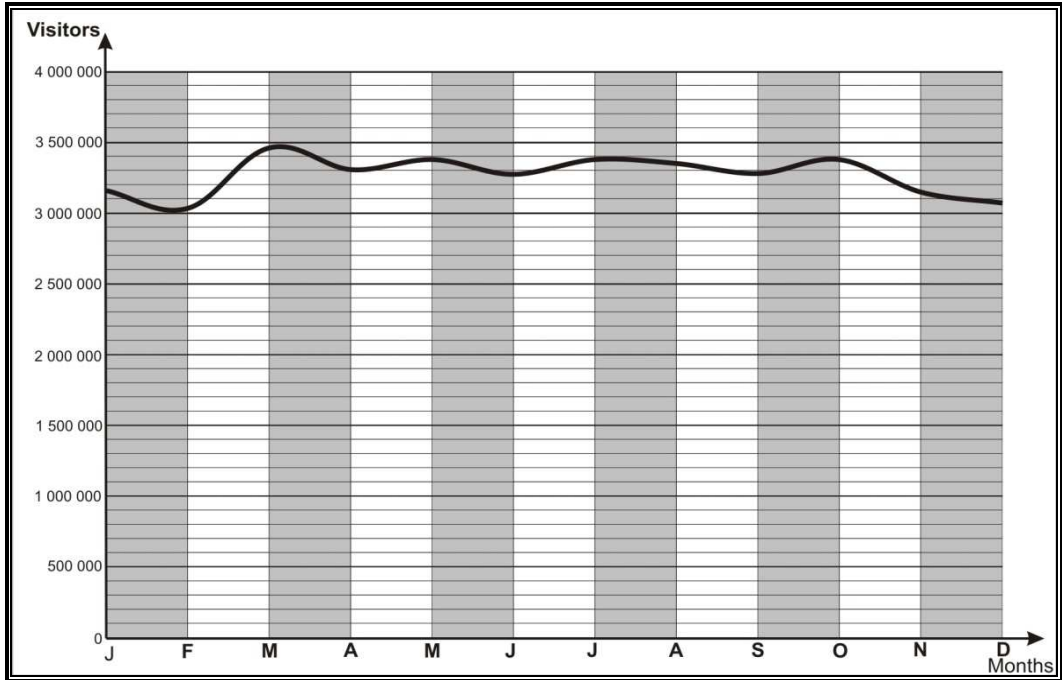


Figure 3. Las Vegas. Visitors Volume, 2007
(Source: www.insidervlv.com)

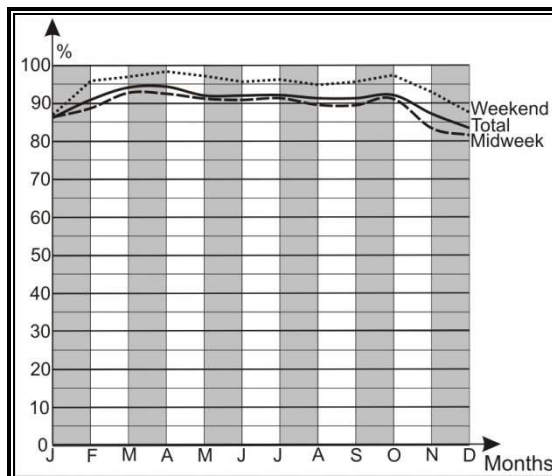


Figure 4. Las Vegas. The Occupancy Rate Rooms, 2007
(Source: www.insidervlv.com)

What is the Meaning of the Tourism “Industry” as a Branding Product?

a. The individual is lost in the crowd

Accommodation and eating structures are enormous, which determines the simultaneous presence of a large number of people in the common areas;

b. The interpersonal contact (tourist-employee) is very much reduced, especially since the introduction of the Swedish Buffet system in the ALL INCLUSIVE touristic packages;

- c. The technology, the standardisation and the branding reduce a lot the need for highly qualified human resources;
- d. The visible human resources, that come into direct contact with the tourist rely more on the art component and less on the science component, having a minimum professional training.
- e. There is no real connection between the promoted image and the real situation of the touristic destination and services;
- f. Both brand companies, as well as brand human resources are a mere creation of branding and do not reflect the reality truthfully;
- g. The high turnover rate of the tourists does not allow comparison, which favours the sale of low quality touristic products wrapped in attractive covers;
- h. The lack of funds prevents quality oriented companies to have access to tourists through high-level branding, since it is rather expensive;
- i. Brands can create other brands by branding, and people only buy brands;
- j. In the “tourism” industry, the human resource is approached as a piece in a puzzle, does not have a stable status, has no stability, since it can be replaced at any “moment” by the “crowd awaiting at the gates”;
- k. Branding and the tourism “industry” can easily be associated with globalisation;
- l. Most web sites and advertisement companies promote tourism based on the fees paid to them, and not on their quality;
- m. Usually, tourists can not choose their vacations only based on the information they get with the help of technology, or from the employees who also get their information with the help of technology.

The Tourism “Industry” – Personalised Tourism. Comparative Analysis (fig. 5)

The two variants can be seen as extremities of the current touristic phenomenon. The first comes as a result of progress, globalization, artificialisation, whereas the second is either a consequence of the slow rate in which progress is spread, or a return to past ambiance using present means.

A huge difference is clearly noticeable from the very beginning in the size of touristic operations between the two extremities. While the tourism “industry” relies heavily on implementing the latest technologies both on the level of branding-sales activities, as well as in supplying various touristic services, personalised tourism is based on human resources of the finest professional quality. While in the first case a lot of money can be saved on the level of investments and functioning, deep human contact in a highly personalised environment is required, which leads to higher expenses in investment, human resources reported, of course to the resulting accommodation capacity.

In a touristic act which involves thousands of persons simultaneously, it is almost impossible to grant the required attention to each and every tourist. In this case huge investments are made – the attention is focused in the masses, contrasting with personalised tourism, where the attention is focused on every tourist, individually.

When big size touristic development projects are initiated, the environment is extremely altered, and arguments such as the creation of new jobs for the locals are brought up. Right on the opposite pole stands the personalised tourism, in which an environment unaffected by human hand represents the touristic attraction itself. Benefitting from inter-human communication on a higher level, one can distinguish most of the side effects of inappropriate territorial administration. This is also the case in which

appears in the local inhabitants the feeling of belonging to a certain space, redirecting their attention towards keeping their identity and local specificity unchanged.

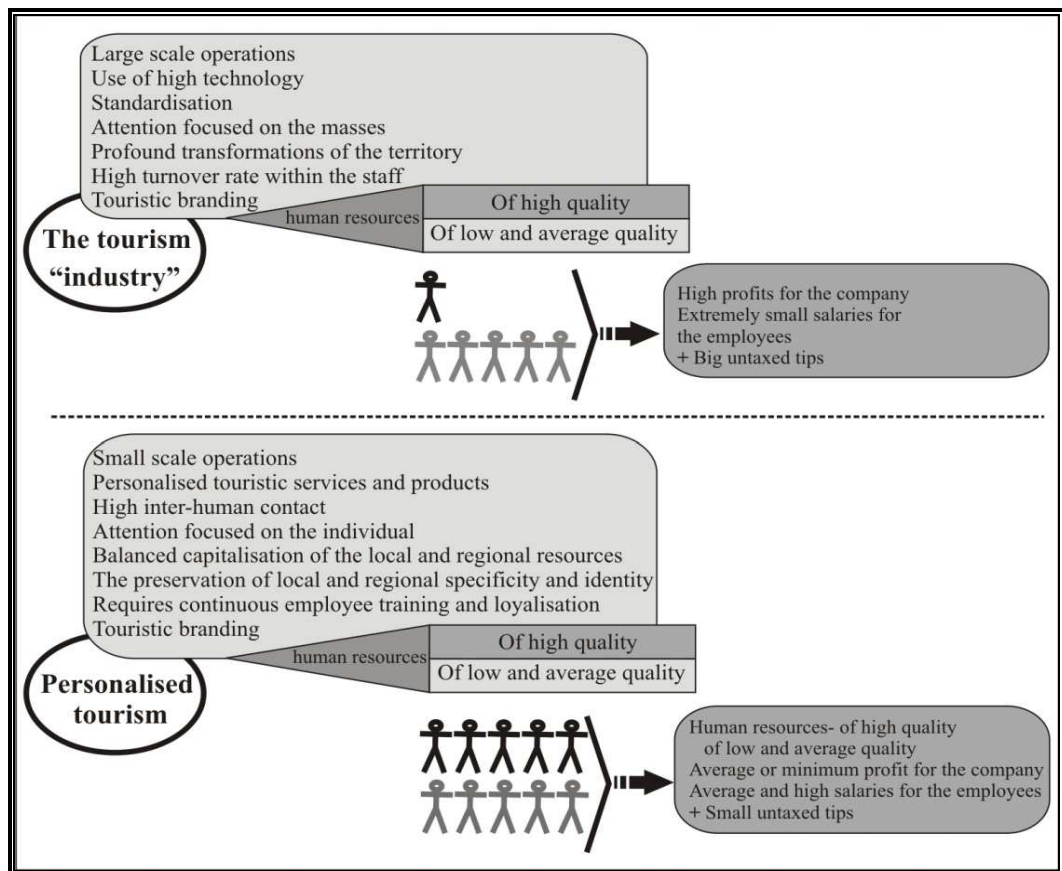


Figure 5. The Tourism “Industry” - Personalised Tourism. Comparative Analysis

On the level of human resources, the tourism “industry” “uses” a high number of employees, on short periods, every season, paying them low wages, since they only represent a small piece in a giant machinery. The highest percentage belongs to the ones with minimum and average qualifications, which perform repetitive tasks, that require almost no intellectual effort. Under such circumstances, professional abilities fade away, since this is not the appropriate environment for their development. With the rather erroneous idea that “our customer is our master” once launched, the employees of large companies must unconditionally obey any verbal assault, thus having their dignity stepped on. Probably, the idea previously mentioned does fit such a trade, where customers acquire simple products, in a short interval of time, with the inter-human concept ending once with the transaction. As a case study, is relevant the situation of a tour guide, who is about to administrate a group of 50, for 7 days, keeping in mind the fact that this guide is actually also the leader of the group, and sometimes even their moral support. In this respect the following question pops up: *Which would be the guide’s authority, dignity and ability to manage them, if he should unconditionally obey every unfounded gesture of the tourist?* Of course, this is not a matter of direct confrontation between the guide and the tourists, but more in the line of professional management of the group, by an employee with unharmed dignity.

Concepts of personalised tourism, addressing human sensitivity, cannot be created without the participation of highly qualified human resources, accordingly motivated and submitted to continuous training.

Both types of tourism pay their tribute to branding actions, which require consistent budgets, and this is more difficult for the small companies, based on personalise tourism.

The report between the percentage of human resources of high professional qualifications, and those of low and average professional qualification is the following

The tourism “industry” requires few employees of high qualification, and those only on the highest steps of the hierarchy, since they rely heavily on technology, standardisation, and do not require extremely sophisticated human contact;

The personalised tourism is all about superior quality human resources in almost every step of the way, starting with the concept and ending with the touristic act being in progress.

In what concerns the profit of the companies and the employees’ salaries, the situation is as follows: In the situation of the tourism “industry” the companies have extremely high profits, but the salaries are very small, the employees mainly relying on the tips they get from the customers. Under the circumstances, the companies are merely a frame for the employees to work in, without the companies spending their financial resources on them.

The situation is quite different in the case of companies that focus on personalised tourism, since their expenses on their employees often exceed 50% of their total incomes. The employees receive tips in this case as well, but only as a token of appreciation of exceptional touristic services. The companies no longer have big profits, but on the other hand they have professional dynamic highly involved employees, based on a very motivational system, set up by the employer.

Negative aspects generated by the tourism “industry”, or Possible directions for the Romanian tourism?

One should start from the idea that what has already happened in the more advanced regions of the world can be used as a landmark in creating the development strategies for the less developed regions. Thus the following discoveries have been made:

The souvenirs sold in the Grand Canyon, as typical for the Navajo tribes, are actually Made in China;

Great investments are made in tourism in places of highly regional specificity, yet the local young people get “highly qualified” jobs as dish-washers, waiters, receptionists, and “call girls”. Often the infrastructure is made by the local authorities, with money collected from taxes, from the very parents of these young people;

The masses of tourists cannot (and do not care to) make the difference between fake materials and real ones;

The profits of the so-called foreign investors “flee” from the country, and are not mandatorily reinvested in the region;

Employees rarely get salaries, instead they have to “beg” for tips-hence the high rate of tax evasion, and the lack of retirement or health funds;

The tip was initially promoted as a means of rewarding exceptional touristic performance from the employees of a touristic enterprise, and not as a rule for every service.

Fundamental Aspects of the Personalised Tourism

Within personalised tourism, the attention is focused on the person, which allows or even calls for applying the important discoveries of today’s neuropsychology’s discoveries. It can be said that tourism, made by means of touristic amenities and the activity of the human resources, must generate positive feelings to the tourists- meaningly happiness. The idea according to which tour operators, alongside the touristic services

providers dispose of the elements needed to generate positive emotional states, can be emitted from the very beginning.

With the aid of a scientific study named *“The Formula for Happiness”* - published by Stefan Klein (2008), a series of soft spots can be touched, spots that are extremely important in tourism, are considered by us to be fundamental aspects creating the foundation of personalised tourism.

“There are two important impulses that can generate happiness: The desire to experience as many positive feelings as possible The curiosity- which is typical for the scientists and the journalists” (Stefan Klein, page 6)

Practically, the two generating impulses can easily be found in tourism, since the first is actually the target of all enterprises, whereas the second refers precisely to cultural tourism- the sector envisaged by knowledge-oriented persons.

“As all feelings, happiness has its origins both in the body, as well as in the brain” (Stefan Klein, page 20)

“Happiness, comes as much from our bodies (arms, legs, heart and skin), as it does from our imagination and our thoughts” (Stefan Klein, page 21). Reaching emotional positive states can be accomplished through all the five senses, which allows the use of a multitude of methods capable to satisfy the tourist. These senses must not only represent a target for the promotion-sales phase, but it must also be reached and satisfied while the touristic act is being performed.

In the activity of conceiving touristic products, the emphasis can be put on generating positive feelings, but also on generating feelings. While in the first case, the tourist can be (pleasantly) surprised with certain moments or states, in the second case one can only generate feelings using knowledge.

“The emotion=the automatic response of the body in a certain situation (the sparkle in the eye as a sign of pleasure, the red face...). The feeling comes in the moments when we perceive emotions consciously (as joy or shame). Emotions are unconscious and feelings are conscious.” (Stefan Klein, page 26)

It is indeed very important to have the staff working in tourism be as pleasant as possible. However, a difference must be made between *“an employee who can smile”*, *“an employee who can sell”* and a professional. The first one can be true or false but is not professional. The second wants to sell anything, to anyone, at any cost. The third case, though refers to an employee who is a pleasant person, who can generate positive emotions, that is happiness. This target can be achieved by means of the actions aimed at the tourist, and this employee can offer the right products to the right people when the process of acquiring a touristic product is initiated. *“The Duchene smile, the authentic one, the one that expresses happiness is unique: the corners of the mouth go up, the eyes are partially closed and they have wrinkles in their corners, the upper part of the cheeks goes upwards still, the ring muscle of the eyes contracts. All these occur at once.”* (Stefan Klein, page 30). Out of a high number of variants of the smile only the one described above is real, but it must be triggered by a corresponding inner state, and not by command. In the case of the professional smile, there is an effect, which also implies a cause, which excludes its appearance in the absence of motivations oriented towards the employee involved in the action. *“... not only the processes necessary to control the body, but also the emotions are protected from the direct influence of the will. We can only control them indirectly, either by acting upon our thoughts and upon the environment, or by remembering certain pleasant situations”* Stefan Klein (page 23).

The expectation also registers great value for the touristic act, as proven below:

“While waiting for a pleasant event to occur, the brain releases neurotransmitters that make us feel pleasure” (Stefan Klein, page 45).

"It is not the food itself, but the expectation, the anticipated joy, that triggered the activity of the neurons" ((Schultz 2000) Stefan Klein, page 89).

"Therefore, the truth is that the anticipation of an event stirs the greatest joy. The reward previously mentioned, does not count for much" (Stefan Klein, page 90).

According to the facts mentioned above, it can be said that the expectation for an important positive moment to happen can generate a much better emotional state than acquiring the moment.

There other situations, in which the exaggerate presence of surprises can actually compromise the true value of the positive perception. If the surprises come regularly, their value decreases substantially.

"An employee whose employer announces a pay raise rejoices. However the joy is much smaller, when the supplementary sum actually enters the account regularly." (Stefan Klein, page 90).

During the touristic programme, people must be brought into positive emotional states, always a little higher than the previous state. The passage towards something positive has a greater impact if there is a significant difference between the previous state and the emotional one. A drink tasting for thirsty people, or a food tasting for hungry people, has a completely different effect as compared to a reverse situation. On the same line goes the idea that it is good o shock the eyes and the imagination positively. This is a matter of how the tourist comes into contact with the surprise. What is, on very short terms, the emotional distance between the image of the loss and that of the gain? Which would be the significance of the passage from negative information or bad news to the news of achieving something extremely valuable? The following scenario can be analysed: *"The tourists moving on foot towards a certain location reach the end of their strength- are starved, thirsty, tired, and depressed. On their way they receive extremely bad news regarding their fate. Shortly after that, in the first clearing, the news does not confirm, and they have drinks and barbecues at their discretion"*.

Any state that a person reaches is manifested through a curve registering the following compulsory steps: launch, growth, peak, fall. It is extremely important for the actions generating positive feelings to be stopped during their peak moments, thus succeeding to keep the pleasant moments in the memory of the tourists. Going over that point risks to compromise the success, being very similar o the situation of people who eat until they no longer feel anything for their food.

Practically, a tour operator can not conceive moments and identify locations that can generate positive emotions if the territorial reality is not familiar. Positive emotions can be generated both by natural aspects as well as by man-made ones, accidental or purposefully prepared. The emotions can be positive or negative.

Another appropriate moment for triggering positive emotions is the first contact between the guide and the tourists at the beginning of the touristic programme. The group leader can be the perfect companion if he/she withholds numerous information about every participant (name, photo, particularities, etc.) fact which has the following meaning: prospecting tourists at the sales point, gathering information from the sale until the development, previous preparation on the side of the group leader (having his homework done).

The difference between a low quality touristic product, that has good media coverage, and one of high quality but less financially fortunate branding, can be made as such:

By achieving professional prospecting work of the components of the touristic destination, both within study tours or info tours, as well as by direct contact with the targets;

By promoting the quality of the touristic products and services from individual to individual, through quality generated satisfaction;

By generating an atmosphere similar to the one at the destination, where the sales point is;

By working with professionals in tourism not only in the sales-promotion phases, but also during the prospecting, the conceiving, the organisation, the development phases and the actual sale should be made through the holiday consultant.

The Scheme of the Circuit with Moments Generating Positive Emotions

Such a scheme is represented by a plan conceiving an managing the moments that generate positive emotions within a personalised touristic product. Other aspects regarding transportation, information, meals, accommodation, touristic attractions, etc., must not be overlooked, even if they are not treated in this study, since they are not its object.

During all the approaches, the whole attention will be focused on the person, on every person, aiming to attain the highest possible number of moments that generate positive emotions. Also from the sales point, continuing with the ongoing touristic programme, it is desirable to acquire information useful for the development of future touristic animation moments.

1. Greeting the tourists

Action 1.1. *The leader of the group meets the tourists when they board the coach, by greeting them and calling them by the name.*

Purpose:

- To grant attention to every tourist
- To open new gates of communication with the tourist
- To accomplish from the very beginning an approach between the tourist and the organising company

Note: The leader of the group has purposefully prepare for this moment, relying on the information he received from the trading sales agencies: photos of the tourists, particularities, preferences, the existence of opinion leaders or of “professional complainers”, inclinations towards certain things, soft spots, etc.

Action 1.2: *The tourists receive a small gift from the organiser*

Purpose:

- To increase the awareness and the openness of the tourists for the ongoing touristic process.

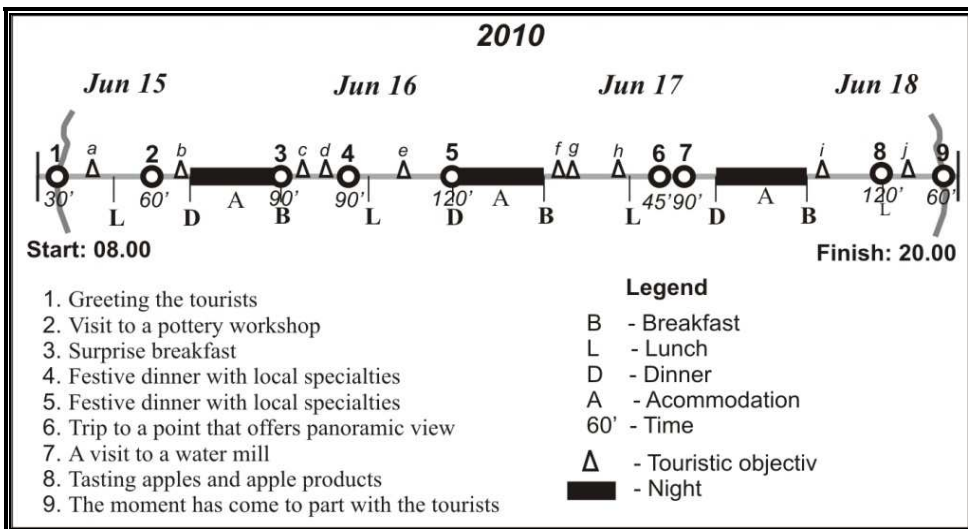


Figure 6. The Scheme of the Circuit with Moments Generating Positive Emotions

2. Visit to a pottery workshop

Action 2.1: *The tourists are given a demonstration at the potter’s wheel*

Action 2.2: *The tourists are encouraged to try it themselves on the already prepared wheels*

Action 2.3: *The tourists can take home their “works of art” in specially prepared bags*

Action 2.4: *In the end the tourists will have small snack in pottery from that very same workshop*

Purpose:

Getting the tourists involved in actions

Attention!

It is absolutely mandatory to make the connection between the size of the group and the size of the workshop.

3. Surprise breakfast

Action 3.1. *Sunrise in the Great Dacian Sanctuary*

Using the pretext that the tourists “must” leave the hotel early in the morning, they will be woken up at Sunrise, thus benefitting from certain special effects purposefully prepared for the Sunrise in the Dacian Sanctuary and from a theme breakfast. The ambiance will also be enhanced by animators and audio background.

Purpose: to pass from a slight state of discomfort caused by the early rise, to a state of positive emotion, thus giving a turn of optimism to the entire day.

Note: a backup plan must also be prepared in case the weather should not correspond.

4. Folkloric dance classes

Action 4.1. *Exposes, familiarises and involves the tourists in a folkloric dance-representative for the touristic destination.*

The tourists will benefit from a demonstration of folkloric dances performed by two pairs of animators.

The tourists will then be taught simple dance steps, that they are not likely to forget.

The atmosphere will become more dynamic once the two pairs of animators get involved.

Everything is videotaped and photographed, and the tourists are presented with the CD’s at the end of the touristic programme.

The soon to follow meal will be welcoming the effort the tourists have made, and will gain a completely new significance.

Purpose:

To stimulate the group and to generate authentic ambiance.

To create within the group the feeling that they have acquired some of the local culture.

To generate positive emotions in the tourists, through their contact with authentic traditional clothes in the appropriate environment.

5. Festive dinner with local specialties

Action 5.1. *The tourists will benefit from a successful combination of local food, drinks, and animation.*

Only drinks and food specific for that place are to be served. Professional animators are to be involved. A short show of the local repertoire will be presented, involving the tourists as well at some point. The animators already have information on the tourists,

and know at what point to get them to become active in the show, by addressing the envisaged person by their names, according to their particularities.

6. Trip to a point that offers panoramic view

Action 6.1. *The tourists are to be taken to a point that offers panoramic view, on an itinerary that will offer a panoramic view of the entire region suddenly.*

If the tourists are taken on a trip that offers at any time a panoramic view of the region, the final effect is reduced substantially. The physical effort increases a lot the importance of the following moment in the programme, which is a visit to a water mill.

Purpose: to form a panoramic view of the region, which will easily persist in the minds of the tourists, and also has huge impact on touristic destination branding. It also prepares the contrast for the following moment.

7. A visit to a water mill

Action 7.1. *The already exhausted and starved tourists will walk for about 300m towards the water mill, on the way sensing gradually the smell of baked bread, fresh out of the oven.*

Once at the mill, the tourists will have:

Direct visual contact with the oven and the steaming bread

Olfactory contact with the smell of fresh bread (starts on the way)

Auditory contact with the quick mountain spring at the mill, the felt, and the natural whirlpool

Gustatory contact with the fresh bread, pies, and other associated products of traditional cuisine (including horinca)

Purpose: to get a strong contrast between tiredness, hunger and thirst on one hand, and the fresh-out –of-the-oven bread served in the most appropriate location, on the other hand.

8. Tasting apples and apple products

Action 8.1. *A tasting of apples is organised, including only ancient apple species from private orchards, alongside them with products obtained from apples as well.*

The animation moment will rely heavily on generating positive emotions by means of all the senses involved – taste, sight, smell – by tasting the apples themselves, and the products derived from them (tuica, dried fruit, cakes, juices, etc.)

Purpose: to integrate into the touristic product elements of a high degree of specificity, that are on the verge of extinction, yet capable to generate highly emotional states, that do not exist or are extremely altered in most touristic destinations. One can hardly find orchards with a high variety of apple species, such as some of the ones found in quite a few of the “country” type regions in Romania. There can be found up to 10, or even 15 species of apples, that differ a lot in taste, smell, and colour.

9. The moment has come to part with the tourists

Action 9.1. *A moment loaded with emotions and satisfaction is organised to part with the members of the tourist group, as an opportunity to really manifest a true friendly connection between the participants, but also an opportunity to create a lasting bond with the touristic destination.*

Every tourist receives meaningful videotaped moments, and also a personalised diploma – which is representative for each of the visitors in a specially prepared ambiance. There will be no extra charges for this.

Purpose: to grant attention to every person, partly due to the qualities that they have all revealed during the touristic programme.

Attention! *Every person has at least one quality.*

The proper environment must be created for the tourists to share the emotions and opinions they have experienced during their stay.

Tourists have to be induced a feeling of loyalty towards the touristic destination, and especially towards the producing company.

Putting such personalised programmes into practice, requires a lot of professionalism manifested in human resources – with high quality employees, not only in the sales and promotion departments, but also in terms of research, knowledge, conception, management, organisation, development, communication, etc. And last but not least in order to achieve such amazing results, the positive motivation of the staff involved must not be neglected.

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