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THE ROLE OF TOURISM DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM ACTIVITIES

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Abstract: *The increasing competitiveness between local, regional, national and international tourism destinations has determined the parties involved in the tourism industry (local, central authorities, tourism service providers) to initiate a series of actions that would contribute to the diversification of tourism offers and obtaining economic advantages and not only. In this regard, destination management organizations have responded to the need of stakeholders by providing some opportunities for the development of the tourism destination. Among the activities performed by the destination management organizations the following can be mentioned: the elaboration of some plans for the sustainable development of tourism activities in a certain tourism area, the collaboration with the providers of tourism services, the identification of some competitive advantages, the promotion of the image of the tourism destination and the creation of a brand image, the provision of information to all stakeholders, the creation of some authentic tourism products, which would offer unique experiences to tourists, ensuring the well-being of the local community and offering strategic alternatives, which would ensure the sustainability of tourism activities. This paper aims to provide insight into the role of tourism destination management organizations.*

Keywords: tourism destination, tourism destination management, specific activities.

JEL Classification: A1; M1; Z3; Z31; Z32; Z33.

Introduction

The World Tourism Organization (2019) defines destination management **as a basic entity that can include authorities, stakeholders, professional associations, facilitating partnerships in order to create a common vision regarding the tourism destination.**

The functions of the destination management organizations may vary from national to local and regional level depending on the concrete needs and the level of decentralization of the public administration.

The performance of a destination management organization will be determined by its ability to be credible and trustworthy among its stakeholders and beyond.

As regards the WTO policies (2020) on destination management, it aims to provide guidance and examples of good practice regarding the destination management policies and models, with the purpose of supporting the tourism sector at national, regional and local level.

WTO specialists appreciate that the development and management of tourism destinations requires a holistic approach to policy and governments. Furthermore, WHO proposes to its members in terms of development and implementation of some models and policies such as: strategic planning, a cooperation between national, regional, local authorities, partnerships between the public and private sectors.

According to WTO, destination management involves the management and coordination of all elements that make up a tourism destination. Destination management requires a strategic approach in order to be able to efficiently manage the elements that are part of the tourism destination. The destination management involves an alliance of several organizations and parties that cooperate in order to achieve a common objective, namely the competitiveness and sustainability of the tourism destination.

The role of the destination management organization according to WTO should be to lead and coordinate activities within a coherent strategy that pursues the achievement of a common goal.

Research methodology

The main objective of this paper is to offer an insight into the role of the destination management organization in the success of tourism activities carried out at local, regional and national level. The steps taken in performing this research were: studying the literature and selecting the most relevant papers using as a selection criterion for the articles, the number of citations on Google Academic (initial research 118000 results) and their relevance in relation to the analyzed topic (Morrison et al 176 citations, Presenza et al - 359 citations, Sainaghi - 344 citations, D'Angella and Go - 441 citations, Elbe et al -137 citations, Bornhorst et al - 1012 citations, Shirazi and Som - 55 citations, Munar - 195 citations, Pechlaner et al - 181 citations, Pearce - 91 citations, Volgger and Pechlaner - 336 citations, Tuohino and Konu - 84 citations, Sheehan et al - 108 citations), examining the reviewed articles, centralizing and analyzing the points of view formulated by the specialists in the field on the role of destination management organizations, formulating hypotheses, issuing conclusions and establishing new directions of research.

Specific approaches, functions and activities related to the management of tourism destinations

The review of the literature (1995-2020) reflects the fact that there are two approaches in respect to the destination management: **managerial and marketing**.

Table 1 presents the main functions, specific activities aimed at managing tourism destinations, which are taken from the reviewed literature

Table 1: Specific approaches and functions related to the management of tourism destinations

Year	Author	Approach	Specific functions/activities
1997	Morrison et al	Marketing	It generates revenue, provides information, represents the interests of the parties, ensures the well-being of the local people.
2005	Presenza et al	Marketing Management	Strategic activities regarding the image of the destination, branding, positioning within the market. Resource management, stakeholder coordination.
2006	Sainaghi	Marketing	Supporting local companies in obtaining competitive advantages.
2009	D'Angella and Go	Marketing Management	Promoting, planning and developing the destination.
2009	Elbe et al	Marketing	Cooperation between the involved parties.
2010	Bornhorst et al	Management	The well-being of the locals, providing experiences to tourists, effective management of the tourism destination.
2011	Shirazi and Som	Marketing	Satisfying tourists, increasing competitiveness.
2012	Munar	Marketing	Creating a strong brand.
2012	Pechlaner et al	Management	Managing the destination, managing the relationships inside it.
2013	Pearce	Marketing	Developing the tourism product, strengthening the connections.
2014	Volgger and Pechlaner	Management	Exchanging information, using synergies and coordinating the action.
2014	Tuohino and Konu	Marketing Management	Developing and promoting the destination.
2016	Sheehan et al	Marketing	Gathering information, gaining a favorable position in the market, disseminating information, collaborating stakeholders.

Source: created and processed by the author

Analyzing the above table, we can see that the management activity of the tourism destinations is a varied one and depends on the political, economic and social conditions of each tourism destination, their objectives and the way of organizing/approaching the activity of these bodies.

Morrison et al (1997) state that CVBs (Convention and visitor bureaus) represent an organizational concept originating in the United States of America as the main force in local destination marketing organizations. The authors identify 5 functions of these offices (1995, p.5): "engine" of the local economy (generating new incomes, jobs), "community marketer" (provides information to the target segments), "industry coordinator" (encourages joint activities in order to ensure increased

economic advantages resulting from economic activities), "representative of the interests of the parties" (between tourism service providers and tourists) respectively "creator" of the sense of local belonging and pride (by improving the quality of locals' life).

Presenza et al (2005) consider that the DMOs play an increasingly important role in the development of the tourism destinations. Over time, the DMOs have been considered marketing organizations for tourism destinations. Moreover, a series of authors still consider that the main competence of destination management organizations is marketing activity. However, there is a tide of opinion according to which the role of the DMO is more than just specific marketing activities, with activities that help increase competitiveness and sustainability.

Presenza et al (2005) suggest two ways in carrying out the activities for the DMOs: Destination external marketing and destination internal development. The activities specific to the external marketing of the destination take into account the following: strategic marketing activities regarding the image of the destination, branding, positioning within the market. Internal development of the destination implies activities such as: resource management, coordination of stakeholders.

Sainaghi (2006) considers that the DMOs have a central role for supporting local companies to build a sustainable competitive advantage.

Paskaleva (2007) identifies 4 key challenges for urban tourism destinations: developing some competitive and sustainable urban destinations, managing complex urban tourism systems, creating a quality urban tourism, specific marketing activities.

D'Angella and Go (2009) consider that destination management organizations are responsible for both the marketing of the destination and its planning, existing possible constraints in the execution of these tasks from government authorities. Moreover, D' Angella and Go (2009) state that the DMO has the role of developing the destination tourism being able to function as a "controller" allowing companies to carry out certain activities, such as hosting congresses, leisure events and exhibitions.

Elbe et al (2009) consider that one of the main functions of the destination management organization is that of being responsible for the tourism destination marketing.

Furthermore, Elbe et al (2009) formulate the idea according to which the DMO should encourage the cooperation between the involved parties in order to mobilize resources for a joint marketing programme.

Bornhorst et al (2010) identify the following roles that destination management organizations perform: to contribute through their activities to the increase of the well-being of the locals of the tourism destination, to ensure that tourists are offered at least satisfactory and, where possible, even memorable experiences and to effectively manage tourism destinations.

Shirazi and Som (2011) consider that destination management can create an environment appropriate in a tourism destination to satisfy tourists in the effort to increase the competitive advantage.

According to Munar (2012) the DMO has the role of creating and managing a strong and competitive brand for the tourism destination.

Pechlaner et al (2012) consider that the DMOs play a major role in managing relations within the destination and in encouraging the cooperation between the stakeholders, occupying an important role in the management of destinations.

Pearce (2013) considers that destination marketing is one of the most important functions named for the DMOs, followed by the consolidation and coordination of relationships, where DMOs play a key role, namely the development of the tourism product.

Volgger and Pechlaner (2014) consider that DMOs can bring a flexible management system and promote responsibility, self-organization and self-regulation in respect to the connections within the destination. The authors name the exchange of information, the use of synergies and the coordination of the action basic elements for the development of the destination and its competitiveness.

Tuohino and Konu (2014) formulate the idea according to which the role of the DMOs in various tourism destinations can vary greatly. In some regions, the DMO can play a very important role in the development of the destination, while in other areas the DMO can have only a minor role in the marketing of the destination. At the same time, Tuohino and Konu (2016) consider that "without collaboration, small and medium-sized tourism enterprises will not be able to maintain their competitiveness" and "the characteristics of each destination (regional, political, economic) influence the destination management strategies".

Sheehan et al (2016) suggest an approach that change the orientation of the DMOs from tourism destination marketing to the idea that these organizations are agents that act as key factors between the external and internal environment of the destination. For the external environment, the objective of the DMO is the collection of information and a favorable positioning of the destination in the market, while for the internal environment, the objective is the dissemination of information and the collaboration of the stakeholders. Moreover, the authors consider that the DMOs are able to help the tourism industry adapt and cope with the changes to the benefit of the industry and of the consumers.

Conclusion

The review of the literature on the importance of the tourism destination management organizations in the development of the tourism services sector highlights a series of diverse and complex activities that differ from one tourism destination to another. This fact is due to the particularities of the tourism services sector in each tourism destination as well as to the degree of involvement of the stakeholders. This paper shows only a part of the points of view formulated on the role of tourism destination management organizations and tries to provide an analytical presentation of different approaches, functions and specific activities regarding the management of the tourism destination.

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