TOURIST INFORMATION AND REGIONAL POLICY

Abstract: In the scientific literature there is no uniform definition of the nature of the tourist information. The main reason for this is that the sources, indicators and methods for collecting tourist information are very diverse. In this study, the link between national tourist information and regional policy was sought. Suggestions are made for the author's methodology for collecting of contemporary, relevant and comparable information relating to the tourist sector.

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During the last 25 years the regional differences in Bulgaria went deeper. The reasons for that are the various environmental conditions, the inherited social and economical structures and the dynamic social changes. The conducted reforms and the harmonization with the European practice do not manage to overcome these disproportions. The problems from the type center-periphery in result of their different adaptive ability increased. The regional development is not something cut off and independent from the specialized and branch development, but it is their territorial projection in different kind of taxonomic units. The tourist economy is part of the regional economy and it is characterized with regional differences. [1] The biggest disproportions are on the level of municipalities (there are 265 municipalities in Bulgaria in 2020) and in all developed municipal plans for development is paid a special attention to tourism. The municipal plans for development (MPD) are periodic planned documents which are prepared for a period of 7 years (2014-2021) and they provide for the development of the whole municipality and not only of the municipal center. Each of the municipal plans for development observes the logical succession and the defined methodology in order to be in correspondence with the requirements of the Law for Regional Development. [2]

In order to clarify the contemporary condition of tourism in some particular municipality it is necessary to get "information" which has to be analyzed. The dynamic changes and the development of the information technologies on one hand gave a big quantity of information, but on another hand they impeded its selection and stated seriously the problem for its actuality. [3] Two are the basic mistakes which can be made:

- an analysis is made on the basis of inappropriate and sometimes not correct information

- a big quantity of information is collected and this takes a lot of time, so when the analysis was made the situation has already been changed.

Concerning the information we can talk about "hard" and "soft" information. The hard information can be found in the officially published sources and the soft information can be collected through making inquiries of the interested sides and groups. On other hand we have to make difference between the primary and secondary research and respectively – between the primary and secondary information. There are a lot of different indexes, sources of information and methods for collecting and analysis of the information. There is no unified position on the selection of the indexes for research activity. The researcher is the person who takes the decision which information is necessary and what sources and methods to use for its collecting.

The given arguments in the present report have to be comprehended exactly as an example, direction, reference point, and not as a thorough examining of the problem for the information. Each scientific research is oriented towards a specific problem (need) and precisely the character of the problem defines the necessary information. On its hand the necessary information makes requirements which sources and methods for its collecting should be used.

The complexity and the rich content of the tourist activity impose the using of a system of indexes whose formulation is an extremely difficult task.

I. In the plans for regional development there are stated the basic indexes for information used during their construction. They are grouped in the following way:

General characteristics, location and administrative structure

geographic characteristics, territorial location of the region, borders; general geographic and demographic characteristics, characteristics of the populations, etc.; administrative structure and town system – administrative structure of the region (regions, municipalities, towns and villages), correlation between the town and village population, basic centers of the region, characteristics of the town system, etc.

Demographic conditions

number and density of population; dynamics of the population; age and gender structure; distribution of the population in all age groups, relative share of the economic active population; birth-rate, death-rate and natural increase; emigration, immigration and mechanic increase; ethnical structure of the population.

Infrastructure

telephone density (number of the telephone posts of 1000 people); degree of motorization (number of automobiles of 1000 people); number of schools, number of classes, average number of students in one school/class; consumption of electric power for 1 person; expenses for cultural events for 1 person; roads (length, structure in classes, maintenance), rail roads (length, share of the double and electrified rail roads), airports (sort, capacity, passenger and cargo turnover), water transport (harbours – sort, capacity, passenger and cargo turnover); water-supply and canalization.

Industrial and business profile

Gross Internal Product on a person of the population; investments – local, foreign, including for 1 person; productivity of labour; structure of the business units among sectors; structure of business units on size; type of industry, concentration; expenses for labour and level of payment; condition of the industry and basic tendencies; structure of the branch of services according to the classification of the National Statistical Institute.

Agriculture and development of the rural regions

using of the land, size of the properties, degree of rehabilitation of the property; production from a unit for basic plant-growing cultures and for stock-breeding; problems of the rural societies.

Labour market

work load, unemployment, economic activity; concentration of the problems of poverty; level of scope in the secondary and high education; basic abilities (primary literacy, computer literacy, etc.); statistic information for the differences in gender of work load/unemployment.

Ecological profile

uncultivated lands, polluted lands, forests, green belts; wastes, including trade, industrial, dangerous indicators for pollution according to the object (air, water, soil) and according to the source of pollution – from the extractive industry, from the manufacturing industry.

Standardization of the stated indexes in all Bulgarian municipalities will give an opportunity for a comparative analysis between them. A big part of these indexes will be necessary and in the scientific analysis of the tourist activity.

II. Basic indexes for information, used in the scientific researches in the geography of tourism. They are grouped in the following way:

Indexes for the lodging basis of tourism. There are the following groups:

a) indexes which characterize the structure of the lodging basis – this is the percentage of the beds in the places of public resort with different characteristics;

b) indexes which characterize the territorial differentiation of the lodging basis of tourism – this is the total number of beds in territorial units, the relative share of the beds in the different territorial units from their total number in the country, the density of beds (in square kilometer); the number of beds for 1000 people or for 10 000 people from the local population. [4]

Indexes for tourist streams

a) characterizing the development of the system for rest and tourism – absolute number of tourists or the sleeping accommodation, increase, speed of development, etc.;

b) characterizing the structure and the characteristics of the tourist quota (according to origin, age, gender, profession, education, incomes, aim of the traveling, etc.);

c) characterizing the seasonal functioning of the system for rest and tourism;

d) characterizing the territorial distribution of the tourist streams – the total number of tourists or sleeping accommodation in territorial units, density of the tourists for 100 persons of the local population, territorial indexes, etc. [4]

III. The basic sources for collecting of information for the tourist demand can be divided to:

Official statistics – it gives information for the regional and local tourist policy. The National Statistical Institute and the territorial statistical departments are producers of different in content and purpose information. The regional tourist researches need detailed and multi-aspect information, part of which they receive through the publication of periodic manuals which contain information for regions, districts and municipalities. The National Statistical Institute and the territorial statistical departments give regional information which is divided in 3 types: published publications; electronic publications and regional publications. On a municipal level and in built-up areas the degree of information insurance is with a possibility for using a bigger number of indexes. The difficulty here is the longer period which is necessary for modernization of the information, its quality and level of accessibility. [3]

Hotel statistics from other side can provide for information about the basic parameters of the tourist streams (people who stay over the night and accomplished lodgings for the night, types of places for lodging, month and nationality of the tourists, etc.) on a municipal level, but no lower. In principle the facts should be thorough, their collection and processing is not connected with big

expenses and software products are used for their processing. But there are problems in the usage of the hotel statistics as:

- the received information is not correct (this is understood during the comparison of the facts with other independent or external sources)
- in principle the information could not be received from a level lower than the municipality (separate resort, tourist center). Even the facts in the municipalities are published incomplete and with delay.
- the statistics gives a lot of limited facts for the characteristic of the visitors and the trips
- the analysis of the facts requires knowledge of the methods for collecting of information and of the existing limitations

Hotel diaries – it expands the official statistics and its possible computer version would allow automatically generated information in the registration of tourists. In a higher level of covering it gives detailed information for the quantitative characteristics of the tourist demand and of some structure characteristics of the visitors. Basic problems and disadvantages of the method of hotel diaries are:

- a strong dependence on the desire and willingness of the owners and the managers to give the necessary information
- comparatively high expenses for collecting of information and for its processing
- a risk for mistakes during the summarizing of the information

IV. Basic methods for collecting information for tourist researches

Inquiry method – a contemporary scientific method which allows the researcher to reveal facts which are not published in the official statistics. This method is basic in the sociology, but in the context of socialization of the tourist geography it is used more and more in the scientific publications. Two basic inquiry researches are possible to be conducted:

Research of the places for accommodation. The research of the places for accommodations with the help of a personal interview, with a standard questionnaire gives different type of information. The method has the following advantages:

- a bigger number of the places for accommodations and a bigger share of the people who answered the questions thanks to the personal contact and the ability for achieving a greater level of trust.
- a chance for receiving an additional information (for the expectations and intentions of the owners, for the expected visitors, for attitude towards the problems, etc.)

At the same time the method has a few disadvantages:

- the information about the visitors cannot be collected so regularly as in the hotel diaries (it is not expediently to be carried out such researches more often than once or twice a year)

- the information is more incorrect and the interviews should be conducted by more experienced researchers

- the collecting of information is connected with a high expense of time for the researchers and for the people who are interviewed

Inquires with the visitors in the tourist place. The inquiry researches of the visitors have a significant place in the tourist policy and information. There are different points of view and opinions for their application and it is stated that they are expensive and the information which is received through them is overestimated. The biggest advantage of inquires is that they give a detailed information for the visitors – for their social and demographic characteristics, for the character of the stay, for the content and the tourist expenses. The researches of the visitors are conducted as excerpts which decrease the expenses in comparison to the thorough ones.

The basic disadvantages of the inquires of the visitors are:

- the results from the research show the characteristics of the visitors only in a particular moment

- although the observing of the methodic requirements when there is no answer, according to the influence of the person who is making the interview or other reason – the results can be deformed

- it requires an excellent methodic preparation and qualification of the researcher and a qualitative selection of the interviewed persons

- high expenses of labour and materials, limited comparison of the results

- the inquiries in the tourist place are appropriate only for places with high attendance

Cartographic method – a basic method in geography. It finds a wide application in the tourist geography and scientifically it is best presented in the textbook "Tourist Cartography" (Buchvarov, Davidkov, 1990). The contemporary cartography and cartographic researches in Bulgaria are on a high technological level. Inseparable part of the cartography today is the Geographic Informational Systems (GIS). On the basis of its character and purpose according to Buchvarov – the tourist maps are divided into: research, educational, managing and project-structured.

The variety and heterogeneity of the used indexes, sources and methods for collecting of information in the regional tourist researches from one hand impedes the scientific discoveries. On the other hand this allows the formulation of a system or algorhythm for objective assessment and analysis of the tourist activity in Bulgaria.

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