

ANALYSING INTERNATIONAL TOURISM CIRCULATION STRUCTURE SPATIALLY

ANALIZA STRUCTURII CIRCULAȚIEI TURISTICE INTERNAȚIONALE DIN PUNCT DE VEDERE SPAȚIAL

PETROMAN I.*, PETROMAN CORNELIA*, CABA I.**, MARIN DIANA*

*Faculty of Farm Management, Timișoara, România

**Mihai Eminescu University, Timișoara, România

International tourism is the most dynamic component of tourism circulation. According to prognoses, the number of tourists worldwide is steadily increasing in 2008, after the record year 2007, despite economic uncertainties. In 2007, there have been 898,000,000 tourists that took trips to certain areas of the world, with 6.2% more tourists than in 2006. The main tourism destinations were France and Spain, but as far as international tourism circulation per regions is concerned, the most considerable growth compared to 2006 was that of the Middle East (13.4%), followed by Central America (11.1%) and Africa (7.9%). Europe has a growth of only 4.2% in 2007, compared to the reference year 2006, but despite all this, it still ranks first from the point of view of the total number of visitors (480,100,000 tourists), which recommends it as a main cultural destination worldwide.

Key words: international tourism, tourism circulation, total number of tourists, tourist destinations

Introduction

Tourism is an economic and social phenomenon specific to modern civilisation, strongly anchored in social life, and in a relationship of inter-conditioning with the latter. The trends recorded by the evolution of world economy, both positive (increasing production and, implicitly, increasing population prosperity) that have speeded up international exchanges and cooperation, and negative ones (economic recession) have had a both quantitative and qualitative impact on tourism activity, enhancing tourism travels and diversifying tourism flows spatially, so that many of the regions with a lower tourist flow have managed, in a short period of time, to become common destinations – with negative impact on the environment (1, 3, 4).

Since tourism addresses wide segments of the population, thus meeting its material and spiritual needs, it resulted in an intensification of world tourism circulation from a spatial point of view, thus conferring it one of the most high

growth rates by implying a high natural, material, and human potential, with impact on economic and social dynamics and on international relationships (2).

Materials and Methods

The dynamics of international tourism and tourism circulation from a spatial point of view is determined by economic growth, by the technical and scientific progress in all the fields of economic and social life. Economic growth is a basic condition of financial availability, of leisure, and of the materialisation of the desire to travel and know new places, i.e. to reach other areas (new spaces).

In order to analyse the structure of international tourism circulation from a spatial point of view, we present in this paper the results of a study of the trends in the dynamics and structure of international circulation structure to assess the degree of concentration per geographical areas and to analyse the trends of the tourism flows, their development and size, the emitter and receiver countries – factors that model tourism intensity and the structure of international tourism circulation.

Results and Discussions

Tourism circulation varies depending on demographics, i.e. on population dynamics and changes of structure (age, professional training, growth, and growth rate) thus having an impact on the number of potential tourists from the point of view of the space. Because international tourism circulation is so complex, we need to analyse it from the point of view of its evolution and territorial distribution. The most important index in the characterisation of the phenomenon is the tourism arrival / departures index.

To also note a spectacular growth of international travels that reached 898,000,000 tourists in 2007, i.e. a growth of 6.2% compared to 2006 and of 10.1% compared to 2005, as shown in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1

Evolution of arrivals in international tourism

Year	Tourist arrivals (millions)	Growth rate (%)
2005	808.0	10.1
2006	842.3	6.2
2007	898.0	-

As for the year 2008, the World Tourism Organisation (W.T.O.) estimates that there will be growth worldwide despite the record of arrivals in 2007 and despite economic uncertainty in 2008. Estimates concerning tourism arrivals until 2020 according to the specialists in the field are shown in Table 2 and Figure 2.

As far as the prospective is concerned, estimates of the W.T.O. concerning the number of tourist arrivals worldwide point 1047 million in 2010 and 1602 million in 2020.



Figure 1 – Evolution of arrivals in international tourism:
1 – 2005, 2 – 2006, 3 – 2007

Table 2

Estimate of arrivals in international tourism

Tourism index	Measurement unit	Year					
		2000	2005	2006	2007	2010	2020
Number of arrivals	million	564	808	842.3	898	1,047	1,602

Source: W.T.O. Tourism 2020 Vision

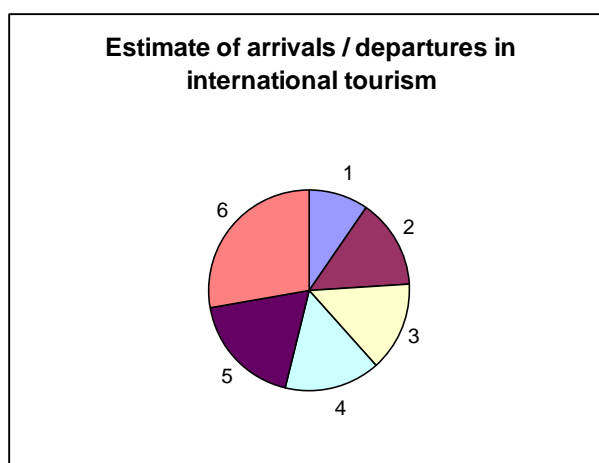


Figure 2 – Estimate of arrivals in international tourism:
1 – 2000, 2 – 2005, 3 – 2006, 4 – 2007, 5 – 2010, 6 – 2020.

Analysing international tourism circulation over the 5 geographical areas identified by the W.T.O., we can note a concentration of tourism activities of 80% in Europe and America while the rest of 20% covers the less developed continents of the world. Such a concentration of tourist activities can be explained by the well developed economies in these areas (allowing their inhabitants to travel abroad), by the huge and valuable tourist attractions and, last but not least, by the expertise in the field of tourism activities (Table 3).

Table 3

Evolution of tourism arrivals per geographical regions
between 2001 and 2020 (in millions)

Region	Year				
	2005	2006	2007	2010	2020
Europe	443.9	459.9	480.1	527	717
America	133.1	135.4	142.1	195	285
Middle East	38.4	40.2	46.4	37	69
Asia and the Pacific	158.2	166.0	184.9	242	456
Africa	38.7	40.8	44.2	46	75
Total	808.0	842.3	897.7	1047	1602

Source: W.T.O., Tourism Market Trends World

The evolution of tourist arrivals per geographical regions in 2007 compared to 2006 had an ascending trend as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Evolution of tourist arrivals per regions

Geographical region	2007 compared to 2006 (%)
Middle East	13.4
Asia and the Pacific	10.2
Africa	7.9
America	4.7
Europe	4.2

The highest growth of the tourist number was in the Middle East (13.4%) and in Asia and the Pacific (10.2%). Though America has an increase of only 4.7% of the tourist number, Central America had a better growth (11.1%) compared to 2006. though in Europe the number of tourists in 2007 increased with only 4.2%, the main destinations from the point of view of tourist circulation were France and Spain, ranking Europe first from the point of view of the total number of visitors (480.1 million in 2007).

Analysing the data in the tables above, we can say that the geographical region with the most intense tourist activity is Europe, but annual growth rates are not as spectacular though the region remains in the top of arrivals, resulting in great cash.

The most dynamic area is represented by Asia and the Pacific, a region in which economic development enhanced the growth rate of tourism circulation. America had an evolution close to that of Europe, and Central America is to be noted for its ascending trend (11.1%) in tourist arrivals compared to only 4.7% of the geographical region.

Africa, compared to the other regions, recorded modest growth of the number of tourist arrivals, but in 2007, compared to 2006, these growths had an ascending trend (7.9%), which changed the hierarchy per regions, such advanced regions as Europe and America being overrun by this geographical area with 3-3.5%.

Conclusions

As a result of analyses carried out on international tourism circulation from a spatial point of view, on the number of tourist arrivals, and on the W.T.O. estimates, we can say that there has been an ascending trend in international travels during the studied period.

There is a strong concentration of tourist activities over the 5 continents: 480.1 million in Europe, 184.9 million in Asia and the Pacific, and 142.1 million in America. Though Europe is the region with the most intense tourist activity, the evolution of arrivals from one year to another only reached 4.2%, compared to the Middle East and Asia and the Pacific, with 10-13.4% more than in 2006.

Reorienting tourist flows to other areas than traditional ones (Europe and the Americas) is due to the economic development of these areas that enhanced high rates of international tourism circulation.

Estimates of international tourist arrivals until 2020 show that the highest arrival rate will be in Asia and the Pacific (457 million) and in the Middle East (69 million); Europe will, though, have the highest number of tourists (717 million).

A slow growth of the arrivals will be in America, with a steady growth for Central America, where the number of arrivals in 2007 showed an increase of 11.1% compared to 2006 despite the geographical region growth of only 4.7%.

Bibliography

1. **Benea, M. & Petroman, I.** (2006) – Bazele turismului, Ediția a II-a, Editura Mirton, Timișoara
2. **Ispas, Ana & Onuț, Elena** (2004) – Economia turismului. Fundamente teoretice și aplicații practice, Editura Universitara Transilvania, Brașov
3. **Minciu, Rodica** (2001) – Economia turismului, Ediția a II-a, Editura Uranus, București
4. **Snak, O., Baron, P. & Neacșu, N.** (2001) – Economia turismului, Editura Expert, București
5. *** <http://www.world-tourism.org> (Last accessed on February 14, 2008).