

УДК 911.5:9

THE CONCEPT OF TOURISM DESTINATION IN THE CONTEXT OF GEOGRAPHICAL SPACE

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Comparison of perceptions according to the definitions of the notion “tourism destination” is carried out in this article. The tourism destination is presented as a key component of tourism development, as a spatial system that summarizes, coordinates, carries and expresses this development. A tourism destination is viewed as a spatial basis that is itself considered a tourist resource and contains tourist resources in itself. In this context, the article theorizes the geographical basis of a tourism destination and substantiates the components of its practical manifestation/significance. The article provides answers to the following questions: is a tourism destination a kind of geographical space and what kind of variety is it?

<https://doi.org/10.46991/PYSU:C/2020.54.3.203>

Keywords: geographical space, tourism destination, territory, geotory.

Introduction. As it is known, from the second half of the XX century, due to a number of factors and their progressive development, tourism at the world level has had a great growth and development, becoming the object of study of various sciences. During this period, tourism research has been criticized for its weak theoretical basis and has “suffered” from the “poverty of tourism theory”, as priority has been given to economic-political research based on statistical-empirical data [1]. In this context, special scientific attention is needed to reinterpret such a concept as a concept of tourism destination, which completes the fact that tourism is a spatial phenomenon, and to raise it to a new level of application. Current theoretical and methodological scientific studies on tourism should focus on the position of integration, for the theoretical substantiation of the concept of the tourism destination. Thus, the existing scientific-social order of the theoretical basis for tourism research, the prospects of discovering new scientific horizons arising from it, make such kind of works relevant.

Problem Statement. At present, the abundance of approaches to interpret tourism destinations ensures the complexity and versatility of the scientific perception of a tourism destination, but at the same time, it confuses its scientific “belonging” – to which science it belongs, in which aspects/approaches it is considered or in what field of science it is observed. Thus, based on the above, the task is to present the geographical content of the tourism destination in this article, in particular “*is a tourism destination a kind of geographic space and what kind of variety is it?*”

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Research Methodology. The methodology of the article as a research work consists of the following parts: At first, the works published within the topic of the article were studied (desk research) in order to obtain secondary data, after which the article was “compiled” based on the processing of the collected scientific data (analysis, combination, comparison).

Critical Discussion. The concept of “tourism destination” was put into scientific circulation in the 1970s N. Leiper was one of the first to localize the concept of destination in tourism. After N. Leiper, the tourism scientific community became interested in the concept of “tourism destination” as a notion and spatial unit, which has led to various aspects of its study: economic-geographical, marketing-managerial, customer-centric, socio-cultural [2]. In addition to the above, the following approaches are currently used to represent the tourism destination as well: classical/traditional views of destinations, destinations as an industrial district, the systemic approach to tourism destinations, smart tourism destinations, and integrative conceptual frameworks of tourism destinations [1] and economic, touristic, geographical [3]. Since the 1970s, there have been various interpretations of this concept, which have presented this or that aspect of it, in particular, considering it as a place, a product, a relationship etc. Historically, geographical interpretations of a tourism destination have been given first, among other interpretations. According to N. Leiper “tourism destination regions can be defined as locations which attract tourists to stay temporarily, and in particular those features which inherently contribute to that attraction. In this context the attraction can be regarded as the anticipation by the tourist of some qualitative characteristic, lacking in the tourist generating region, which the tourist wishes to experience personally” [4]. This definition has a rather broad content, from which it becomes clear that a tourism destination is primarily a *physical spatial unit*, expressed in the form of a specific area/place. At the same time, the definition does not specify at what expense the tourist’s experience is provided – the natural or socio-cultural components of the given area? The definition also emphasizes the time component of the tourism destination, but the time frame (duration) of the visit is not clear, as visits with different durations present different requirements to meet the needs of tourists within the given tourism destination. Therefore, it is very important to take into account the time aspect (visiting duration) to call the area a tourism destination as well. According to the definition we cannot assess the issue of the borders of a tourism destination (as a territory) – what are they and how are they determined? The issues raised in this article, regarding Leiper’s definition, were also addressed by A. Safaryan, presenting certain justifications for them [3].

Geographical definitions have also been given by C. Metelka [5] and C. Gunn [6], according to which “a tourism destination is a geographical place where tourists travel” and it is considered a “tourism market area”. These definitions also emphasize the fact that tourism destination is a territorial unit. At the same time, the above-mentioned issues arising from N. Leiper’s definition remained open, but an important aspect is added here. Tourism destination is considered as a place of tourism supply and demand, which is based on the features of the area and its promotion mechanisms. Thus, a tourism destination, in addition to being only a physical spatial unit, is also considered as an *economic spatial unit* in the form of a set of economic relations. In other words, within the borders of tourism destination,

human society transforms and enters into relations with the physical spatial unit by its economic-tourism activity. Also, in the context of the content of the economic spatial unit, complex, multi-layered relationships are developed between the economic entities within the given tourism destination in the form of tourism value chain. On this basis, tourism destination acquires one more quality of geographical space, arguing that geographically “space in itself does not create unity, it is the result of the interaction of specific geographic objects” [7], which in this case is formed as a result of tourism destination’s physical and economic spatial units interactions.

The definition given by S. Medlik complement the once given by C. Metelka and C. Gunn. According to Medlik’s definition “tourism destinations are countries, regions, towns and other areas, which attract tourists, are main locations of tourist activity, and tend to account for most of tourists’ time and spending. They are the main concentrations of tourist attractions, accommodations and other tourist facilities and services, where the main impacts of tourism – economic, social, physical-occur” [8]. As a tourism destination is considered as a spatial unit within the framework of geographical objects with administrative borders as city, country etc., the first part of this commentary provides some answers to one of the most important methodological questions in geography and governance: delimitation (defining borders for tourism destination). Thus, tourism destination acquires the two main characteristic of space: discontinuity (expressed through transitions of spatial units, for example, from country to region) and continuity (expressed as a complex within a spatial unit, for example, region). Consequently, it has an elongation (surface) and somehow formed borders, due to which it acquires concrecity, acquiring the characteristics of a area (territory). And the territory is considered as “a delimited part of the hard surface of the Earth with its natural and man-made characteristic and resources. Which is characterized by elongation/surface as a unique spatial resource and geographical location and other qualities” [7]. At the same time, it is clear from the first part of Medlik’s definition that a tourism destination has taxonomic classes of different spatial levels, expressed in the form of a spatial hierarchy: country, region, city, etc. And as E. Alaev points out, “any geographical space can be divided into the geographical spaces of the various objects that are part of it” [7]. The second part of the definition explains the fact that tourism destination is an economic spatial unit based on the locals playing a key role in the tourism value chain and being an attribute of the tourism destination as a whole.

These definitions are partially supplemented by a commentary of the UN World Tourism Organization. According to the World Tourism Organization’s working group on destination management, “a local tourism destination is a physical space, in which a visitor spends at least one overnight. It includes tourism products such as support services and attractions, and tourism resources within one day’s return travel time. It has physical and administrative boundaries defining its management, and images and perceptions defining its market competitiveness. Local destinations incorporate various stakeholders often including a host community, and can nest and network to form larger destinations” [9]. From this definition it becomes clear that tourism destination is a volumetric spatial unit consisting of a number of components (Tab. 1).

Table 1

Components of tourism destinations [10]

Attractions	Public and private amenities	Accessibility	Human resources	Image and character	Price
Natural (e.g. beaches, mountain, parks, weather). Built (e.g. iconic buildings such as the Eiffel tower, heritage monuments, religious buildings, conference and sports facilities). Cultural (e.g. museums, theatres, art galleries, cultural events).	Basic infrastructure such as utilities, public transport, and roads as well as direct services for the visitor such as accommodation, visitor information, recreations facilities, guides, operators and catering and shopping facilities.	Via road, air passenger services, rail or cruise ships (to in within destination). Visa requirements, ports of entry, and specific entry conditions should be considered as part of the accessibility of the destination.	A well-trained tourism workforce and citizens (local).	Uniqueness, sights, scenes, environmental quality, safety, service levels, and the friendliness of people	The cost of transport to and from the destination as well as the cost on the ground of accommodation, attractions, food and tour services.

According to Tab. 1, tourism destination has a component structure as well and these components have a horizontal arrangement in the framework of their importance for formulation of tourism destination. Here, the discontinuity of tourism destination is emphasized, as it consists of structural units – their combinations, and the continuity is expressed in the form of its being a complex, because the absence of any group of components leads to destruction of tourism destination. Based on the components of “attractions” it is clear that tourism destination also has some elements from aquatory and aerotory. In particular, in the case of aquatory, which is interpreted as “a delimited part of the water surface of the Earth with its natural and man-made characteristic and resources. Which is characterized by elongation/surface and depth as a unique resources and geographical location and other qualities [7]”; tourism destination contains water spatial units in different proportions. And in the case of aerotory, which is defined as “a part of the air environment of the geographical sphere” [7], tourism destination again offers tourism values in different proportions due to the attractiveness of the air environment (aerotherapy, paragliding etc.). Here, it should be noted that the components of the territory, aquatory and the aerotory “appear” in the form of combinations within the presentation/promotion of a given tourism destination as a one tourism product. Moreover, they are often found in two-component combinations, for example rafting (relief-river), paragliding (relief-air environment) etc.

At present, the study of tourism destination from the scientific aspects of marketing and management is widely spread. According to F. Kotler’s, tourism destination is considered as a multidimensional tourism product (complex of intangible and tangible elements): main, accompanying, complementary, enhanced products [11]. Thus, tourism destination is considered as a unit of purchase and sale, a product, the development and competitiveness of which depends on its correct targeting and packaging. The main feature of this approach is that, when presenting a tourism destination as a tourism product, a strong emphasis is placed on the fact

that it is complex: it is not marketed as a separate tourism product, but as a set of all tourism sub-products (spatial, componential, sectoral etc.). In this case, the subjective approach to viewing the area as a tourism destination is arising and expresses itself in two aspects: the tourist point of view and management/governance. That is to say, according to the first approach, tourism destination is considered as such when tourists themselves consider it as tourism destination. From the point of view of management, the problem is the following. Tourism destination, as a spatial unit, must also be managed, and in practice, one of its management effective types at present is to delimit it within the boundaries of administrative unit or to consider the administrative unit as a tourism destination. In this case, the governing bodies of the given territorial unit, through the relevant territorial-sectoral policies, position the territory under their management as tourism destination.

At the same time, the subjective approach has a very objective basis and is conditioned by geographical factors, the existence and correct combination of which, expressed in the form of tourism destination branding, can guide those subjective perceptions. In this context, D. Buhalis considering that “it is increasingly recognized that a destination can also a perceptual concept, which can be interpreted subjectively by consumers, depending on their travel itinerary, cultural background, purpose of visit, educational level and past experience [12], however he suggests “destinations are considered to be a defined geographical region which is understood by its visitors as a unique entity, with a political and legislative framework for tourism marketing and planning”. That is, tourism destination, as a geographical unit, is also presented in the form of relations as a whole, relations that have spatial, economic, social, cultural, political, legal, environmental, internal and external dimensions. The existence of such a relationship makes the tourism destination a “complex adaptive system” [13], the wholeness of which depends not only on internal and external factors and their changes, but also on the relationships within them and on the mutations in those relationships. In other words, tourism destination acquires the “practical meaning” of the geographical space. In particular, based on the scientific interpretation of geographical space, “geographical space is a set of relations between geographical objects located in a specific area and evolving over time” [7], it can be concluded that, in this context, tourism destination is expressed by the interactions of its components and their geographical objects carrying those interactions. Moreover, the adaptation conditioned by the change of these relations is expressed in tourism destination as not only in the context of it being a complex, but also in the context of the adaptability of certain elements of tourism destination.

In the case of the latter statement, the factors of geographical indeterminism are added to the factors of geographical determinism. In particular, the qualities to response the changes and to be adapted for different tourism industry enterprises, managers of tourism destination management organizations and management style and system are not the same. For example, the elimination of COVID-19 traces is carried out differently by the different tourism business (such as hotels and recreation zones etc.) in the area of the given tourism destination at the same geographical determinate conditions, which implies that a destination is “a system of many parts, which are coupled in a non-linear fashion” [1]. So, the tourism destination should be considered as a system, but taking into account the above mention, and as it is noted

by E. Lawes [14] as well “while tourism destination as a complex may be an open system, which consists of a number of primary elements (anthropogenic and natural attractions), and secondary elements including built hospitality facilities and infrastructures for the successful development of tourism within tourism destinations, there are also closed systems”. For example, national parks, which, again, will not become/be perceived as a complete tourism product without the other infrastructure included in the given tourism destination. The existence of such correlations grounds that tourism destination is also a “dynamic system” [15], which changes the space and places, where tourism products are created. The fact being a dynamic system of tourism destination is evidenced by the concept of life cycles of tourism destinations (Tab. 2).

Table 2

Stages of the development of a tourism destination [16]

Evolutionary models	Stages					
Christaller's	discovery	growth	expansion	–	–	–
Butler's	exploration	involvement	development	consolidation	stagnation	rejuvenation or decline
Liszewski's	exploration	penetration	assimilation	colonization	urbanization	–

In other words, tourism destination has developmental stages, expressed in time, which allow it to be viewed in the context of spatio-temporal phenomena, which is one of the inseparable features of geographical space. And as it is known, “the philosophical concept of the unity of space and time requires that the attribute of dynamism be attributed to geographical space as a condition for the continuous development of geographical objects” [7].

Conclusion. Summing up the analysis, it can be concluded that in practical reality, within the content of the physical spatial unit, tourism destination is presented in the form of geotory, as a set (complex) of territory, aquatory and aerotory. However, taking into account the fact that it is an economic spatial unit as well, it should be emphasized that tourism destination, as a unique geotory, can appear in two senses of tridimensional measurements. According to the first meaning, as a tridimensional geotory, it implies the surfaces occupied in the aquatory (horizontal plane), territory (horizontal and vertical plane) and aerotory (vertical plane), expressed in the form of physical formation. In the case of the second meaning, it again occupies a certain area, but the vertical plane has not a physical content, but a semantic content, under which the various content layers of tourism destination can be presented: economic, political, social, cultural, temporal etc. Tourism destination, as a complex of the mentioned spatial units (parts of geotory) and different semantic layers appears as a spatial system, which ensures the process of its self-development in the conditions of interaction of external-internal factors. Tourism destination by its ontological and semantic nature, is considered a multi-layered and volumetric manageable spatial system.

Received 25.09.2020

Reviewed 26.11.2020

Accepted 10.12.2020

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Գ. Փ. ԱԼԵԻՍԱՆՅԱՆ

ԶԲՈՍԱՇՐՋԱՅԻՆ ԴԵՍԻՆԱՅԻԱՅԻ ՀԱՅԵՑԱԿԱՐԳԸ
ԱՇԽԱՐՀԱԳՐԱԿԱՆ ՏԱՐԱԾՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՀԱՄԱՏԵՔՍՈՒՄ

Ա մ փ ո փ ու մ

Հոդվածում համեմատություն է կատարվում «զբոսաշրջային դեստինացիա» հասկացության մեկնաբանություններից բխող ընկալումների միջև: Զբոսաշրջային դեստինացիան ներկայացվում է որպես զբոսաշրջության զարգացման առանցքային բաղադրիչ, որպես այդ զարգացումն ամփոփող, համակարգող, կրող և արտահայտող տարածական համակարգ: Զբոսաշրջային

դեստինացիան դիտարկվում է որպես այնպիսի տարածական հիմք, որն ինքն իրենով համարվում է զբոսաշրջային ռեսուրս և իր մեջ պարունակում է զբոսաշրջային ռեսուրսներ: Այս համատեքստում, հողվածում տեսականացվում է զբոսաշրջային դեստինացիայի աշխարհագրական հիմքերը և հիմնավորվում են դրա պրակտիկ նշանակության/դրսևորումների իմաստավորման բաղադրիչները: Հողվածում տրվում են հետևյալ հարցերի պատասխանները՝ արդյո՞ք զբոսաշրջային դեստինացիան աշխարհագրական տարածության տարատեսակ է և ինչպիսի՞ տարատեսակ է:

Г. П. АЛЕКСАНИЯ

КОНЦЕПЦИЯ ТУРИСТСКОЙ ДЕСТИНАЦИИ В КОНТЕКСТЕ ГЕОГРАФИЧЕСКОГО ПРОСТРАНСТВА

Резюме

В статье проведено сравнение восприятий по определениям термина “туристская дестинация”. Туристская дестинация представлена как ключевой компонент развития туризма, как пространственная система, которая суммирует, координирует, несет и выражает это развитие. Туристская дестинация рассматривается как такая пространственная основа, которая сама по себе считается туристским ресурсом и содержит в себе туристские ресурсы. В этом контексте в статье теоретизируется географическая основа туристской дестинации и обосновываются компоненты ее практического проявления/значения. В статье даются ответы на следующие вопросы: является ли туристская дестинация разновидностью географического пространства и какой разновидностью?