



DRAFTING A CULTURAL STRATEGY BASED ON CULTURAL CONTENT - FORTRESS OF ORADEA CASE

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Abstract The increasing competition in the tourism market entail the need for strategies focused on positioning and differentiation elements. A pillar of cultural tourism strategy in city of Oradea is the Fortress. By means of European funds, we are witnessing reintroduction of this Fortress into tourist circuit. A Fortress can get to be a vector of utmost importance for tourism in Oradea and Bihor County, but only under the conditions that will be preserved and enhanced the features as: value, rarity, inimitable and organization (exploitability). In this article are presented in detail these features, which we consider, that represents the core elements of the strategy based on cultural content. In our opinion, for a sustainable development, the efforts must be continued and directed towards creating an own identity, reason that elements such as mystery, story and participation cannot be missing.

Key words:

cultural tourism, strategy,
Oradea, fortress

1. Introduction

In Romania, after 1989 (the great system change), some of cities have invested in tourism, by placing tourist activity in the center of regional and local development strategies. Oradea is one case; being the capital and largest city of Bihor County, located in Romania on North-Western Plain, on Repede River, close to the border with Hungary. Lately in Oradea tourism begins to develop more and more: the newest promotion action of the local tourism, namely participating to Tourism Fair in Vienna in January 2016, alongside Felix Spa, which is in the very vicinity, and is a famous resort in Romania.

Romania, overall, it has tourism potential that has so far been, only partially, explored. The researches conducted with the aim of creating the brand of country (Romania - Explore the Carpathian Garden) highlighted the competitive advantages of Romanian tourism: spectacular and diverse nature; untouched landscapes, such as those offered by the Carpathian Mountains and Danube Delta; *cultural heritage*, which includes the objectives of the UNESCO; historic sites covering virtually, all important periods, of human history; *well kept traditions and national culture* that provides an important advantage Romanian tourism in a market where visitors looking for more new experiences and interaction with particular lifestyles than luxury destinations, but also low prices. (Ministry of Tourism, 2010).

The main resources of competitive advantage for Romanian tourism are considered to be the natural and cultural resources. However, according to the classification made by the World Economic Forum (WEF) based on calculation of Competitiveness Index on tourism (ICT), Romania ranks worldwide to 66th place (World Economic Forum Report, 2015). In this regard, to become more competitive country, in general, Romania, and in particular, Oradea as a city, the management must implement strategies to restore, preserve cultural heritage and animation strategies. This is particularly now highly topical, since, for 2016, Romania is seen as one of the top tourist destinations (Rough Guides, CNN). It is estimated that Romania has a fascinating history of towns. It has been disclosed, that in populated areas (cities, towns, villages) combines several architectural styles; e.g. mystical castles and rural settlements where "the time seems to had stoped". It is possible that Romania, a country of contrasts, that responds to the appetite of authenticity, which has been developed as a reaction to modernisation, to standardization and homogenization of the urban environment since the 50s and '60s of the last century (Zukin, 2010).

One thing is certain, it must remark that tourism has changed. Although tourism it is still to called upon to manage larger flows of visitors, now it is clear, that it is becoming more and more "an experience economy" (Keller, 2002). Lately successful destinations seek to

gain a competitive advantage using "visual power" (Crouch and Lubben, 2003; Dempsey, 2006) in combination with "local attractiveness" (Lippard, 1997).

2. The Market Trends

In the context of some mutations, but also, *under the new information and communication technologies*, the tourism market is more dynamic than ever, the motivation of demand and thus, regarding *the duration of the tourist attachment* we are witnessing the *changing physiognomy commercial act*. Without abandoning the core purpose of any tourist activity, it is necessary to be understood it and to be evaluated this activity, in a strategic perspective, a perspective which considers the matter on the long term.

Another phenomenon that is worth mentioning is related to the emergence of *new components in the decision mechanism of purchasing*. Today, the buying decision is based, in whole lesser extent, on a single vector that has a determinant role in purchase, namely the price. Now, in most situations, demand bearer decide to buy according the binomial: *quality - price*. Instead, in future, this will be marked by a decisive trio. The purchasing decision will be done, according to the trio: *quality - price - life experience*. This does not automatically means that the world will become more rational in its trade options, but the tourists will increasingly known better, and more analytical their needs. As a result, a tourist destination which wants to develop will have to take into account *early warning systems* regarding future market behavior. Such a system requires identification and current use in its strategic management of the destination, of a *complex system of performance indicators*, both quantitative and qualitative. Their role is to report the predictable changes in the competitive environment of the tourist market, and to shape the viable solutions (Pop, Petrescu, 2008).

Tourism market competitiveness is increasingly driven by differentiation. Subject to competitiveness, the travel now must be personalized, becoming more through differentiation and cultural content can do successfully. Modeling of the personalized offer will be achieved through the setting up of the organizational systems of destinations, which are circumscribed to strategic management principles. As a result, will succeed and will have success, those who will quickly learn how to *supply better service, and provide better benefits*, at the same time *differentiated products from competition* (Sickler, 2006).

All these trends reinforce the idea that when drafting of a strategy focused on cultural content, the emphasis must focus on the tourist experience, that to become an integrant part of the paradigm: "do and tell story" (Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

3. Oradea Fortress - The Core of Tourism Development Strategy in Oradea

Tourism development in Oradea is seen as an opportunity for the city opening to the outside and to the inside to stimulate initiative. Tourism provides the framework to recovery of cultural heritage, ethnic and religious and therewith building an own identity. Cultural tourism is placed in the center of Oradea tourism development strategy. We consider appropriate this approach, that can represent an important step in restoring the city growth, also being an important stage for winning a major position in area (Herrero et. Al, 2005; Liu & Lin, 2011).

One of the pillars of cultural tourism strategy in this city is the Fortress of Oradea. Currently, it covers an area of 150,000 square meters. For nine centuries of existence the fortress of Oradea had a tumultuous and eventful history. Until 1241 it was a fortress with earthen rampart and wooden palisade, afterwards, it has rebuilt, as a circular stone fortresses (a five star shape, a relatively rare form, typically are fortresses with foursquare).

Oradea Fortress was built between 1570-1618 by Italian architects, and is considered the best preserved Italian Renaissance fortress of Central Europe. Between 1092-1557 he served as the residence of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Oradea, during which the city became an important religious and cultural center of that times. In the fortress had operated a library, an observatory, a printing press and a school. In the Catholic Church and its graveyard had found eternal rest, no less than, seven crowned heads. Starting with the year 1557, the fortress played strictly military role, being besieged several times, namely: Tatars (1241), Turks (1474, 1598, 1658, 1660), Transylvania rioters (1290, 1514, 1664, 1703-1710), the armies of the Principality of Transylvania (1557, 1603) and the Austrians (1692). Throughout its history of over 750 years, the fortified fortress was only twice conquered. In autumn 1598 the city was besieged unsuccessfully for five weeks by Turkish armies. Residents of fortress had on their side prince, Michael the Brave, also the rains that flooded the Ottoman camp and diseases that have decimated it.

This year (2016) we are witness the ending of the restoration and to the revitalization of fortress, by the project "Revitalization of Oradea Fortress for Entry into the Tourist Circuit" that started in the year 2009. The total value of project was 36,780,329.12 lei (about 879.9121,77 EURO June 2009), of which financial grants: 28,717,702.60 RON, and beneficiary contribution: 7,477,075.65 lei. The project was aimed to reintroduce Oradea Fortress into tourist circuit regionally, nationally and internationally as a representative center for regional cultural heritage, next

to creating additional revenue at regional and local level and create new jobs in the field of culture, tourism, and of all the related economic sectors. (<http://www.oradea.ro/cetatea-oradea/despre-proiect/index.php>)

The project was based on an integrated approach, which foresaw: consolidation, preservation and restoration, that confer a functionality for eight buildings with a total area of 13514.7 square meters - about 190 rooms; introduction of compatible functions with monument by creating 19 functions (of tourism, and cultural), namely: a museum, library, exhibition spaces, medieval restaurant, traditional centers to promote traditional art and crafts, etc.; beside to increased accessibility to the monument, namely: restoration, development of access roads, exterior lightening and decorative landscaping of the area; creating and hosting a cultural consortium (organizer of two annual festivals and other 20 small cultural events. All these should extend the tourist season by introducing Oradea Fortress into European cultural tourist circuit by revitalization of traditional economic activities of the City, etc. (Internal data Oradea City Hall, Oradea Fortress website).

In our opinion, the fortress of Oradea can get to be an extremely important vector for Bihor County tourism and Oradea, under the conditions that It will be preserved and enhanced the features as: value, rarity, inimitable and organization (exploitability).

Oradea Fortress is a valuable resource which generates additional income and increases the held market share. Rehabilitation of the fortress took into account an area of 27 028 square meters (buildings, green spaces and access roads). Last year, 2015 - were recorded 10125 visitors considering the 119 new jobs created, increasing energy efficiency by 100%, also the facilitation the access of tourists to rehabilitated heritage objectives, it may considered that the objectives of project were attained 100% (internal data Oradea City Hall project website Oradea fortress).

A tourist resource is considered to be rare, if number of competitors is relatively small. Scarcity, once known and recognized, there is as the sustainable attribute. Of course, the best case is when we are dealing with one owner of the resource, and so is the case of fortress of Oradea. It is a positive fact, due from the fact that each community is unique, and this is what makes the difference. In terms of economic performance, this stems to notoriety of the resource. In other words, a scarce resource in tourism is more valuable, insofar as is known being notorious, at the same time being higher ranked in the tops of specialist, namely like "best / most ..." Either in our case there is still much work in this regard.

Imitation of a resource involves two different

relative aspects: imitation itself and the substitution. A resource is considered inimitable whether a competitor can not take possession of them in a short time, or if the purchase do not induce cost disadvantages. Unsubstitutive means that a competitor is unable to get the same benefit from a different mix of resources. Only if a resource is inimitable, is kept the advantages of the value and the rarity. The time "play" for this type of resource, in that it creates a barrier against copy of original. Specifically, imitation, in economic terms, would involves very high costs. After Barney (1991), we are dealing with costs related to historical conditions determined by the position in time and space, the lack of a identifiable causality of the resources, or of their way of combining, by the social complexity that generates a psychosocial phenomenon, and by unique protection of legal, by patent type for example.

Regarding the degree of exploitation and resource organization, there were made some progress. In this regard we mention that are organized guided tours thus are offered information on Bihor Oradea and - accommodation, various services, programs and tourist routes, events. In the Fortress operates the following exhibitions: Archaeology exhibition Oradea Fortress - Hall Grifoni, Lapidary - the ground floor; and in basement exhibition "Resistance and Repression in Bihor County", also exhibition "Illusion and Reflection, aspects of life Count Miklos Banffy". (<http://www.oradea-online.ro>)

This will enable the extension of the tourist season to 200% (more visitors in the winter months) and increasing the number of tourists in 2020 to 300%. There are planned the organization of 10 annual Festivals and about 20 small cultural events. (Internal data Oradea City Hall, Oradea Fortress project website).

Conclusion

In conclusion, a cultural tourism strategy based on cultural elements to become successful requires a multidisciplinary approach and the involvement of all those concerned, meaning those gathered into the city and county management. The next mandatory step that is required in this particular case of Oradea Fortress is to create "the Image of the Fortress", that is tight linked to an own identity and an own atmosphere, reason that elements such as mystery, story and participation cannot be missing.

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