

The Public Urban Transport and The Tourism Marketing

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Abstract

A distinct activity within the transport services supply, the urban public transport is both a consequence and a cause of urban development. Through its functions, the urban public transport service allows the movement to and from various places of interest within an area not only of local residents, but also of different non-residents. In addition to this, if that locality is also a tourist destination, the urban public transport service gives tourists the possibility to travel to the various points of tourist attractions. In this paper we aim to present a few aspects related to the importance of the urban public transport service in increasing the attractiveness of the urban localities regarded as tourist attractions.

Key words: urban transport, tourism, marketing

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1. Introduction

The transport service is a component part of the tertiary sector; it has a major influence on the economic development of a country and contributes significantly to the quality of life of its inhabitants.

Through its specificity, the urban public transport provides the traffic of different people to certain points of interest within a locality, based on their needs (professional activity, personal needs, specific preoccupations etc.). Related to the tourism activity, through its structure, capacity, safety and speed, the transport ensures the traffic of tourists and allows satisfying their needs as much as possible.

Through its specific features and the manner in which it allows the appropriation and the application of the marketing principles and efforts within the public services' activities, the transport marketing holds a privileged place within the services marketing. Approaching the transport activity from a marketing point of view is very important. Through the size and structure of the transport infrastructure, through the quality and diversity of the activities included in the transport service, through the size and professionalism of the staff involved, the transport service contributes directly to the dynamism of the economic and social life of different localities, regions, countries or more extensive geographical areas, and represents an important element of the urban marketing approach and a major reference point in tourism marketing.

Based on the opinions from the specialized literature on multicriteria classification of services (Kotler, Ph., 1997, pp. 583-584; Lovelock, Ch., H., 1983, pp. 9-20; Olteanu, V. Cetina, I., 1994, pp. 36-47; Olteanu, V., 2005, , p.78-82), the passenger transport service can be generally viewed as holding certain specific characteristics, such as: being a service with a tangible action, acting on the human body, being supplied discontinuously through an unformalized relationship, having a low level of customization through the supplier-client contact, the features of the supplying system allow customization only to a small extent, having a high demand fluctuation, the peak of the demand exceeds the capacity of the offer, the client moves towards the supply location, the service being supplied in several locations.

There are however certain situations in which the passenger transport services are approached from a specific perspective in relation to the general perspective of the transport services marketing, situations which are determined by certain goals, interests and specific activities. Thus,

certain passenger transport services are a part of the public passenger transport services, so they represent activities that are aimed at the general interest of the members of a larger or smaller community, and are supplied by local or central institutions of public administration.

2. Few Aspects Regarding the Marketing of Urban Public Transport Services

Consisting of activities of public utility, the local public passenger transport service aims to satisfy the need to transport people between different points of interest within the area of a locality. The public transport service is a part of the urban services and thus contributes to ensuring decent living conditions (Cetina, I. et al, 2009, pp. 232-236).

On the other hand, through its functions, the passenger transport service can contribute significantly to increasing the visitors' satisfaction, whether they are in the locality for a day or for longer periods of time, as tourists.

The public urban transport service has certain specific characteristics, mostly based on the specific manner in which it is founded, organized and works. Thus, according to specialists' views on the characteristics of public services, especially public utilities (Cetina, I. et al, 2009, pp. 247-248), the public transport service is organized and works under the control of an executive authority of the public administration (the representatives of the local town hall). Even though private companies can exist alongside the public supplier of the urban transport service, the main decisions regarding the authorization, the endorsement and the functioning of the local transport means and lines are taken by the representatives of the local authorities within the range of that locality. Included among the users of the urban public transport services are students traveling to and from schools, high schools, universities, employed people on their commute to and from work (each of them being able to travel by public transport on other occasions, related to satisfying certain specific personal needs, such as: solving personal issues, shopping, strolls, recreational and leisure activities etc.), pensioners, tourists and one-day visitors, freelancers, unemployed people, businessmen using public transport for various reasons (for instance, in order to avoid issues caused by the shortage of parking spaces or the high parking rates) etc. Due to the fact that the public transport services are organized and work based on rules set by the representatives of the public authorities, and that they are mainly funded from the town halls' public budget (although there are many cases of successful public-private partnerships), the marketing policy is generally formulated with certain difficulties.

Taking into consideration all these specific characteristics, the product policy in public transport services is outlined in accordance with the approaches from the services marketing literature (Lejeune, M., 1989, p. 24, Olteanu, V., 2005, pp. 167-169; Cetina, I. et al, p. 156). Thus, one can consider that in public passenger transport services, the product also consists of basic services (the actual transport of people during the journey by transport means on a certain route and during a time interval), auxiliary services (for example, the possibility to acquire a ticket from the driver, devices and equipment that facilitate access and luggage storage, providing information about the next stops, connections with other routes or transport services supplying units etc.) and additional services (air conditioning, music, providing travelers with various useful pieces of information etc.). In regards to the product strategy, the deciding authorities should channel their efforts into resolving the issues generated by the clients' needs: high quality, high rate of renewal, a range of services according to their needs. The answer to these expectations can be represented by providing a variety of modes, networks and means of transport which, at an appropriate frequency, through the technology used and the connections made, allow travelling fast and comfortably. As far as the price policy is concerned, it depends on the budget allocated by the local authorities and is closely linked to the number and structure of the travelers (traveling subventions can be granted to certain types of travelers, under different forms: free rides, discounts etc.). Tickets, passes and traveling cards distribution can be both direct (from the drivers of the transport means, from the vending machines or ticket booths of the transport companies, or from the transport companies' websites etc.), and indirect (through tourist agencies, press kiosks etc.).

Regarding the activity of promoting public transport services, it becomes more visible when a new transport mean, route, operator etc. is promoted, and is usually made through mass-media publicity (advertisements in the local press or radio), outdoor publicity (posters, panels etc., placed in large, urban agglomerations, subway stations etc.), direct marketing etc.

3. The Public Urban Transport and the Mix of Tourism Marketing

In tourism marketing, the tourism product consists of several elements (Balaure, V. et al, 2005, p. 270): tangible elements (including the heritage of resources that represent tourist attractions, the general infrastructure of tourist destinations, tourist equipment), intangible elements (including not only the ensemble of services through which the tourism offer is materialized, such as the transport service, but also the elements of psychological nature that can contribute to the product's definition), communications related to the tourism product (information provided to tourists by the suppliers through promotional efforts) and product image (how tourists view the product). Based on the opinions above mentioned, one can notice that both the transport infrastructure, as well as the transport service itself, are elements with an important contribution to the definition of the tourism product, thus directly contributing to the structuring of the offer that will most appropriately meet the tourists' needs.

The importance of urban transport for our country is also emphasized in the Romania National Tourism Development Master Plan, outlined for 2007-2026, in which several factors that generate tourism issues are mentioned, such as the overcrowding of the urban roads and in the vicinity of tourist attractions, the setting of network roads, the placement and capacity of parking zones, the reduction of road capacity and the lack of discipline in urban traffic (Master Planul pentru Dezvoltarea Turismului National, 2007,p. 43).

Based on the above mentioned aspects, one can notice that among the other transport services that facilitate the tourists' transport from and towards tourist destinations, if these destinations are urban settlements, the public urban transport has an important role in tourists' satisfaction. What is more, in certain cases the tourism product image can be outlined through urban transport services and equipment, which can be considered as symbols of certain tourist destinations, such as, for instance, the San Francisco Cable Car, the Montmartre-Paris Funicular, the Polybahn or Riggiblick in Zurich, the Lycabettus Funicular in Athens, the London Underground or Double-decker bus etc. The London Underground (The Tube) is one of the oldest transport means of this kind in the world and nowadays it is a notable tourist attraction. Rides can be planned on-line and the access is facilitated through the official site of the society that administrates the transport in London (Mayor of London, Transport for London, Plan a Journey, Site-ul TfL, 2018). The integration of such transport means in the urban transport system of big cities represents one of the most successful solutions for fluidizing traffic, providing a civilized and efficient way to travel for their inhabitants and visitors, and at the same time, represents a way to gain tourists' attention and to satisfy their needs as far as transport service is concerned.

Therefore, under certain conditions, the public transport service can contribute to the representation of a complex tourism product. In collaboration with the representatives of the local or regional public authorities, the tourism agencies can include certain transport facilities in their offers. For the tourists visiting cities that are tourist destinations, the quality of the tourism product can be increased by offering various facilities through the transport services within those areas, that can cover longer periods of time (it is very important for tourists to be able to use means of transport during night or late hours, so that they can visit more tourist attractions, including the leisure and entertainment ones) and more extensive areas (metropolitan, vast areas). For instance, in Bucharest, the RATB-Metrorex unique ticket can be used for both surface transport (bus, trolleybus, and tram), and underground transport (subway), and is valid to use for 60 minutes (Regia Autonoma de Transport Bucuresti, Transport Public Integrat, Site-ul RATB, 2018). Although integrating the cost of different means of transport is an important step in increasing the client's satisfaction, a more efficient way to increase the quality of the transport service could also be by using a single integrated payment document not only for a day, but for several days, such as, for example, two, three, seven or more days, so that tourists can benefit not only from discounts, but also from less time and worries with the purchase of the travel passes.

One of the most important problems concerning the quality increase in tourism product is represented by the connections between the different means of transport within a locality, as well as the links between the lines and means of transport from a larger, metropolitan area, so that different kinds of transport passes can be included in an offer proposed to tourists. In London, for instance, from a variety of transport cards available, visitors can choose to use the Oyster Card pass, which gives the possibility to travel by multiple means of transport, to the extent of the sum of money loaded. This card can be purchased from vending machines placed in traffic points (airports, train stations, Underground stations etc.), and if its limit of money is not reached, the rest is returned to the user through these vending machines. In addition to this, another possible attractive feature in a tourism offer can be the combination of services offered by different types of suppliers, especially by the suppliers of urban passenger transport services. Very popular are the variety of passes that can be used by tourists in big cities, for instance The London Pass, The Paris Pass, Paris Visite Travel Card etc. (The Leisure Pass Group Limited WebSite, 2018; Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau WebSite) etc. By using these transport cards, and depending on the type chosen, tourists can benefit from free travels with certain means of transport in these cities (bus, tour-bus, subway, regional train, funicular etc.), and at the same time, they can visit various tourist attractions (museums, castles, cathedrals, cruises, restaurants, clubs, aquariums) in advantageous conditions. The acquisition of these travel passes through the tourism agencies represents a method of content enrichment of the tourism product. Moreover, if tourists benefit from these service discounts, as opposed to the integral costs of individual travels, the tourism agencies can take different approaches in the price policy. Although in most cases the tourists purchase these travel cards directly (through the sites of the town halls or the public transport societies, from the transport administration ticket booths, from the vending machines situated in various traffic points etc.), by including and selling these cards (under public-private partnerships) within a tourism product, the comfort of the tourists counseled in this area by the agencies' specialists could increase (even though this represents an indirect distribution from the point of view of the authorities responsible with the public transport). The main methods to promote the tourism products that include urban transport cards are specific to on-line marketing (agencies' sites, social networks), outdoor publicity (posters, panels etc.), tourism prints (leaflets, catalogues), sales promotion (special offers, gratuities, price discounts etc.).

Communicational approaches can be initiated and developed through the combined efforts of the responsible public authorities and tourism operators, but also at the tourism agencies level and, depending on the goals set, can aim to inform and raise not only the tourists' interest, but also other various categories of public (mass-media representatives, business partners etc.) that can influence the tourism activity, thus contributing, through different means, to the development of the socio-economic activity of those localities or regions.

4. Conclusions

As a basis factor in conducting the personal, social and professional life of numerous people, the public urban passenger transport can also represent an important key in providing successful tourism activities. Numerous benefits can be achieved by including this transport service, under various combinations, in different tourism products (especially those that include visiting big cities) provided by tourism operators. On the one hand, for tourists, the financial costs are reduced, as well as the time dedicated for traveling to the various points of interest within the cities that are also tourist destinations (the time spent on documenting and choosing the most advantageous transport means and routes is reduced, multiple trips can be made at a better price, different means of transport can be taken, so as to cover as many tourist attraction points as possible, optimizing the travelling time and space etc.). On the other hand, by including these transport services and by offering access to the public urban transport means under various advantageous forms (cards, passes, tickets and subscriptions for a number of days or hours etc.) in the tourism product (products such as city breaks, for instance), the tour-operators and the suppliers of tourism products can differentiate their offers and increase the tourists' interest in certain tourist destinations. Moreover, the local transport services suppliers and, implicitly, the authorities that administrate the local transport activity, can also have various benefits, such as: the possibility to plan their activity

more rigorously and to make better use of their offer, transport service payment in advance, and consequently, the possibility to benefit from the financial resources in advance, the revenue growth for the transport societies and local budgets, and moreover, the possibility to promote the services and the destination itself through tourism operators.

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