# Opinions on the main elements to be considered in potential assessment models in tourism

Ruxandra-Gabriela ALBU[1], Radu CÎMPEAN[2]

**Abstract:** *The proper assessment of the tourism potential is an essential condition for choosing the most appropriate development directions for tourism destinations. The reference literature presents several options for the assessment of the tourism potential, individualized depending on the importance given to elements being considered in the assessment models. The key problem in grounding a potential assessment method in tourism is to determine the main factors to be considered and the share due to each one, the distribution schemes of the scores corresponding to different factors, respectively.*
*This paper brings forward an updated version of a potential assessment model in tourism, proposed in 2005, in line with the transformations in the general environment of tourism destinations (political and legal environment, socio-cultural environment, economic and technological environment), which occurred during the 11 years passed since the initial presentation of the model.*

**Key-words:** *tourism resources, tourist attraction, tourism potential, potential assessment model in tourism*

## 1. Introduction

The reference literature in tourism uses different acceptations of the concepts of tourism potential and tourist patrimony. In a very broad sense, the tourism potential of a territory may be defined as „the set of natural, cultural, historical, economic and social components, scientifically recognized from quantity and quality perspectives, proven into practice, which show the potential of tourism capitalization and have a certain functionality for tourism" (Glăvan, 1995, p. 52).

A certain region becomes touristically interesting when it provides tourism with natural and anthropic resources, which, through capitalization, following certain technical arrangements, and by taking into account the environment, may be included in the tourist circuit and determine a tourism activity. Tourism potential research, just like tourism in general, needs an interdisciplinary approach of research

---

[1] Transilvania University of Braşov, ruxandra.albu@unitbv.ro
[2] Transilvania University of Braşov, cimpeanradu.brasov@yahoo.com

work, resource capitalization in tourism taking place with the specialists' endorsement.

One may distinguish two concepts describing the natural or anthropic components of the tourism potential, their content being slightly different: „tourist attractions" and „tourism resources".

A tourist attraction is any „natural or anthropic element which grounds tourists' travel towards a destination. Along with transportation, accommodation and leisure are the essential items of the tourist product. The attractions may be classified as natural and artificial". (Stăncioiu, 1999, p. 21) The concept of tourist attraction defines more the emotional side of different components of the tourism potential, referring especially to aesthetic and cognitive elements.

Tourism resources cover a much wider range; on the one hand, the notion is used to designate the reason for visiting (the attraction itself) and, on the other hand, it is used to define the necessary means (sources) to carry out the tourism activity: natural, material, human, financial resources. According to the definition presented by Stăncioiu (1999, p. 173), tourism resources are „all natural, anthropic and financial resources existing in a destination or held by a tourism company, which can be capitalized in order to carry out the tourism activity".


## 2. Models for analysing the tourism potential

For assessing the tourism potential of a territory, one may use the LEADER II guide intended firstly for local authorities and partners interested in tourism development. This guide aims to perform an assessment of the tourism potential taking into consideration the offer, demand, competition and trends on the market. The assessment shall allow the determination of the proper territory where the project of tourism development will be implemented.

According to the LEADER II model, the main stages composing the assessment of the tourism potential of a territory are: analysis of offer, analysis of demand, analysis of competition, analysis of market trends, diagnosis of local tourism potential and determination of successful strategic position. The document was drafted following several LEADER seminaries, organized at Sierra de Gata, Spain, in January 1996, by Peter Zimmer, Simone Grassmann and others (1996, p. 3). The guide's utility is unquestionable. Although it is focused on rural areas, it approaches general concepts applicable for tourism potential assessment in every area, providing solutions, methods of analysis, examples (Albu, 2005, p. 197).

According to the QEPP model, the Evaluation Model of Tourism Resources (Liu, X., 2010, p. 181), tourism resources assessment is carried out considering four basic aspects: Q (Quality), E (Environment), first P (Position), the niche the resource addresses to, and the second P (Public Prise), the level of public prize related to the resource.

A possible method to determine the regional tourism potential is that proposed in the SCAMONI- HOFMANN system (Albu, 2007, p. 103). Developed in 1969, this method raises the problem of the quantification of the tourism destination recreational value, also emphasising the arrangements necessary on every tourist track in order to increase its leisure value.

The quantification of the recreational value focuses on the following elements: territory's natural frame: roads, landscape, flora, types of vegetation, field slope, climate; disturbing factors: purity of air, peacefulness, insects, aesthetic disturbers; factors related to the state of arrangements: condition of roads and bridges, shelters, resting places, parks, hygienic arrangements; accessibility (Bolea and Ciobanu, 2003, p. 16).

The attractiveness of a tourism destination represents a concept that still needs elements to define it in the more complete way (Tescaşiu and Micu, 2015, p. 64).

Tourism represents an important sector of the European Union economy, sustaining economic growth and employment. However, one of the biggest challenges Europe faces consists in consolidating and improving the sustainable tourism development, in order to ensure the industry's long-term competitiveness. The European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS) is focused on tourism destinations. The system was designed as a locally controlled and coordinated monitoring, management and intensification process of tourism destination sustainability.

It consists of a set of indicators, a guide and a dataset. It was developed as a tool selectable and applicable by any destination, without any specific training. The system may be a useful method for monitoring the destination performance, for improving the decision-making process related to management, and also for influencing adequate policies endorsement. The importance of the cooperative capabilities of different stakeholders in a tourism destination to improve competitiveness represents a milestone for the sustainable tourism development (Albu et al., 2016, p. 118).

The structure of the current system includes 27 core indicators and 40 optional indicators. They can be used discretionarily or in their entirety, or be integrated into existing destination-monitoring systems.

An important step in using the system is represented by the assessment of the destination tourism potential by creating a destination profile (*location, climate, geographical characteristics of the chosen destination, transport links, population, tourists, existing tourism infrastructure etc.*) (EC, 2016).

A rigorous setting of the destination profile, taking into account all the offer and demand features, creates the conditions so that the destination become competitive, avoiding the non-profitable investments this way (Foris et al., 2016, p. 116).

The system is flexible: it can be extended or reduced depending on the needs of each destination, on the interest of every local party and on the specific problems in terms of durability faced by each and every destination (Brătucu, et al., p. 174).

**3. Models for assessing the tourism potential based on indexes**

In order to draw up a possible method to assess the tourism potential and tourism offer of various areas, a model was adopted based on indexes (Albu, 2005, p. 216). This type of methods enjoys the great advantage of simplicity and of the fact that it allows the assessment of certain features (such as the tourism potential) hard to quantify otherwise through global values (scores), as they depend on numerous and various factors.

Of course, a quantitative representation of the tourism potential has the great advantage that it facilitates the comparison of different areas, allowing the determination of alternative, currently touristically-undeveloped areas, but with a potential comparable to that of areas very attractive for tourists. This creates the premises for unifying the touristic flow in a certain region, avoiding to overburden certain areas and ensuring this way a sustainable tourism development.

The methodology was inspired by the theory of Gearing (Albu, 2007, p. 111), related to consulting experts in order to assess the tourism potential. Following consultations, it was set that the tourism offer (TO) may be assessed by adding the tourism potential (TP) index to the one characteristic to tourist facilities (TF).

According to the model developed in 2005, the tourism potential (TP) is evaluated based on its two essential components: natural potential (NP) and anthropic potential (AP). In respect of the natural potential (NP), in order to determine the characteristic index, we took into consideration its three basic components, i.e. the climate potential (NCP), the one related to fauna and vegetation (NVP) and the landscape (NLP) as a synthetic, global element. To these three elements, we added an index related to pollution, which may reduce up to voidance the potential given by the favourable climate, biotic conditions and by the attractive landscape.

In order to determine the schemes of index distribution for the purpose of assessing the two elements defining the anthropic potential of an area (the social-cultural potential (SP) and infrastructure (I)), we used the following procedure, also inspired by the Gearing method. A list of characteristic attributes was set, then distributed to a group of experts, asking them to mark (by assigning the value 1) those attributes which are to be found in case of areas with low, medium and high anthropic tourism potential. Based on such assessments, we set the score intervals defining these categories of tourism favourableness. The differences occurred between experts in respect of the preference for certain attributes was omitted; instead, only the total values of assigned indexes were taken into account.
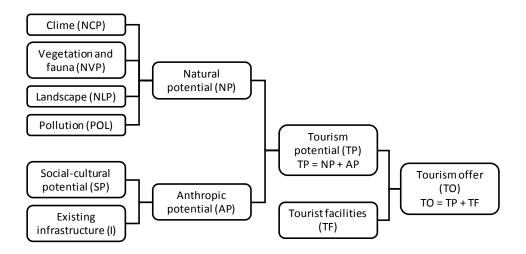
Fig. 1 *A model for assessing the tourism offer (Albu, 2005)*

The model proposed by Albu in 2005, in line with the transformations occurred in the general environment of tourist destinations (political-legal environment, social-cultural environment and economic-technical environment) in the 11 years since its presentation, could be improved by adding new components in order to enhance a better understanding upon a destination`s image. The modified model could be as follows (Cîmpean, 2016, p.2):
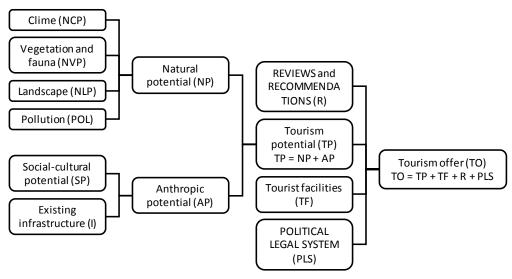


Fig. 2. *A model for assessing the tourism offer* (Albu, Cîmpean, 2016)

The components *Reviews and recommendations* and *Legal-political system* have been added to the initial model.

I. *Reviews and recommendations* was thought as an indicator regarding the satisfaction of those tourists who have already visited the destination and have certain information that is not so well-known for those who plan a trip in that certain area. The Internet has fundamentally changed customers' notions of convenience, speed, price, product information and service (Chiţu, 2009, p.30).

Following the conception of the other quantifiers already existent in the model, this one would comprise:

| Reviews and recommendations | | R |
|---|---|---|
| 0- | Not known/Not recommended | 0 – 3 |
| 1- | Poor Reviews/Few Recommendations or Negative ones | 4 - 6 |
| 2- | Mixed Reviews/Mixed Recommendations | 7 – 13 |
| 3- | Good reviews/Positive Recommendations | 14 – 17 |
| 4- | Excellent Reviews/Excellent Recommendations | 18-20 |
| Scoring | | |
| Current number | Components | Points |
| 1 | Good reviews for accommodation facilities (75% - 100%) | 0 / 3 |
| 2 | Mixed Reviews for accommodation facilities (50-75%) | 0 / 3 |
| 3 | Poor Reviews for accommodation (<50%) | 0 / 3 |
| 4 | Good reviews for Food & Beverage facilities (75% - 100%) | 0 / 3 |
| 5 | Mixed Reviews for Food & Beverage facilities (50-75%) | 0 / 3 |
| 6 | Poor Reviews for Food & Beverage accommodation facilities (<50%) | 0 / 3 |
| 7 | Good reviews for leisure facilities (75% - 100%) | 0 / 3 |
| 8 | Mixed Reviews for leisure facilities (50-75%) | 0 / 3 |
| 9 | Poor Reviews for leisure facilities (<50%) | 0 / 3 |
| 10 | Good reviews for transport facilities (75% - 100%) | 0 / 3 |
| 11 | Mixed Reviews for transport facilities (50-75%) | 0 / 3 |
| 12 | Poor Reviews for transport (<50%) | 0 / 3 |
| 13 | Recommendations regarding accommodation facilities | 0 / 1 |
| 14 | Warnings regarding accommodation facilities | 0 / 1 |
| 15 | Recommendations regarding Food &Beverage facilities | 0 / 1 |
| 16 | Warnings regarding Food &Beverage facilities | 0 / 1 |
| 17 | Recommendations regarding leisure facilities | 0 / 1 |
| 18 | Warnings regarding leisure facilities | 0 / 1 |
| 19 | Recommendations regarding transport facilities | 0 / 1 |
| 20 | Warnings regarding transport facilities | 0 / 1 |

| Predominant type of review | Points |
|---|---|
| Positive | 2 |
| Neutral | 1 |
| Negative | 0 |

Table 1. *Reviews and recommendations*

For the Reviews section, grouped into service categories: accommodation, Food & Beverage, leisure and transport, the procedure will be the following:
Based on the data gathered from professional websites (e.g. Booking, TripAdvisor) the process will work as such: for every type of review, there will be a scoring from 0 to 3 based on the percentage of each type in all the reviews. For instance, if a destination for accommodation has 35 positive reviews, 45 mixed reviews and 30 negative ones, there will be a score of 3 points for the neutral ones, 2 points for the positive ones and 1 for the negative ones. The one with the 3 points will be taken into consideration in the final score based on the following table:

| Predominant type of review | Points |
|---|---|
| Positive | 3 |
| Neutral | 2 |
| Negative | 1 |

Table 2. *Predominant type of review*

Next, considering that the case provided had mostly mixed reviews, in the calculation of the indicator *Reviews and recommendations* 2 points will enter, as stated in the table above. If the majority of the reviews had been positive, then 3 points would have been considered, as stated in table.
When discussing leisure, all forms are included: natural, cultural, entertainment, artistic etc.
As regards transport, one takes into account the existence and efficiency of public transport, the tourist one (e.g. ferryboat, buses) and the one that ensures the connection with the destination.

II. *The legal-political system* is an indicator as to how the state is involved in the functioning of tourism. Some decisions favour tourism (e.g. Visa relax policy), while others give a negative approach (e.g. Capital punishment). Therefore, the quantifier is presented as follows:

| Legal-political system | LPS |
|---|---|
| 1-Unfavourable to tourism | 0 – 3 |
| 2-Neutral | 4 – 7 |
| 3- Favourable to tourism | 8 – 12 |

| Appreciation Score | | |
|---|---|---|
| Current number | Components | Points |
| 1 | State institutions that manage tourism | 0 / 1 |
| 2 | Tourist Information Centres | 0 / 1 |
| 3 | Tourist NGO | 0 / 1 |
| 4 | Tourist Boards | 0 / 1 |
| 5 | Tourist Agencies (tour operator) | 0 / 1 |
| 6 | Tourist Agencies (voyage) | 0 / 1 |
| 7 | The existence and enforcement of antidiscrimination laws | 0 / 1 |
| 8 | The existence and enforcement of human rights laws | 0 / 1 |
| 9 | The existence and enforcement of antihuman trafficking laws | 0 / 1 |
| 10 | Lack of laws regarding death penalty | 0 / 1 |
| 11 | The existence and enforcement of gun restriction laws | 0 / 1 |
| 12 | Laws that favour tourism | 0 / 1 |
| 13 | Laws that restrict tourism | 0 / 1 |

Table 3. *The legal-political system*

It should be considered that it will not suffice just to claim the existence of the laws mentioned, especially those imposed by UN, but also it is mandatory that they be enforced. As an example, China has antidiscrimination laws, but they are not always put into place, therefore a Chinese destination of that kind will receive 0 points for that component. The improved model was tested on 3 destinations, situated at extreme poles: Vienna, Pyongyang and Bled. For this study, the selection of tourist areas was required, and in order to prove the usefulness of the new model, the 3 destinations would have to stand out through one particular aspect. For instance, Vienna is interesting from the cultural point of view (https://www.en.bmwfw.gv.at/Tourism/TourisminAustria/Seiten/default.aspx, whereas Bled has a more natural component developed, and Pyongyang, North Korea`s capital city (https://www.pyongyang-travel.com/), presents itself as a tourist paradox in which the political regime dictates  everything that represents tourist activity: the monuments that tourists are allowed to see, how to be photographed, the prohibition of leaving the hotel on their own, restricted access to local population etc.

Using the new model, the following have been found:
- Vienna tourist offer 14;
- Pyongyang tourist offer 7;
- Bled tourist offer 14.

Vienna and Bled have the same score, but considering their main attractiveness potential, there are some differences: Vienna consists mostly of anthropic sights, whereas Bled (http://www.bled.si/en/accommodation/hotels) is renowned for its natural sights. Although Pyongyang benefits from a tight state control, it has lots of economic and infrastructure difficulties, which gives the city a mediocre tourist offer. The laws are restrictive towards tourism, which further enhances the unattractiveness of the destination.

One can witness the difference between excellent destinations such as Vienna and Bled, and mediocre ones such as Pyongyang. Through the introduction of the *Legal Political System* indicator, a broader image could be observed related to the tourist offer of a country. Despite some of them presenting very interesting sights and resources, the political regime could ultimately decide whether to adopt an isolationist stance, or even anti-tourism.

## 6. Conclusions

Although it cannot provide us with absolute certainty regarding the sector's development perspectives, the accurate assessment of the tourism potential of a territory is an excellent basis for tourism stakeholders in the decision-making process, allowing them to minimize the risks of getting involved into bad investments and, at the same time, to offer a sustainable tourism development of the territory.

The key problem in grounding a tourism potential assessment method is to determine the main factors to be considered and the share due to each one, the schemes of distribution of scores corresponding to different factors, respectively.

For the purpose of assessing the tourism potential, one shall use a system of methods permitting the avoidance of subjectivity, unilateral visions and those favouring confrontations and data correlations, and, finally, the determination of a correct and complete diagnosis.

## 7. References

Albu, R.G., Chitu, I.B., Baltescu, C.A. and Ispas, A., 2016. Is Brasov a Sustainable Tourism Destination? An Analysis from the Stakeholders Perspective. *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference, information society and sustainable Development*, p. 118.

Albu., R.G., 2007. *Evaluarea potenţialului turistic în perspectiva dezvoltării turistice durabile. Teorie şi aplicaţii*, Braşov: Editura Universităţii Transilvania din Braşov.

Albu, R.G., 2005. *Managementul dezvoltării turistice durabile la nivel regional*. Braşov: Ed. Infomarket.

Bolea, V. and Ciobanu, D., 2003. *Ghidul eco-turistului în pădurile din Săcele.* Braşov: Editura pentru viaţă.

Brătucu, G., (coord.), Ispas, A., Chiţu, I., Cismaru, L., Albu, R.G., Dincă, G., Băltescu, C., Foriş, D., Demeter, et al., 2015. *Judeţul Braşov - Profilul Destinaţiei turistice*. Braşov: Editura Universităţii Transilvania.

Chiţu, I., 2009. Some Aspects Regarding Internet Advertising. *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov*, Series V, Vol. 2 (51), p. 30.

Cîmpean, R., 2016. *Tourism Management Project. Practical Training*. Braşov: Transilvania University of Braşov.

Foris, D, Albu, R.G., Chitu, I.B., Foris, T. and Baltescu, C.A., 2016. Brasov Travel Destination Profiling, in the Context of Sustainable Tourism Development. *SGEM International Conferences on Social Sciences and Arts, Conference proceedings*, Bulgaria. Book 2, vol 5, p. 116.

Glăvan, V., 2005. *Geografia Turismului.* Bucureşti: Ed. Fundaţiei România de Mâine.

Stăncioiu, A.F., 1999. *Dicţionar de terminologie turistică.* Bucureşti: Editura Economică.

Tescasiu, B. and Micu, A.E., 2015. Defining Elements of Cities Touristic Attractiveness -  A Case Study – Helsinki. *Annals of "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati Fascicle I. Economics and Applied Informatics,* Years XXI – no2. p. 64.

**Web sources**

Bled < http://www.bled.si/en/accommodation/hotels> [Accessed on March 30, 2017].

European Commission, 2016. *The European Tourism Indicator System ETIS toolkit for sustainable destination management,* [online]. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/21749> [Accessed on March 30, 2017].

Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economics. <https://www.en.bmwfw.gv.at/Tourism/TourisminAustria/Seiten/default.asp> [Accessed on March 30, 2017].

Liu, X., 2010. *The QEPP Evaluation Model of Tourism Resources - A Case Study of Tourism Resources in Beijing,* [online]. Available at: <http://www.seiofbluemountain.com/upload/product/201004/2010lyhy03a1.pdf> [Accessed on March 30, 2017].

Pyongyang Travel, [online]. Available at: <https://www.pyongyang-travel.com/> [Accessed on March 30, 2017].

Zimmer, P. and Grassmann, S., 1996. *Evaluating a territory's touristic potential*, [online]. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leader2/rural-en/biblio/touris/metho.pdf> [Accessed on March 31, 2017].