Tourism as a Research Field of Economics

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Abstract

Underlying this contribution is the principle that rejects the concept of tourism as a stand-alone discipline: the key tools for a scientific analysis of touristic aspects are methods taken from non-tourism disciplines. Examples for such typical methods are: "opportunity cost principle", "product cycle theory" (economics), "travel cost approach", "destination life cycles" (economics, geography), "prospect theory" (psychology), or segmentation/analysis by psychological and sociological criteria. Moreover, there is no general or accepted frame of reference which would allow to set theoretical relationships between isolated conducted research activities.

In the literature we have 16 disciplines that each investigate tourism as a research field, chiefly among them philosophy, economics, jurisprudence, political science, geography, sociology and psychology.

Following an in-depth analysis of the literature, the author of this paper feels enabled to describe the scientific analysis of tourism as a research field on the basis of a single discipline – economics, excluding commercial-managerial issues and concentrating solely on the macroeconomic aspect. Quite obviously such a sharp reduction will limit the analysis to a partial aspect, leaving aside issues of the social, psychological and political sides of tourism.

The most important approaches to embedding tourism analysis in economic theory are provided by consumer theory, foreign trade theory, public goods theory and services production theory, and in a second line by crosslinks to other economic disciplines.