

The Analysis and Quality Improvement of Eco-Tourism Services by Using the Supply-Demand Interface Platform

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Abstract

The Supply-Demand Interface Platform is the key to the improvement of eco-tourism services in Romania. In the present paper, I have presented the modus operandi of this Supply-Demand Interface Platform, the advantages and disadvantages offered to the accommodation units that wish to use this IT model, as well as the advantages and disadvantages for the beneficiaries of the eco-tourism services provided by these units (accommodation services, catering, transportation, guidance services).

Keywords: Supply-Demand Interface Platform, maximum satisfaction of customers' needs, accommodation services, sustainable tourism.

1. Introduction

In the current economic environment, we notice that IT models have shaped most of the industries existing in Romania. The Supply-Demand Interface Platform IT model will be developed in detail in my doctoral thesis entitled: "**The Quality of Eco-Tourism Services - Methods of Evaluation and Strategies of Improvement for Romania**".

In the field of eco-tourism services, the existence of competitive software such as the Supply-Demand Interface Platform, which is especially designed for accommodation units and their customers, may be a "plus" for the development of sustainable tourism in Romania, both for the accommodation units and the tourists that use their services (either natural or legal entities). Another advantage is that an accommodation unit can use it to collect information (the number of "gained" tourists vs. the number of lost tourists), in order to learn to sell its services by implementing additional packages in its offer (such as internet connection, trips around the area, sauna, all-inclusive, etc) or to improve the quality of the services it already provides. If a customer is satisfied, he/she will not hesitate to recommend you to others or to come back whenever possible. This will result in lower advertising costs that the accommodation service provider has to pay for the same number of customers. The Supply-Demand Interface Platform will optimally meet the customer's needs, by offering him the possibility to acquire the desired eco-tourism service (accommodation, catering,

transport, guidance, etc) for the desired price. It also sets a balance between supply and demand.

2. The operating principle of the Supply-Demand Interface Platform

When a customer advertises its availability for a certain period of time (i.e. he/she launches a demand), the accommodation units present their offers and compete for the expressed demand. In the end, the potential customer examines their proposals and chooses the version that best fits its needs and possibilities.

My personal contribution to the field of eco-tourism and accommodation services is the creation of the *Supply-Demand Interface Platform*, a competitive software model designed for the guest-houses and hotels in the Salaj county. Within this platform, accommodation units in this county will compete online to meet the customers' demand (A. Gheorghe, 2012: pp. 354-356).

Eco-tourism is the only form of responsible tourism in nature that respects its values and contributes to maintaining them unchanged in time. Salaj county has plenty of tourist and eco-tourist resources, such as: the cave with old paintings from Cuciulat, Wesselényi Castle in Jibou, Porolissum Castrum (Roman camp) from Moigrad, the Castrum (Roman camp) from Buciumi, the Almas Fortress in Almas, the Aranyos Fortress in Cheud, the monument of Mihai Viteazul from Guruslau, Iuliu Maniu's Memorial House in Badacin, Stramba Monastery in Paduris, the Holy Trinity Monastery, "Vasile Fati" Botanical Garden, "Poiana cu Narcise" (the Daffodil Glade) Natural Reservation, the Lii Cave, the Dragons' ("Zmeilor") Garden Natural Reservation (A. Gheorghe, 2012: pp 53-57).

Among the competitors in Salaj county, the following are worth mentioning: STAR-SERVICE Ltd., ALEX-COMERT and SERVICII Ltd.. The competition among the service providers will take place either in real time or within a given time interval. The application will be accessible online, by computer or mobile phone.

The Supply-Demand Interface Platform supports the customer by offering him the possibility to choose the lowest price for the desired service package. Another advantage for the customer is the elimination of search times for the most convenient offer (according to its own requirements and standards), as all offers are only one click away. As for the reservation cost, this is also reduced, as the customer does not make a large number of phone calls (but only one phone call for each service provider).

3. Presenting the advantages and disadvantages of using the Supply-Demand Interface Platform

The offer might include: a preview of the rooms, live cameras to view the natural environment where the objective is located, online room reservations, *all inclusive*, hiring tour guides, tour and accommodation services for disabled people.

Advantages for the service providers:

- an increase in the degree of occupation by attracting customers through an extended offer (more services at the same price);
- profit growth;
- reduced costs by eliminating travel agencies;
- an increased level of quality offered by the accommodation units through modernizing the space and outfitting it with all the necessary equipment for service provision;
- a continuous improvement in the quality of services, by including quality standards.

Disadvantages for the service providers:

- additional expenses for the improvement of auxiliary services (e.g. the electrical power for the surveillance cameras);
- environmental lighting;
- royalties for the Supply-Demand Interface Platform;
- auxiliary staff for the maintenance and repair of extra equipment, tour guides;
- additional expenses for promoting the services provided.

Advantages for customers:

- the customer's possibility to choose the desired service at the desired price;
- the customer's possibility to choose the (position of the) room;
- the customer's possibility to travel without an attendant to a hotel that facilitates access to disabled persons;
- ensuring the psychological comfort by involuntarily eliminating the "cheaper accommodation regret" (an effect that appeared and grew worse with the financial crisis);
- eliminating the search times for finding the most convenient offer, according to specific requirements and standards (all offers are just one click away);
- reduced reservation costs (since the number of phone calls is significantly diminished – to one call per accommodation unit).

Disadvantages for customers: none.

4. Conclusions

In my opinion, this model will lead to a higher degree of occupation in the accommodation units, profit growth for the service providers, an expansion of the number of accommodation places and it will bring up continuous improvement in the quality of services offered by these providers (accommodation, catering, transport, guidance services included), directly expressed by their consumers' behavior. This model aims to continuously improve the quality of eco-tourism services in Romania, by optimizing the value-for-money ratio.

To sum up, we consider that the use of this platform by both natural persons and legal entities might - in time - lead to the disappearance of travel agencies in Romania, because the Supply-Demand Interface Platform represents the place where the Demand meets Supply directly, without any go-betweens, thus achieving the maximum satisfaction of customers' needs.

Acknowledgement

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