

India in Romania's Travel Packages –An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

India's temples, towns and palaces form a strong cultural heritage which is the country's icon attraction, the central image in marketing, widespread in tourism industry as a key feature of its tourism products. Due to the distance and duration which means high costs for travel packages, India penetrates with difficulty in Romania is tourism market. This paper is focused on several researches into the interactions between Romanian tour operating companies with India's travel packages via internet. It also reveals the importance in understanding the tourists' behaviors in the dynamics of local and global economies. This article examines the demand pattern and supplies' practice, as well as the recognition of importance in understanding of how they function. It defines and ranges India destinations in conventional views of tour operators as providers and tourists' expectations, advantages and disadvantages of both segments which deal with marketing practices and policies demonstrate that India, as destination, is sold alone or together with other Asian countries.

KEYWORDS: *India, travel package, Romania, internet, promotion*

INTRODUCTION

Visiting India or another country twenty years ago, as a Romanian citizen, was a dream and only people involved in cultural, sports events or economical, political interchanges enjoyed it. After 1990, when Romania left the communist system and subsequently oriented towards the market economy, tourism was developed, opening abroad places to visit. At the early stage, it focused on its neighbours, European countries and, then, it enlarged steadily to the destinations from America, Asia, Africa and tropical islands. This process was very difficult and lasted over 10 to 15 years, due to the requirements of development in transport services, tourism infrastructure, laws, medical assistance and setting up of the tourism enterprises. Now, Romania is a new European country, with a strong economic growth, which is expected to increase people's revenue, as well as the possibility of spending money for vacations. Even in this context, taking into consideration the distance between Romania and India, about 4800 km, and flight time, over 20 hours (the route is composed by one stop in Turkey or in Europe), a travel package is expensive and not many tourists can afford it.

THE SURVEY OF ABROAD ROMANIAN TOURISTS' DEMANDS

A country with 21 million inhabitants, that would be 1.8% of India's population, provides around 7 million visitors and receives 6 million yearly. So, it can be said that 1 in 3 Romanians are international travellers. Indeed, this number certifies the fulfilment of two

components in recreational demand: the financial and time supplies of tourists and on the other hand, the functionality between demand and offer's interaction (Coppock and Duffield, 1975). Usually, the desire to be engaged in a travel and the real possibility to do it plays a key role in the market demand's shaping. Moreover, factors affecting tourist decisions like demographic, socio-economic and situational characteristics for individuals or households (Pigram, 1983) are suitable for Romanian pattern's demand; while motivation could be found in several items from Crandall's list (1980) or Kabanoff's scaling leisure needs (1982). But the demand acts together with the supply, mainly the opportunity to spend out a holiday which is stimulated by accessibility, both spatial and financial, security during a travel or other resource characteristics (Pigram, 1983) and several psychological needs about personal self-fulfilment (Ryan, 1991, Maslow, 1954).

Attempting to shape the statistical data and the interviewed persons, it can configure the features of the Romanian tourists' demands. In the last five years, almost 80% of out flows from Romanian tourists visited Europe, 0.13% Asia, 0.30% Northern America and 0.06% Africa. In Europe, Italy receives 30%, Spain 20% and Greece almost 20%, followed by Germany, Hungary and Austria (National Institute of Statistics, 2007). The characteristics of this background's demand are related to the perception about language: Italian and Spanish belong to the same linguistic group as Romanian, Latin, while Germany, Austria and Hungary also attract by their development, modern roads access and minorities spreading during history on these territories. In the same time, many Romanians are employed in EU countries and the family visits could be connected to the highest values of visitors.

The next reasons of this prevalent trend in demand for Europe could be given by low costs of a trip, duration (weekend or short vacation) and safety. In this flow are involved tourists with medium salaries, whose motivation is to esteem, to know, to relax or as a family activity. Choosing EU destinations is now influenced by the law facilities in travelling, the fact that visas or exchange money are no longer required. Consequently, types of tourism promoted and released in Europe can clarify the trend. Europe's offer is focused on cultural heritage, businesses, scientific meetings, events (sports, music, education etc.) which are the most requested types by the mass tourism and then the nearness and diversification of transport means increase the accessibility and the safety of a travel company's income. The reduced number of Romanian tourist arrivals in Asia and America suggests that these destinations are affordable for rich people or a small segment of the elite, whose aim is to put on their list the exclusive places or attractions, luxury and uncommon tours. One can assume that, former visitors in Europe could be, now, the first visitors for remote countries. Actually, in the Romanian consumer's perception, money must be spent usefully, that evolves changing yearly or once at two years the visiting destination.

Using the Plog's model (2001), it can consider the visitor for Asian destinations belonging to the allocentric type, which means adventurous, seeking new experience, inquisitive personality. According to Pearce (1995), which highlights the spatial implication, every tourist seeks different destination that will be changed in time (Hall and Page, 2005). On this perspective visitors of India could go next year to another Asian destination or European as well.

INFORMATION VIA INTERNET

Computers are part of our lives and for many people they signify a basic need. In the last ten years, this domain has developed at a high rate in Romania. The total number of Internet connections in 2007 was about 5,8 million, registering an increase of 76% compared to 2006, (Trafic.ro). Considering that a family is composed by three persons, it means that all of Romania's population may access to the Internet. The ICTs reshape all tourism-related processes, restructuring and innovating market strategies, (Hudson, 1997). In fact, there are

many benefits or adding-values by ITCs, providing access to both the demands and suppliers in tourism. Actors on the demand side can gain access to the tourist information and suppliers can enhance their potential to manage and disseminate information, (Stratigea and Giautzi, 2006).

All Romanian touring firms have web pages to promote their activity to the public or to link themselves to the global tourism industry. The policy of making businesses via internet has been very developed, since '90s. In fact, the dot.com phase started in 1999-2000 and created so called web-based tourism business, (Papakonstantinou, 2006). For the customers or future consumers a firm has many ways to inform them about tourist attractions, completed by pictures or photos, hotel offers, payments, flights, travel packages etc. In Romania, since 1992, when the first company introduced computer networks, the internet market was in blooming and the effects are seen as an increase in tourist flows and gains. An enterprise can contact a person by checking the database with the previous clientele and e-mailing the news, participating in business fairs and collecting data from the future collaborators or clients, doing publicity (aggressively on the internet, television, radio or newspaper), advertising on the static materials (posters, booklets etc.).

A tourist or a potential customer uses two ways for a trip procedure: going to a firm or consulting the internet. How does the consumer use the internet for tourism information? The main search engine used by Romanians is Google.com, due to its popularity and support for language. In fact, Google is a very good tool for finding resources on the World Wide Web. By introduction of a small key text it ranks pages upon the importance and hits in the whole system. A user tends to view mostly the first three pages and rarely up to 10.. Starting from this rationale, the analysis of information about India's tourism industry on the internet is focused upon Google.com search engine's first ten pages shown. Typing the text "India offers" on <http://www.google.com> displays 7 050 000 results; at the option *pages in Romanian* there are 818 000 results and for *pages from Romania* there are 928 000 results. If every page displays 10 results a tourist could visit up 100 potentially different sites from those mentioned above. On all these pages almost 30 sites offer information from Romanian tourism companies (Table 1). For beginners on the Internet the command could be "India". By web election, from the first 10 pages, only 3 contain information about traveling and 5 sites get the tour packages in India.

The text "Tourism India", on web option, displays 757 000 results from which on the first 10 pages it can find 45 sites, half of them being posted on the first 3 pages, which contain 20 sites with touring offers for India. Many offers seem to have the same content, because the tourism enterprises belong to one of the two broad categories: tour operators and travel agencies which function for general tourism, obtaining their goods wholesale from the first group. But the flexibility of payment handled by the second group make them more available for the consumers' profiles. After the information phase on the internet a user could order a travel and in case of a positive feedback he/she has two possibilities to submit a package, on line or manually, going to the agency's headquarters. In Romania the majority of tourists combine these two ways, respectively the early stage of looking for information, followed by manual procedures.

INDIA AS A DESTINATION PRODUCT ON THE ROMANIA'S TOURISM MARKET

India is well known, in the world and Romania as well, by its spiritual life, culture, history. Any Romanian learned during schooling at history, geography or religion something concerning India. Otherwise also, in a globalizing mass media, the chance to watch India's news or movies exists. So, tourism industry in Romania finds a space theoretically known, desired by visitors. What does it do or operate with? It promotes India, as a touristic

destination, in a manner which attracts consumers, to forget the distance and costs impediments or other travelling risks (poorness in some areas, tropical diseases etc.). That's why in almost all offers India is rarely sold alone. The travel packages contain several combinations:

1. Alone: Northern and Southern India; Golden Triangle; Goa;
2. Group of two countries: India-Nepal; India-China, India-Sri Lanka;
3. Group of three countries: India-Nepal-China; India-Nepal-Sri Lanka;
4. Group of four countries: India-Nepal-China-Sri Lanka, India-China-Hong Kong-Macao (table 1).

The travel package's cost ranges from €1000 to €3000. It usually includes the transport, accommodation, additional services plus the firm's commission. But the transport cost varies depending on the airline companies and distance, sometimes train or bus for internal connections, the accommodation is different by hotel types and services and if other additional offers are included (museum entrance fees, shows etc. and other commercial auxiliaries). Basically the product is aimed on well paid job groups, intellectuals, scientists, business owners, and people in showbiz and business travellers. To analyze this assertion it's necessary to juxtapose it to the financial possibilities of the majority of the Romanian population. If one person earns yearly an average of around €3000, it symbolizes that only a small percent can buy the India's package, respectively those with an annual income about more than €40 000. The length of stay is longer than a usual vacation (7 days). It lasts from 8 to 21 days (Table 1). But, nowadays firms' politic is to allocate two or three vacations in a year, each being 7 days, thus not many employees benefit of a long period which allows them such travels. India and Asia are accessible all year round, but some tourism enterprises are focused on the winter time, just to avoid monsoons with rains or flood risks, hot summer days accompanied by tropical diseases. On the other hand, tourism industry in Romania registers a clear seasonality of business, with a pick in summer (June-August), a second one in winter (at the end of December and the beginning January). Promoting India in winter or/and in autumn, during the non-active period of tourism enterprises, it diminishes wastage in payment balance sheet.

TABLE 1. India product on the Romania's tourism market

<i>Destination</i>	<i>Days</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Costs €</i>	<i>Hotel type</i>	<i>Transport</i>	<i>Places to visit</i>
India, China, Hong Kong	21	Summer	3250	4	Plane	Delhi-Udaipur, Khajuraho -Varanasi, Katmandu, Katmandu- Lhasa, Lhasa-Hong Kong
India	21	Summer	3000	4	Plane	New Delhi, Jaipur, Agra-Jhansi, Bombay - Aurangabad -Bombay, Benares, Bombay-Madras
India	21	Summer	2800	4	Plane	Delhi-Jaipur-Agra-Tajmahal-Khajuraho-Benares, Varanasi-Katmandu-Elephanta- Aurangabad-Ajanta- Ellora- Madras- Madurai-Pondichery
Northern and Southern India	21	Summer	2700	4	Plane	Delhi- Jaipur- Agra-Tajmahal-Khajuraho- Benares Katmandu - Bombay, Elephanta - Aurangabad-Ajanta- Ellora- Madras-Madurai-Pondichery
India, Nepal	16	Winter	2800	4	Plane	Delhi-Jaipur-Jhasi-Orchha-Khajuraho-Varanasi-Sarnath-Kathmandu - Patan-Lhasa-Kathmanu-Delhi

India, Nepal, China	16	Winter	2800	4/5	Plane	Delhi-Jaipur-Jhasi-Orchha-Khajuraho-Varanasi-Sarnath-Kathmandu-Patan-Lhasa-Kathmanu - Delhi
India, Tibet, Nepal	16	Summer	2000	4	Plane	Delhi-Jaipur-Jhasi-Orchha-Khajuraho-Varanasi -Sarnath-Kathmandu-Patan-Lhasa-Kathmanu-Delhi
India, Nepal	16	Spring	2000	4	Plane	Delhi-Udaipur, Jodhpur-Jaipur, Fatehpur Sikri - Agra, Jhansi - Khajurah, Varanasi - Sarnath, Kathmandu
India, China, Nepal Turkey	15	Spring	3500	5/4	Plane	Istanbul - New Delhi - Jaipur - Jhasi - Orchha - Khajuraho - Varanasi - Sarnath - Kathmandu - Patan - Lhasa - Kathmanu - Delhi - Istanbul
India, Tibet, Nepal	14	Summer	2000	4	Plane	Delhi-Jaipur-Jhansi-Orchha-Khajuraho-Varanasi-Sarnath-Kathmandu- Patan-Lhasa- Kathmanu - Delhi
India, Nepal	13	Autumn	2000	4	Plane	Delhi-Udaipur, Jodhpur - Jaipur, Fatehpur Sikri -Agra, Jhansi - Khajuraho, Varanasi -Sarnath, Kathmandu
India	13	Autumn	1900	4	Plane	Delhi - Samode - Jaipur - Agra
India, Sri Lanka	13	W/S				Colombo and Gold Triangle
India Nepal	13	Autumn	1700	4	Plane	Delhi - Kathmandu - Varanasi - Khajuraho - Jhansi - Agra - Jaipur - Delhi
India, Nepal	12	Spring	1600	4	Plane	Delhi - Kathmandu - Varanasi - Khajuraho - Jhansi - Agra - Jaipur - Delhi
India and Nepal	11	Winter	2000	4	Plane	New Delhi, Jaipur, Fatehpur Sikri Agra-Jhansi-Khajuraho, Varanasi-Sarnath, Kathmandu
India, Nepal	11	Summer	2000	4	Plane	New Delhi, Jaipur, Fatehpur Sikri - Agra, Jhansi -Khajuraho, Varanasi - Sarnath, Kathmandu
India, Nepal	11	Autumn	1800	4	Plane	New Dehli, Jaipur, Fatehpur Sikri, Agra, Jhansi, Khajuraho, Varanasi, Sarnath, Kathmandu
India, Nepal, China, Hong Kong, Macao	11	Autumn	1800	4	Plane	New Dehli, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Jaipur, Fatehpur Sikri, Agra, Jhansi, Khajuraho, Varanasi, Sarnath, Kathmandu, Tibet, Lhasa, Hong Kong, Macao
Golden Triangle	11	Autumn	1750	4	Plane	Dehli, Jaipur, Fatehpur Sikri, Agra, Jhansi, Khajuraho, Varanasi, Sarnath, Kathmandu, Dehli
India, Nepal	11	Winter	1200	4	Plane	Delhi- Khajuraho-Varanasi, Bhairawa -Katmandu , Katmandu-Dehli
North and South India	10	Summer	3000	4	Plane	Delhi-Jaipur-Agra-Tajmahal-Khajuraho-Benares Katmandu-

India, Nepal	9	Winter	1800	4	Plane	Bombay-Elephanta-Aurangabad-Ajanta-Ellora-Madras (Chennai)-Madurai- Pondichery Delhi - Kathmandu - Varanasi - Taj Mahal
India	8	Winter	1200	4	Plane	Goa
Golden Triangle	8	Autumn	800	5	-	New Delhi, Shekhavati, Dundlod, Mandawa, Jaipur, Fatehpur Sikri, Taj Mahal, Agra
Golden Triangle	6	All	1500	4	Plane	Delhi - Jaipur - Agra

To perform their activity, they add on their supplies: event trips (spring), shopping travels (February, September) or tropical destinations, having a wide marketing palette to shape their offers. Regarding the accommodation, only the 4 or 5 star hotels, with B&B or AP or MAP, usually double beds (extra cost for single bed) are promoted in India's packages. Actually, the interesting part of India offers is touring program, respectively sites to visit. In this context, the most popular spots delivered on the Romanian tourism market are:

1. **New Delhi with: Ghandi Memorial, Raj Ghat, Presidential Palace, Qutab Minar, Lotus Temple, Jantar Mantar, Birla Mandir, India Gate, Red Fort, Humayun Tomb;**
2. **Agra: Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Jama Masjid;**
3. **Jaipur: Hawa Mahal, Amer Fort, Jaigarh Fort, Jantar Mantar;**
4. **Udaipur (known as the city of lakes): Jagdish Temple, Jag Mandir City Palace, Saheliyon-Ki-Bari, Fateh Sagar Lake;**
5. **Madurai: Gandhi Memorial Museum, Vandiyur Mariamman Teppakulam, Thirumalai Nayak Palace, Meenakshi Sundaeswarar Temple;**
6. **Jodhpur: The Clock Tower, Bazaar Sadar and Umaid Bhawan Palace.**

Otherwise, the results of the questionnaire applied in June, 2008, on 100 subjects (Bucharest), show that those who experienced travelling in India, the mind symbols are strong and multiple, similar to the visited places, meanwhile for the presumptive visitors, India product is synonymous with Taj Mahal for the 50% of interviewed persons, Holy temples (30%), riding elephants (5%), Indian beautiful songs (3%), spicy food etc.

CONCLUSION

India is desired on the Romania tourism market because of its unique heritage. But the travel costs and length of visiting it are still barriers for many Romanian tourists. Basically the product is aimed on well paid job groups, intellectuals, scientists, business owners, peoples in showbiz and business travellers. The new status of Romania as an EU member with a high rate of economic growth will enforce the people's income, thus should increase the tourist flows in remote areas, but steadily, in a sustainable way. The success of Indian product is guaranteed by its qualities, tour operators or travel agencies' marketing via internet and tourists' demand as well.

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