

THE BENCHMARK ANALYSIS OF TOURISM IN ROMANIA AND JAPAN

Georgiana BĂDICU¹, Iancu DORIN²

¹ Valahia University of Targoviste, Romania, monicad_d@yahoo.com

² Valahia University of Targoviste, Romania, dorin_iancu04@yahoo.com

Abstract: *In the last decades, the tourism developed a lot, especially due to technological advances and access to an ever-increasing range of means of transport that allow convenient and fast travel over long distances and their increasingly affordable costs. Tourism is an important factor in both promoting countries and cultures, as well as in the economy. Every culture is unique and an effective strategy to attract tourists can benefit both in the country's economy and in creating a diverse population. Benchmarking is a valuable tool for managing companies, local governments, governments in their development strategies. Companies, settlements, regions, states, governments that compare their performance with others and identify best practices get strategic, operational and economic benefits, leading to increased competitiveness. Thus, this paper proposes comparative analysis by benchmarking of four categories of aspect related to tourism in Romania and Japan: Tourist Indicators, Human Resources in Tourism, Business Environment, and Competitiveness of Tourism Prices.*

Keywords: Benchmarking, Tourism, Competitiveness, Performance.

JEL Classification Codes: L83.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, work is the main activity that takes our time, but it is sometimes necessary to detach our daily routine, enjoy ourselves, so a stroll, trip or a stay would be ideal for achieve this goal.

Tourism is an important branch of a country's economy, as it contributes to GDP growth each year, but also a workforce sector. For some countries on the African continent or in some islands, tourism is vital because it is the only activity that brings income to the economy, revenue from transport, accommodation structures or entertainment (theaters, parks, music).

Tourism plays an important role in exploiting the elements that make up a country's heritage and making it worthwhile through national or international bodies that promote and protect the richness of nature, traditional culture and the history of a nation. Tourism also acts on the human factor, contributing to the restoration of work capacity, good quality of life and increased life expectancy through rest activities or balneary treatment. Moreover, the tourism activity through its cultural forms participates in the education of the population, in the development of the degree of civilization and training.

In the last decades, there has been a growth trend in tourism, especially in Europe, where short-term international travel is common. Tourists have a wide range of budgets and tastes, which has made hotels and resorts develop to meet their requirements: some tourists prefer



This is an open-access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

simple beach holidays, while others want more special holidays, family vacations and quieter resorts.

There have also been some tourism hurdles such as the 11 September 2001 attacks, terrorist threats to tourist destinations such as Bali and many European cities, and the Indian Ocean earthquake that caused a tsunami in 2004. These phenomena resulted in human losses , including tourists. This, along with cleaning operations have prevented or even substantially stopped tourism in the area for a while.

2. BENCHMARKING - COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TOURISM

Benchmarking is the process of continually improving performance by identifying, understanding, adapting, and implementing best practices that are inside and outside the organization and involves creating partnerships for sharing information on processes and evaluations, resulting in realistic goals. It is a valuable tool for managing the company, local governments, and governments in their development strategies. Companies, settlements, states, governments that compare their performance to others and identify best practices have strategic, operational and economic benefits, leading to an increase in competitiveness.

Most benchmarking initiatives relate to financial and management issues, but lately extensive comparative assessment across different areas has become a major element in management. In most cases benchmarking is done for companies, but it can be easily adapted to the needs of knowledge of performance at the level of settlements, areas, regions and states as a tool for analyzing environmental practices.

Benchmarking is made by comparing the results of the analyzed area with one of the better ones or the situation in another year of the same area, the areas of application implying the assessment of a wide range of indicators.

The benchmarking concept originates from English, which means "reference," being used extensively in the U.S. and consists of analyzing the performance of a comparison domain with a leader in the same domain.

Benchmarking helps us set our goals, analyze and look for ways to become the best, this being the very essence of benchmarking, as the Japanese word "danotsu" expresses the meaning of being "the best of the good ones".

The development of benchmarking involves the following steps:

- 1) Establishment of the team (of the specialists);
- 2) Documentation, collection of the information necessary for the elaboration.

This information can be collected from various reports, which are produced at the level of each county (where data can be extracted for the main localities in the respective county), as well as in the development regions;

- 3) Assess the identified situation;
- 4) Interpretation of results.

3. TOURISM IN ROMANIA AND JAPAN

Romania and Japan are two different countries regarding geographical location, nationality, traditional culture, but both are within the field of tourism, and both want to excel so in order to analyze tourism in the two countries, we have carried out benchmarking.

Table 1. Benchmarking of tourism in Romania and Japan

Categories of indicators	Indicator subcategories	Weight ratios	Analytical weight	Level of maturity (1-10)		Weighted score	
				Romania	Japan	Romania	Japan
Tourist	1. Natural sites	200	60	7	10	420	600

The Benchmark Analysis of Tourism in Romania and Japan

indicators 300	included in the World Heritage						
	2. Cultural sites included in the World Heritage	200	60	8	10	480	600
	3. Attractiveness of natural elements	150	45	4	0	180	270
	4. Quality of tourism infrastructure	150	45	1	0	45	360
	5. Digital tourism for natural tourism	100	30	5	0	150	270
	6. Digital demand for cultural and entertainment tourism	100	30	4	10	120	300
	7. The effectiveness of marketing and country brand to attract tourists	100	30	1	09	30	270
Total		1000				1425	2670
Human resources in tourism 300	1. Primary education rate	250	75	2	10	150	750
	2. Secondary education rate	200	60	6	0	360	480
	3. Personnel training	150	45	3	0	135	450
	4. Ease to find skilled workers	200	60	2	0	120	480
	5. Ease to hire foreign workers	100	30	9	0	270	60
	6. Women's participation as labor force	100	30	4	0	120	150
Total		1000				1155	2370
The business environment in tourism 200	1. Time needed to start a business	300	60	5	0	300	300
	2. Costs involved in starting a business	300	60	8	0	480	300
	3. Dominance in the market	400	80	6	0 ¹	480	800
Total		1000				1260	1400
Competitiveness of tourism prices 200	1. Flight tickets and airport taxes	350	70	3	0	210	490
	2. Hotel price index	350	70	10	0	700	350
	3. Fuel price level	300	60	2	0	120	360
Total		1000				1030	1200
TOTAL SCORE						4870	7640

Source: own processing

In order to apply the benchmarking method, we identified four common tourism indicators for Romania and Japan, to which we have given a weight so that we can get 1000 points. These weights make a hierarchy of the analysis criteria according to the importance the analyst attaches to the criteria. The four categories of indicators are divided into subcategories, for which they are given in two proportions. The analytical weight represents the ratio between the product of the indicator group and the weight of each indicator and 1000 (for example: the group has the value

of 300, the natural sites the value of 200 and proceed as follows - $300 * 200/1000 = 60$). The level of maturity is represented by grades 1-10 obtained by Romania and Japan. The weighted score of each country is the product of the analytical weight and the mark obtained by each of the two countries. After each category of indicators a total weighted score is represented by the sum of all weighted scores for each indicator sub-category. The total score is the sum of all the total weighted scores. (Dinca, 2014).

The level of maturity is represented by the country's economic tourism scorecards on a scale of 1 to 10. According to the Tourism Competitiveness Report of 2016, (Report, 2017) 136 countries have been analyzed in this area, including Romania and Japan, but we converted the rank of 1 to 136 by 1 to 10 by the quartile method as follows: I split 136 to 10 (equal to 13.6), and the range 1-14 corresponds to note 10, then we added 14, the range 14-28 corresponds to note 9, the last interval being 126-140 and corresponds to note 10. The weighted score has high values when the scores obtained by Romania or Japan are at the maturity level closest to the maximum mark of 10.

We have selected as common points in the tourism of the two countries the following indicators:

- tourism indicators with the subcategories: the number of natural and cultural sites in the World Heritage, the attractiveness of natural elements, the quality of the infrastructure, the demand for virtual natural, cultural and entertainment tourism, and the efficiency of marketing and country branding to attract tourists;
- human resources in tourism with subcategories: primary and secondary education rate, qualification of staff, ease of finding skilled workers, ease of hiring foreign workers and female participation in the labor market;
- tourism business environment with subcategories: the time and cost needed to start a business and dominate the market;
- price competitiveness in tourism with subcategories: airline cost along with airport taxes, hotel price index and fuel price level.

Romania is a country with a diversified relief, which offers a variety of natural resources, having in the World Heritage List only one natural site and 6 cultural sites and scores 7 on the number of natural sites and 8 on the cultural ones in the total of 10. Japan is an island country and has as form of relief only mountains and water, but despite this, it has 4 natural sites and 16 cultural sites in the World Heritage, obtaining maximum marks unlike Romania. Apart from these subcategories of tourism indicators, the attractiveness of natural elements has an analytical weight of 45, but the weighted score is lower for Romania than for Japan, because also for this indicator Romania has a lower result than Japan.

An important indicator of tourism is the quality infrastructure, which makes tourism to be carried out in optimum conditions and thus attracts tourists.

Although Japan scores 8 on infrastructure, as opposed to Romania, which obtains the 1 st note, the first state is at the top of the rail infrastructure ranking, with the largest delays being in the order of seconds.

As today's technology evolves every day even more, tourism can also be done virtually, with only certain destinations being visited in this way at the moment. Demand for virtual tourism is beginning to grow, with more tourists in Japan (note 9) than in Romania (note 5), which does not produce state-of-the-art gadgets like the Japanese state.

Japan is more effective in attracting tourists by using marketing and country branding, reaching 9, compared to Romania, which still has a lot to invest to overcome the 1 st mark.

In the category of tourism indicators, Japan has a total weighted score of 2670, which is a good thing and demonstrates that the country is making efforts to organize, develop and promote heritage, while Romania has a total weighted score of 1425, which shows that the latter is not as

organized as Japan. As far as the human resource in tourism is concerned, Japan is a much more educated country than Romania, which is demonstrated by the primary education rate that places Japan at the top 10, those who choose lower secondary education and lead the country to note 8, while Romania is far from these places, pointing only 2 to the primary education rate, respectively 6 to the secondary education. This is the result of a higher level of training and qualification of staff in Japan (note 10) than in Romania (note 3), so that Japan has skilled workers and does not seek to hire foreign workers, obtaining this note 2, to Romania, which has a small number of qualified employees and prefers to hire foreigners (note 9), rather than qualifying people for labor. The labor market has also begun to dominate the female side, with equal rights between men and women, this time the two countries are close to each other in the rankings, to one point difference, namely: Japan 5 and Romania marks 4. The total weighted score on tourism's human resources also shows that Japan (2370 points) is well ahead of Romania (1155 points) and Japanese staff is prepared to fit into this field without resorting to foreign labor, as Romania does.

A good business environment benefits tourism, which in turn benefits the economy of the country. In Romania, the costs of starting a business are lower (note 8) than in Japan (note 5), but the time required to start the business brings equality between the two countries (note 5) and the dominance in the market is lower in Romania gaining 6 points, while Japan gets the maximum mark.

Given that the time required to start a business is the same in both countries, the overall weighted tourism business score is lower in the case of Romania (1260 points) than in Japan (1400 points) because even if for the start of a business in Romania, the costs are lower, and lead the country to high marks, is not compared with Japan's high degree of dominance on the market.

Concerning price competitiveness, costs are higher in Romania for airline tickets and airport taxes (note 3) as well as for fuel (note 2), while Japan is more affordable for airfares and airport taxes (note 7) and fuel (note 6). The hotel price index proves that Romania has lower costs in these accommodation structures, being the only indicator in this country that gets the maximum mark, unlike Japan that gets only half the maximum mark.

In this last category of indicators, the total weighted score of 1030 for Romania and 1200 for Japan, demonstrates that Japan is also more accessible at the level of prices compared to Romania.

As a total score on all the indicators analyzed, Romania has a score of 4870 points, far behind Japan, which achieves a nice score of 7640 points, which shows that Japan is an example to excel in the field of tourism. As a result of this benchmarking study between Romania and Japan, it is highlighted that Romania, which is composed of much of the relief and can provide a lot of resources for economic development and tourism, has much more to invest in order to achieve better human tourism outcomes, improving tourism indicators, business environment and price levels. Japan, on the other hand, holds leading positions on these indicators, despite the fact that it is an island state and its geographical position is subject to various natural disasters.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Tourism is very important for the economic development of a country and the state must participate effectively in the development and promotion of tourism at national and international level. Both Romania and Japan are countries where tourism largely contributes to the national economy and to the world economy.

In both countries, tourism is an important branch of the national economy, with GDP rising from year to year (www.economica.net). Tourism brings economic benefits by attracting tourists with the help of national tourist patrimony, which should be in their liking to start tourism.

First of all, Romania is a country that, through its geographic position, offers a varied tourism through natural and anthropic elements. The most important tourist destinations are the Carpathians, the Danube Delta, the Black Sea coast and plenty of attractions from the other regions of the country. The Romanian customs and traditions offer moments of relaxation, delight and at the same time make a connection with the historical and cultural past of each region. For good organization in the field of tourism, bodies have been set up to coordinate, develop and promote tourism. Even though these bodies are doing their best to promote the Romanian tourist heritage, Romania has some deficiencies in price levels, education and qualification of staff, infrastructure quality, which disadvantages tourism and measures need to be taken to optimize them.

Secondly, Japan is a country with a rich traditional culture that attracts a large number of tourists. The customs and traditions of the Japanese are strictly respected by them, as well as certain rules of conduct and superstitions, making them a peculiar people with a unique culture. Japan is a country with a high level of education and training of its personnel, it is a country that wants to excel, investing in tourism, is among the first states with a quality infrastructure, which makes the tourism to be carried out under conditions optimized and thus increase requests for visits to Japan.

At the same time, in order to show which of the two countries is more organized and developed in the field of tourism, we conducted a benchmarking analysis between the two countries, identifying and analyzing common indicators and arriving at the conclusion that Japan is a leading state in all categories of indicators following their scoring, compared to Romania, which obtains the lowest scores.

In conclusion, the two countries have tourism potential and deserve to be visited for the knowledge of traditions and customs, of the population, of the unique tourist destinations for each country.

REFERENCES

1. Cheran I., *Tourism of Romania – Breviar Statistic*, National Institute of Statistics 2007.
2. Dinică G., *Sustainable Development and Globalization of the Contemporary Economy*, Bibliotheca Publishing House, 2014;
3. Dușa A., *Elements of comparative analysis*, Tritonic Publishing House, 2014;
4. Melinda C., Tamara S., Bogan E., *Romanian Tourism Patrimony, Course Notes, "Geography Collection"*, University Publishing House, Bucharest, p.259, 2012;
5. Octavian Simu, *Traditional Japanese Civilization*, Herald Publishing House, p. 313, 2012;
6. Paul V., *Japanese culture*, Fourth Edition, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, p.398, 2000., (Ruxandra M. K., *Japanese culture*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2017);
7. Petru B., Iacob C., *Tourism Geography (Course Notes)*, ASEM Publishing House, Chisinau, 2012;
8. Roberto C., Tiffany M., *The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2017*, Editions World Economic Forum, Geneva, 387, 2017;
9. Smelser N.J., *Comparative methods in the Social Sciences*, Editura Quid Pro Books, 2013;
10. *International Recommendation for Tourism Statistics 2008*, United Nations, New York, p. 134, 2010;
11. <https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turism>;
12. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism#cite_note-WTO_Tourism_Highlights_2016_Edition-23;
13. www.go2hr.ca;https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284419029