

THE DIVERSIFICATION OF TOURISTIC OFFER AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO MINIMIZE SEASONALITY: THE CASE OF THE EVENTS AT (SANTA CATARINA, BRAZIL)

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It is in a context full of irregularities that we can place the behavior of individual. And this happens as human activities, including touristic activities, are conditioned by seasonality. Meanwhile, seasonality does not influence all economical sectors in the same way, which is why it becomes so important to know the origins, causes and specific impacts of seasonal concentration and its relation with offer and demand.

The main issue of this research is to analyze how the city of Balneário Camboriú is developing a segment of events as an alternative to aid and minimize touristic seasonality. Balneário Camboriú has an area of 46 km², located on the north-central coast of the Santa Catarina state, southern Brazil. According to the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), the population of Balneário Camboriú in 2014 was of 124.557 habitants. The geographical location of the city makes it easy to access other touristic attractions of Santa Catarina state, such as Blumenau, Joinville, Brusque, Bombinhas, Nova Trento and Florianópolis, due to the proximity to the national highway BR 101, the main axis of connection between cities in a 50 km area.

In relation to tourism, Balneário Camboriú is a solid destination for Sun and Beach, attracting national and foreign tourists, mainly from South America. It has a vast network of hotels, with approximately 120 establishments and 18 thousand beds, and is known for having its economy based on the services sector.

The goal of this research is to study the diversification strategy for touristic offer at Balneário Camboriú through the events that are held in the city as an alternative to minimize seasonality. The research's scope is bibliographical and statistical data provided by official tourism offices was used. Thus, the analysis was based on the information of the city's Secretaria de Turismo and the Brazilian Ministério do Turismo.

The article is structured as follows: the first session is the theoretical frame that approaches the concept of seasonality, followed by the session that approaches Balneário Camboriú as the object of study, highlighting how touristic activity in the city is structured,

its location within the touristic regionalization of the state of Santa Catarina and the touristic relationships between neighbor cities. The following session identifies the diversification of touristic segments as strategies that are adopted to minimize seasonality. Then, the article contains a specific analysis of the events calendar of Balneário Camboriú, used as a reference of touristic offer diversification, and finally, the research's conclusions are included.

1. THEORETICAL FRAME

Even though they are not detailed, the statistical data for tourism in Brazil accounts for a permanent increase of tourists. For data available on 2015, The Ministério do Turismo says that between 2010 and 2014 there was an increase of 20% in the number of tourists arriving at Brazil. The preferred destinations for tourists in Brazil are those of Sun and Beach, as in the twenty most searched destinations, twelve are coastal destinations (Salvador, Recife, Fortaleza, Rio de Janeiro, Búzios, Angra dos Reis, Macaé, Parati, Vitória, Florianópolis, Balneário Camboriú e Bombinhas). Among the tourists that travel to Brazil for leisure, 60,2% search for the Sun and Beach tourism and Balneário Camboriú occupies the fifth position between the most searched coastal destinations, only behind Rio de Janeiro, Salvador and Florianópolis that also have more touristic segments besides Sun and Beach.

One of the principal characteristics of the touristic market is the climatic seasonality of touristic offer during the year. That is why some destinations adopt diversification strategies of the Sun and Beach product, as it is the case of Balneário Camboriú, where it is going through a restructuration process to keep attractive, adapting to the new social and economical demands.

Touristic offer diversification is one of the solutions so as to minimize seasonality, as it promotes the affluence of people to the destination during most part of the year and develops complementary tourist products. Another solution is the identification of new market segments to attract tourists to the destination on low seasons, with the creation of events and the development of new touristic products to be promoted during the low season.

Actually, Balneário Camboriú is one of the principal touristic destinations in southern Brazil, and was picked by the Ministério do Turismo as one of the three destinations that induce tourism in the state of Santa Catarina. The Ministério's program of the 65 destinations that induce tourism has the purpose to define the parameters by which to evaluate the development degree and to prepare an action planning for these 65 Brazilian destinations.

The touristic demand data that was available via the municipal Secretaria de Turismo, proves that the high season period for Balneário Camboriú corresponds to the segment of Sun and Beach, as it establishes a total of 817.418 tourists for the months of January and February of 2012 (summer on the southern hemisphere), raising a total of approximately 2 billions of Euros. On the other hand, on the low season months, when the Sun and Beach segment does not attract many tourists due to climatic conditions, the number of tourists is around 200 thousand per month. Thus, in relation to the monthly flux of tourists, the data show that the months of December, January, February, the summer vacations months, are those with a greater concentration of tourists at Balneário Camboriú. Besides the mentioned months, July stands apart as it is a month of scholar vacations in Brazil, although it is a low season month (winter on the southern hemisphere).

The most advanced strategies at Balneário Camboriú to minimize seasonality, propose, besides the diversification of touristic segments, a broader relationship with other municipalities in the region so as to develop complementary activities to the offer of Sun and Beach.

Another segment on which Balneário Camboriú is working, is on the segment of Events Tourism. The objective is to offer events during the whole year and that way attracting tourists on different seasons, thus minimizing the city's touristic seasonality.

The events are distributed in such a way that the high season months do not concentrate many events. On 2015 there was an observed contrast, as in the months of January and February (high season there were no programmed events, and in July (low season) eight programmed events were held. The most important event in July was the "6° Festival Gastronômico de Balneário Camboriú" which aims to advertise the city's restaurants. The event lasts 15 days and its main appeal is the participation of restaurants that aim at different kinds of customers with an assorted gastronomy, with the option to an exclusive menu for the festival, at a fixed price.

In October, even though it is not a summer month, there is no tendency to promote events in the city, as it is the holiday month of the state of Santa Catarina, and Balneário Camboriú is chosen by many tourists as a lodging option when on their way to cities like Blumenau, Itajaí or Brusque, as they visit the main traditional festivals and events.

This way, the diversity of events mainly in the cities near to Balneário Camboriú, shows a complementarity arrangement for offer and not a repeated destination. One of the reasons that make possible this relation between neighboring cities, is the bigger offer of hotels that Balneário Camboriú has, compared to the other destinations.

When analyzing the events calendar provided by the Secretaria de Turismo de Balneário Camboriú, it is evident that there is a huge diversification of types of events that are held in the city, not only in relation to the different segments but also in relation to its dimensions or its timespan, for example: social events, related to health, sports, culture, food, among others. There are also events that last for more than a day, during a specific period of time. This kind of events makes possible for the tourist to stay in the city, increasing the hotel occupation on low season months, this way contributing to minimize seasonality.

The presence of great universities in the city and in the neighboring city of Itajaí is responsible for the constant scholar dynamic during the scholar year, and in a certain way, influences the balance between the demand during the scholar vacations, when these students go back to their native cities and Balneário Camboriú receives a new demand during the summer vacations season, concentrated on the months of December, January and February.

According to exposed, the occurrence of events promotes a greater period of stay of the tourist in the city, which generates an increase of revenues and consumption of many elements related to tourism: lodging options, restaurants and bars, commerce and services in general. Besides all this, a major period of time in the city increases the possibility to know and enjoy the city's touristic attractions.

Additionally, the broad touristic and complementary infrastructure offered by Balneário Camboriú (lodging options, bar and restaurant services, shopping, leisure and enter-

tainment) together with the configuration of a city where services are relatively nearby and concentrated, gives the city, besides its geographical centrality in the state of Santa Catarina and the southern region of Brazil, a strategic position to structure itself as a hub for touristic destinations with touristic segments based on attractions that are related to culture, folklore, nature, patrimony, history, business, among others.

This way, the conclusion is that the complementarity of activities of diverse touristic segments between neighboring cities and the distribution of events during the months of the year that are not high season, are the main strategies to diversify touristic offer at Balneário Camboriú and to contribute to minimize touristic seasonality.