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PERSPECTIVES OF URBAN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN YEREVAN

Urban tourism advancement is very important for the development of the city. Tourism is a driving force for economic development and an essential element of urban development policy, as it provides a competitive product to meet visitors' expectations, develops the city, provides better infrastructures and conditions to residents. For that purpose, the importance of urban tourism development and several touristic sites in Yerevan are presented; the main issues and ways of urban tourism development in Yerevan are analyzed in the given article.

Key words: *urban tourism, infrastructure, touristic site, hotel facility*

JEL: L8, L83, L88

Cities may be defined as large centers for human settlement. They are part of our history and culture. As societies change, cities try to adapt and meet the needs of residents and visitors. This goal is set on urban planning basis which is aimed at increasing human quality of life: well-being, environmental quality and cultural identity. Tourism is a significant element of urban development policy, as it provides a competitive product to meet tourists' expectations, develops the city, and provides better infrastructures and conditions to residents.

According to UNWTO, urban tourism refers to trips taken by travellers to cities or places of high population density. The duration of such trips is usually short (typically from one to three days), and, therefore, urban tourism is closely linked to the short-break market¹.

¹ Tourism 2020 Vision, Volume 7: Global Forecasts and Profiles of Market Segments, World Tourism Organization, 2001, p. 103.

Over the past decades tourism has expanded becoming one of the largest and fast growing economic sectors in the world. The number of international tourist arrivals increased from 25 million (1950) up to 1,186 million in 2015 (a 4.6% increase over the previous year). For 2050 the forecast is 1,874 million tourists in the world². The total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was USD 7,170.3bn (9.8% of GDP) in 2015 in the world, the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to employment was 9.5% of full employment including jobs (283,578,000) indirectly supported by the industry, Travel & Tourism investment in 2015 was USD 774.6bn, or 4.3% of total investment³.

According to the UN, the urban population of the world is expected to increase by more than two-thirds by 2050, with nearly 90% of the increase taking place in the urban areas of Africa and Asia. The world's urban population is now close to 3.9 billion and is expected to reach up to 6.3 billion in 2050⁴. Of course, this will have a considerable impact on urban tourism as a key factor not only in the city development but also in its economy.

Urban tourists are of substantial economic benefit to cities; they bring new changes to the urban landscape. Tourism connects people, creates relationships. The tourism industry has to implement innovative strategies to provide the city with a consistent image and, therefore, provide significant revenue and added value to its residents. Today, effectively managing a tourism destination with the central objective of improving its competitiveness and the quality of life of its citizens also means managing the complexity of the economic, social and environmental climate of the world in which we live⁵.

Hence, urban tourism contributes to urban development, that is why we will analyze tourism promotion perspectives in Yerevan.

Yerevan is the capital and the largest city of Armenia, also the economic, cultural and scientific center of the country. It is one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities. The history of Yerevan dates back to the 8th century BC, with the founding of the fortress of Erebuni in 782 BC by king Argishti I at the western extreme of the Ararat plain. Yerevan is located in a mountainous area on the Hrazdan River. There are many theatres, museums, parks, churches and monuments in Yerevan. Yerevan is a very nice city with old and modern buildings. Here follow some of the main places worth visiting in Yerevan:

- **Matenadaran - The Museum of Ancient Manuscripts.** The Matenadaran is one of the oldest and richest book-depositories in the world. Its collection of about 17000 manuscripts includes almost all the areas of ancient and medieval Armenian culture and sciences - history, geography, grammar, philosophy, law, medicine, mathematics-cosmography, theory of calendar, alchemy-chemistry, translations, literature, chronology, art history, miniature, music and theatre, as well as manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, Greek, Syrian, Latin, Ethiopian, Indian, Japanese and other languages. The Matenadaran, the Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, was founded in 1959 as a State depository of Manuscripts. The

² UNWTO Tourism Highlights, 2016 Edition, p. 3.

³ Travel & Tourism Economic Impact World, 2016, p.1. World Travel and Tourism Organization

⁴ World Urbanization Prospects, The 2014 Revision, Highlights, United Nations, New York, 2014, p. 11.

⁵ World Tourism Organization, 2012, Global Report on City Tourism - Cities 2012 Project, UNWTO, Madrid, pp. 6–14.

Matenadaran is named after Mesrop Mashtots, the creator of the Armenian Alphabet. 11000 completely preserved handwritten books and more than 2000 partially preserved manuscripts are the core of the Matenadaran's collection.

- ***Tsitsernakaberd Memorial.*** In 1965, on the occasion of commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, the monument to the victims of the Armenian Genocide was founded on the hill of Tsitsernakaberd, designed by the architects Tarkhanyan and Kalashian. The monument consists of two parts: one is a high pillar and the other is a circle of lower walls in the center of which there is an eternal fire. There are stairs between the slabs of the circle leading down to the fire. Every year, on the 24th of April, many Armenians and foreigners visit the Tsitsernakaberd memorial and bring flowers. An arrow-shaped stele of granite, 44 meters high, reaches the sky, symbolizing the survival and spiritual rebirth of the Armenian people. Partly split vertically by a deep crevice, this tower symbolizes the tragic and violent dispersion of the Armenian people, and at the same time, expresses the unity of the Armenian people.

- ***Armenian Genocide Museum.*** The Museum-Institute of the Armenian Genocide was established in April of 1995. Its mission is to collect, research, publish, preserve and exhibit documents, photos, publications related to the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the government in Turkey during 1915-1923. Documents, authentic photos and the Genocide victims' personal effects and encased relics, illustrating the details of the most horrid events of the 20th century and reflecting the attitude of the world public to the Armenian Genocide, are on permanent display.

- ***Erebuni Town-Fortress.*** Erebuni built on the hill Arin Berd is situated in the south-east of the City of Yerevan. It is the first largest Urartian military-strategic center, which occupied the territory of Aza land of Ararat valley. Before the first half of the 20th century the territory of Erebuni was still unknown. Only in 1950 during the exploration of Arin Berd monument, a constructing inscription of Argishti the First was found. After deciphering, it turned out to be the confirmation of the construction of Erebuni fortress.

- ***Erebuni Museum.*** Erebuni Museum of the History of the Foundation of Yerevan was established in 1968. The opening of the Museum was timed to coincide with the 2750th anniversary of Yerevan. The Museum stands on the Arin Berd hill, on top of which the Urartian Fortress Erebuni was constructed. The City-Fortress was excavated, some parts of the structure were reinforced and restored and the fortress was turned into an outdoor Museum.

- ***The Cascade.*** Tamanian Park /Cascade, north of the Opera, is an oasis in the middle of an urban atmosphere. A series of fountains center the park as it leads towards the equally beautiful Cascade monument.

- ***Republic Square with the dancing fountains.*** The Republic Square is really a traffic oval, centerpiece of Alexander Tamanian's 1920's master plan for Yerevan. The Republic Square is the center of the RA Government. Directly across the Square the State History Museum and National Art Gallery are situated.

- ***History Museum of Armenia.*** The State History Museum of Armenia was founded in 1919. The Museum collections became the main resource for

starting up a number of museums (Museum of History of Yerevan, Armenian Ethnographic Museum, etc.). The archaeological groups of the Museum West European conduct excavations on various sites and publish monographs and collections of research papers. Currently the Museum has about 400,000 exhibits, over 5,000 of which are on a permanent display.

- **National Art Gallery** was opened in 1921 and is one of the richest museums of the world. Its extensive collection of Armenian, European, Russian Art numbers over 19000 items.

- **Victory Park and Statue of Mother Armenia.** Victory Park is a large park located at the top of Cascade in Yerevan. It is named Victory Park in commemoration of Soviet Armenia's participation in the Second World War. The Mother Armenia statue symbolizes peace through strength. Its strategic location of being on a hill overlooking Yerevan makes it look as if she is the guardian of the Armenian capital. Every year on the 9th of May, thousands of people walk past the statue of Mother Armenia to commemorate Armenian victims of the war⁶.

- *Vernissage Market (the best place to buy souvenirs),*
- *Yerevan Brandy Company,*
- *Armenian National Opera and Theater,*
- *Lovers' Park,*
- *Northern Avenue Pedestrian Street (the modern part of the city with modern buildings, cafes, shops),*
- *Freedom Square and Swan Lake,*
- *Yerevan Zoo,*
- *Cafesjian Center for the Arts,*
- *Yerevan Botanical Garden, etc.*

There are also many churches in Armenia which will attract religious tourists, such as: Saint Gregory The Illuminator Cathedral, St. Sarkis Vicarial Church, Holy Mother of God Zoravor Church, Church of the Holy Trinity of Yerevan, Katoghike Holy Mother of God Church, St. Hovhannes the Baptist church, Church of Holy Martyrs, Holy Mother of God Church, etc.

The number of hotel facilities was 170 in Yerevan in 2016 with 4194 rooms and 7342 accommodation capacity⁷. The touristic season in Yerevan is from May till October. During this time hotels are overloaded. Because of high demand, the number of hotels has increased in the recent years. There are also internationally known hotels such as: Armenia Marriott Hotel, Best Western Congress Hotel, Royal Tulip Grand Hotel Yerevan, Hyatt Place Yerevan, Double Tree by Hilton, etc.

The total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP in Armenia was USD 1,380.5 mn (13.7% of GDP) in 2015, the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to employment was 12.2% of full employment including jobs (147.1) indirectly supported by the industry. Visitor exports generated USD 913.9 mn (29.6% of total exports)⁸.

Yerevan's population is 1074.6 thousand people (October, 2016), which is about 36% of the total population of the country (2993.9 thousand people)⁹.

⁶ Armenian Travel Bureau, URL: <http://www.atb.am/en/armenia/sights/>

⁷ The data has been provided by the Division of Tourism of the Department of Tourism and Culture of the Yerevan Municipality.

Yerevan owns 41.2% of the total industry value and 76.4% of retail trade turnover¹⁰.

In 2015 the volume of services was 1,144,605.3 mn AMD in Armenia, and in Yerevan the volume of services was 931,302.9 mn AMD (81.4% of the total)¹¹. 20 mn AMD from the budget of Yerevan was provided for tourism development in Yerevan in 2016 (the total expenses are 78,4 bln AMD)¹².

In 2015 1,192,120 tourists visited Armenia¹³. From January till September, 2016 969,010 tourists visited Armenia (3.6% growth compared to the same period of last year), yet only 136816 of them stayed in hotel facilities¹⁴. The touristic packages include also Yerevan, and tourists stay here for about 2-3 days, that is why it is generated that the total number of tourists of Yerevan is the same as for Armenia. In the recent years, numerous programs have been carried out and planned to be continued in the coming years for tourism advancement in Yerevan, such as Yerevan City tour, Yerevan Summer, Yerevan Brand developing project, Yerevan Master Plan as a vision for 3-5 years' tourism development in the capital, publication of Yerevan touristic maps and guidebooks, etc.

However, there are certain problems for urban tourism development in Yerevan. Yerevan is not presented abroad in its best way as an attractive tourism destination with old history, culture, hospitable people and cuisine. There is a lack of medium class hotel facilities; the prices of hotels are high during touristic high season; the level of services is not high; tourism infrastructures are not fully developed; there are no tourism information centres in the city, etc. Here are some steps to advance urban tourism in Yerevan:

- to increase the effectiveness of marketing performance in order to raise the attractiveness of the city abroad as a specific tourism destination, thus attracting a huge number of tourists,
- to develop a complex tourism product for Yerevan including historical-cultural, religious, cuisine, rest and leisure, sightseeing, business activities,
- to develop the main infrastructures according to the international standards,
- to open tourism information centres in the city,
- to improve the price and quality indicators of tourism services,
- to enable investment policy in the sphere for promoting investments,
- to increase the conservation of the environment and natural resources,
- to organize staff training programs of tourism sphere according to the international practice, etc.

Moreover hotels and other infrastructures will benchmark and invest the best international practice of tourism development, and implement innovations

⁸ Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2016 ARMENIA, p. 1, World Travel and Tourism Council

⁹ Number of De Jure Population of the Republic of Armenia as of October 1, 2016, p. 3, NSS of the RA

¹⁰ Statistical Yearbook of Armenia, 2016, pp. 274; 353, NSS of the RA

¹¹ Statistical Yearbook of Armenia, 2016, pp. 361; 370, NSS of the RA

¹² Budget of Yerevan in 2016, p. 8, Yerevan Municipality

¹³ Socio-Economic Situation of the RA, 2016, p. 1, NSS of the RA

¹⁴ Socio-Economic Situation of the RA, 2016, January-October, p. 118, NSS of the RA

(organizational, such as improving financial, economic, human resources, motivation policies, marketing and production innovations, for example new services). Hotels should use electronic systems widely (online booking, Wi-Fi, also e-marketing tools); organize excursions for tourists, cultural programs, etc.

Thus, urban tourism promotion is very important for the city development. Marketers should observe the recent trends of tourism and tourist needs, in order to understand tourists' decision making motives and to develop up-to-date tourist product for attracting huge number of tourists and meeting their needs in the best way. Yerevan's touristic potential should be fully used. Tourism is a driving force for economic development and with the multiplier effect it will contribute to all aspects of urban development. For this purpose, innovative strategies must be implemented to provide the city with new and more specialized products that have high added value. Unquestionably, Yerevan should move towards the concept of "Smart Cities", when urban destinations carry out strategies and actions for sustainable and innovative technological developments in the fields of innovation economy, urban infrastructure and governance.

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ԳԱՅԱՆՆ ԹՈՎՄԱՍՅԱՆ

ՀՊՏՀ «Ամբերդ» հետազոտական կենտրոնի հետազոտող,
տնտեսագիտության թեկնածու

Երևան քաղաքի զբոսաշրջության զարգացման հեռանկարները. – Քաղաքային զբոսաշրջության զարգացումը խիստ կարևոր է քաղաքի առաջընթացի համար: Զբոսաշրջությունը տնտեսական աճի շարժիչ ուժ է և կենսական տարր քաղաքի զարգացման քաղաքականության տեսանկյունից, քանի որ ապահովում է մրցունակ արտադրանք՝ այցելուների սպասելիքները բավարարելու նպատակով, զարգացնում է քաղաքը, ապահովում ավելի լավ ենթակառուցվածքներ և պայմաններ բնակիչների համար: Այդ նպատակով հողվածում ներկայացվել են քաղաքային զբոսաշրջության զարգացման անհրաժեշտությունը, Երևանի զբոսաշրջային որոշ վայրեր, վերլուծվել են քաղաքային զբոսաշրջության զարգացման հիմնական խնդիրները և ուղիները:

Հիմնաբառեր. քաղաքային զբոսաշրջություն, ենթակառուցվածք, զբոսաշրջային վայր, հյուրանոցային տնտեսության օբյեկտ:

JEL: L8, L83, L88

ГАЯНЕ ТОВМАСЯН

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Перспективы развития городского туризма в Ереване. – Продвижение городского туризма очень важно для развития города. Туризм является движущей силой экономического развития и важным элементом политики в области развития городов, так как она обеспечивает конкурентоспособную продукцию, чтобы соответствовать ожиданиям посетителей, развивает город, обеспечивает лучшую инфраструктуру и условия для жителей. С этой целью важность развития городского туризма, некоторые туристические места в Ереване представлены в статье, проанализированы основные проблемы и пути развития городского туризма в Ереване.

Ключевые слова: городской туризм, инфраструктура, туристические места, объект гостиничного хозяйства.

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