
Recent dynamics of the cruise supply in the Mediterranean region

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Abstract

Cruise tourism is a tourism sector characterized by great dynamics and great resilience, in comparison to majority of other worldwide tourism sectors. Since both the tourism product – a cruise itinerary, or the destination – a vessel are mobile, cruise tourism is able to avoid regions which could be threatening the business in any way.

Probably one of the reasons why cruise tourism research is still limited in scope is inaccessibility or hard accessibility of cruise data due to business, trade, market or know-how secrets of the companies providing cruise experience and competing globally for potential passengers. The veil of secrecy is thickest in the field of supply data. In order to research the dynamics of cruise tourism supply in Mediterranean cruise region, the catalogue offer of the two largest cruise companies - Costa Cruises and MSC Cruises, operating in the Mediterranean basin has been analyzed for two different full year period: 2011-2012 and 2015-2016.

The purpose of this paper is to present the results of research focused on recent changes in the itineraries and sailing routes of the cruise vessels deployed in the Mediterranean region.

Generally, the analysis shows that Mediterranean cruise region experienced a decrease during the researched period – not only in the share of total cruise passengers embarked in European ports, but also in the total number of passengers. Companies reduced number of deployed vessels in Mediterranean region and number of main ports of call, while patterns of the cruising itineraries has also change within this 5 year period.

The reasons for the general decrease of cruise supply in the Mediterranean should not be searched in the saturation of the demand market. UNWTO (2012) argues that cruise tourism in Europe is only in the transitional point from introductory to growth stage of the product's life cycle curve. Therefore, saturation is a far away point for the Mediterranean cruise demand market. However, supply of cruise industry worldwide is limited by the number of beds available and thus, they should be deployed where demand could easily fill them. Asia became a promising region, while the Mediterranean cruise region experienced serious threat connected with political destabilization of Eastern and Southern Mediterranean countries, war in Syria, refugee crises and fear of terrorism attacks.

Keywords: cruise tourism, itineraries, sailing routes, Costa Cruises, MSC Cruises

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