

## LOGISTICS IN THE RIVER CRUISE PRODUCTS

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**Abstract:** *The topic of this paper concerns the analysis of logistics in river cruise products. There are a lot of possibilities to exploit rivers to complete the whole tourist experience and that is the reason for writing this paper. This paper analyzes the main characteristics of river cruises, importance of river cruising and logistics of main river cruise products – accommodation, dining, bars, entertainment, shore excursions, shops, photography, casinos and other segments like different celebrations (weddings, renewal of vows...).*

**Keywords:** *river cruising, cruise products, cruising flow, river tourism, logistics in river cruise*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourists today have shorter stays at destinations and they look for a new kind of tourist product and experience. The main reason for analyzing this topic is that there are a lot of possibilities and opportunities in this kind of tourist aspect, but it is insufficiently exploited.

Regarding all these various possibilities, there are a lot of different products in river cruising, and their logistics is interesting and very comprehensive. The number of products depends mostly on the size and luxury of the cruise ship and company. Larger cruise ships mostly feature multiple casinos, spas, swimming pools, adventure parks and lots of activities, while smaller cruise ships are typically more luxurious and offer a different kind of cruise experience.

According to the abovementioned, river cruise products are very important, the most common being: accommodation, dining, bars, entertainment, shore excursions, shops, photography, casinos and other segments like different celebrations (weddings, renewal of vows...). Their logistics is a part of this paper. They do not necessarily have to be all included in the river cruise package, but some of them always are. Some of them bring extra revenue to the cruise company, while others are there just to raise the river cruise experience to a higher level.

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## 2. MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF RIVER CRUISE

The cruise is quite a new tourist branch and has the possibilities for a quick growth in the classic global tourist services. Multiple-day river cruises have been flourishing at the beginning of this century as a response to the swift rise of sea cruises. The main features are accommodation on board, a variety of restaurants, bars and commercial services, entertainment, leisure, recreation, sightseeing different towns and exploring their culture. Some of the characteristics are:

- there are two types of infrastructure demands for the river cruise industry – tourist and operational demands. Tourist demands are: pier / quay close to the city center and easy accessibility for buses and taxis, while operational demands are: waste reception facilities, sewage handling facilities, shore-side power supply, accessibility, fresh water and bunker supply ([www.ccr-zkr.org/files/documents/workshops/wrshp081013/6\\_HGrammerstorf\\_en.pdf](http://www.ccr-zkr.org/files/documents/workshops/wrshp081013/6_HGrammerstorf_en.pdf) 4.3.2017);
- the average river cruise ship built in 1996 had a width of only 11m, draft around 1.5m and length around 110m (capacity of 140 passengers), while today ships are 135m long, 17m wide and have a capacity of 220 passenger (Vojvodić, 2006);
- the importance of river cruises can be found in 12,000 direct jobs onboard, 10,000 jobs involved outside vessels, € 1.1 bn. new building investment within two years, € 1.3 bn. passenger expenditure and € 0.5 bn. shore side expenditure in Europe according to the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine ([www.ccr-zkr.org/files/documents/workshops/wrshp081013/6\\_HGrammerstorf\\_en.pdf](http://www.ccr-zkr.org/files/documents/workshops/wrshp081013/6_HGrammerstorf_en.pdf) 4.3.2017);
- the biggest river cruise region is Europe, whereas the country with the most developed river transport is Germany (rivers Rhine, Main, Danube). According to the German Travel Agents Council, the average tourist on a river cruise ship is 57 years old and is inclined towards themed cruises, highlighting topics such as golf, music, art, cooking and wellness. Citizens of Germany, France and Great Britain show the greatest demand for river cruising in Europe (Seatrade Cruise Review 2004);
- the average price for river cruises in Germany in 2007 was € 1,180, while in 2015 it was € 1,027, so there is a trend in the price-drop of river cruises ([www.statista.com/statistics/537438/average-river-cruise-price-germany](http://www.statista.com/statistics/537438/average-river-cruise-price-germany) 7.3.2017);
- operators in Europe have different routes and offers, so tourists can choose between one-day short river cruise or just dinner cruise, and a one week cruise in down, middle or upper part of the Danube River. The lower part of the Danube River usually starts in Budapest (Hungary) including Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria and ending at the Black Sea in Rumania;
- the average number of days spent on river cruises in Germany was 7.2 days in 2015, whereas in 2007 it was 7.76 which means that there is a trend in shortening the duration of river cruising by 0.7% yearly ([www.statista.com/statistics/537464/average-river-cruise-duration-germany](http://www.statista.com/statistics/537464/average-river-cruise-duration-germany) 7.3.2017).

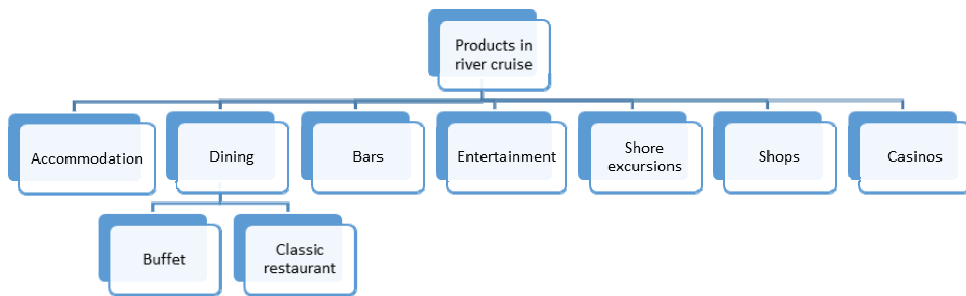
These characteristics reveal that river cruising is growing, and their logistics is starting to be quite challenging. Therefore, the following topic brings some examples of river cruise logistics.

### 3. LOGISTICS IN THE RIVER CRUISE PRODUCTS

In every tourism branch there are several products, therefore river cruise products are no exception. These products have three economic features: heterogeneity (mix of different products), inelasticity (these products cannot be stored if they are not sold) and complementarity (several different products taken together make a complete cruise experience).

(<http://v5.books.elsevier.com/bookscat/samples/9780750666374/9780750666374.PDF>  
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Figure 1 shows products of the river cruise, followed by an explanation of the logistics of these products.



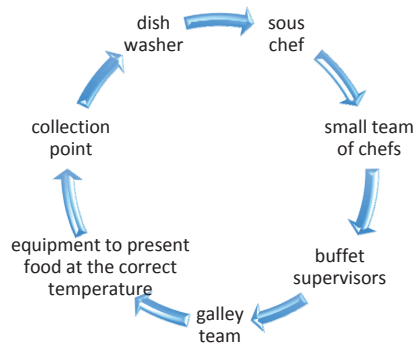
**Figure 5 River cruise products**

Some cruise companies refer to accommodation as cabins, but terms such as staterooms, mini suites and suites are frequently used to replace this nautical term. Some of the largest, most luxurious and most expensive options are probably penthouse suites (Mancini, 2000). The cabin size normative is between 18 to 23 square meters, but there are also some cabins (penthouse suites) with over 85 square meters. All cabins on a modern cruise ship have a shower, room and toilet – ensuite (Dervaes, 2003). Everything needs to be inside limited dimensions, so storage areas are designed to maximize the use of space, and areas that can generate revenue are the biggest ones. Brochures and cruise brand websites can help customers to select the best room for their needs. The most common way of identifying cabin locations is by using deck plans. Cabins that are on the lower decks are less expensive, while cabins that are on the higher decks are more expensive.

Basic cabin facilities include the following: two single beds (king-size bed) with possibility of an extra two upper beds, bedside tables, writing desk, storage areas, mirrors, chair, TV and radio, safe, hairdryer, minibar, direct-dial phone and air conditioning. Mirrors are used strategically to enhance space and light. Making beds, changing linen and towels, checking the room minibar, cleaning and vacuuming are the daily tasks of the steward. Housekeeping supervisors and managers inspect cabins to ensure that standards are maintained. Some suites and penthouse suites are allocated a butler to provide more personal service. (Gibson, 2006)

Dining on board is the next product, as the cruise ship is a place to enjoy good food, wine and company. Costs of eating on board are mostly included in the price of the cruise. There are several styles of cuisine (Italian, Mexican, Chinese...). Most large cruise ships operate at least two large 500 seats restaurants that are located on either side of a galley with a double-ended servery or hotplate. This arrangement facilitates the service of large number of people at dinner without creating lines at the door. Also, a major part in avoiding line is linking dinner service with entertainment schedules. Coordinating breakfast or lunch is usually a smaller problem

because passengers have alternatives such as buffet or room service, and port visits are mainly during the day.



**Figure 6 Logistics cycle of buffet**

Figure 2 shows the logistics cycle of buffet. The buffet requires fewer staff than the traditional restaurant. A small team of chefs under the supervision of a sous chef services the buffet. The galley team is supported by buffet assistants and supervisors who help customers, clear tables, and serve drinks. The buffet employs equipment that is designed to present food at the correct temperature. Menus are changed daily according to the duration of the cruise itinerary. Tables are cleared to a collection point, from where dirty plates are taken by a trolley to the dish washer. (Gibson, 2006)

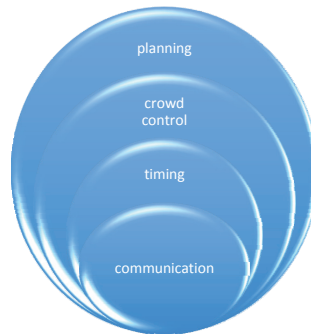
The main restaurants tend to reflect a style and standard of more formal dining. The menu is configured to meet the demands of passengers from different countries. Service ranges, depending on the brand and passenger expectation, from fully silver service on luxury ships to plated or buffet service combination on budget ships. Table sizes vary, from those for two to eight people.

The next products are bars. They start to get busy after dinner, but there are a lot of opportunities for passengers to purchase drinks at other times: sailing day (departure celebration), pre-ordering dinner, theater, nightclubs, during the day (pool bars), lounges....



**Figure 7 Logistics team of entertainment products**

Figure 3 shows the logistics teams of entertainment products. Entertainment is the product that does not create additional revenue, but it adds to the entire cruise experience. The theaters are the largest gathering areas (musicals, comedy clubs, cabaret, magic shows...), but they can also be used for emergency and as a meeting point. Every entertainment activity on the river cruise ship is published in the ship's newspaper, so all passengers are informed about them. These activities can differ, ranging from scuba diving, dance groups, culinary demonstrations to wine tasting, wellness and spas. Musicians are employed to provide support for theatrical productions, show bars, bar areas and deck parties. A technical team provides cinema support, IT support for computers, stage support for lightning, sound and similar. The leisure staff provider support for sporting activities such as golf, water sports or even tennis. (Gibson, 2006)



**Figure 8 Logistics function in shore excursions**

Figure 4 shows the logistics of the next product. The logistics of shore excursions is done before and during the river cruise. Shore excursions can include visits to different cities inland, or even Christmas markets during the Christmas time. They are convenient for passengers (between 50 and 80 percent buy an excursion in each port) and provide solid revenue. Shore excursions often use third-party tour operators to provide tours that best suit destination offers. Mostly, if passengers are disappointed with this product, they blame the port not the cruise ship. In some destinations, as little as 10 percent of the amount collected for a shore excursion is paid to the person that actually provides the tour. This leaves the shore excursion provider in an uncomfortable position of being paid \$10 for a product that passengers expect to be worth \$99 (Klein, 2008). The range of transport options depends on the port of call, and can include traveling by bus, train, bicycle, or taking a helicopter trip. The logistics of tours for passengers is like military logistics, involving planning, crowd control, careful timing and efficient communication.

Another part of river cruise products are shops. They are mostly duty free and can range from jewelers, gift shops and fashion stores to classic markets. They are located in the central area within the ship, resembling the shopping mall in bigger cities inland.

Photographers are also part of the cruise products. They give passengers the possibility to buy professional pictures in special presentation packs as best gift and memory reminders. Cruise companies have invested a lot of money in digital technology to process all these photos. Pictures are presented in corridor display areas so as to be easily viewed by passengers who may be on their way from a restaurant to a show bar. It is hard not to stop and look at the pictures. Sale can be confirmed with the application of carefully considered sales techniques. Some photographers are employed directly by cruise brands, others are contracted by concessionary operators. (Gibson, 2006)

Casinos on the river cruisers give the most revenue. They offer passengers the possibility to have a “James Bond moment”. Games are played with cashless chips. Passengers receive a card that allows them to purchase goods on-board and credit that to their account. Casinos are generally operated by strict codes, and players must be over 18. Most casinos have a dress code and are operated with minimum and maximum bets.

Other things worth mentioning are weddings, renewal of vows and other special celebrations. While on board, passengers can celebrate special occasions, because where the law allows, the ship’s captain can perform a marriage ceremony. Other passengers can purchase a package to renew their vows and the package can be customized to include spa treatments, champagne, and a formal ceremony. Birthdays, anniversaries, honeymoons, New Year’s Eve and other special celebrations can all be catered to as part of a package.

The logistics of these products is very important, as they directly influence the categorization of the river cruise ship. According to the Berlitz Guide category, which takes 5 factors into account: ship, accommodation, dining, services and program, there are categories from three to five plus stars. Also, there are three "life style" categories: standard, premium and luxury, and according to them the cruise company can set a price for the river cruise. (Worldwide Cruise Ship Activity, 2003)

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, river cruising has a great potential, but it requires great efforts of all entities involved. If it is properly operated, the river cruise industry can boost tourism of every country. River cruise products are becoming more diverse, and operators are seeking new ways to satisfy passengers' needs and expectations. Today, the logistics of those products is more important than ever before. If everything is not perfect, the passenger will probably be unsatisfied and disappointed. The result of an unsatisfied passenger will probably be a bad review on the internet, and according to that, a drop in the sale of the river cruise packages and products.

Without high technology and simulations there is no relevant logistics progress. The most important and crucial link in the logistics chain of river cruise products is man, as it is a service business. Man can surely make a big difference between two similar competing companies with similar cruise ships, and in the end even provide survival on the market.

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