

INTERNATIONAL ECOTOURISM TRENDS AND ITS IMPACT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

The development of ecotourism focuses mainly on four directions: economic by increasing the degree of capitalization of resources, ecological by ensuring the rational use of all resources, reducing and eliminating waste, their recycling, ensuring the preservation and protection of environment, reducing the process of removal of agricultural and forestry land from agricultural and forestry circuit, socially by increasing the number of jobs, maintaining traditional crafts, attracting the population into practicing different forms of tourism, cultural by capitalizing on the special elements of civilization, art and culture, expressing a certain cultural identity and developing the spirit of tolerance.

Key words: trends, ecotourism, ecological food, Romania

OMT's (Tourism Towards 2030) long-term foresights, the number of international tourists arriving worldwide is expected to increase by 3,3% per year in the 2010-2030 period. It is foreseen that by year 2020, the international arrivals of tourists are expected to reach 1,4 billion, and by 2030 to 1,8 billion people. Tourism is not only an increase in the number of tourists, it has shown to turn into a diverse and complex activity.

Estimates from the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) show that ecotourism could increase over the next six years to around 25% of the global travel market and the incomes could reach \$ 470 billion a year. Ecotourism attracts those tourists who want to interact with the natural environment and want to widen their level of knowledge, understanding and appreciation. One of the tendencies that fuel the growth of this form of tourism is the travelers' preference to choose educational holidays that would enrich their existence (Wood, Eagles, P., 1997).

One of the most important trends influencing the demand for ecotourism, especially for soft (light) activities, is the aging phenomenon of the population in developed countries, especially in those countries where the demand for the international ecotourism market is centered: North America, North Europe and less Japan (Megan Epler Wood, 2002).

At the opposite end, the market of youth tourism (Millennials generation, also known as the Y12 Generation) is also an important source of ecotourism, especially for the outdoor activities,

offering good potential for the future development of this form of tourism.

The tendency to depersonalize the workplace and the ultra-technological life-environment contributes to an increasing demand for ecotourism holidays. This tendency is determined by the desire of people to overcome their limits, to maintain their physical condition, the need to spend quality time with their friends or in the family (Gruescu R.C., 2005).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Scaling the measurement and the measurement procedures to be used by counting the number of responses and relative to the raw data that they have. In order processing we apply a number of five scales that help us to identify what matters most to a consumer of travel services, and other elements that can influence the consumption of tourist services, such as income, age, sex, occupation, etc.

Step I - Preparation of survey.

Information needed for research will be useful both for tourism service providers as well as for tourists.

Step II - Sampling.

Sampling and sample size determination will be made only in Romania and will be carried out in different parts of it including both rural and urban. How questionnaires will be conducted online using social media. Is built using simple random sampling method, each unit of accommodation facilities, with the possibility of being included in the sample. There are no restrictions in advance.

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The method allows a sample tends to be studied distribution characteristics similar to that existing in the community. All data analysis will be collected and analyzed so that it can be easily interpreted. Represent numbers in a chart form is much easier to understand for anyone who needs this information.

Stage III-Data collection.

Personnel will handle data reception will take care to ensure their good group. Using programs like Excel can group information to process in order to be as easy to interpret necessary information.

Thus, some diagrams can be processed. Such as question wording associated one diagram can be easily set any manager who may exploit this information to increase sales. Do not forget the focus group with moderator who obtain quantitative data can be collected themselves useful research information.

First scale model was presented more explicit, as is similar to other types of scales, but respecting their rules and answer questions related variants. a) scale consumer reviews (semantic differential) applied questions about the quality and price of services. b) by Likert Scale c) the method of paired comparisons d) is scaled by a constant amount, rank ordering method.

Stage IV- Conclusions.

Based on data from their respective conclusions can be drawn generally encrypted information is later to be sold to those who need them. At first glance it seems hard to make research more difficult it is to interpret your data and choose the most effective means to cause increased consumption of tourist services in Romania. Since it is a market where the potential exists, but has exploited every advantage of these travel to be sold as well as in other EU countries existing or developed in the modern world.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

All these trends indicate not only an increase in demand for ecotourism, but also a transformation of it from a market niche into a major segment. A positive evolution is also in the tourism in protected areas, with an increase in the interest in this type of travel. (figure 1,2) It is estimated that at a worldwide level, the protected natural areas receive 8 billion visitors annually, of which 80% are registered in protected areas in Europe and North America. (Cristureanu C., 2006).

Quantitative developments will be accompanied by a suite of qualitative changes, the most important ones being: increasing the demand for tourism in the protected natural areas, diversifying the offer and improving services, through the fact that, nowadays, the protected natural areas offer numerous opportunities for spending holidays, the active participation

represents one of the significant trends of tourism in protected areas, the promotion of ecotourism as the main tourism activity developed in the areas (Bucur-Sabo M., 2006).

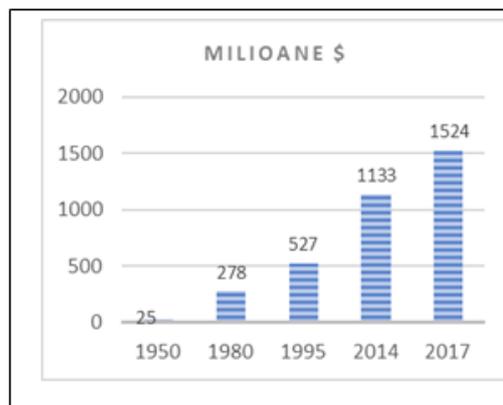


Figure 1 Dynamics of the number of tourists worldwide between 1950-2017

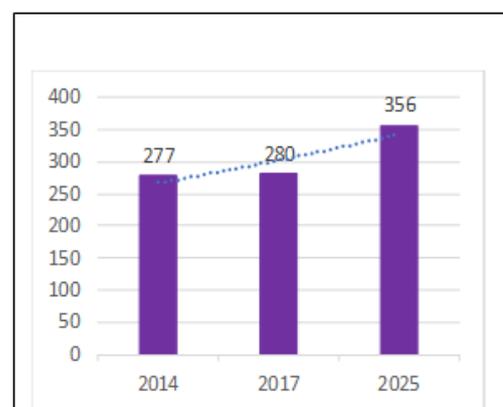


Figure 2 Dynamics of international tourism employees between 2014-2025

The impact of ecotourism on the environment

In the world, this style of travel is considered harmless, having many followers. In terms of daily life, the quality of the environment, the lack of pollution, the cleanliness and the attitude of the local population will be more important for potential tourists than the variety of entertainment and shopping opportunities.

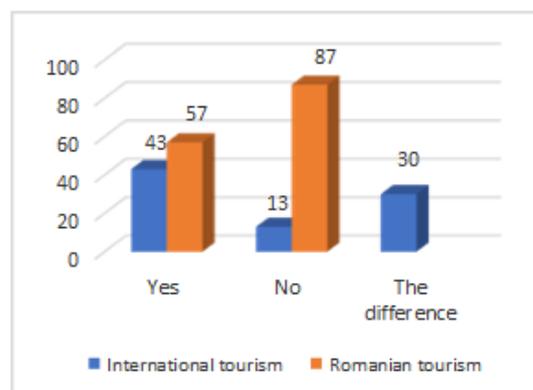


Figure 3 Dynamics of respondents who felt their ecological footprint holiday in the period 2014-2017

By developing these new forms of tourism, tourists' preferences have also changed a lot.

Thus, various market studies have shown a strong interest among tourists - consumers in terms of tourism products and services that protect the environment, respect local culture and traditions.

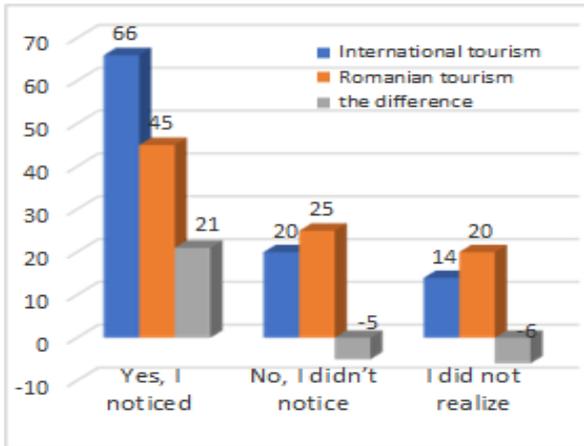


Figure 4 Dynamics of respondents who prefer products and services that have implemented by the Corporate Social Responsibility CSR Programs

A total of 156 Romanian and foreign tourists were interviewed in a sociological survey.

- about 43% of foreign tourists that responded the survey stated that they would have taken into account the ecological footprint during their holidays in the period 2014-2017, while 13% of Romanian tourists felt this (figure 3).

The sample interviewed said how they preferred the products and services that implemented the corporate social responsibility program.

- 66% of consumers around the world mentioned that they prefer the products and services of companies that have implemented corporate social responsibility programs, 46% being willing to pay extra for them (figure 4);

- 46% said they are prepared to pay more for a holiday to a company that has an impressive track record in terms of environmental and social responsibility activities; this percentage experienced an upward trend (figure 5).

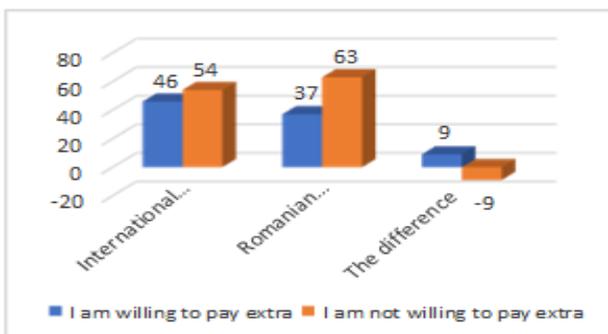


Figure 5 The weight of tourists willing to pay extra

- 24% of respondents to foreign tourism research said that interest in "green" trips is at the highest level in the last 10 years (figure 6). While for Romanian tourists 20% are interested in green travel.

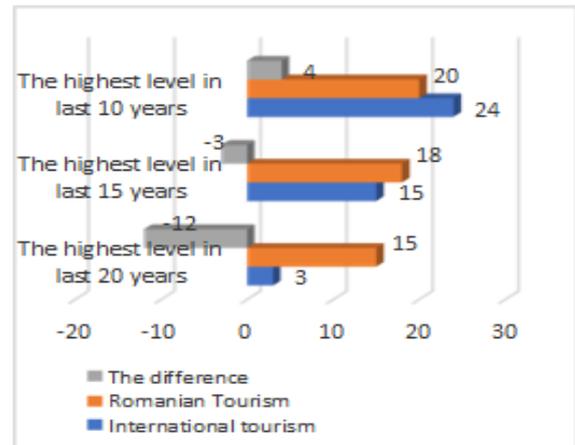


Figure 6 Interest in travel „green“

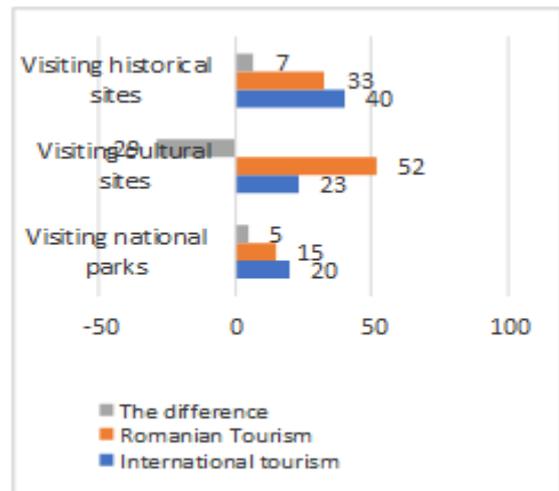


Figure 7 Receptivity of tourists to the favorite vacation experiences

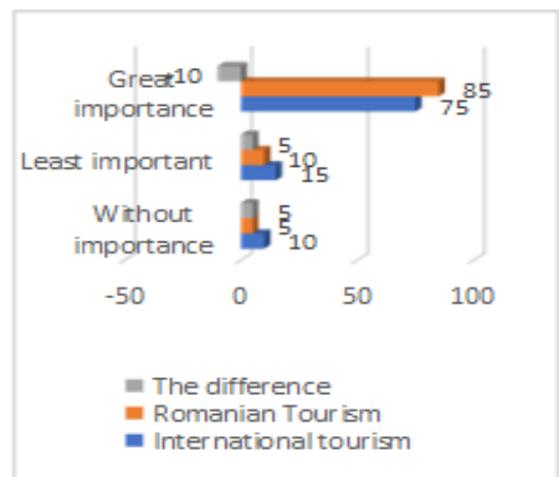


Figure 8 Environmental influences on tourists in choosing tourism services and their opinion about introducing a voluntary component holiday offers

On the other hand, the sustainability has been increasingly integrated into the tourism industry, with an increasing number of operators in this field adhering to various voluntary environmental certification systems (***)The Ecotourism Society, Ecotourism Guidelines for Nature Tour Operators, 1993).

As a result of researches carried out in the analyzed field, the following aspects were identified:

- over 50% of foreign hotels mentioned the fact that they have implemented “green” practices within the accommodation establishments. Three-quarters of them have taken action to reduce the negative impact and optimize the positive impact of their work on the environment (figure 7).

- two-thirds of a sample of multinational corporations in Europe and the USA have identified as the top priority “integrating sustainability into their corporate strategy. Progressively, several measurement tools and criteria have been developed to certify “green” destinations through initiatives (figure, 8, 9).

The characteristics of the Romanian rural tourism formulated by the World Tourism Organization regarding the location in the rural areas, the construction of the tourism product in a functional way, the preservation of the rural infrastructure, the preservation of the native rural life, the diversity of the presentation forms depending on the rural and economic environments, history and geographical location, while preserving its specific cultural Romanian identity (Bucur-Sabo M., 2006).

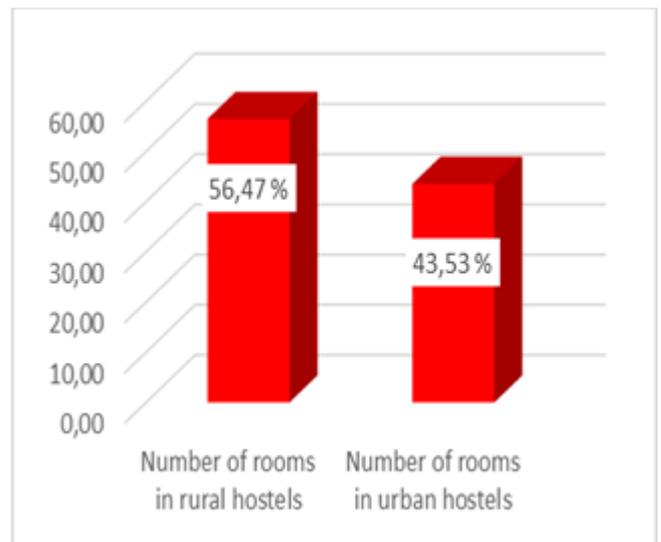


Figure 9 Percentage of rooms in rural vs urban boarding

From the analysis of the number of accommodation rooms we can see that Regions North West, West and Central Region are the first places (figure 9).

Although the number of rural pensions is higher than the number of urban guesthouses, Romania’s practice is at an early stage in ecotourism. The Gaussian distribution in the eight regions of Romania indicates the following: the largest share of accommodation locations is concentrated in the Central Region, the North West Region and the West Region. These Regions allow the initiation and development of ecotourism activities in Romania (figure 10, 11).

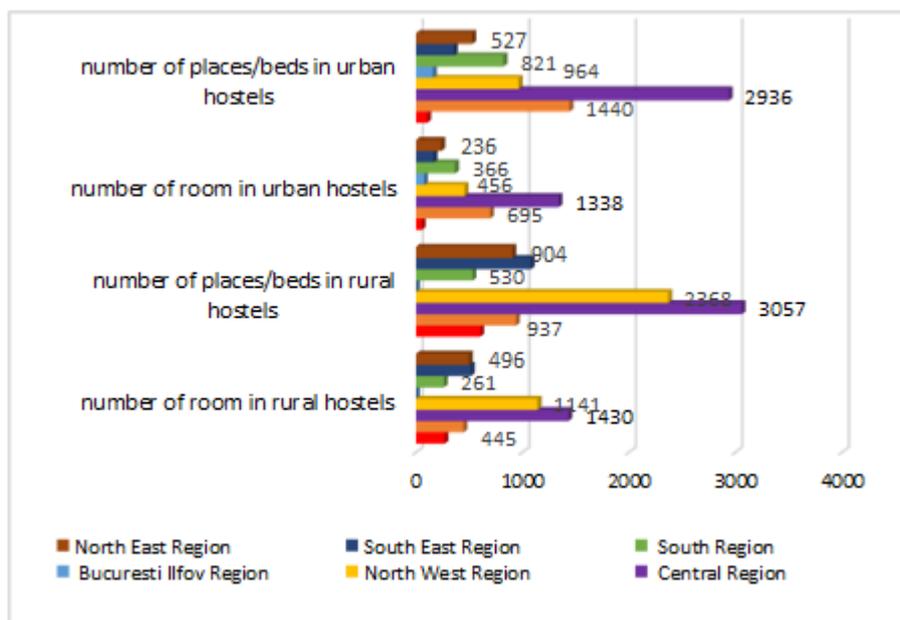


Figure 10 Dynamics of the rooms vs beds from counties

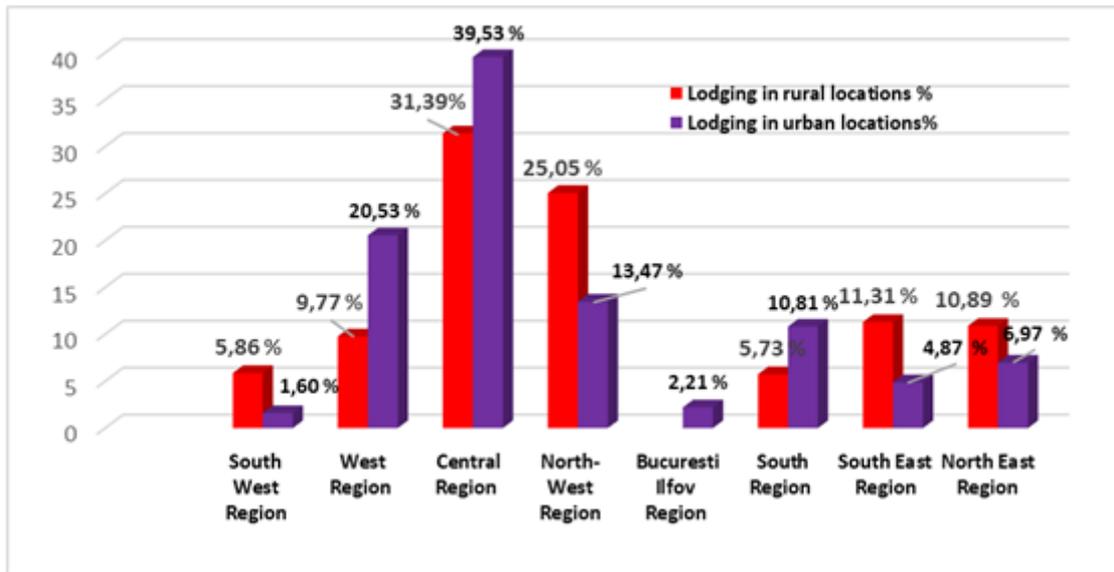


Figure 11 Distribution locations Regions accommodation in Romania

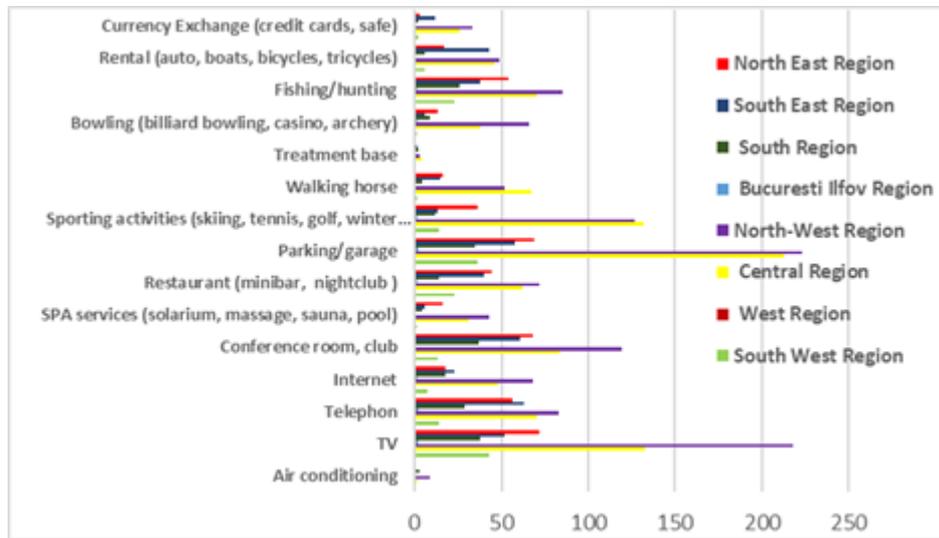


Figure 12 Development of ecotourism services in Romania

Analyzing the offer of tourist services in Romania, we find that the highest density of services offered to tourists is concentrated in the North West Region, the Central Region and the North East Region. Tourist services for relaxation, sports, entertainment, adventure parks, horseback rides, hiking and medieval, cultural and speleological clubs offer recreational comfort through the holiday destinations, representing a nonconformist tendency very popular with tourists in Romania (figure 12).

CONCLUSIONS

1. It is expected to reach a total of 1,4 billion international arrivals of tourists by 2020 and 1,8 billion persons by 2030. That is why tourism represents both an increase in the number of tourists and a transformation into a diverse and complex activity.

2. If 43% of the foreign tourists said they would have taken into account the ecological mark during their holidays in the period 2014-2017, only 13% of the Romanian tourists felt the same.

3. Thus, various measuring instruments and criteria have been developed to certify the “green” destinations through initiatives of the World Tourism Organization, the European Union, Ethical Traveler, Earth Check, Green Globe or Sustainable Travel International.

4. The tourist offer in Romania presents a high density of tourist services, these being concentrated in the North West Region, the Central Region and the North East Region. Relaxation, sports, entertaining, adventure parks, horseback riding, hiking, medieval, cultural and speleological hiking and recreation provide recreational comfort through holiday destinations, representing a nonconformist trend highly appreciated by Romanian and foreign tourists.

5. The quality of the environment and lack of pollution, the attitude of the local population will be much more important for potential tourists than the variety of entertainment and shopping opportunities. By developing these new forms of tourism, tourists' preferences have also changed a lot.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research study was conducted using statistical and sociological survey applied to a sample of Romanian and foreign tourists.

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