

## The Importance of Tourism Quality Management in the Integrated Development of Constanta Municipality

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### Abstract

*Quality management plays an important role in the tourism activity as a comprehensive approach that continues to be an inseparable part of the success and evolution of tourism and the development of tourist regions.*

*The objective of this paper is to highlight the emerging issues related to the dynamics of contemporary tourism in Constanta. As specific objectives, which we want to address in this paper would be: improving activities, modernizing the flow, technologicalization, sustainable responsibility and defining organizational characteristics. At the cognitive level, only the simple association of quality management with the development of tourist regions can provide positive results in terms of the theoretical approach of the notion in choosing, defining, mapping the tourist product or service.*

**Key words:** quality management, tourism, development, Constanta

**J.E.L. classification:** M10, M19, Z30, Z31, Z32, Z38

### 1. Introduction

The tourism industry is an inherent dimension of contemporary social life and is one of the most complex industries in the world, involving the whole society. Thus, for many countries it has become a concern, a priority, because tourism supports economic growth through the contribution of currency, the revenues obtained contributing to the gross domestic product and new jobs are created. Through the prism of practicing tourism, the tourist resources are capitalized superiorly, the infrastructure is improved, the action of landscaping is intensified and at the same time exchanges of experiences and cultures are carried out.

The main purpose of this paper is to address emerging issues related to the dynamics of contemporary tourism in the city of Constanta. These issues refer to the sustainable use of natural resources, the dynamics of innovation and specialization models, the impact of tourism activities on regional economic growth and, finally, the relationship between tourism performance and regional sustainable development of Constanta.

Among the current tourism trends are the increase in the number of tourists but also in their demands, the concern for searching unique destinations and tourist products. In fact, there is an increase for the demand and supply of personalized tourist products, because the needs and desires of tourists differ. Among the concerns is the one for the environment, focusing on the idea of sustainability. The Internet plays an important role, asserting itself as a means of information, promotion and last but not least marketing in tourism.

There is an important relationship between local economic development and tourism, in the sense that tourism stimulates the level of domestic demand. The capacity of the economy to benefit from tourism depends on the availability of investments for the development of the necessary infrastructure, in addition to its capacity to provide the quality services that tourists demand.

From this point of view, the specific objective of this paper will refer to tourism quality management as an integral part of tourism in order to improve all tourism activities and services, offered by the Constanta region as an important factor of its integrated development. The way in which the resources of a region are assembled, coordinated, synchronized and enhanced at the level of a company is related to managerial skills, and if the result increases the company's competitiveness means that the company has distinctive managerial skills and therefore can facilitate the development of the area.

## **2. Literature review**

In a globalized and modern world, tourism is recognized as one of the largest businesses, with the fastest growth and dynamics among economic sectors and attracting foreign economic activities. Many developing countries and regions have succeeded in restoring the economy with increased participation of the tourism sector. Tourism is seen as a tool for regional development to help create new local economic activities. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, worldwide and especially in developing countries, tourism is seen as a significant tool for promoting economic development and poverty alleviation as an alternative to other traditional economic sectors such as industrialization.

The concept of regional development includes, on the one hand, the dynamics of development of specific areas, understood primarily as a regional economic development of those areas, but also regional traffic, population or environmental development. There are many specialized articles on regional development that are based on exploiting the potential of these regions, and sustainable development must be based on reasonable regional development. In this context there is a conventional relationship between the enhancing factor - tourism and regional development.

Regional development meets the development needs of the people in the region concerned. Each region has its own development potential. For the most part, nature has offered those potentials for the development of each region. Many regions in any country have their own natural development capabilities, which countries have used in time for their development. On this basis, the natural environment for tourism is one of the gifts that the regions have. Tourism is a main strategy for the development of the region.

Although it is a driving force for growth, tourism depends on the level of economic development of supplier and host countries. In late countries, the development of tourism needs, as a precondition, the existence of an adequate economy, with the expansion of industries and the provision of diversified products and services. With these basic needs, tourism contributes to the economy by providing full potential benefits of employment, taxes, infrastructure and conservation of natural resources. (Firmino, 2007). Previous studies indicate that there are three main elements involved in the development process of tourism in general and regional tourism in particular, namely the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impact. All this must be taken into account to ensure an effective assessment of its sustainability. Such an assessment can be made using the triple bottom line approach to impact, commonly used in studies on the sustainable development of tourism. (Jurowski, C., Gursoy, D., 2004)

Understanding tourism as a potential promoter of the general development of the economy, especially of local economies, is increasingly consensual. Consequently, it is mandatory for this activity to take the values of enhanced sustainability. (Yasuo O., Shimichi E., 2013)

According to several authors, regional development is a process that is divided into two levels: external and internal. As for the external level, it includes the flows of the region with the external environment, i.e. the types of products and services, capital and information. On the other hand, the internal level refers to the internal differentiation, which includes the specialization of the labour force, the improvement of its capacities and, in general, the reorganization of the region. Consequently, tourism covers both these levels and creates flows for the region and the external environment, on the one hand, and contributes to changing its social and economic structure, on the other. As a result, tourism must be analysed in both aspects in order to adequately present its real impact as a factor of social and economic change. (North D., 1955) , (Loukissas P, 1982).

In this context, of the type of products and services offered on the tourism market, the qualitative approach to tourism is extremely important. The quality of tourism-related services, such as services in general, is mainly based on balancing customer perceptions and expectations. Successful service providers are able to respond and, whenever possible, exceed the needs and desires of consumers. (Tigu G., 2005)

Quality tourism can contribute to the sustainable development of a region by improving the competitiveness of enterprises, meeting social needs and preserving the cultural and natural environment. In order to be successful simultaneously in all these different areas at the level of tourist destinations, a global approach is needed, a touristic satisfaction concentrated and based on the principles of sustainable development, which is described as an integrated quality management (IQM).

Integral quality management is usually part of a strategy of tourist destinations developed for specific providers of tourist services, such as tour operators, travel agents, hotels, restaurants, etc. The specific tourist destination depends not only on the experience of the tourist service providers, but also on many other more general factors, such as kindness and hospitality, destination security, health and sanitary conditions and tourism debt management. (Ritchie, J., Crouch, 2003)

The impact of quality tourism on regional development can be positive or beneficial, but also negative or harmful. Whether the impact is perceived as positive or negative depends on the value position and the judgment of the impact observer. It is conventional for researchers and decision makers to note several positive and negative effects of tourism. Positive economic benefits usually include contributions to the local economy and job creation. The positive social impacts of tourism may include the revival or stimulation of traditional arts or crafts as a result of tourism demand. The positive effects on the environment of tourism can include income generated by the attraction for visiting natural sites, as well as an increased interest of visitors in the importance of the natural environment.

The negative economic effects of tourism may include rising prices for food, land and housing in tourist destinations. Negative environmental consequences include vehicle pollution, garbage dumped by visitors, habitat disturbance and deterioration of landscape features. Negative socio-cultural impacts can include the loss of cultural identity, especially when tourists are from the developed world and the hosts are in a developing country. This can be part of what is usually called the demonstration effect and happens when the inhabitants of a developing country imitate the activities of visitors who are from developed countries. (Mason P., 2003)

### **3. Research methodology**

Coastal tourism is considered one of the fastest growing areas of current tourism, with its central attributes of sand, sea and sun. In order to create safe, stable and attractive coastal environments with clean waters and healthy coastal habitats, it is necessary to develop a sustainable, well-managed coastal tourism. Integrated coastal zone management is the best approach available to achieve this goal.

Although quality management is a relatively new approach, a few coastal tourist destinations are making real efforts in this direction. They have defined strategies with key partners, implement good practices and continuously develop monitoring and evaluation tools to adjust this approach to its economic, social and environmental impact.

Technological progress is the immeasurable advance that has facilitated in recent years the optimization and efficiency of quality management with the help of indicators that allow measuring the effects of actions and planning an adapted strategy that characterizes the tourism activity.

The present research aims to highlight the importance of quality tourism in the regional development of the Constanta municipality, with implications on the economy of the area.

Constanta County is located in the SE extremity of Romania, opening to the Black Sea. In addition, a distinctive feature of the county is the presence of natural marine lakes, rivers, fluvio-marine, lagoons, therapeutic lakes with sapropelic mud, ponds and recreational lakes. Constanta County has 3 seaports and 6 river ports. The port of Constanta is a seaport and a river port on the Danube - Black Sea Canal.

The predominant tourist profile of the Constanta Metropolitan Area identifies this sector as the launching engine of the local economy. The Black Sea coast is one of the oldest and most important tourist regions, which traditionally offers various shapes and types of attractions. The city of Constanta, located on the Black Sea coast, in the historical region of Dobrogea, is the oldest certified city in Romania with favourable prospects in terms of economic growth and territorial development.

One of the basic directions of the economic engine of progress of the component communities of the Constanta municipality, is the high tourist potential, ensured by the proximity of the Black Sea, with an impressive number of accommodation and public catering structures, the existence of natural lakes, with unique therapeutic properties in the world (Lake Techirghiol), which also facilitated the development of spa tourism in the area. A large part of the communities belonging to the region have an intense tourist activity, which every year generates economic growth, successfully representing a gateway for Romania towards the whole world.

Having as object of study the implications of the tourist activities in the regional development of Constanta municipality, we chose as barometer the numerical evolution of the tourist reception structures with accommodation function and of the tourists, with the main purpose to find out if the quality management contribution is a favourable one for the economic component. - tourism and at the same time the growth of the general economy.

Indicators chosen to analyse the economic implications of tourism in the Constanta region are: (1) the economic evolution of the municipality of Constanta, (2) the structures of tourist reception with a function of tourist accommodation; (3) catering establishments; (4) the number of tourists; (5) the evolution of profit and turnover.

The data collection was available with the help of official data provided by the National Institute of Statistics of Romania. According to the data provided by the Trade Register, Constanta municipality occupies the 8th place in the ranking made according to the turnover at national level. Turnover is considered to be a fundamental indicator of the volume of a company's activity and, obviously, it is always taken into account when evaluating a company.

*Table no.1. Number of commercial units and turnover in Constanta municipality*

Year	No. of commercial units	No. of hotels and restaurants			Turnover of hotels, restaurants (mill. LEI)
		Public	Private	Total	
2015	21,311	34	782	816	1,339
2016	21,459	32	800	832	1,450
2017	22,499	30	899	929	1,570
2018	23,255	30	964	994	1,851
2019	24,210	29	989	1,018	1,983

*Source:* made by the author based on INS data

In order to develop a profitable business, managers are required to make decisions and act quickly to cope with current economic and social constraints, which have an impact on the company's progress.

According to the analyses carried out in Constanta municipality, the income-generating activities that contribute the most to the growth of the economy and the development of the region are tourism, heavy and light industry, trade, transport. From the perspective of turnover, the companies from Constanta County amounted to 81,702 million lei in 2019. In the table below we presented the number of companies existing in 2018 in Constanta County, depending on the field of activity in which it operates.

Table no.2. Distribution of companies by branches of the economy in 2018

Activity	No. of companies
Agriculture	234
Mining industry	44
Manufacturing industry	347
Food industry	421
Water distribution	59
Construction	87
Commerce	361
Transport	126
Hotels and restaurants	994
Information and communication	61
Real estate	404
Insurance	34
Professional, scientific and technical activities	104
Administrative services	129
Education	121
Health	61
Cultural activities, shows	67
Other activities and services	327

Source: made by the author based on INS data

The technical-material basis represents the set of material means used to ensure comfort and all that is necessary for a tourist during his stay. Thus, the material base includes the accommodation and food spaces, as well as those that involve entertainment and relaxation, namely the spaces for recreation and leisure. All the components have an important role, they make up a complete and attractive tourist product, but the accommodation spaces tend to think that they pay more attention, because they practically become, for a certain period, the tourists' home. Also, the degree of development of those that are part of the technical-material base is seen as an advantage, the tourist resorts that benefit from a higher degree of development and better conditions, register a high tourist circulation, unlike those with a lower degree.

"Tourist reception structure with tourist accommodation functions means any construction or arrangement, which provides permanently or seasonally the accommodation service and other specific services for tourists". (INS-National Institute of Statistics)

"The number of tourist reception structures with tourist accommodation functions includes the tourist reception structures existing at 31st of July of the respective year, excluding those whose activity has been interrupted for a longer period of time, in order to carry out capital repairs or for important changes of the accommodation capacity and/or of the classification category". (INS).

The data regarding the existing accommodation units in the period 2015-2019 in Constanta municipality are presented in the table below.

Table no.3. Number of accommodation units in Constanta municipality

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of accommodation units	145	135	144	154	163

Source: made by the author based on INS data

The existing tourist accommodation capacity represents the number of accommodation places made available to tourists by the tourist reception structures, considering the number of days they are open. Places in rooms or structures temporarily closed, for lack of tourists, for major repairs or for other reasons are excluded. The tourist accommodation capacity in operation for the years 2015-2019 from the resorts in the coastal area, exclusive to the city of Constanta is highlighted in table 8.

*Table no.4. Number of tourist accommodation operating withing Constanta municipality*

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of accommodation units	9,411,584	8,797,917	9,221,634	9,032,938	9,129,918

Source: made by the author based on INS data

The tourist demand represents the ensemble of the persons who benefit from products and services, respectively from the tourist offer, expressing their desire to make temporary trips outside the locality of residence in order to achieve this tourist consumption. In order to be able to carry out an analysis regarding the tourist demand, we considered the number of tourists, i.e. the number of arrivals, the number of overnight stays they benefited from.

Therefore, the number of tourists represents both Romanian and foreign tourists. Foreign tourists are those who do not reside in Romania, and who travel for a period of less than 12 months in order to visit and without carrying out another paid activity.

The total number of tourists (Romanian and foreign) accommodated in the tourist reception structures available during 2015-2019 in Constanta County is presented in table 11.

*Table no.5. Number of tourists in the period 2015-2019*

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of Romanian tourists	762,419	908,588	982,604	1,040,699	1,085,120
Number of foreign tourists	29,620	34,399	33,683	35,345	34,281
Total number of tourists	792,039	942,987	1,016,287	1,076,044	1,119,401

Source: made by the author based on INSSE data

Regarding the arrivals of both Romanian and foreign tourists in Constanta, they represent every night that is spent by a tourist or for which a tourist is registered (because his presence is not mandatory) in a tourist accommodation structure.

Below is the total number of overnight stays of Romanian and foreign tourists in accommodation units in Constanta during 2015-2019.

*Table no.6. Number of overnight stays in the period 2015-2019*

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of Romanian tourists	3,476,854	3,946,729	4,183,458	4,433,022	4,534,514
Number of foreign tourists	191,093	161,555	132,921	120,385	123,441
Total number of tourists	3,667,947	4,108,284	4,316,379	4,553,407	4,657,955

Source: made by the author based on INSSE data

For the economic development of the Constanta region, it is very important that the area is visited by foreign tourists. Most of the tourists who visit Constanta are Romanians, the proportion of foreigners not being negligible. The geographical area of origin of foreign tourists includes most European countries, as well as some non-European countries (Russia, USA, Canada, Israel). Most foreign tourists come from geographically close countries, traditional providers of tourists (Hungary, Poland, Ukraine, Serbia, etc.).

*Table no.7. Arrivals of foreign visitors*

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Hungary	1,661	1,562	1,454	1,491	1,529
Republic of Moldova	1,633	1,918	2,052	2,330	2,523
Bulgaria	1,524	1,527	1,603	1,600	1,857
Ukraine	823	1,055	1,208	1,466	1,755
Germany	438	466	479	489	521
Poland	355	302	311	314	345
Serbia	352	427	502	543	576
Italy	324	425	460	468	521

Turkey	301	327	357	397	430
Israel	182	230	289	320	309
Austria	180	142	139	148	165
France	129	201	220	231	246
the UK	122	180	213	216	244
Other countries	1,084	1,002	1,023	998	1,004

Source: made by the author based on INSSE data

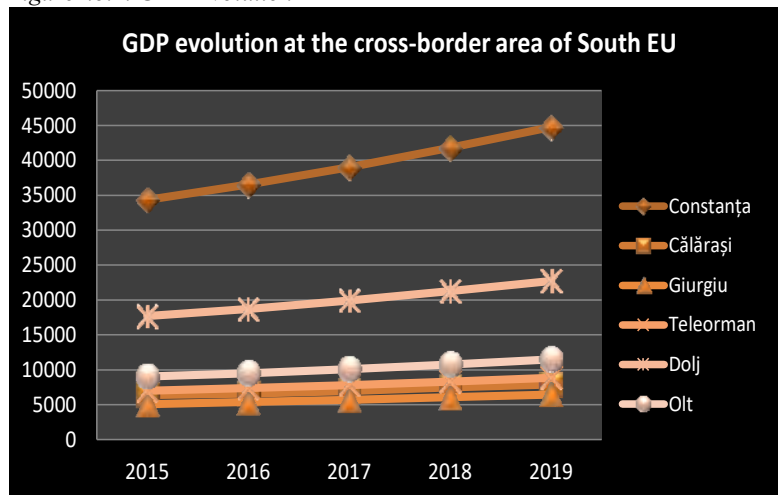
The tourism industry in the Constanta area has the capacity to generate a significant number of jobs. Also, companies in the field of tourism, respectively hotels and restaurants as well as other accommodation and food units generate a large part of the turnover. The local economy in this area benefits from the development of tourism. Tourists create an increased demand for services and consumer goods, thus stimulating the tertiary sector of the region's economy (services, trade, craft industries, etc.). Moreover, the tourist localities tend to have a more developed urban and service infrastructure.

The transport sector and the real estate sector are two other important branches that have to gain through the development of tourism, as we can see in table 6. We must also consider the indirect benefits obtained by registering a large flow of tourists that increases visibility and interest in the Constanta region. Thus, tourism in this area, through development strategies and policies can become a factor of economic growth with enormous potential. Tourism can easily contribute to the sustainable development of the Constanta region.

#### 4. Results

The contribution of tourism to the increase of the gross domestic product and of the income from the Constanta area are because of the increase of the volume of revenues from tourism, as a result of the production increase, which can be seen in the figure below. Constanta registers in the period 2015-2019 a continuous increase of the GDP, reaching the highest gross domestic product compared to the other analysed regions.

Figure no.1. GDP Evolution

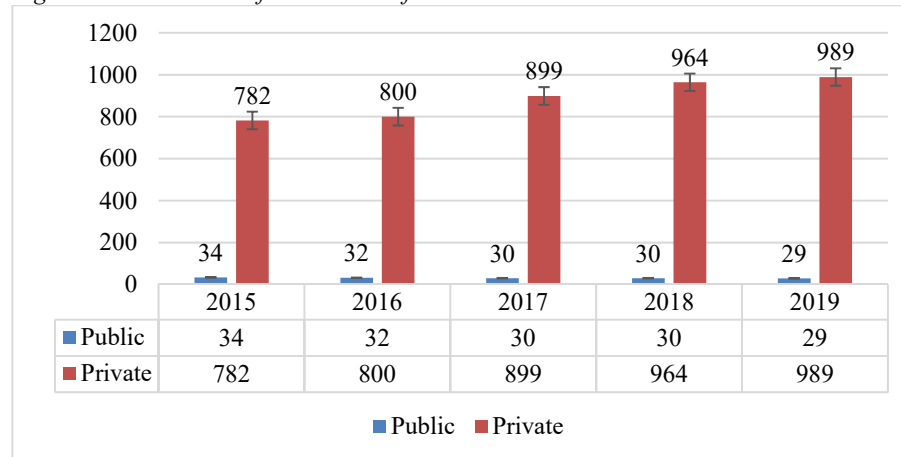


Source: made by the author based on INS data

The number of commercial units in Constanta municipality followed in the interval 2015-2019 an ascending trend as we could observe, the economic environment increasing by 207 companies during the 5 years. Thus, there is an increase of 26.5% among companies in Constanta, which can only highlight its economic development. What we can see in the chart below is the fact that most of the existing commercial units in Constanta are private and a very small number are public.

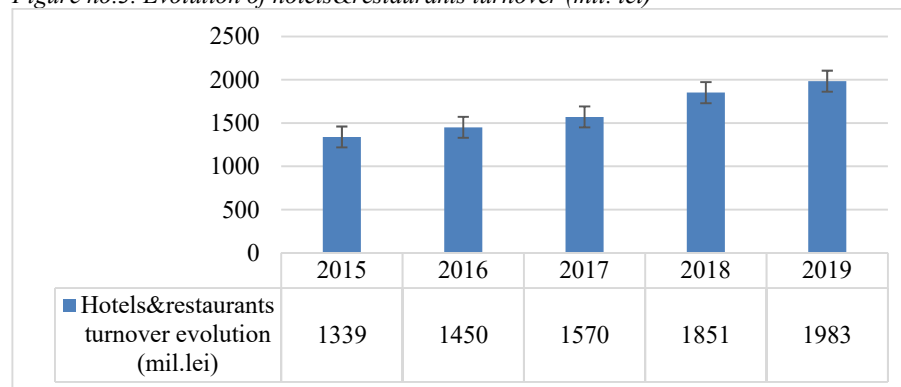
Regarding the turnover generated by the commercial units in the HoReCa field, we notice that there is a constant growth from 2015 to 2019. This is the sector that brings the largest contribution to the turnover of Constanta, while contributing to the positive dynamics of the economy. Also, restaurants and hotels represent a large part of the total number of existing commercial units in Constanta, as we will see below.

Figure no.2. Evolution of the number of commercial units



Source: made by the author based on INS data

Figure no.3. Evolution of hotels&restaurants turnover (mil. lei)

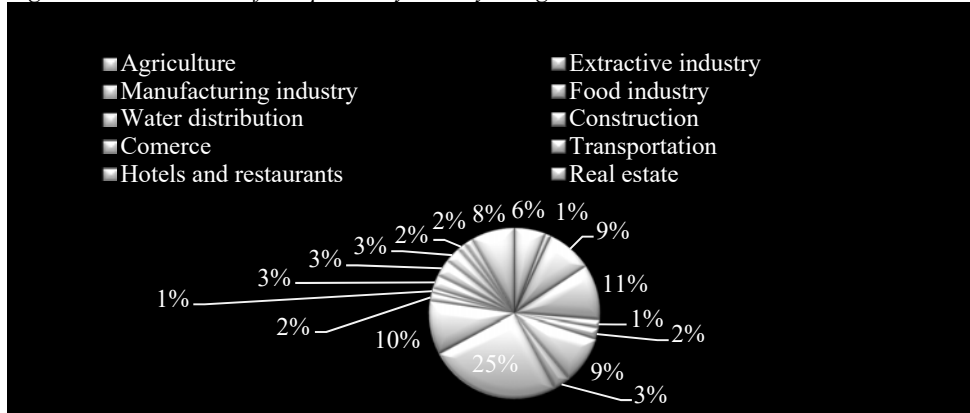


Source: made by the author based on INS data

The largest share of companies in Constanta has their businesses opened in the HoReCa field. Thus, in 2019, a number of 994 hotels and restaurants available for locals and tourists alike were registered. This has a special importance in the development of tourism in the municipality of Constanta, because it offers primarily a large number of accommodation and restaurants, as well as a diversity of them. At the same time, the HoReCa industry makes the largest contribution to the turnover of Constanta, followed by real estate and trade. These are the sectors that bring the greatest contribution to the economy of Constanta, but also of the entire county.



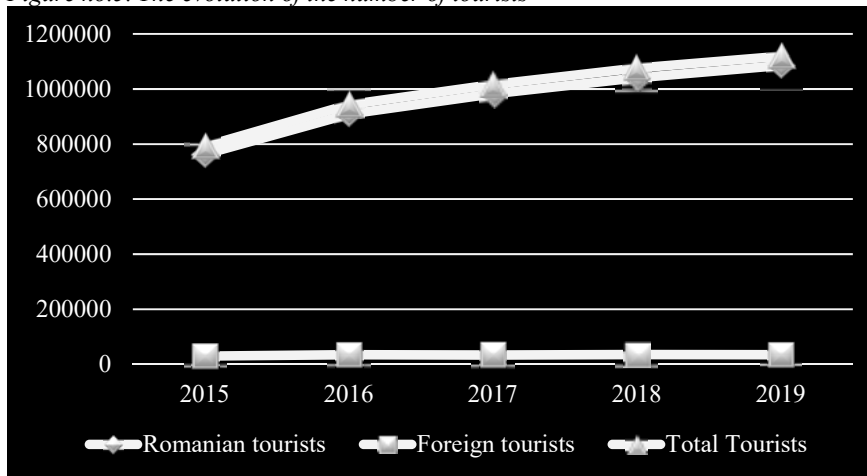
Figure no.4. The share of companies by activity categories



Source: made by the author based on INS data

Regarding the evolution of the number of tourists, there is an growth in terms of increasing the number of Romanian tourists, because the line representing foreign tourists does not indicate any obvious increase. Thus, in 2015 a total number of 792,039 Romanian tourists visited Constanta municipality, their number increasing considerably in 2019 and reaching 942,987. The total number of tourists is marked by an ascending line until 2019 when the number of tourists reaches 1,119,401.

Figure no.5. The evolution of the number of tourists



Source: made by the author based on INS data

## 5. Proposals and recommendations

Raising the general awareness of travel opportunities in the internal market must be a priority, make tourism products accessible to all, facilitate the development of a culture of tourism and create a safe and welcoming environment for visitors.

Quality issues have never been foreign to tourism. In fact, quality tourism has become one of the important issues of global tourism policy, given the rapid growth of the tourism industry, which has become one of the most developed economic sectors, especially after 2000. Preoccupation regarding the tourism quality has been demonstrated by various private organizations at all levels: international, national, regional and entrepreneurial, as well as by researchers in the field.

Considering the rapid and continuous growth of the tourist activity, both from the tourist point of view and from the economic, cultural, religious or health point of view, both from the past and from the foreseeable perspective, as well as its strong effects, both positive and negative, on the environment, economy and society of the countries that generate and receive, local communities

and indigenous peoples, as well as international relations and trade, we can say that the tourism industry is considered one of the most important, most diverse and the richest global industries.

Thus, the tourist product in the Constanta area includes the packages of activities designed in order to dose the services in various combinations, being oriented according to the nature and features of the tourist products offered for sale in this area. In this context, in order to increase the number of foreign tourists, the aim is to obtain a superior quality of the services offered by capitalizing on the elements of tourist attraction and obtaining a balanced quality-price ratio to meet both customer requirements.

Due to their quality, tourist services must satisfy the requirements of heterogeneous and complex motivations, customized, most of the times, at the level of each tourist. Therefore, the degree of satisfaction obtained from the consumption of tourist services is not only the sum of the individual consumption of component services of a tourist product, because it may be that, at some point, the assessment of the quality level of tourist consumption is negatively influenced by any inconsistency of a single component. That is, if at some point one of the needs or desires of the tourist does not find its qualitative equivalent in the offer of services, his dissatisfaction has not only momentary effects, but on the whole image of the quality of the consumed tourist product. (Neagu V., Bucuioc M., 2007, p. 64)

In the field of tourism, there is a permanent process of diversification and modernization of services, by implementing new types of activities by materializing the receptivity of tourism to changes in the structure of demand, consumption needs and quality requirements.

Therefore, the continuous improvement of the quality of tourist services must be a permanent concern of those working in the field to provide high-performance services that meet the needs and requirements of customers. The quality of tourism services needs to be continuously improved in order to make them more efficient, and for this it is necessary to establish and implement an adequate quality policy.

What determines the implementation of a quality management system in the units providing tourist services are the positive effects generated by it. Thus, quality management increases the chances for repeat visits in Constanta. Because, as we noticed after processing the data from the INS on the arrivals of foreign tourists during the period and their share, there is a decrease, which means that those who came once to this area did not want to repeat the experience.

Also, tourism management determines financial performance and at the same time attracts new customers. Avoiding expenses with resolving complaints is another positive effect of quality management. Its role is to provide better employee motivation and therefore higher productivity and performance, because employee motivation is closely linked to job satisfaction and performance. The positive effects of quality management are one after another: promotion, consistency and gaining new markets.

## **6. Conclusions**

An indicator of the degree of impact of tourism on the economic prosperity of the Constanta region is the satisfaction of tourists with the tourist offer. Emphasis must be placed on the perception of the local population on the economic effects of tourism. The need for the most harmonious coordination and the implementation and control of all aspects of tourist destinations appears as a consequence.

The development of tourism activities must be based on sustainability criteria, it must be economically sustainable in the long run and ethically and socially equitable for the local population of the tourist region. Tourism must contribute to sustainable development through integration into nature, culture and humanity. It must respect the fragile balance, which is characteristic of many tourist destinations.

In conclusion, it is necessary to use the quality of integrated management in the tourist destination Constanta will offer it a competitive advantage in the market competition with the tourist destinations of the world, which are meant for the same target groups.

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