

## Domestic Tourism and Romania's International Tourism

Marian Ionel

„Ovidius” University of Constanta, Faculty of Economic Sciences, Romania  
[ionelmarian@yahoo.com](mailto:ionelmarian@yahoo.com)

### Abstract

*If domestic tourism takes place within a country, international tourism is carried out by crossing the borders of that country, either by foreign tourists entering the country or by residents leaving the country for other tourist destinations. Both forms of tourism are important for a country, as they generate both tourist flows and financial flows, which can involve expenditure and income from tourism.*

*In Romania, the analysis of tourism flows, from the point of view of these forms of tourism, highlights the importance of domestic tourism for sustaining tourism activity in Romania, since international tourism has recorded low rates in terms of foreign tourist arrivals and, at the same time, high rates of domestic tourist flows to other tourist destinations competing for Romania. As such, the purpose of this paper is to highlight the role of domestic and international tourism for Romania.*

**Key words:** domestic tourism, international tourism

**J.E.L. classification:** L80, L83

### 1. Introduction

Seen from the point of view of the emission and reception of tourist flows, tourism takes the form of domestic tourism and international tourism.

Domestic tourism determines the formation and distribution of tourist and financial flows within a country, exploiting the different forms of tourism and thus ensuring the higher or lower development of certain areas of that country. International tourism can contribute to a country's economic and tourism development if foreign tourists come to that country, or it can generate a deficit in the balance of trade if domestic tourists go to other tourist destination

### 2. Theoretical background

Domestic and international tourism are two essential forms of tourism for a country. This is why these two forms of tourism are given special conceptual attention in economic theory.

Thus, Cristureanu C., defines international tourism as "the action of temporary movement of residents of a country as visitors to another country in order to satisfy tourist motivations and not for lucrative activities, which involves the provision of tourist services, consumption of these services, but also income for the destination country" (Cristureanu, 2006, p.25). At the level of a country, international tourism is represented by the arrivals and departures of tourists (Stanciulescu *et al*, 2002, p.180).

In the "Lexicon of Tourism Terms" domestic tourism is "tourist travel by residents of a country within the borders of that country" (Stanciulescu *et al*, 2002, p.180).

We note that in both international and domestic tourism there are two types of flows: physical flows caused by the movement of tourists either within or outside the country, and financial flows represented by the expenditure made by tourists and the revenue received by the tourism service providers in the country.

In other words, international tourism can be expressed by the totality of flows that are formed between sending and receiving countries (Pirvu, 2012, p.47). These flows are essential for a country's economy as they have an impact, either negative or positive, on the balance of trade and payments.

Both domestic and international tourism are concerned with travel to tourist destinations, but not all travel generates these forms of tourism, which is why tourist travel is fundamentally different from migration (Page, 2009, p.17). In other words, domestic or international travel must be based on a tourist motivation, which determines the visitor status for the country.

### 3. Research methodology

For the study of domestic and international tourism in Romania, statistical methods based on the analysis of indicators on Romanian and foreign tourists are used to identify trends, developments and influencing factors for the analyzed data.

The interpretation of these data is essential to establish different measures to recover the tourism activity in Romania and to revive tourism.

### 4. Domestic and international tourism in Romania, influencing factors and stimulation measures

Special information is obtained from the analysis of the data in Table 1, data on the evolution of foreign visitor arrivals in Romania, as well as the departures of Romanian visitors abroad, in the period 2019-2021, a period that was under the negative effects of the health crisis caused by COVID.

*Table no. 1 Arrivals of foreign visitors in Romania and departures of Romanian visitors abroad, 2019-2021 (thousands of persons)*

Year	Foreign visitor arrivals in Romania	Departures of Romanian visitors from Romania	Differences between departures of Romanian visitors abroad and arrivals of foreign visitors in Romania
2019	12815.4	23065.7	10250.3
2020	5022.7	9510.1	4487.4
2021	6788.8	11642.6	4853.8

*Sources:* National Institute of Statistics, www.insse.ro - Romanian Tourism Statistical Abstract, 2022, p.70; 2021, p.70;

Thus, regarding the total arrivals of foreign visitors in Romania, we can draw the following aspects:

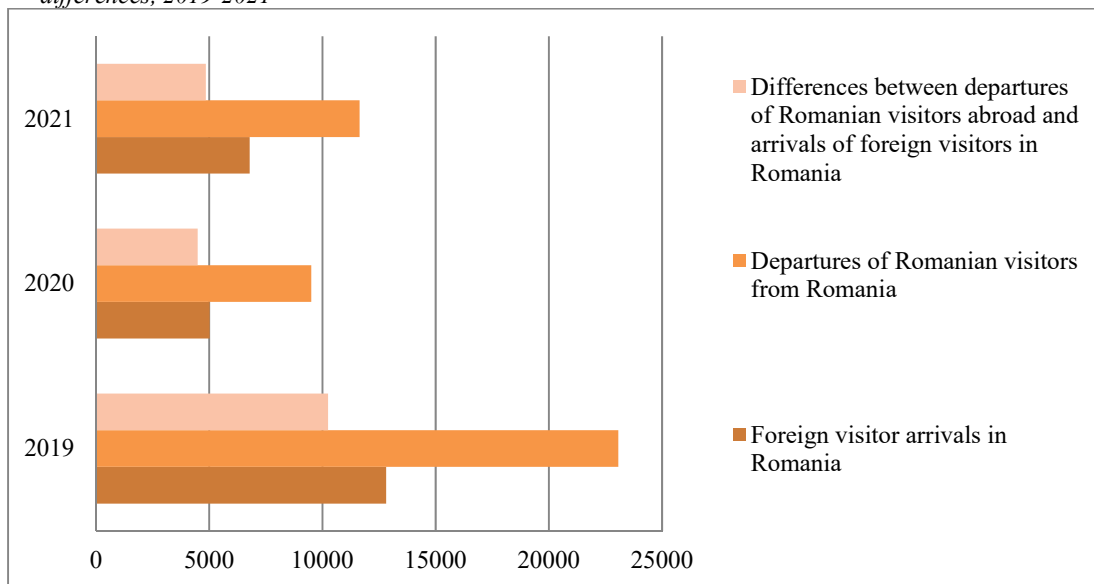
- If in 2019 the total number of arrivals of foreign visitors in Romania was over 12815 thousand, there is a drastic decrease in the number of foreign visitors in 2020 to approximately 5022, which means a reduction of 60%.
- This 60% reduction in 2020 compared to 2019 is mainly due to the restrictions generated by COVID, restrictions that have negatively affected inbound and outbound tourist flows in Romania.
- In 2021 compared to 2020, although there was a 35% increase in foreign visitor arrivals in Romania, compared to 2019 it represents a 47% decrease, which reflects the fact that inbound tourist flows have not even reached the value of 2019. This fact highlights not only health factors with a negative impact on inbound tourist flows, but also the existence of other economic factors, as well as factors related to the tastes, preferences and motivations of foreign tourists. In other words, the COVID pandemic has caused changes in the preferences of foreign visitors to Romania, but also in the preferences of Romanian tourists, generating a reorientation of tourist flows towards other more attractive destinations.

In the case of departures of Romanian visitors to other tourist destinations, it is noted:

- Diminuarea numărului de la 23065 mii în 2019, la peste 9510 mii în 2020 (adică o reducere de peste 58%) ceea ce semnifică un nivel asemănător reducerii sosirilor de vizitatori străini în România
- Decrease in the number of visitors from 23065 thousand in 2019 to over 9510 thousand in 2020 (i.e. a reduction of over 58%) which means a similar level of reduction in the number of foreign visitor arrivals in Romania.
- Although in 2021 compared to 2020, there was an increase in the number of Romanian visitors who went abroad by 22.4% (from 9510 thousand to 11642 thousand Romanian visitors), however, these outbound tourist flows were in 2021 compared to 2019 almost half the values recorded in 2019, reflecting a recovery of the tourism phenomenon in this segment, but still under the influence of the restrictions caused by the COVID pandemic

Of particular importance are the annual differences between departures and arrivals (see also Figure 1).

Figure no. 1. Departures of Romanian visitors abroad, arrivals of foreign visitors in Romania and their differences, 2019-2021



Source: Table no.1, National Institute of Statistics, [www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro)

Thus, the number of Romanian visitors who went to other tourist destinations is higher than the number of foreign visitors who came to Romania. In 2019, the number of Romanian visitors who went to other tourist destinations was over 10250.3 thousand higher (almost 1.8 times higher). The same trend was maintained in 2020, but also in 2021, which means a deficit balance of payments on this segment of tourism.

Table no. 2 Overnight stays of Romanian and foreign tourists in Romania in 2019-2021

Year	Total tourists		Of which			
	Number (thousands)	%	Romanian tourists		Foreign tourists	
			Number (thousands)	%	Number (thousands)	%
2019	30086.0	100	24795.2	82.4	5290.8	17.6
2020	14579.1	100	13581.7	93.1	997.4	6.9
2021	20835.3	100	19002.6	91.2	1832.7	8.8

Sources: National Institute of Statistics, [www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro) - Romanian Tourism Statistical Abstract, 2022, p.65; 2021, p.65;

The analysis of the tourist accommodation indicator in tourist accommodation facilities in Romania provides us with a clearer picture of the phenomenon of domestic and international tourism

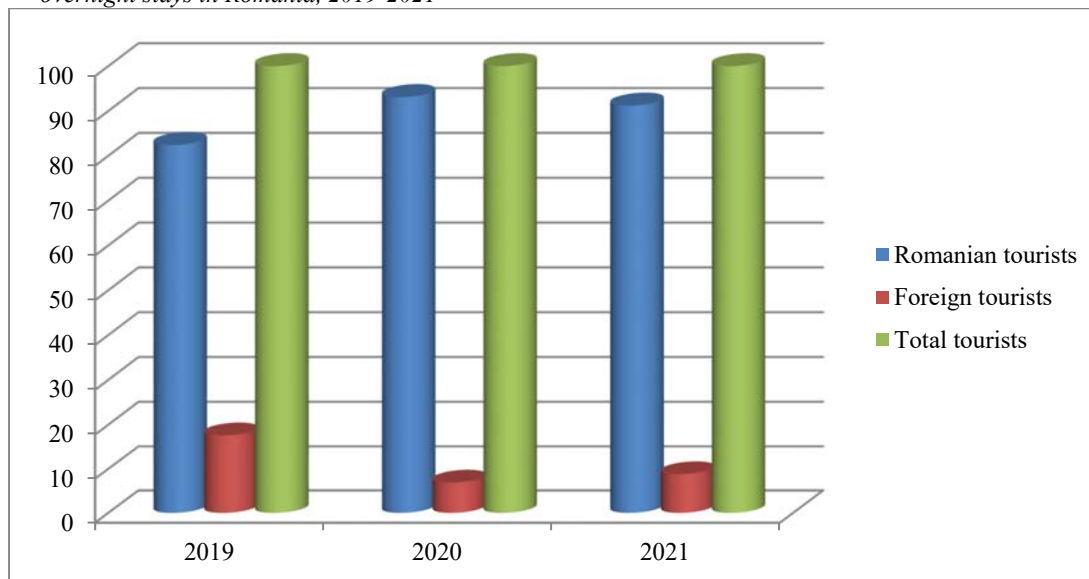
Thus:

- There is a decrease in total overnight stays from 30086 thousand in 2019 to 14579 thousand in 2020 (a reduction of 51.5%) and to 20835.3 thousand in 2021 (a reduction of 30.7%). In other words, 2020 saw the largest decrease, and then the phenomenon of overnight stays in tourist accommodation facilities has an upward trend.
- In the case of Romanian tourists, the analysis shows the same trend, i.e. a decrease in overnight stays in 2020 compared to 2019 by 45% and by 23.3% in 2021 compared to 2019 (although in 2021 compared to 2020 there was an increase of 39.9%).
- In the case of foreign tourists staying in Romania, the largest reduction is observed in 2020 compared to 2019 (by 81.1%), although in 2021 there was an upward trend (an increase of 83.7% is observed in 2021 compared to 2020), however, there is a decrease of 65.3% compared to 2019, which reflects the reduced size of foreign tourist flows in Romania.

The analysis of the structure of overnight stays in Romania, for Romanian and foreign tourists, shows the high share of overnight stays of Romanian tourists compared to foreign tourists: between 82.4% and 91.2% for Romanian tourists, compared to 17.6% in 2019 and 8.8% in 2021 for foreign tourists (see figure 2).

This highlights the importance of domestic tourism in Romania's tourism market. Of course, this high share of domestic tourism is also based on the facilities for stimulating domestic tourism by granting holiday vouchers, which can only be used in Romania, thus generating the development of domestic tourism.

Figure no. 2. Share of Romanian and foreign tourists' overnight stays in the total number of tourist overnight stays in Romania, 2019-2021



Source: Table no.2, National Institute of Statistics, [www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro)

We can say that domestic tourism is the main form of exploitation of Romania's tourism potential, although both domestic and international tourism are not exploited to their true value.

In addition to health factors, which have affected the phenomenon of domestic and international tourism in Romania, there are other factors, namely: insufficient promotion of Romania as a tourist destination on the international tourism market, poor tourist services with low quality correlated with high tariffs, but also factors relating to the general infrastructure and thus affecting mountain tourism, coastal tourism, rural tourism, spa tourism, and other forms of tourism involving access roads suitable for taking in tourist flows (lack of motorways, roads, tourist signs and markings, a technical and material base specific to tourism that is physically and morally worn out).

Therefore, Romania must be promoted more effectively as a tourist destination on the international market, investments must be made in both general and tourist infrastructure, and the behaviour of service providers must be changed both towards Romanian tourists and foreign tourists. The departure of Romanian tourists abroad must be limited and the entry of foreign tourists into Romania must be stimulated through various facilities.

## 5. Conclusions

Although both domestic and international tourism are important for a country, as is the case of Romania, it is noted that in Romania, during the period analyzed, domestic tourism has a high share (around 90%) of the Romanian tourism market. On the other hand, international tourism, although essential for an economy, has a low share, in terms of foreign tourists staying in Romania (less than 10%), which indicates a poor exploitation of tourism resources on the international tourism market.

In conclusion, the outflows of Romanian tourists abroad are much higher than the inflows of foreign tourists in Romania, which from an economic point of view has a strong negative impact on Romania's balance of trade and balance of payments. On the other hand, there is also a positive effect of this phenomenon, namely the lack of mass character of international tourism in Romania, thus preserving Romania's natural, cultural and traditional resources.

## 6. References

- Cristureanu, C., 2006, *Strategii și tranzacții în turismul internațional [Strategies and Transactions in International Tourism]*. Bucharest: C.H.Beck Publishing House
- Page, S., 2009, *Tourism Management. Managing for Change*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Elsevier Ltd.
- Pirvu, R., 2012, *Turism internațional [International Tourism]*. Craiova: Universitaria Publishing House
- Romanian Statistical Yearbook, *National Institute of Statistics*. [online] Available at: [www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro)
- Romanian Tourism – Statistical Abstract, 2022, *National Institute of Statistics*. [online] Available at: [www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro), [https://insse.ro/cms/files/Publicatii\\_2022/74.Turismul\\_romaniei\\_breviar\\_statistic/turismul\\_romaniei\\_2019-2021\\_breviar\\_statistic.pdf](https://insse.ro/cms/files/Publicatii_2022/74.Turismul_romaniei_breviar_statistic/turismul_romaniei_2019-2021_breviar_statistic.pdf)
- Romanian Tourism – Statistical Abstract, 2021, *National Institute of Statistics*. [online] Available at: [www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro), [https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/turismul\\_romaniei\\_2018-2020\\_breviar\\_statistic.pdf](https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/turismul_romaniei_2018-2020_breviar_statistic.pdf)
- Romanian Tourism – Statistical Abstract, 2020, *National Institute of Statistics*. [online] Available at: [www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro), [https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/turismul\\_romaniei\\_2017-2019\\_breviar\\_statistic.pdf](https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/turismul_romaniei_2017-2019_breviar_statistic.pdf)
- Stanculescu, G., Lupu, N., Tigu, G., Titan, E., Stancioiu, F., 2002, *Lexicon de termeni turistici [Lexicon of touristic terms]*. Bucharest: Oscar Print Publishing House