

Sustainable Tourism and the Forms it Generates on the Tourism Market

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Abstract

The tourism market is essential for a country's economy because it is represented by the forms in which tourism demand and tourism supply manifest themselves. Thus, the existence of natural and artificial resources, as well as their utilization, determine the forms of tourism existing on a country's tourism market.

In the tourism market of a country, sustainable tourism can take the form of tourism based on ecological principles, the form of cultural tourism and that of rural tourism. At the same time, I consider that religious tourism is an important form of sustainable tourism because through its practice both natural, cultural and social resources are protected.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to reflect the forms of sustainable tourism and their importance in the tourism market of a country such as Romania.

Key words: sustainable tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism, protected areas, rural tourism

J.E.L. classification: L80, L83

1. Introduction

The forms of tourism practiced differ from one tourist destination to another, depending on the use made of existing tourist resources and attractions, but also on the tourist motivation of tourists.

Sustainable tourism is a positive alternative to mass tourism because it seeks not only economic benefits but also to minimize negative impacts on the natural, cultural and social environment.

Currently, sustainable tourism is a tourism activity that is particularly important in a country's economy because it takes into account not only the economic impact, but also the cultural, social and environmental impacts of a country as a tourist destination.

2. Theoretical background

Sustainable tourism is an alternative form to mass tourism, which primarily takes care of the natural environment, but also of the social communities in the tourist destination, reducing the tensions caused by mass tourism between locals and tourists.

Concerns about the definition of sustainable tourism and the forms it generates are numerous, which is why the different conceptual approaches developed in tourism theory and practice are important.

Sustainable tourism may be applied to all forms of tourism which are in harmony with their physical, social and cultural environment in the long term (Medlik, 1993, p.141). It is essential not to see tourism as an isolated phenomenon but to place it in a social context (Aronsson, 2000, p.19).

In other words, all forms of tourism are expected to respect the principles of sustainable tourism, although many economic agents are only looking for economic benefits without taking into account the expenses that are necessary to restore the natural, cultural and social environment and consequently, the people are the ones which are affected because if the natural, cultural and religious environment is destroyed, man is also destroyed.

These principles refer to the involvement of the local community in the development of a sustainable tourism business that generates sufficient income to meet their consumption needs and to preserve and protect the natural environment. At the same time they refer to minimizing the

negative impact on the cultural and religious environment, as well as on the social environment concerning the relations between locals and tourists, in order to reduce tensions caused by high intensity tourist flows in certain tourist destinations.

Tourism businesses have a particular responsibility for the type and scale of development imposed on environmentally sensitive areas (Middleton *et al*, 1998, p.7).

Therefore, a particularly important role for sustainable tourism is played by protected areas that aim to preserve and protect the natural, cultural, social and religious environment. The practice of ecotourism is closely linked to the existence of protected areas directly, which is why protected areas are regulated by law at both national and international level. Parks and protected areas have a certain mystique to travellers interested in some of the best representative natural regions or countries (Fennell, 2003, p.45-46).

Ecotourism differs from nature-based tourism because ecotourism emphasizes conservation, education, responsibility and active involvement of the local community (Nistoreanu *et al*, 2003, p.81). Religious tourism is a form of sustainable tourism even if in the specialized literature it has not received this status in all conceptual approaches. It integrates with the other forms of sustainable tourism respecting its principles. In the case of religious tourism, people who travel with the motivation of pilgrimage need to travel to their destination, eat and sleep, all these services being part of the tourism sphere (Tala, 2012, p.62). It is often difficult to delimit these forms of sustainable tourism, especially in rural or mountainous areas where ecotourism, rural tourism and religious tourism overlap within certain limits, even territorially, but also in terms of sustainable tourism principles.

3. Research methodology

Sustainable tourism is an important topic for scientific research because it has positive implications for society, but above all it is an activity aimed at minimizing the negative impact on the social, cultural and natural environment.

The use of descriptive methods of the concepts under which sustainable tourism is manifested, as well as the use of research methods based on the indirect analysis of the tourism phenomenon and statistical data, reflecting sustainable tourism in Romania, play an essential role in this paper.

4. Findings

In Romania, unfortunately, there are no registered statistical data that distinctly reflect the forms of sustainable tourism. There is no statistical categorization of tourists according to the reasons for their trips which would accurately reflect sustainable tourism.

But, an analysis of sustainable tourism and the main forms it generates can be made with statistical data on tourists accommodated in tourist accommodation facilities, because tourist accommodation facilities are specific to the areas that generate the forms of tourism, including sustainable tourism, by capitalizing on the natural resources and tourist attractions of the areas concerned.

Thus, according to the data in Table 1, regarding the number of tourists accommodated in Romania in 2023, we can draw the following conclusions:

- of the total number of tourists staying in Romania (13910956 tourists) most of them are staying in hotels, namely 63%. Since hotels are usually located in cities, we can conclude that a large part of the tourists staying in these hotels are motivated by the visit of cultural sights and attractions, thus cultural tourism as a form of sustainable tourism. Urban tourism, which is based on more than one reason for traveling, should not be confused with cultural tourism because cultural tourism is only a part of urban tourism, which takes place within cities. While cultural tourism is a form of sustainable tourism, urban tourism as a whole does not respect the principles of sustainability because it takes more the form of mass tourism, which is often of high intensity, generating a high degree of pollution and tensions between residents and tourists

- agro-tourist boarding houses as well as tourist boarding houses and tourist inns are accommodation units that reflect the motivation of tourists for rural tourism and agro-tourism. Therefore, tourists staying in these tourist accommodation structures reflect the extent of rural

tourism as a form of sustainable tourism, namely: most tourists were accommodated in 2023 in agro-tourist boarding houses (1306683 tourists), i.e. approximately 10% of the total number of tourists accommodated in Romania, then in tourist boarding houses (1037475 tourists), i.e. 7.5% and in tourist inns 1820 tourists, representing 0.02%

- tourists accommodated in tourist chalets (137390 tourists) and those accommodated in tourist halting places (18224 tourists) can reflect ecotourism as part of mountain tourism

Table no. 1. Tourists accommodated in tourist accommodation establishments in Romania in 2023

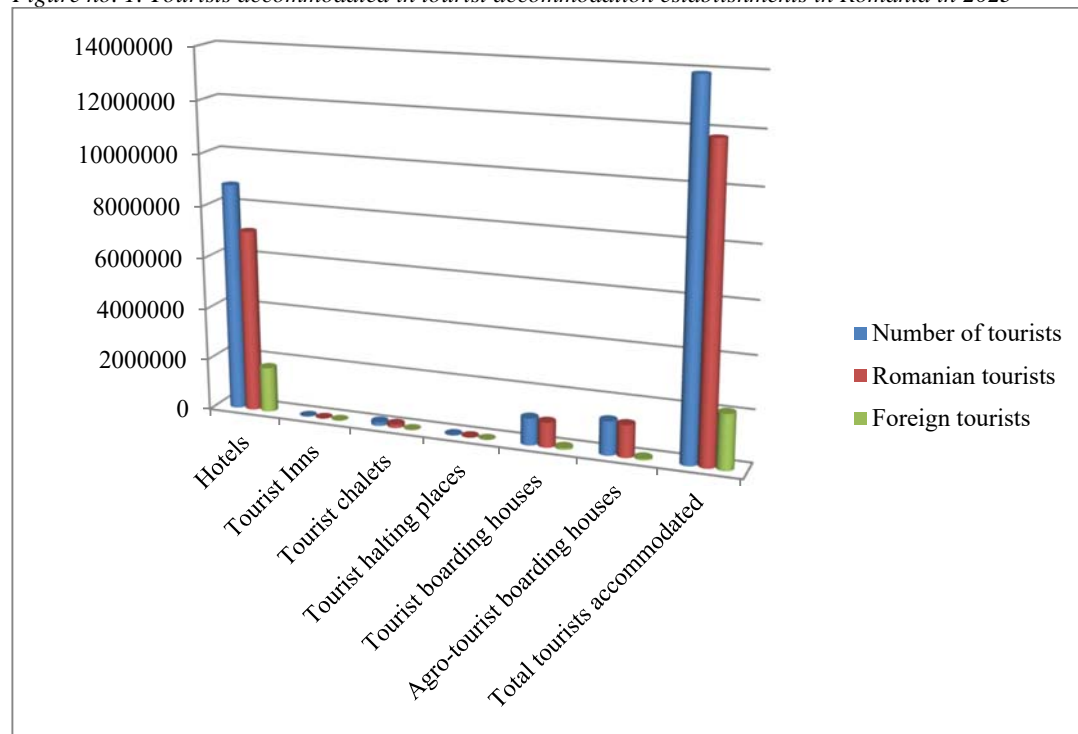
Type of tourist accommodation establishments	Total		Of which:			
	Number of tourists	%	Romanian tourists	%	Foreign tourists	%
Hotels	8790053	100	7046613	80.2	1743440	19.8
Tourist Inns	1820	100	1739	95.5	81	4.5
Tourist chalets	137390	100	130104	94.7	7286	5.3
Tourist halting places	18224	100	18167	99.7	57	0.3
Tourist boarding houses	1037475	100	961547	92.7	75928	4.3
Agro-tourist boarding houses	1306683	100	1245163	95.3	61520	4.7
Total tourists accommodated in Romania	13910956	100	11790888	84.8	2120068	15.2

Sources: (National Institute of Statistics in Romania, www.insse.ro)

If we consider the structure of tourists (see figure number 1) we notice that:

- the share of Romanian tourists accommodated in these tourist accommodation establishments is the highest, between 80% and 95% of all tourists accommodated in 2023 in Romania
- foreign tourists have a small share, between 0.3% and 19.8%, which indicates that in 2023 Romanian tourists will continue to have the highest share, i.e. 84.8% compared to 15.2% of foreign tourists staying in Romania

Figure no. 1. Tourists accommodated in tourist accommodation establishments in Romania in 2023



Source: Table no.1, National Institute of Statistics, www.insse.ro

An overview of tourists in Romania, by reason for their trip, is presented in Table 2.

Thus, the analysis of these data aims at the possible forms of sustainable tourism in Romania in 2023 compared to 2022, based on tourists who traveled through travel agencies, by forms of tourism. Of course, only tourists who traveled in an organized way through travel agencies are taken into account here, but in Romania a significant share of tourism is own account tourism, not organized by travel agencies, especially ecotourism, cultural tourism, rural tourism and religious tourism as essential forms of sustainable tourism. It should also be pointed out that there are currently no travel agencies in Romania specializing in offering tourist packages specific to sustainable tourism, providing tourists with sustainable tourism education services.

The training of tourists regarding sustainable tourism and its principles is very important, as is the one aimed at local communities as hosts, local authorities and tour operators as manufacturers and organizers of tourist trips specific to sustainable tourism.

Table no. 2. Number of Romanian tourists according to the reason for traveling to Romania

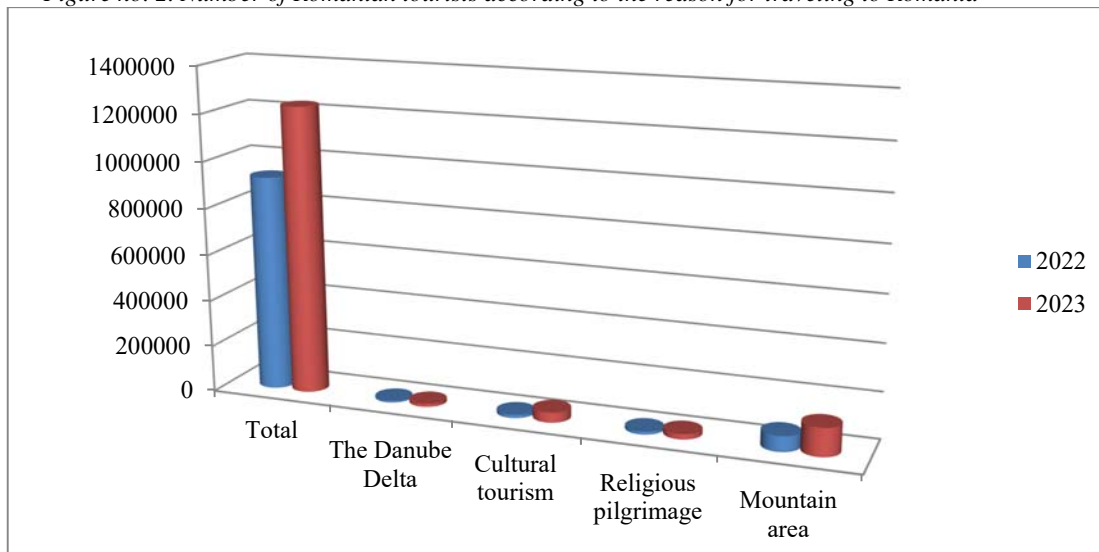
Tourists	Travel agencies organizing tourist service packages		Retail travel agencies	
	2022	2023	2022	2023
Total	838416	1133866	86582	99536
Of which:				
The Danube Delta	7404	12733	765	635
Cultural tourism	14439	43340	79	216
Religious pilgrimage	12800	22064	8	67
Mountain area	59298	114234	7087	6778

Sources: (National Institute of Statistics in Romania, www.insse.ro)

Thus:

- has been an increase in the number of tourists going through travel agencies organizing tourist service packages (from 838416 to 1133866 in 2023, i.e. an increase of 35.2% in 2023 compared to 2022) but also in the number of tourists who traveled through retail travel agencies (an increase of almost 15%) which highlights the positive trend of tourism in Romania

Figure no. 2. Number of Romanian tourists according to the reason for traveling to Romania



Source: Table no.2, National Institute of Statistics, www.insse.ro

- there are also significant increases in the forms of tourism specific to sustainable tourism, both ecotourism and rural tourism in the Danube Delta and ecotourism in the mountain area, as well as cultural and religious tourism

- mountain tourism shows an 82% increase in the number of tourists traveling through travel agencies in 2023 compared to 2022. Some of these trips are motivated by rural and ecotourism

Of course, this analysis focuses on the changes in tourism flows according to the tourism motivation based on which tourists traveled through the two types of travel agencies in Romania.

Positive developments were also recorded for the other forms of sustainable tourism, as follows (see Figure 2):

- in the case of cultural tourism, the tourist flow increased by 200% (from 14518 tourists in 2022 to 43556 tourists in 2023, tourists who traveled through the two types of travel agencies. This reflects the potential of this form of sustainable tourism by capitalizing on Romania's existing cultural resources

- ecotourism in the Danube Delta, together with rural tourism, recorded an increase of 63%, with the clarification that eco-tourism in Romania is not only represented by the Danube Delta but also by eco-tourism trips to protected areas, but for which there are no statistics reflecting the ecotourism phenomenon in Romania's protected areas

- religious tourism, as a form of sustainable tourism, recorded a 72% increase in the number of tourists traveling through travel agencies in 2023 compared to 2022 (from 12808 tourists to 22131 tourists in 2023).

Table no. 3. Tourist arrivals in tourist accommodation establishments in destinations in Romania that can reflect the forms of sustainable tourism in 2023

The tourist destination	Total arrivals		Of which			
	Number	%	Romanian tourists		Foreign tourists	
			Number	%	Number	%
Mountain area	2689496	100	2534420	94.2	155076	5.8
The Danube Delta	136974	100	128031	93.4	8943	6.6
Bucharest and cities of county residence	6129640	100	4493836	73.3	1635804	26.7
Other localities and tourist routes	2389113	100	2127662	89.0	261451	11.0

Sources: (National Institute of Statistics in Romania, www.insse.ro)

This analysis highlights the positive trend of the main forms of sustainable tourism in Romania in 2023 compared to 2022.

The dimensions of sustainable tourism in Romania can still be highlighted with the help of tourist arrivals in tourist accommodation establishments by tourist destinations in 2023, according to the data in Table 3, namely:

- the first place by tourist destinations is occupied by tourist arrivals in Bucharest and the cities of county residence (6129640 tourists) which, together with tourist arrivals in other tourist destinations and tourist routes (2389113 tourists), reflect cultural and religious tourism

- the mountain area generates significant tourist arrivals (2689496 tourists), which, in addition to other reasons for mountain tourism (such as white tourism and spa tourism), also highlights the forms of sustainable tourism, namely tourism in protected areas such as nature parks or biosphere reserves, ecotourism, as well as rural and cultural tourism in Romania's mountain areas

- The Danube Delta is the most important protected area in Romania and therefore has a special place in sustainable tourism

- the structural analysis of tourists indicates the high share of Romanian tourists compared to foreign tourists, although ecotourism is a form of sustainable tourism which plays an important role in the preferences of foreign tourists at international level

- Romanian tourists prefer all tourist destinations, while foreign tourists prefer the Dan Danube Delta, thus ecological and rural tourism, as well as cultural tourism in big cities.

The analysis carried out shows the importance of sustainable forms of tourism in Romania. However, although there are conceptual approaches to these forms of sustainable tourism, including at the level of the Romanian Ministry of Tourism, as well as at the level of non-governmental organizations such as the Romanian Ecotourism Association or the “National Association for Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism in Romania”, which aims to develop and promote sustainable tourism in Romania, there are no statistical data that clearly reflect the forms of sustainable tourism in Romania, which makes it difficult to analyse this tourism phenomenon.

5. Conclusions

In the case of sustainable tourism, its forms are not clearly delimited but intersect with each other, which makes it difficult to accurately assess each form of tourism from a statistical point of view.

Thus, ecotourism intertwined with rural and cultural tourism in many areas, and cultural tourism with religious tourism, depending on the motivation of each tourist.

In Romania, some forms of sustainable tourism are older and established, such as those of cultural, rural and religious tourism, while ecotourism, being a form of tourism developed after 1990, is not perceived at its true value by Romanian tourists, but not by the local and central authorities, which makes it not captured in the statistical data as a distinct form of sustainable tourism.

Sustainable tourism, through the main forms in which it manifests itself, plays an important role at the local and global level, due to the minimization of negative effects and the maximization of positive ones.

6. References

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