

ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN COORDINATES OF MOUNTAIN TOURISM IN ROMANIA

Roxana Elena POPȘA¹

Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Sibiu, Romania

Abstract

Worldwide, mountain tourism is one of the fastest growing market segments, with over 2000 mountain resorts boasting an industry of over 115 million skiers. Romania has a vast mountain tourism potential, with numerous resorts that ensure both winter sports and opportunities for recreation and knowledge of cultural and ethnographic values of local communities. The present paper aims to analyze the mountain tourism potential of Romania and the development possibilities of this segment of the tourist market.

Keywords: *Mountain Tourism, Natural Resources, Tourists' Arrivals*

JEL classification: *L83, Z32*

1. Introduction

Globally, the mountain areas occupy about 24% of the planet's land, and the relative homogeneous distribution between the continents, makes mountain tourism one of the preferred forms of tourism by a growing number of tourists (De la Cruz del Rio-Rama et al., 2018).

According to the specialists in the field ((Mohd Taher et al., 2015), after coastal tourism, mountain tourism is the second segment of the tourist market in terms of profitability, covering a wide range of tourists motivations including: winter sports, recreation, hiking, cultural preferences etc.

Landscaping in mountain areas is a dynamic and complex process of organizing the tourist space considering the relationship between the environment and human communities. It aims at the optimal and sustainable

¹ *Lecturer Ph.D., Faculty of Economic Sciences, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romania, roxana.popsa@ulbsibiu.ro*

capitalization of the tourism resources from a territory in order to achieve a modern tourism with a diversified offer, which would lead to the full satisfaction of the tourists' motivations; the coordinated development of tourism with other sectors of the economy within the limits of the given space, these being integrated in the process of planning and general arrangement of the territory; superior capitalization of resources in the context of protection and conservation of the natural and built environment, namely sustainable development (Neacșu et.al, 2011).

For attracting tourists, in a mountain resort, quality is one of the basic conditions, and for their loyalty and promotion of a competitive image is fundamental the existence of an integrated tourist product.

In this context, the successful mountain areas on the international tourism market are those that have managed to meet all requests such as: accessibility, quality equipment optimally sized, various tourist products available to tourists, multiple facilities, thus, it becomes appropriate to know the coordinates of tourism mountain in Romania.

2. Mountain tourism in Romania - trends and perspectives

Romania represents an important destination for mountain tourism, with almost 28% of the country occupied by the Carpathian Mountains (Ilieș et al., 2017). In the conditions of the Romanian Carpathians, the ski area has a relatively limited distribution compared to the total conventional surface of about 70,000 km², but important as a tourist potential in the perspective of an adequate capitalization. Thus, the ski area is mainly developed in the mountain massifs Postavaru, Bucegi, Gârbova.

From the point of view of the endowments for the practice of winter sports, in our country the efforts were focused on the arrangement of some ski slopes and mechanical climbing installations, in this sense the following can be mentioned:

- the total number of ski slopes arranged in our country is over 300, with a total length of over 160 km, most of them being in the resorts on Prahova Valley and Poiana Brasov (about 45%);
- more than half of the optimal capacity to receive of the slope (people / hour), belongs to the resorts Poiana Brasov, Sinaia and Predeal, which have the best arranged and organized ski slopes.

In addition to the ski area, another coordinate of mountain tourism is represented by the accommodation base.

Therefore, data contained in the table below show the existing accommodation capacity in Romania's mountain resorts, in the last three years.

Table 1. Existing accommodation capacity in Romania's mountain resorts, in 2017-2019

Types of tourist accommodation structures	2017		2018		2019	
	Number of establishments	Number of beds	Number of establishments	Number of beds	Number of establishments	Number of beds
Hotels	206	18471	208	18552	204	18710
Hostels	34	1513	36	1387	40	1538
Apartment hotels	6	204	5	166	4	126
Motels	19	1203	20	1206	16	939
Tourist villas	206	4913	223	5349	214	5183
Tourist chalets	144	4674	151	4621	152	4651
Bungalows	25	441	33	381	52	403
Holiday villages	5	358	4	260	4	256
Camping sites	14	1184	13	1160	12	1134
Tourist halting places	15	603	14	593	14	657
Houselet-type units	20	586	18	494	24	582
School and pre-school camps	16	1574	16	1723	16	1737
Tourist boarding houses	449	9263	471	9661	155	9428
Agro-tourist boarding houses	1110	18903	1161	19436	1134	19373
Total	2269	63890	2373	64989	2342	64718

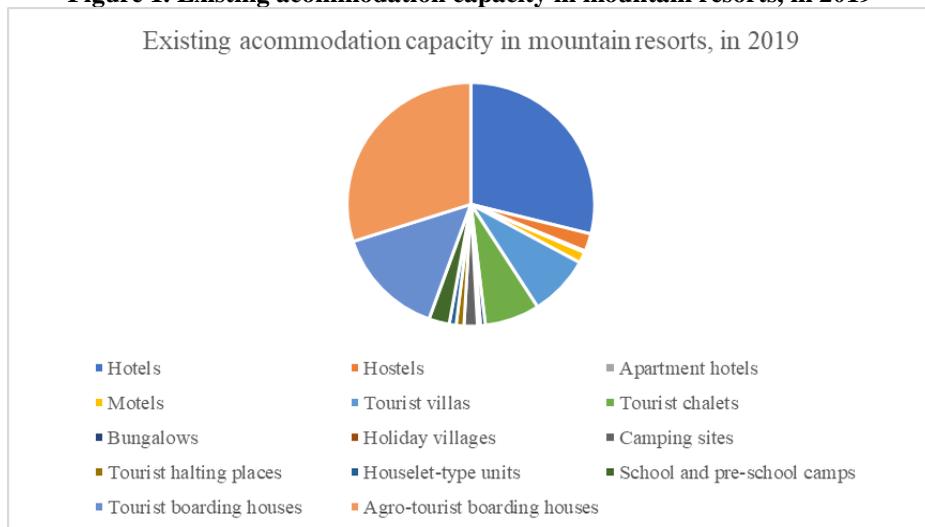
Source: INSSE, 2020

The data contained in table 1 indicate that the mountain resorts in Romania provide a diversified accommodation base, which in 2019 registered a slight decrease in terms of accommodation units, more precisely a decrease with 1.30% compared to the previous year.

Regarding the accommodation capacity existing in the mountain resorts – at the level of 2019 – it can be mentioned – by analysing the data contained in the figure below – that on the first place in the hierarchy of

structures with tourist accommodation functions are agrotourism pensions, which represent about 30% of the total capacity, and in the second place are the hotels with a percentage of 28.91%. At the opposite pole are the apartment hotels and houselet-type units, which provide only 0.19% respectively 0.90% of the total accommodation capacity.

Figure 1. Existing accommodation capacity in mountain resorts, in 2019



Source: INSSE, 2020

The flows of tourists staying in mountain resorts registered an increase of 15.1% in 2019, compared to 2017. The table below illustrates the evolution of arrivals and overnight stays in Romania's mountain resorts during the reference period for both Romanian and foreign tourists.

Table 2. Evolution of arrivals and overnight stays in Romania’s mountain resorts, in 2017-2019

Year	Arrivals	Romanian tourist	Foreign tourists	Overnight stays	Romanian tourists	Foreign tourists
2017	2.019.142	1.800.140	219.002	4.178.123	3.723.816	454.307
2018	2.217.110	1.997.812	219.298	4.544.949	4.108.910	436.039
2019	2.305.517	2.109.378	196.139	4.810.148	4.421.424	388.724

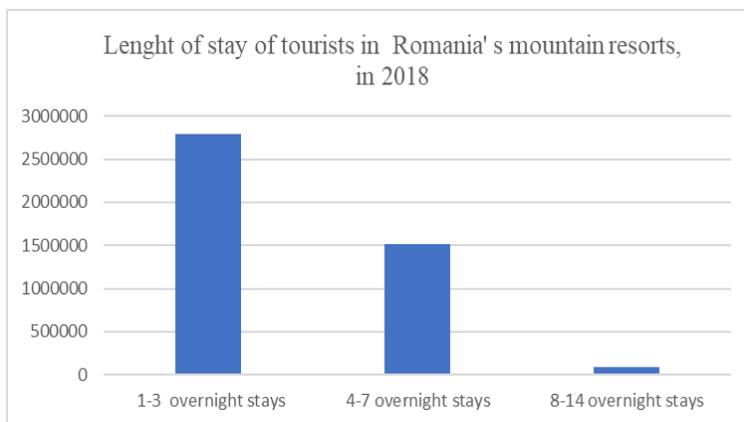
Source: INSSE, 2020

Furthermore, in 2019, the mountainous areas registered 17.24% of the total tourist arrivals in Romania and 15.98% of the total overnight stays.

As a result of the distribution of arrivals between Romanian and foreign tourists, we find that the first represent over 90% of the arrivals in the mountain resorts, a domination that remains constant during the last three years.

According to the National Institute of Statistics, 63.18% of the tourists chose to spend in the mountain resorts between 1 and 3 nights, and only 2.11% chose a stay longer than 8 nights, as can be seen from the figure below.

Figure 2: Length of stay of tourists in Romanian’s mountain resorts in 2018



Source: INSSE, 2020

The low number of foreign tourists who choose to practice mountain tourism in Romania, but also the low average length of stay in these resorts, can be explained by the following weak points facing mountain tourism in our country: degradation of tourist infrastructure (markings, indicators) and the network of mountain refuges; small number of information centres; predominance of low comfort accommodation units; poor access infrastructure (road and rail) to tourist attractions; undersizing the facilities for practicing winter sports; weak Transcarpathian road and rail connections; low leisure opportunities.

Therefore, a large part of the ski area in Romania is undervalued. Thus, the international experience in the development of mountain tourism has led to the definition of some actions meant to increase the competitiveness of mountain resorts:

- ensuring the accessibility of the resorts by building or arranging modern and efficient communication routes;
- concentration of accommodation facilities in resorts near the ski slopes and cable transport facilities, in order to limit unnecessary travel;
- combining the basic tourist activity (winter sports) with other activities meant to increase the interest and attraction for the resorts, to complete them and to diversify their profile;
- for each part of the resort, the most suitable cable transport installation must be chosen, both in terms of operational efficiency and in terms of its investment and profitability.

3. Conclusions

Tourism can become one of the key factors in the process of economic development, taking into account the fact that Romania has a huge tourist potential, adequate for mountain tourism. One of the main aspects to be addressed in mountain tourism in our country is the insufficient use of its potential or its use in inappropriate conditions, therefore it is necessary to exploit the mountain relief in a way to expand the ski area, correlate accommodation with facilities for winter sports and increase the quality and diversification of the leisure offer.

The priorities in the development of mountain tourism in Romania should pursue in the medium and long term, the development of a complex

tourist offer, to make the most of existing natural resources, in correlation with the conservation of the environment and heritage.

Not least, a major disadvantage that is a cause of stagnation of mountain tourism is the lack of tourism promotion and information about certain tourist areas that can lead to the loss of potential customers who choose other destinations to spend their vacation, so attractiveness and visibility of the mountain resorts must be supported constantly through adequate strategies to promote the mountain tourism offer.

4. References

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