

New Trends in Romanian Tourism in 2018

Mirela Mazilu^{1*}, Daniela Dumitrescu², Roxana Marinescu¹ and Adrian Baltălungă²

¹University of Craiova, Cuza Street, Craiova, Dolj, Romania

²University of Valahia, Târgoviște, Bulevardul Unirii, Târgoviște, Romania

Abstract

The industry of tourism is without a doubt a powerful driver of economic growth. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism currently generates approximately 10 percent of the world's GDP, makes up one in every 10 jobs, accounts for 30 percent of world trade in services, and drives \$1.4 trillion in exports. With this actual increasing globalization, international digital and social connectivity, and easily accessible methods of travel, it is easier than ever before for leisure travellers to jet set to somewhere new and for business professionals to get to that important meeting.

Inspired by the international growth trends, the Romanian tourism recorded a significant increase of about 10% in 2017. In the first nine months of 2017 the number of Romanian tourists by destinations in Romania increased by one million reaching 9.5 million, so that the number of foreign tourists reached a record number of 2,600,000 persons. According to all estimates generously provided by the institutes in question, the total number of tourists who choose destinations in Romania will reach in 2018 (thanks to God and willingness and desire of the tourists) a number of over 12 million - a value that has not been reached since 1990.

Unfortunately, Romania persists in error: authorities continue to stimulate consumption at the expense of exports and investments, but tourism urgently needs investment in infrastructure and quality staff.

Keywords: Tourism; Trends; Strategy; Sustainable; Investment; Growth

Introduction

In shaping and especially in managing a tourist destination such as ROMANIA, it is difficult to make speculative predictions, especially when the infrastructure, the tourism laws, the politics and nature do not help one fight the touristic seasonality [1].

The good news of the Union Centennial Celebration is a heavenly gift for hotel owners. Almost 9 months before the National Day, Alba Iulia no longer has rooms available. All have been booked since the end of last year, without the possibility to find free places in nearby localities either [2,3]. The fortress of the Great Union has gradually become one of the most sought-after touristic destinations in Transylvania, the taxes bringing huge revenues to the local budget [4].

Romania, at the Union Centennial, in terms of tourism, its sustainable development, the Danube Strategy, becomes a permanent attraction point both regionally and competitively at a cross-border-international level, a touristic destination that can compete with the other Danube river countries [5]. Especially, there are tourists who want to discover new places, to get into new, wild, less accessible places, and, as a general trend, to enjoy special travel experiences [6,7]. I can say that 2017 was a good year in tourism (because we barely finished it) as I feel that people, Romanian tourists, are more optimistic - so they plan their holidays and the associated expenses in a more confident and more responsible manner [8-12]. If we manage to offer our clients a special and unique experience from the time of the offer until the actual time of the holiday and continuing with the follow-up after the tourists' return, and the preparation of the new trips, we will surely have a better 2018 than 2017 in Romania, managing to transform Romania and to give it in 2019 what it gives us for free with gratitude (Figure 1). Perhaps we should remember to learn to be united, not just survivors in a country rich in touristic attractions, to recognize and to honour our Romanian geniuses, because we all know: consciousness is like a geyser, an icon of the Romanian people, which gathers us from wherever we are tourists, because the call of the Romanian blood wins (Figure 2).

In what follows, we present concrete data of the positive trend recorded in the trend of Romanian tourism, being the economic field with the greatest resilience to the effects of the economic, political, etc. crisis, all "skipping" the touristic phenomenon that is recording significant increases [13,14]:

Thus, Table 1 and Figure 3 show a massive increase in both Romanian and foreign tourists in 2017 compared to 2016, and in comparison with the period taken as the basis of calculation there is a double increase and even more [15]. By country of origin, the countries of the tourists who visited our country have the following shares: Italy (14.55%), Germany (13.96%), France (8.39%), Hungary (7.3%), the USA at the same level with the United Kingdom (6%), Israel (5.7%), etc.

The years 2014 and 2015 were periods of crisis, the trends being obvious, Romanian tourism being affected by domestic economic events and global phenomena that have left their mark on international tourism [16-20]. The situation of Romania's international tourism is different, which, as shown in the table, has registered a slower but most reliable increase, so that we can speak of almost a tripling of the number of foreign tourists in 2017 compared to 2012 (287.67%) [21].

Regarding the departures of tourists, they have not increased significantly, from 6,274,000 in 2003 to 6,497,000 in 2008, with a percentage increase of 3.5% with specific fluctuations over the same period [22,23].

***Corresponding author:** Mirela Mazilu, University of Craiova, Cuza Street, Craiova, Dolj, Romania, Tel: +0040252316966; Fax: +0040316966; E-mail: mirelamazilu2004@yahoo.com

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On tourist areas, the situation was the following:

- At the seaside, the number of Romanian tourists increased by 32.3% in 2017 as compared to 2012 while the number of foreign tourists almost tripled;
- In the spa resorts, both the number of Romanian and foreign tourists increased by more than 50% in 2017 compared to 2012 (56.13% and 51.72% respectively);
- In the mountain resorts, if the number of Romanian tourists increased by 51.67%, the number of foreign tourists increased about four times;
- In the Danube Delta area, the growth was spectacular, namely: the number of Romanian tourists doubled and the number of foreign tourists increased fivefold.

The Table 2 shows that in all touristic regions of the country, the period 2012-2017 was characterized by a continuous decrease in the number of Romanian tourists, while the number of foreign tourists was constantly increasing due to the efforts of the Romanian authorities to support and promote tourism on the international markets [24]. The

year 2015 meant a return of Romanian tourism due to the growth rates recorded as follows: coastal tourism - 26.09%, mountainous tourism - 19.78%, spa tourism - 30.66%, the Danube Delta tourism - the most spectacular growth 79.41%, and Bucharest, other towns and touristic routes only recorded rates at the level of 2012. These trends intensified in 2017, with all forms of tourism exceeding the levels recorded in 2016 [25].

The conclusions derived from the data collected are the following:

- Domestic demand is continuously decreasing due to the money available for spare time, culture, care and health.
- Decrease of the number of places in the touristic accommodation structures combined with a permanent deterioration of the treatment facilities.
- Some forms of tourism continue to deteriorate in quantitative and qualitative terms mainly from economic causes, although some providers try to provide some facilities.
- The competition identifies means of dominating the issuer markets, both with massive investments (Turkey, Bulgaria), through high quality services (Hungary) and with the use of modern equipment and facilities.

That is why Romanian tourism must “become aware” that the following measures have become absolutely necessary:

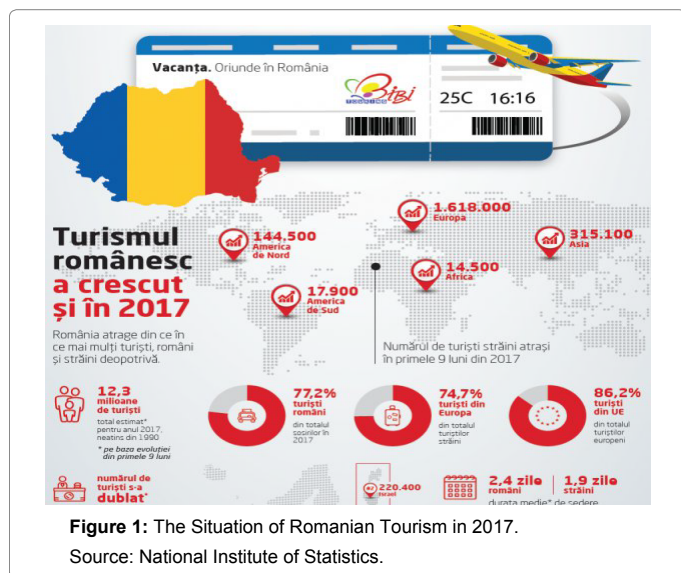
- Continuous market research;
- Continuous and constant promotion precisely targeting certain market segments;
- Elaboration and development of a series of marketing programs at the level of the main representative touristic products within the Romanian offer;
- Rigorous management adoption, based on concepts of quality and competition.

The foreign tourists arriving in Romania want to benefit from reasonable accommodation conditions to ensure a minimum of comfort. In the third millennium, in a country that claims to be fully European, there are still non-electrified localities in the Apuseni Mountains. We can also add the lack of running water supply, the lack of sewerage and the small number of rural telephone stations to these.

Culture and tourism have a symbolic relationship, and the lack of investment to capitalize on the cultural resources of the country will have negative effects on tourists, but also on the resident population. Art and crafts, dances, rituals, legends are likely to be forgotten by younger generations, but can be revitalized when tourists show interest in them. Cultural moments and objectives can be capitalized through the use of funds from tourism. Culture and tourism must support each other and develop a constant relationship of long-term help. This cooperation can be achieved by involving both the government sector and the private sector in a mutually beneficial partnership.

As a promotion, Romania has not created a clear and strong image on the international market because it has not adopted a systematic and constant policy of attracting foreign tourists. One year the seaside and Dracula were promoted, the Danube Delta and rural tourism were promoted in the following year, all of which created a confusing image in the minds of foreigners interested in Romania [26].

Following the analysis of Romania’s strengths and weaknesses, it is



Indicator	M.U.	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
1. Tourists Romanians	thousands	4,314	4,053	3,960	3,848	3,952	5,809
trend	%	100.0	93.95	91.79	89.20	91.61	134.65
2. Tourists Foreigners	thousands	795	867	914	999	1,104	2,287
trend	%	100.0	109.06	114.97	125.66	138.87	287.67
3. Overnight stays Romanians	thousands	15,689	15,497	15,731	14,742	15,080	21,295
trend	%	100.0	98.78	100.27	93.96	96.12	135.73
4. Overnight stays Foreigners	thousands	1,981	2,149	2,390	2,534	2,766	4,674
trend	%	100.0	108.48	120.65	127.92	139.63	235.94

Source: National Institute of Statistics (processed data)

Table 1: Tourists' Trend Recorded In Accommodation Units In 2012-2017.

Touristic Areas	M.U.	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
I. Seaside Resorts, Excluding Constanța City							
Romanian tourists	thousands	643	638	614	623	810	850
Trend	%	100.00	99.22	95.50	97.36	126.09	132.30
Foreign tourists	thousands	34	32	43	57	86	117
Trend	%	100.00	94.28	125.71	165.71	248.57	337.14
II. SPA Resorts							
Romanian tourists	thousands	635	651	662	601	830	992
Trend	%	100.0	102.52	104.25	94.65	130.66	156.13
Foreign tourists	thousands	28	25	25	32	40	43
Trend	%	100.00	89.66	89.66	113.79	141.38	151.72
III. Mountainous Resorts							
Romanian tourists	thousands	717	668	661	601	759	1,088
Trend	%	100.00	93.17	92.20	83.84	119.78	151.67
Foreign tourists	thousands	71	87	87	97	217	301
Trend	%	100.0	122.22	122.22	136.11	302.78	419.44
IV. The Danube Delta Area, Including Tulcea City							
Romanian tourists	thousands	33	29	39	28	60	66
Trend	%	100.0	88.24	117.65	85.29	179.41	197.05
Foreign tourists	thousands	5	4	5	6	22	30
Trend	%	100.0	83.33	100.0	116.67	383.33	516.67
V. Bucharest and County Capital Cities, Excluding Tulcea							
Romanian tourists	thousands	1,663	1,578	1,512	1,536	1,685	2,074
Trend	%	100.0	94.89	90.93	92.37	101.32	124.70
Foreign tourists	thousands	597	658	686	721	1,179	1,596
Trend	%	100.0	110.22	114.91	120.77	197.49	267.50
VI. Other Towns and Touristic Routes							
Romanian tourists	thousands	618	484	466	452	620	732
Trend	%	100.0	78.35	75.44	73.18	100.32	118.42
Foreign tourists	thousands	55	57	63	81	145	194
Trend	%	100.0	103.57	114.29	146.43	260.71	348.21

Source: National Institute of Statistics - processed data

Table 2: Touristic Flow Trend by Touristic Areas In 2012-2017.

possible to identify the directions of action that will have to be followed by Romania's international tourism re-launch strategy: development of general infrastructure, development of tourism infrastructure, creation and intensive promotion of competitive tourism products to capitalize on both the anthropogenic and the natural potential, the improvement of the services offered to the tourists, but also the creation of a coherent image on the foreign markets, a picture which must be completely different from that of the direct competitors: Hungary and Bulgaria.

Opportunities and threats, more related to the country's external environment, can only be anticipated and supported or prevented by measures that maximize beneficial effects and minimize negative outcomes. A permanent analysis of the economic, social and political developments on the target markets should be carried out in order to identify the changes that occur, the changes that can influence positively or negatively the international tourism-receiving activity of Romania. Among the threats that Romania may face, there is the deterioration

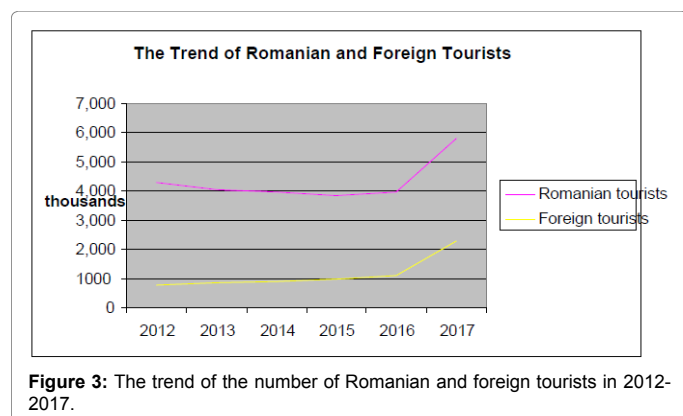


Figure 3: The trend of the number of Romanian and foreign tourists in 2012-2017.

of the economic situation of the Western European countries and especially of the big tourist issuers, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, France, Italy, plus the threats of new terrorist attacks, which will further contract the demand for tourism. The IMF report highlights the weakness of the euro area economies relative to the rest of the world. The European Union has seen a trend of economic growth based on stronger external demand, with the domestic consumption being kept at a very low level.

Globalization can, in turn, bring negative effects as well in addition to the positive effects of increasing investment and employment. The latter will be felt especially on the cultural level by the deterioration, for the sake of greater profits, of traditional customs and lifestyle. This is one of the negative effects of globalization, tourism being interested not only in the natural and anthropogenic resources of a country, but also in aspects of cultural values, customs and traditions, specific holidays.

Given that Romania is intended to be promoted as a destination for discovering traditions, there is the risk that in a few decades we will only be able to show specific customs of Romania in pictures and special events, which will bear the mark of the consumer society.

The six Romanian most competitive tourism products, recognized on the European and international tourism market, are: cultural circuits, nature tourism, rural tourism, city break packages, active and adventure tourism, spa and wellness tourism.

Among the supporting elements we mention:

The authenticity

- The cultural mix which has been kept alive for centuries by the ancient customs and folklore;
- Romania is one of the most rural societies in EU;
- Conservation of the uniqueness of the rural areas.

Unique cultural heritage

- UNESCO world heritage sites spread throughout the country;
- Romania is the only country in the world with both Latin and Byzantine cultural heritage;
- Unique painted monasteries and wooden churches in the world.

Virgin nature and landscapes

- 13 National Parks and 13 Natural Reservation (7% of the country's surface represent protected areas);

- The abundance of rare species of flora and fauna in Europe.
- The largest river delta in Europe (Danube Delta).

In the same context it has been established that the main competitive advantages of Romania are the virgin nature and landscapes (the Carpathian chain, the Danube Delta), the uniqueness of the cultural heritage (the UNESCO sites) and the authenticity of the culture and lifestyle.

The sustainable development that we want for Romanian tourism can be considered as a very ideal to preserve and protect the political and economic power held. In order to find a solution to this problem, it is necessary to adjust the "socio-economic and ecological systems of this "given" of globalization: Sustainable development" [1,2].

"Sustainability has three independent aspects for tourism as well as for other industries: economic, social-cultural and environmental. The sustainable development implies permanence, meaning that the sustainable tourism represents the optimal usage of resources (including the biological diversity), the minimisation of the negative economic, social-cultural and ecologic impact, the maximisation of benefits on the local communities, the national economy and the preservation of nature. As a natural consequence, sustainability also refers to the managerial structures needed to meet these challenges."

Areas that have managed to preserve their nature, ecotourism areas also have the authenticity and the traditional way of life, will continuously awaken the interest of more and more segments of potential visitors, taking into account the fact that the international market is following two important trends: the sophistication of the tourists' taste who are looking for special experiences and the increase in the number of those who opt for holidays where art, culture, history, education and spirituality play an important role. To maintain and re-enter a sustainable, evolutionary trajectory, Romanian tourism must adopt the following elements of strategy focused on its sustainability, schematically presented in Figure 4.

Causes of imbalance with a major impact on Romanian tourism regarding the situation faced by Romania

"A basic requirement for the qualitative existence of tourist destinations in Romania is to remain competitive. The actions undertaken for this purpose should be considered as part of the process of creating a sustainable nature, representing one of the most important competitive advantages" [2].

The targeted tourist for practicing sustainable tourism is discerning travellers, willing to make extra efforts to reach unexplored places and escape from crowded areas with mass tourism. These people travel frequently, live in medium/large cities, lead a healthy and active life, are open and tolerant, choose destinations with values they believe and share, respect the natural, social and cultural environment, are experienced in using state-of-the-art technologies, read a lot, both at home and on the go, looking for details of where they travel by using the internet, travel guides or other recommendations. Discerning travellers are opinion leaders and trend setters, and their recommendations can lead to attracting new segments of tourists to the destinations that have made a pleasant impression.

A Kottler's older definition, which is probably the source of confusion with the logo, defines the BRAND as a name, term, sign, symbol, or combination of them that identifies the manufacturer or the seller of a product or service. Let's note, however, that this old

definition is already showing the concept of visual identity, but without involving a certain period of brand status, another source of confusion. Then marketing theorists have increasingly complicated this BRAND definition, around a complex of positive meanings transmitted to a particular type of consumer to whom it addresses (attributes, benefits, values, culture, personality), deepening the concept of brand equity.

The consumer/the tourist reacts to the huge amount of information [...], accepting only what is consistent with his/her previous knowledge or experience. Three conclusions emerge from this logic. It is not easy to build consumer perceptions, but once formed, changing them is really difficult. That is why positioning should be thought of well from the beginning. In an over-crowded information environment, the message to the consumer needs to be simplified and built in consonance with his/her earlier beliefs, focusing on his/her perceptions, not on the intrinsic reality of the product. The third conclusion, but the most important one, the positioning requires the deep knowledge of the target consumer (Figure 5).

Conclusion

Concluding, regarding the new 2018 trends which are quite obvious in Romanian tourism, the purposes of practising a sustainable tourism must be followed and targeted in order to for the trends to become sustainable:

- to improve the quality of life of the host community;
- to provide equity within and between generations;
- to protect the quality of the environment by maintaining biological diversity and ecological systems;
- to ensure the cultural integrity and the social cohesion of the community;

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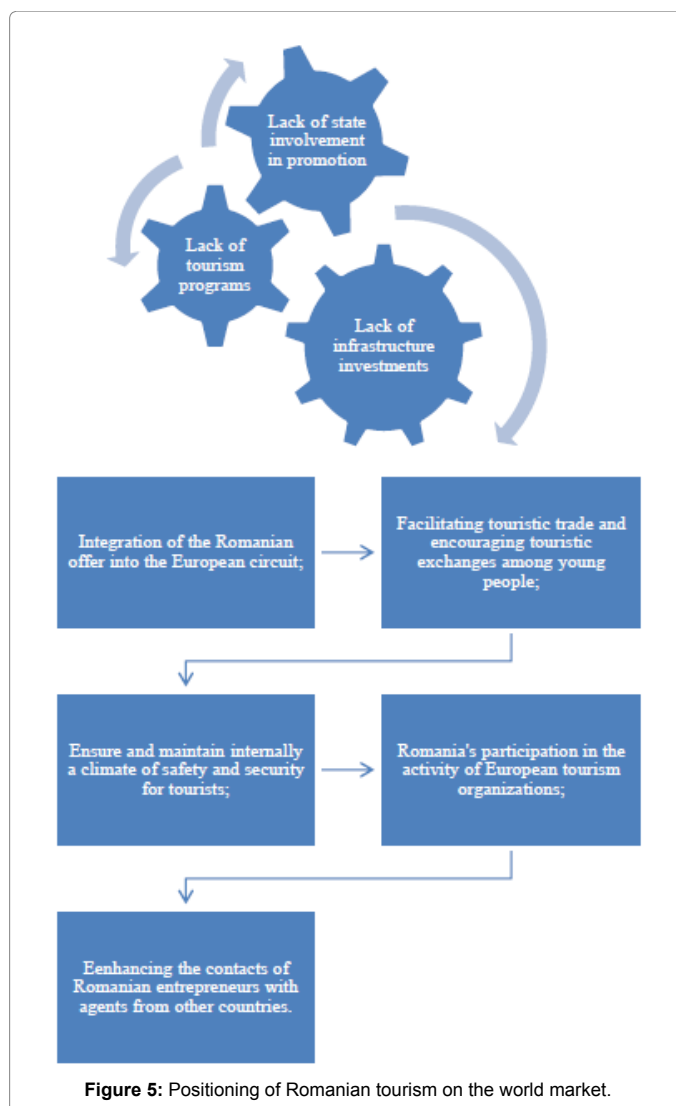


Figure 5: Positioning of Romanian tourism on the world market.

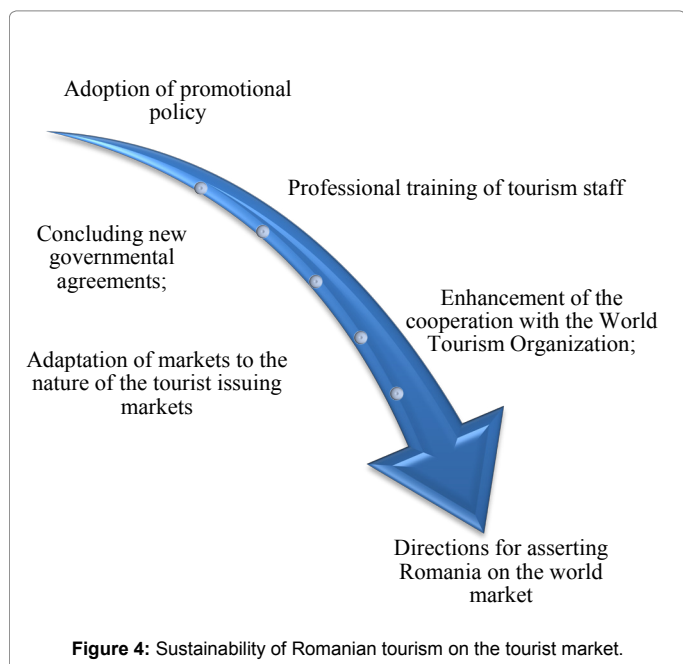


Figure 4: Sustainability of Romanian tourism on the tourist market.

on a very dynamic tourism market must be well thought out from the start. In an over-crowded information environment, the message to the consumer needs to be simplified and built in line with his/her previous beliefs, focusing on his/her perceptions, not on the intrinsic reality of the touristic product offered by Romanian tourism. The third conclusion, but the most important one, is that this positioning requires a deep knowledge of the target consumer.

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