
TOURISM MANAGEMENT EXPLAINED IN ROMANIA BASED ON THE TOURISM INDICATORS IN RURAL TOURISM

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Abstract

The rural tourism is in full development at European level, especially in Romania. The rural environment in which ecological and agro-tourism accommodation units are located is known in the European Union as an oasis of relaxation for Romanian and foreign tourists. Accommodation services with various specificities are constantly evaluated by specialists, offering tourists the security of spending their time for recreation, recovery, relaxation in optimal overnight conditions, in Romanian ecotourism.

The evolution of ecotourism has involved changes in accommodation structures through intelligent tools for electrifying protected areas, accommodation spaces, and leisure spaces. Also, equipping accommodation units with traditional furniture is necessary for the ecotourism labeling specific to European Union countries.

Both the number of tourist arrivals and the number of overnight stays depend on the quality index of accommodation services registered in Romania.

Keywords: ecotourism, rural tourism, tourism management, sustainable tourism.

JEL Classification: M00, M01, M11.

Introduction

The analysis of tourism management was carried out using the results of the simple linear regression model from the previously presented articles, in the economic contexts present in the years 2023, 2024, through which the mass tourism indices and niche tourism indices are correlated. In the specialized literature, responsible tourism is defined as a form of tourism focused on the principles of protecting natural areas supported by the national ecotourism infrastructure.

The social accountability of ecotourism involves the adoption of measures for the development of national responsible tourism. In counties with ecotourism demand, emphasis is placed on measures to improve ecotourism services, so that national sustainable tourism can follow its evolution over time.

The tourism offer in the country is diversified, with important players appearing in the tourism services market in: rural tourism, agrotourism, ecotourism. The number of overnight stays in ecotourism accommodation units is continuously increasing, with agrotourism and ecotourism accommodation bases having an increasing frequency.

Tourism demand is continuously increasing, by approximately 8%, year on year, in the last decade. The rural tourism offer increased by approximately 28%, with accommodation units being 32% more in 2023, compared to those recorded in 2020-2022 in the counties of Covasna, Harghita, Maramureş, Braşov.

In Romania, the rural tourism has a small share in mass tourism, with competitors at European level implementing existing tourism development strategies in national economic development strategies.

The Romanian Ecotourism Association states that green tourism meets the conditions for conserving natural resources, using local resources (financial, human, informational, material). It also represents measures for the implementation of sustainable tourism, having an educational character in an ecological spirit.

Another intelligent management path is to respect nature by raising awareness among tourists and local communities. Minimizing all tourism activities that could affect nature, the cultural and social environment is a measure to protect existing natural areas in Romania.

In the work *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. A/RES/70/1, produced by the United Nations (sustainabledevelopment.un.org accessed 25.02.2024) one of the objectives of sustainable tourism management is the conservation of the natural heritage of the tourist area. The objectives of responsible tourism aim to "Protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt the decline of biodiversity" (sustainabledevelopment.un.org accessed 20.02.2024). In the country, attempts are being made to implement programs to protect natural areas specific to ecotourism through activities to conserve the environment exploited in an agrotourism sense. Among the main ecotourism attractions are the tourist attractions in the country's mountainous areas, natural areas where tourists experience the recovery of labor in mountain ecotourism areas. Romanian ecotourism has been on an upward trend in the last decade, but the evolution from one year to the next is in a small percentage.

Research methodology, data, results and discussions

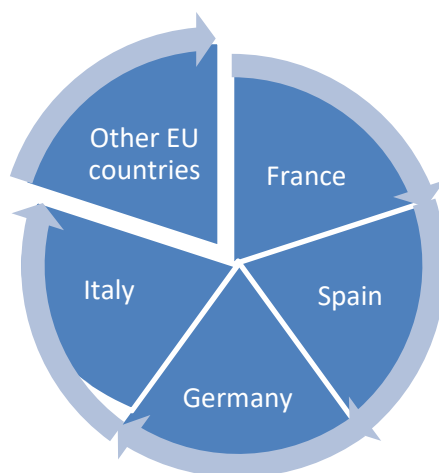
1. Analysis of the evolution of tourism indicators recorded during the period 2019-2024

In the ranking of the economies of the European Union countries, the income collected from European tourism represents a 30% segment.

The labor market in the tourism industry in the European Union is continuously developing, with France, Germany, Italy and Spain occupying the first positions in receiving foreign and national tourists

Ranking of the main European countries that register the largest number of foreign and national tourists in the European Union

Figure no. 1



Source: created by the author.

2. Evolution of average income per employee in rural tourism accommodation units in Romania

The author studies the evolution of the average annual net income per employee, during the period 2019-2024, an indicator presented in Table no. 1:

Evolution of the average annual net income per employee, during the period 2019-2024

Table no. 1

Period analyzed	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Average annual net income per employee (RON)	5165	5432	5472	5423	5381	5279

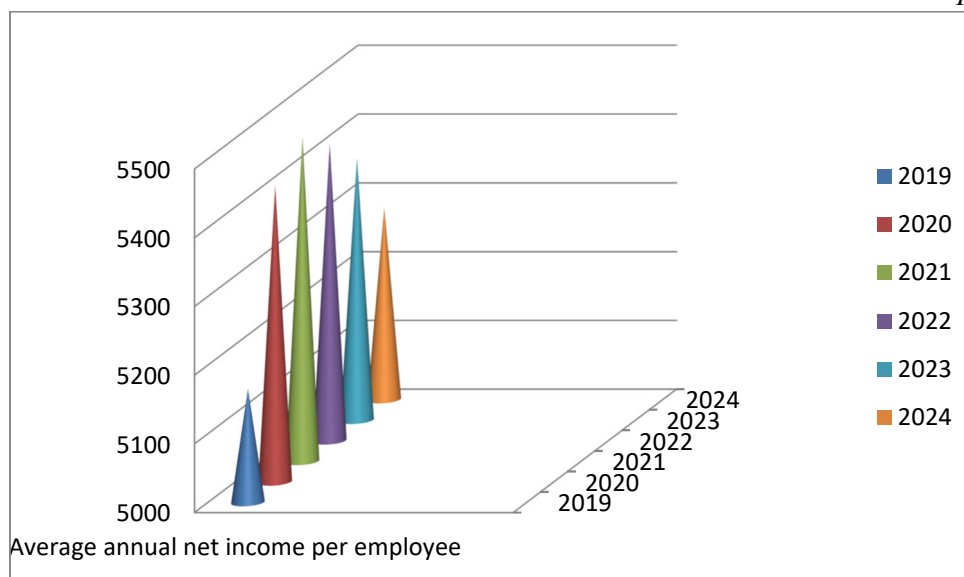
Source: TempoOnline, National Institute of Statistics.

In Table no. 1, the average monthly net income per employee recorded during the mentioned period can be observed. Starting with 2020, average net income increased until 2022, followed by a gradual decrease in 2023 and 2024, effects that influence the purchasing power of Romanian ecotourism packages in the counties: Braşov, Covasna, Harghita, Maramureş, Sibiu, Cluj.

In Figure no. 2, the evolution of the average annual net income per employee is presented:

Evoluţia venitului mediu net anual pe angajat, în România, în perioada 2019-2024

Figura nr. 2



Source: created by the author.

In the study conducted, Romanian tourists reserve approximately 24% of their net income for annual vacations in tourist areas of educational and recreational interest.

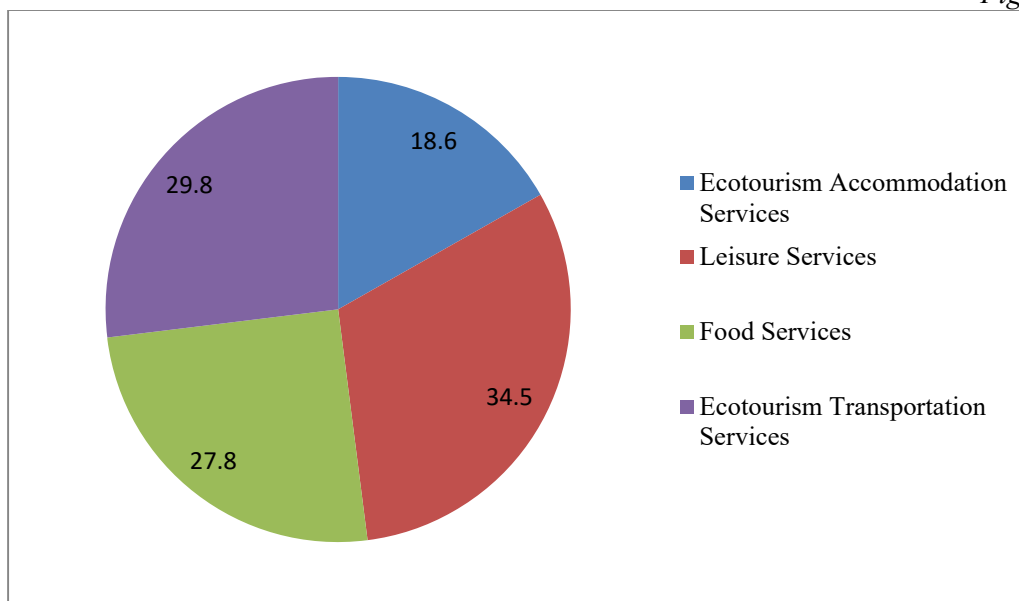
It can be seen that the average annual net income per employee has increased in the last decade, which contributes to increasing the quality of the employee's professional life. The studied indicator is expected to continue evolving in the coming years, with the trend recorded showing a constant increase.

Leisure services are the most sought after by Romanian tourists, as they contribute to the recovery of the employee's workforce. Romanian-specific food services are increasingly accessed by foreign and Romanian tourists, Romanian cuisine being among the most appreciated worldwide.

Figure no. 3 presents the structure of ecotourism accommodation services in Romania in 2024:

Structure of ecotourism accommodation services in Romania, in 2024

Figure no. 3



Sursa: realizat de către autor.

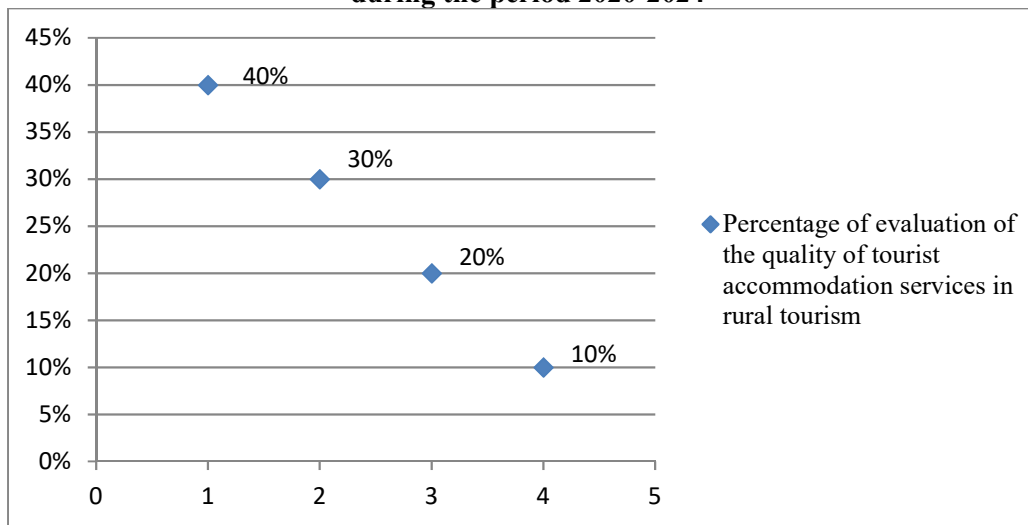
Following the results of the evaluations of ecotourism services, in the period 2020-2024, the author proposes a series of measures to improve the quality of ecotourism services in the Romanian rural area in order to attract more foreign tourists, with ecotourism accommodation conditions currently being evaluated as: 40% "Poor", 30% "Satisfactory", 20% "Good" and 10% "Very good".

Food services in ecotourism are quantified at a percentage of 78% with the qualification "Satisfactory", a result that highlights the lack of "Organic" ingredients in the preparation of menus for tourists present in ecotourism accommodation units.

The issue of developing the agrotourism and ecotourism fields by increasing the quality of the tourist services offered is debated worldwide. At a European level, ecotourism services are recording a continuous evolutionary trend. At a national level, mass tourism services are more sought after by Romanian tourists.

Among ecotourism transport services are: carriage transport services, horse riding services, cycle tourism services, these taking place in mountainous areas where rural tourism activities are carried out. In the counties of Covasna, Harghita, Braşov, Maramureş, ecotourism accommodation services have been developed intelligently through the national programs "SMART Tourism" and Start-Up Nation.

Figure no. 4. Evaluation of the quality of tourist accommodation services in rural tourism, during the period 2020-2024



Source: created by the author..

Compared to the level of quality of agrotourism accommodation services recorded in the period 2007-2016, a slow evolution of the level of quality of Romanian ecotourism services was observed, compared to the situation recorded in the European Union, in the period 2020-2024.

In this sense, the author proposed improving rural tourism services by improving accommodation services in accommodation units in rural communities where ecotourism economic activities are carried out.

The quality of ecotourism services is defined as the asset of success in terms of carrying out ecotourism activity in optimal conditions. At the same time, the maximum satisfaction of the ecotourist's need and the attempt to obtain zero defects of national tourism services. Diversification of ecotourism services is essential in European, national, regional and local tourism.

Orientation towards the needs of the tourist, in order to maximally satisfy tourist demand are strategic objectives in tourism management tactics. Increased attention is required from ecotourism service providers, and the orientation on the ecotourism product is dependent on the one mentioned above.

According to the data presented in previous research. the accommodation capacity in rural areas reaches the maximum quota of 5858656 places in agrotourism guesthouses, in 2021, which leads to an increase in rural and ecotourism tourism demand. Camping sites have almost tripled their number of places from 2019 to 2024, information that denotes an increased interest of the tourist in protecting nature, and at the same time, its valorization.

Conclusions

The social responsibility of ecotourism in the future involves adopting a new paradigm that encourages innovation, both for public administrations and for tourism businesses. Traditional tourism consumers get involved in agritourism every year, purchasing tourist services for accommodation, leisure, food and transport specific to ecotourism.

Branding strategies for tourist packages are the first step to be taken to achieve smart tourist objectives. Ecotourism labeling of such tourist packages implies, first of all, reputation in ecotourism and prestige in innovating sustainable and responsible ecotourism services. The effects of international green tourism are found in the turnover of each ecotourism accommodation unit in the country.

This form of rural tourism can be defined as *responsible tourism*, because it protects both the final consumer and the local community. Among the objectives of responsible tourism are the implementation and development of green tourism that leads to supporting *sustainable tourism*.

The lifestyle of buyers of ecotourism services has changed. Traditional mass media is increasingly ill-equipped to support the construction of a brand based on emotional and nationalistic coordinates in Romanian rural tourism. Product promotion is done by displaying tourist packages with the help of modern technology. The use of the internet and social networks have a major impact on tourist demand, as information circulates quickly over long distances and in different social environments.

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