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SUSTAINABLE PROMOTION OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN ROMANIA

PROMOVAREA DURABILĂ A DESTINAȚIILOR TURISTICE DIN ROMÂNIA

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Rezumat. *Ca țară, România urmărește să-și promoveze la nivel internațional autenticitatea, diversitatea tradițiilor și obiceiurilor, potențialul turistic natural și moștenirea cultural-istorică. În secolul XXI, din punct de vedere turistic, mass-media joacă un rol important în promovarea imaginii destinațiilor turistice din România. Scopul acestui studiu științific este de a identifica, analiza, procesa și interpreta datele statistice disponibile despre destinațiile turistice din România cu ajutorul sistemelor de informații geografice (GIS) pentru a informa factorii de decizie locali și turiștii despre adevăratele valori naturale și valorile culturale ale spațiului geografic românesc.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *promovare durabilă, destinații turistice, ghid de promovare, sosiri turistice, GIS, România.*

Abstract. *As a country, Romania seeks to internationally promote its authenticity, diversity of traditions and customs, natural tourist potential, and cultural–historical heritage. In the 21st century, from a tourist point of view, mass media plays an important role in promoting the image of tourist destinations in Romania. The purpose of this scientific work is to identify, analyze, process, and interpret the available statistical data about tourist destinations in Romania with the aid of geographic information systems (GIS), in order to inform local decision-makers and tourists about the true natural and cultural values of the Romanian geographical space.*

Keywords: *sustainable promotion, tourist destinations, promotion guide, tourist arrivals, GIS, Romania.*

Introduction

The promotion of tourist destinations is based on the expectations and desires of tourists [1], which are fulfilled when connection with a vivid image of a tourism objective in their consciousness is achieved and, at the same time, they experience emotional feedback [2, 3, 4]. Each of the tourist destinations analyzed in this research are picturesque landscapes and lookout areas, which unify into a floristic and faunal landscape system.

A tourist destination is a location for tourism activities to be carried out, and the visitors are the core of the tourism activities within tourist resorts. With the accelerated growth of tourism, many tourists are heading to tourist destinations in Romania to carry out tourist activities.

From the visitor's point of view, the choice of a tourist destination is determined by the following characteristics: tourist attractions, previous satisfaction with a spectacular destination, the tourist's wants and needs, the image of the tourist destination, the distance from home, the interactions between visitors and the local community and, finally, the tourist's budget [5, 6].

In the process of sustainable promotion of tourist destinations, sustainable tourism should be seen as a new and indispensable development strategy in the medium- and long-term, which truly takes into account the repercussions of tourism on the whole process of economic, environmental, and social development; sustainable development is also an important way to increase the competitiveness of tourist destinations and social prosperity [7, 8].

In many cases, sustainable tourism promotion is at the core of efforts to build and realize the tourism brand for countries, urban areas, historical regions, and major tourist destinations. Tourist information centers, tourist documentation on tourist destinations, and tourist promotion offices in Romania, together with decision-makers from local and county public administrations, should develop strategies for designing, structuring, and promoting the representative tourist destinations of Romania.

Better knowledge, understanding, and distribution of the geographical location of tourist destinations in Romania can be achieved using geographic information systems (GIS), which are widely used to analyze, edit, and visualize geographic data [9, 10].

Methodology

Study Area

According to Prăvălie et al. (2020), Romania is the largest country in south-eastern Europe [11]. Romania (Figure 1) is located in Central Europe [12, p. 17]. It has an area of 238,391 km², thus occupying the 13th place in Europe in terms of largest countries, covering about 4.8% of the surface of the continent, and is the 80th largest country on the globe. Its position within the continent places Romania at almost equal distances from the continent's extreme points – Cape Roca (about 2,950 km) in the SW, the Ural Mountains (2,600 km) in the east and the North Cape (2,800 km) in Norway. To the south, Cape Matapan in the Peloponnese Peninsula is only 1,050 km away [13].

Data Sources

First, previous research on tourist destinations in Romania was analyzed. For this, the Google Scholar and Web of Science databases were explored, using "tourism promotion" and "tourism destinations" as the main keywords.

Second, the scientific documentation stage consisted of using the sources for the preparation and analyses necessary for the research.

This study only used secondary data collected from the National Institute of Statistics [14]. The secondary data focus on analysis of the number of tourist arrivals, and on the specifics of the development and promotion of tourist destinations in Romania. Based on the secondary data, various graphs were produced using the descriptive statistical method.

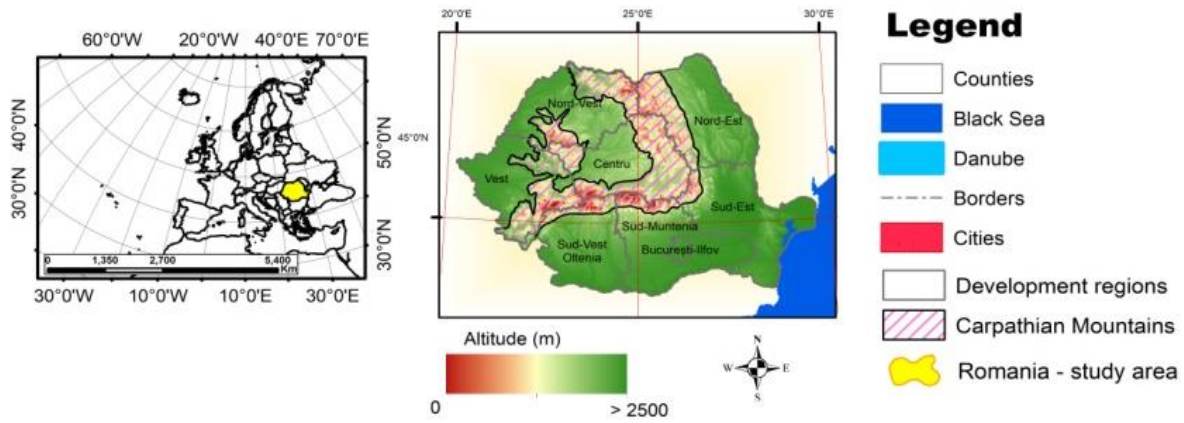


Fig. 1. Romania's position on the continent and its national context

Source: Authors' processing of ArcGIS 10.7.2 data

Results and Discussion

What is a tourist destination?

A tourist destination is a well-defined geographical space where a tourist stops—either for one or more nights of accommodation (within tourist reception structures, e.g., hotels, motels, tourist guesthouses, tourist villas, etc.) or for a short period of time—regardless of whether they are traveling for tourism or business purposes. As a result, we can appreciate the fact that a tourist destination includes two significant elements, from the point of view of tourism development and promotion (Figure 2):

1) Tourist attractions, which include historical monuments, memorial houses, museums, theaters, cinemas, zoos, parks and urban gardens, nature reserves, beaches, viewpoints or areas, and so on.

2) Tourist facilities, which include hotels, motels, mansions, restaurants, campsites, amusement parks, and tourist information and documentation centers.

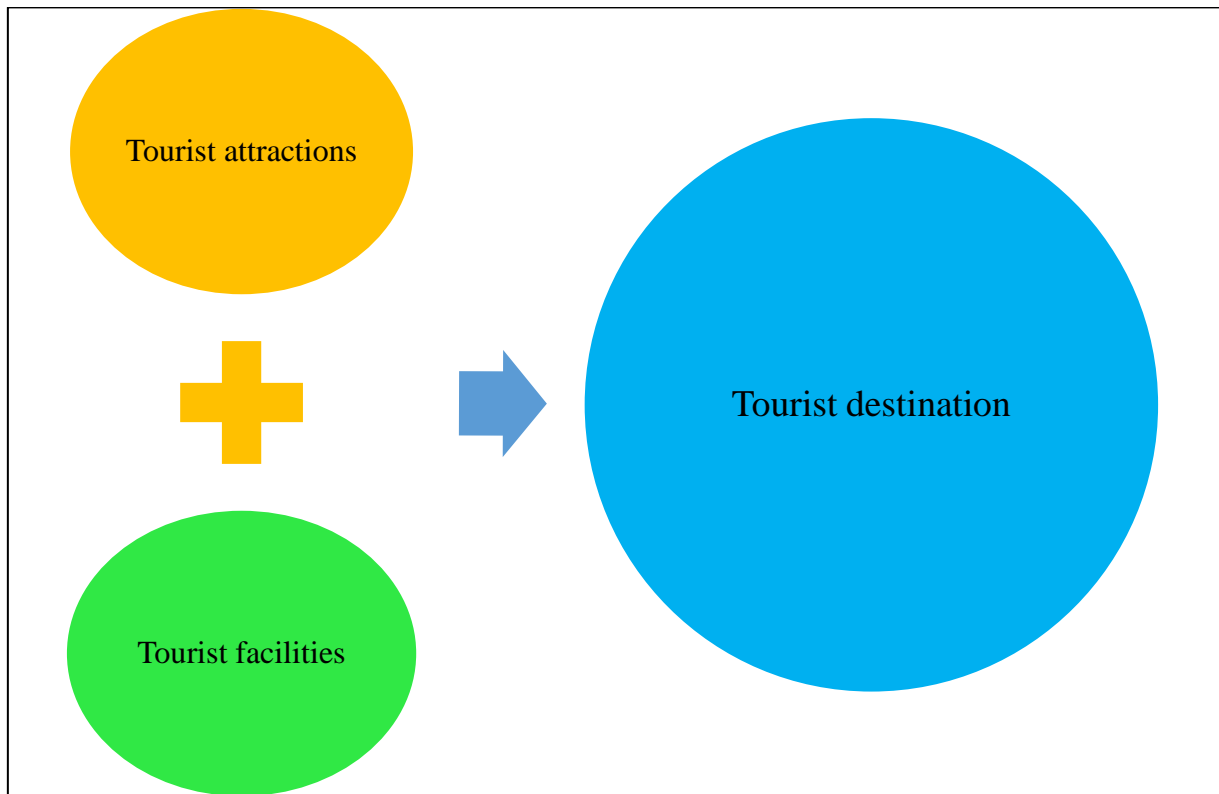


Fig. 2. The elements of a tourist destination

Analysis of tourist arrivals and presentation of tourist destinations

Remarkably, in Romania, several tourist destinations (according to INS, 2024) experienced an impressive revitalization of national and international tourist arrivals (Figure 3) immediately after the lifting of all social distancing restrictions. An increase in the number of Romanian tourist arrivals was recorded in 2022 (Figure 3), compared to the 2020–2021 period characterized by the spread of the contagious SARS-CoV-2 virus. This increase in the number of tourist arrivals was observed in spa resorts, resorts in the mountain area, Bucharest, and county seat cities, exclusively in Tulcea, as well as also other localities and tourist routes.

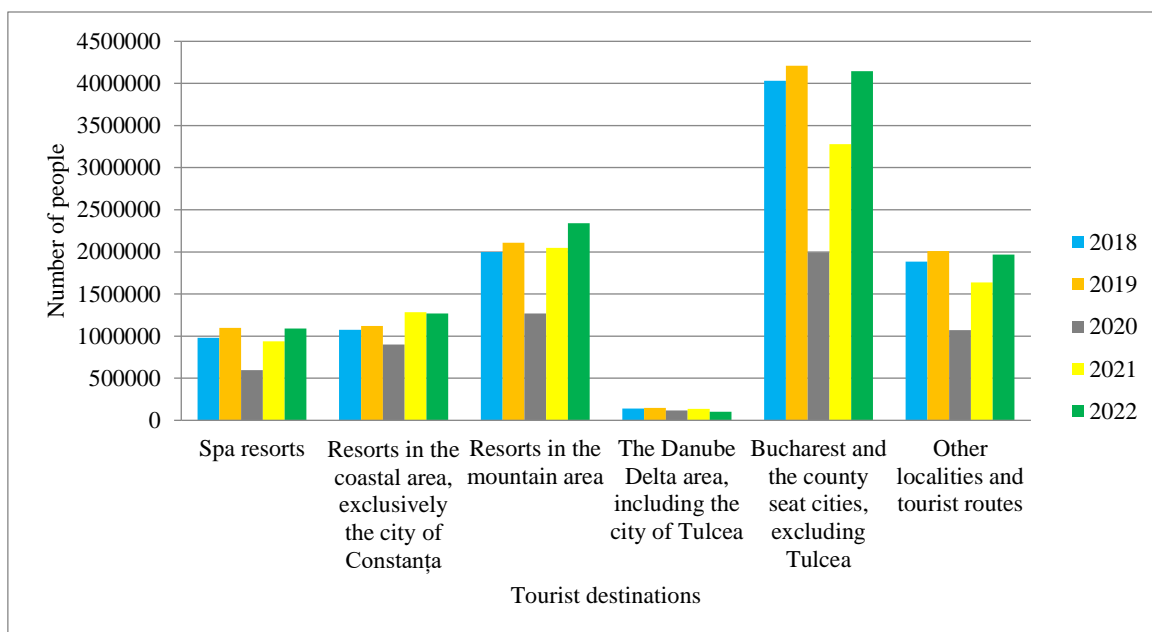


Fig. 3. Number of Romanian tourist arrivals at tourist destinations in Romania

Source: Authors' processing of NIS data [14].

With regard to the arrivals of foreign tourists in tourist destinations in Romania (Figure 4), for the period 2018-2022, the largest increase was recorded in 2018 in Bucharest and the cities of the county, excluding Tulcea; in the following years, a downward trend was recorded in 2019 and 2020.

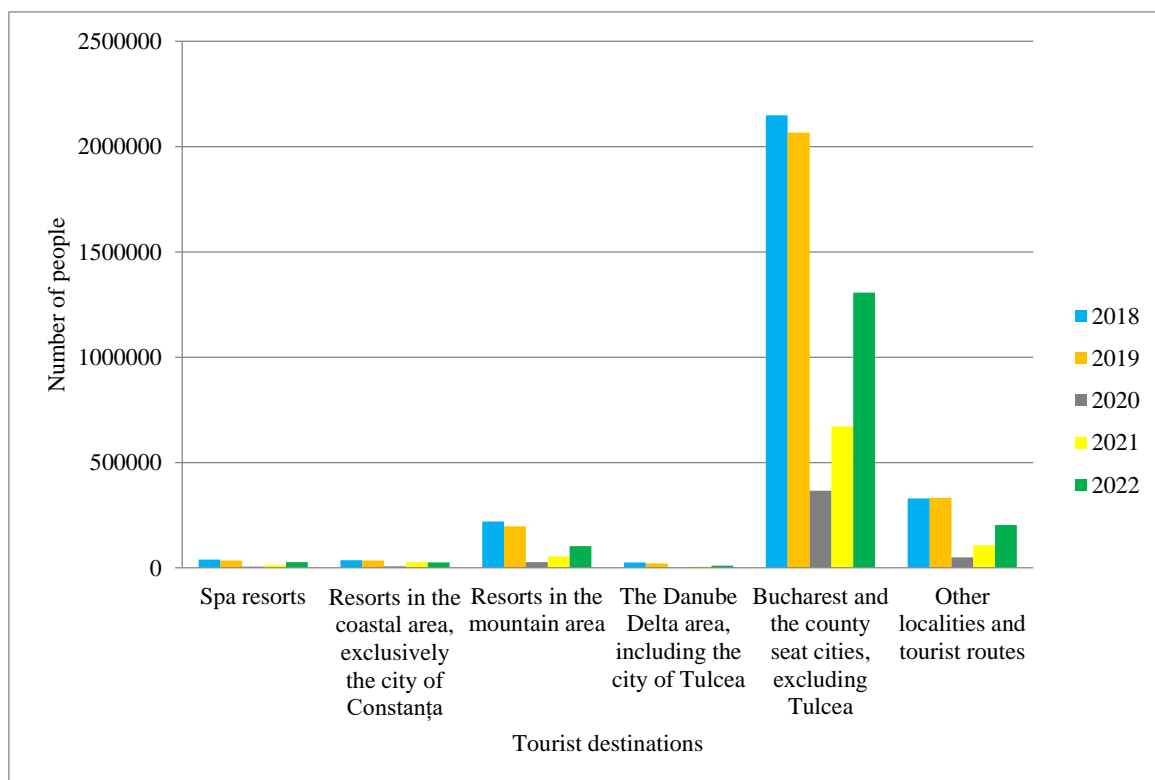


Fig. 4. Number of foreign tourist arrivals at tourist destinations in Romania

Source: Authors' processing of NIS data [14]

The capital of Romania, Bucharest, was founded in 1459 and is the largest cultural and industrial center in Romania. The main attraction of Bucharest is its old center, characterized by very narrow streets, small squares, and a diversity of restaurants, bars, and terraces.

The seaside resorts include Mamaia, located in the northern part of the Coast; Eforie Nord, the second-largest resort on the Romanian Coast; Eforie Sud, a very quiet and small resort; Techirghiol; Mangalia; Neptun; Olimp; Jupiter; Cap Aurora; Venus; and Costinesti.

The Romanian Carpathian chain represents the most favorable geographical space to engage in a varied range of tourist activities, such as ecotourism in national and natural parks, hiking in the Bucegi Massif, rural tourism in traditional villages that promote authenticity and traditions, off-road trips through the Jiului Valley, pilgrimages in the North of Moldova and Vâlcea county, and so on.

The balneo-climate resorts in Romania that are of major importance for treatment and leisure tourism (i.e., spa tourism) are Băile Felix, Buziaș, Băile Olănești, Băile Govora, Slănic Prahova, Amara, Băile Tușnad, Slănic Moldova, Sovata, Praid, Borsec, and many others (see Figure 5).

The Danube Delta (Figure 5) is considered to be the largest river delta for the conservation of flora and fauna biodiversity in Europe. Last, but not least, the Danube River is the second-longest river in Europe, originating in the Black Forest in Germany.

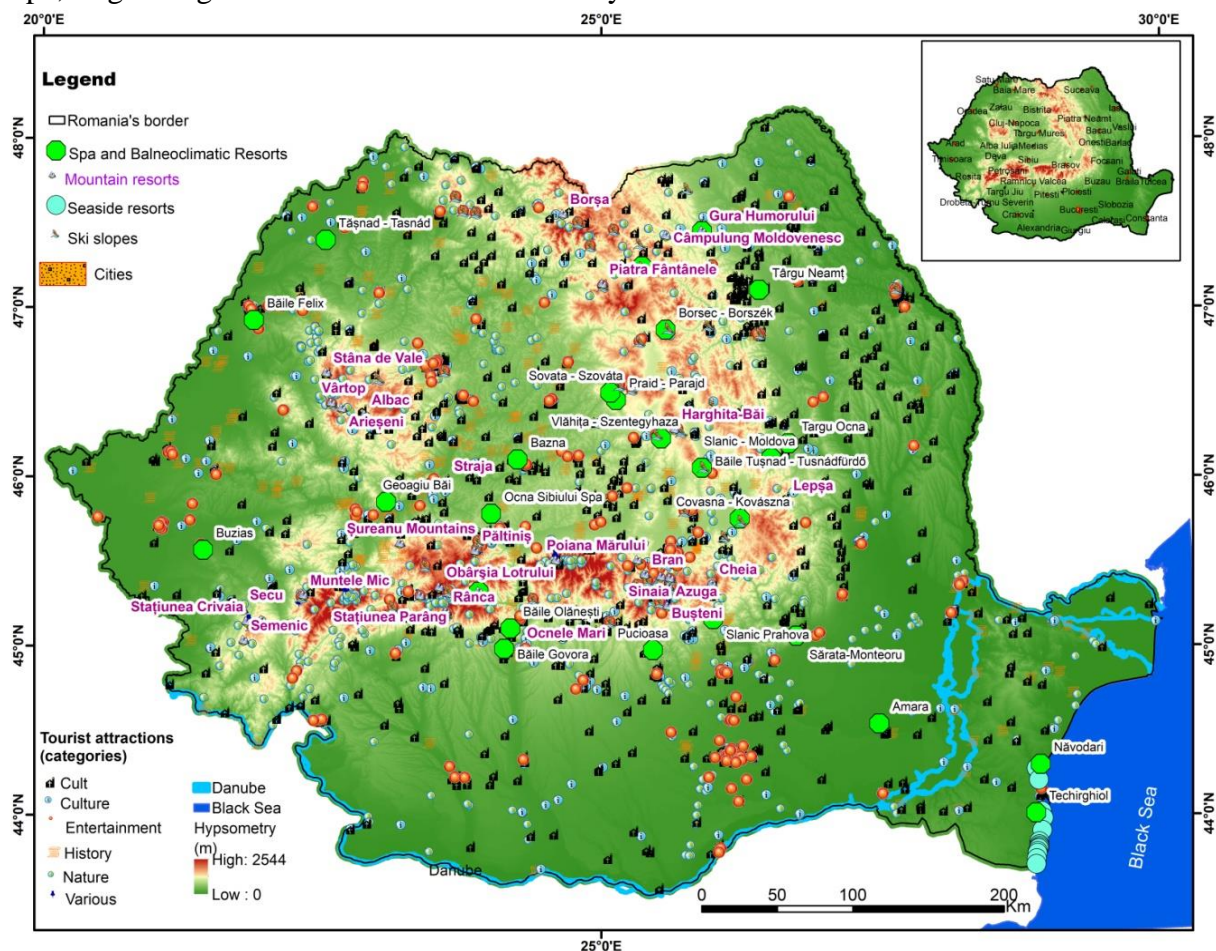


Fig. 5. Tourist destinations/goals in Romania
 Source: Authors' processing of ArcGIS 10.7.2 data

The initiative to implement "The National Guide for the Support and Promotion of Romania Tourism"

Programs for the promotion of tourist destinations in Romania must have two major strategic objectives in mind: (1) the presentation of the tourist objectives inside the tourist destinations/resorts in the most attractive way, and (2) the consolidation of a good notoriety for the tourist services from these tourist destinations/resorts.

The strategic objectives regarding the promotion of tourist destinations in Romania in the international market should be implemented through a "National Guide for the Support and Promotion of Romanian Tourism," which should include concrete actions or activities for potential tourists, the local population, and state institutions. This guide will be reviewed and adapted periodically (once every two years) and will include evaluations of tourist demand trends; analyses of the services and products offered; the identification of new products and services adapted to the needs of tourists; verification of the activities carried out at the information centers and the information offices' tourism promotion; the development of a database of tourist attractions in Romania; the identification of the main tourist spatial circuits that offer added value to tourist destinations; the identification of secondary attractions for sustainable tourism (pottery; weaving; egg dyeing workshops); the design of a calendar containing the festivals and fairs that are organized within the tourist destinations; the creation of "urban-polarizing networks" of exhibitions with the sale of exclusively traditional and ecological products; and investigations of the impact that the application of the proposed guide will have on the domestic and international tourist markets (e.g., the flows of tourists, expenses for promotion, income from tourism).

A fundamental criterion in the emergence, conception, and successful implementation of the National Guide for the Support and Promotion of Romanian Tourism is the establishment of an appropriate organizational framework and collaborative partnerships between the local and county administration institutions, tourism agencies, professional associations active in the sphere of tourism, professional organizations, and NGOs.

Conclusions

There should be dialogues, discussions, and open debates involving all tourism actors (e.g., tourism agencies, local communities, entrepreneurs, managers of tourist reception structures, tourist guides, and various interested parties) regarding the sustainable promotion of destination tourism from the tourism sector.

This research work can be built upon with new perspectives and opportunities; for example, through promoting forms of tourism that can be practiced within tourist destinations, promoting guided tours, the promotion of tourist objectives and viewpoints, and educational activities, festivals, traditions and exhibitions that offer tourists the opportunity to learn more about the tourist activities.

The tourist attractions and facilities that make up a tourist destination represent two very important elements that should be considered in order to promote tourism in the most sustainable way possible, protecting the areas that are inside or in the vicinity of the tourist destinations in Romania.

The future directions of our team's research will focus on deepening of the research on the resorts in mountainous, coastal, and spa areas, as well as in county seat cities. The second direction of research will focus on the mapping of other tourist locations and tourist routes with the help of geographical information systems (GIS), specifically QGIS. The third direction of research will focus on the application of a questionnaire related to integrated marketing communication activities, in order to improve tourist resorts from a tourism point of view in the international market.

In conclusion, the main methods for the sustainable promotion of tourist destinations in Romania are flyers and brochures, advertising in print media and specialized websites, TV advertising, travel agencies, tourism fairs, and tourist information centers.

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