

## **ASPECTS OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN TOURISM IN ROMANIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The analysis of the touristic offer, of the marketing programs and of the touristic market revealed that Romania has a rich mix of unique, world-class tourist objectives, ready to be capitalized. The urban tourism in Romania has the potential to contribute to the promotion of social development and also to establish a strong link with other economic sectors. But in Romania, as well as in other Central, Eastern European and developing countries, the Government is responsible for planning and controlling the development of tourism, the expansion of tourism being almost entirely dependent on public investment, often inadequate.*

**KEY WORDS:** *urban tourism, economic impact, sustainable development, Romania.*

**JEL CLASSIFICATIONS:** *R0, R1, Z3.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Urbanization has shaped the past and present landscape of global cities. Today, as people return to areas with maximum urban concentration in important metropolitan regions, re-urbanization not only influences urban development trends, but also the development of non-urban projects around the Globe.

Globally, the percentage of people living in urban areas has increased from 30% in 1950 to 56.2% in 2020. By 2050, according to the UN, about 66% of the world's population will live in urban areas, a trend fuelled by economic growth in developing countries, preferably the younger generations living in the middle of metropolises and intensifying the efforts of the authorities to make cities cleaner, safer and more conducive to living.

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Analyzing the motivation of tourist flows in the urban space, it can be concluded that attractions such as history and famous people, cultural elements, recreation and entertainment, festive events and occasions, buildings, monuments and sculptural ensembles and natural beauty are among the preferences of visitors and constitute defining elements in choosing the travel destination.

In terms of travel motivations, the largest share is held by cultural tourism and urban leisure (approximately 40%), followed by meetings with family and friends (30%), business and professional reasons (10-15%), gastronomic visits, shopping, participation in events etc. Given these motivations, an analysis of the behaviour of visitors in cities leads to the identification of particularities of demand and the shaping of some forms of *urban tourism*.

## 2. THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF URBAN TOURISM

The description and analysis of the social and cultural impact of tourism involves taking into account the effects, direct and indirect, induced on the host communities by the complexity of relations with tourists, as well as the interaction with the hospitality industry. For a variety of reasons, host communities can often be vulnerable and too receptive to the influences of visitors and service providers; however, the effects are not only difficult to identify, but also difficult to measure, and may be direct or indirect, depending on value judgments.

The negative impact occurs when tourism brings changes in the systems of values and behavior, in customs and traditions and, therefore, affects the identity of the citizens of the host regions. As a result, there are changes in the structure of the local community, in family relationships, in the individual and collective lifestyle. But tourism can also generate positive effects, if we consider only the fact that it is an active force for peace, for the promotion of cultural traditions and helps to solve social problems, for example by creating jobs.

The urban tourism has the potential to contribute to the promotion of social development through employment effects, income redistribution and poverty alleviation. One of the main beneficial effects of urban tourism, in social terms, is that it strengthens the host communities and brings an extra vitality, in several ways. Thus, job creation in the hospitality industry plays an important role in reducing emigration, increasing the chances of better earnings for the local working population, not only for activities directly related to tourism, but also through complementary activities. It stimulates economic recovery, business development and entrepreneurial skills (Ashworth & Page, 2011, pp. 1-15).

Regarding the negative social effects, it must be said that urban tourism can cause changes or losses of local identity and value system, determined by changing the structure of demand for goods and services, standardization and diluting authenticity. Thus, meeting the expectations and desires of tourists, the local population is inclined to transform cultural customs and traditions into goods, and objects and places with ethnic (sometimes even sacred) load lose their significance as they become goods for sale. Fast food restaurants, hotels and shops located near or inside scenic areas can change these places into a completely unfamiliar environment. The local atmosphere

also suffers if cultural manifestations and events lose their historical or religious significance. Cultural, ethnic and religious erosion can also occur due to the mobility of the local population or the creation of additional jobs, which leads to immigration in tourist areas. Residents' attitudes range from euphoria to apathy and even irritation.

The expansion of tourism can change facilities, especially in less economically developed regions, the typology of consumption and lifestyle, the local population being inclined to copy the behavioral features of visitors. On the other hand, even if we accept the role of tourism in improving the chances of local communities for employment and high incomes, we must emphasize that, especially in less developed areas, many jobs are available at a low level of professionalism, with an inadequate pay and low chances of qualification, beyond an accentuated seasonality and an extended work schedule. Moreover, for many of the activities related to the hospitality industry there is a feminization - which obviously affects the opportunities for social development of women - or an orientation towards very young people or children.

To minimize the negative socio-cultural effects, some measures are needed: maintaining the authenticity of local art and crafts, ensuring local access to tourist attractions and facilities, preventing congestion, informing locals about tourism, for example about local customs and dress, applying a strict control over drug trafficking and use, crime and prostitution, if there are such problems in the area. Even if the tourism projects have been planned in compliance with the environmental norms, and the environmental impact assessment procedure is applied correctly, the development of tourism must be constantly monitored in order to avoid the occurrence of a serious negative impact.

### **3. THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF URBAN TOURISM**

There is a close relationship between tourism and the environment. Tourism can have both a positive and a negative impact, depending on how it is planned, developed and managed. Environmental protection measures must be taken, such as the development of adequate utilities and transport systems, the correct use of land and the application of development principles and standards, the management of the flow of visitors and the control of tourist's access to tourist attractions.

The most important ways to intensify economic benefits are: establishing strong links between tourism and other economic sectors, encouraging the employment of local labor, owning and managing tourism businesses by locals and increasing tourism spending especially by buying items from local production.

The impact of tourism, viewed economically, socio-culturally, but also in relation to the environment and biological diversity, includes positive and negative aspects.

In the social, economic and cultural dimension of tourism development, the negative impact on different segments of the population may include social degradation of local communities, undesirable effects on habits, traditions and lifestyle, effect on employment structure, income level and distribution (Stănciulescu, 2004).

In building a sustainable development policy, the evaluation of the economic effects of tourism development is important and the positive impact must be taken into

account - which, in most cases, no longer requires additional argumentation - but also the negative impact. From this perspective, a closer analysis of the negative effects is useful, precisely in order to offer the possibility to carry out actions to eliminate the disadvantages and to increase the benefits of the development of this sector of activity.

#### 4. FEATURES OF URBAN TOURISM IN ROMANIA

Analyzing the tourist offer, the market and the marketing programs of the country, several experts in the field concluded that Romania has a rich mix of unique, world-class tourist objectives, ready to be capitalized. The main challenge involves three aspects:

- improvement of services for visitors, associated with the goods mentioned above (infrastructure, transport, accommodation, management of tourist destinations, through innovation and digitalization);
- better coordination between private and state agencies, at all levels, in order to further promote the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and to reduce the human capital shortfall;
- a more efficient implementation of marketing initiatives, in order to promote the unique destinations and travel experiences that Romania can offer, in the markets from which come the tourists who spend the largest amounts worldwide.

The arrivals of foreign tourists from the last five years (table 1), according to the countries of origin are presented in the following table:

**Table 1. Arrivals of foreign tourists in Romania, 2015-2020**

Country	Year					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Hungary	1661	1562	1454	1491	1529	481
Bulgaria	1524	1527	1603	1600	1857	1267
Republic of Moldova	1633	1918	2052	2330	2523	827
Ukraine	823	1055	1208	1466	1755	663
Germany	438	466	479	489	521	143
Poland	355	302	311	314	345	199
Italy	324	425	460	468	477	121
Turkey	301	327	357	397	430	353
Israel	187	230	289	320	309	43
USA	168	176	201	199	214	29

*Source: INSSE, 2021*

From the table above, it is observed that the largest number of tourists in the last five years, come from neighboring countries such as Hungary, Bulgaria and the Republic of Moldova. Out of the total number of tourists arriving in Romania in the last year, 37.3% organized their trip alone, 35.4% through travel agencies, 21.6% through other ways of organizing the trip, while 5.7% organized the trip both on their own and through a travel agency.

Business trips (including participation in congresses, conferences, courses, fairs and exhibitions) were the main reason for their stay, by 59.6% of non-resident tourists who arrived in Romania in the first half of 2021. Their expenses representing 62.0% of the total expenses.

Out of the total business expenses, in the 1st semester of 2021, the largest share is represented by the accommodation expenses (50.8%), from this type of expenses being preferred especially the accommodation with breakfast included (89.0% of total accommodation expenses). Expenditures of foreign tourists in restaurants and bars were 18.2%, and those for shopping accounted for 14.4% of total business expenditures. Of the total shopping expenses, 48.2% were intended for the purchase of food and beverages, and 29.6% for the purchase of gifts and souvenirs. Expenditures for car rental accounted for 74.5% of total transport expenditures, and expenditures for access to amusement parks, fairs, casinos, mechanical games rooms accounted for 25.8% of total recreational expenditures.

The most visited cities, both by foreign and national tourists (table 2) were the following:

**Table 2. The most visited cities from Romania in 2015-2020**

City	Year					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Bucharest	1723999	1926919	2043970	2080229	2038858	559802
Constanța	501579	532624	552728	575698	618755	391847
Mangalia	245353	332437	338939	339824	351243	319213
Sibiu	320664	371295	397902	406746	415836	169518
Cluj Napoca	319920	371505	470727	477577	488742	176733
Eforie	152560	159394	180627	218813	214730	152125
Iași	223437	272095	290066	302470	310938	127320
Oradea	163416	190022	223362	250395	236793	113122

Source: INSSE, 2021

**Table 3. Romanian cities with the most visited museums in 2015-2020**

City	Year					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Bucharest	1710497	1692842	2093284	2318465	2288251	837791
Sibiu	1100617	1243932	1290836	1313994	1631196	672828
Brașov	926683	980950	1057924	1094625	1169613	499351
Constanța	460246	635694	712846	829766	840151	341863
Iași	318278	521249	646701	731691	761251	337560
Cluj Napoca	609586	322889	360641	390382	431808	172210
Timișoara	171777	144922	155855	181935	247204	38034

Source: INSSE, 2021

As we can see, the most visited city in Romania is the country's capital, Bucharest, followed by cities such as Constanța, Mangalia, Sibiu and Cluj Napoca. Of

course, in 2020 the lowest number of visitors is registered, due to the global situation imposed by the pandemic with the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

The main cities which have attracted the most tourists with their museums and festivals are shown in the following tables (table 3 and table 4).

**Table 4. Romanian cities with the most visited festivals by tourists**

City	Festival name
Bucharest	Summer Well Bucharest Street Food Festival George Enescu Festival Outdoor Art Festival - Theatre under the Moon Bucharest Dance Festival Rock the City Festival Wine Festival
Cluj Napoca	Untold Electric Castle Transilvania Jazz Festival International Festival of Transilvanian Music and Art Transilvania International Film Festival
Constanța	Neversea Sunwaves
Sibiu	Sibiu Fashion Days Feeric Fashion Week Sibiu Jazz Festival International Theatre Festival
Brașov	Amural 3 Festival Brașov Street Food Festival
Iași	Afterhills Music and Art Festival
Timișoara	Plai Festival Heart Festival
Râșnov	Rockstadt Extreme Fest
Câmpulung Muscel	Posada Rock

## 5. PERSPECTIVES OF URBAN TOURISM

In developed countries, local tourism is increasingly based on public-private partnerships in planning, financing and implementation actions. Public authorities are concerned with land clearing, systematization, cost evaluation and infrastructure investments and the provision of fiscal incentives for private investments in tourism, the implementation of transit systems, restoration actions, being the responsibility of the local administrations (Buia & Nimară, 2016, pp. 18). However, there are also attempts to promote private investments through joint ventures, the property right granted to foreigners as well as collective rents.

Summarized, the main trends registered in urban tourism are as follows:

- orientation of visitors' preferences towards forms of active tourism: sports, adventure, entertainment, assimilation of knowledge about the history and culture of the areas they visit;
- the increase of cultural and religious tourism;
- diversification of tourist products;
- increasing the interest towards maintaining and improving the health condition;
- fragmentation of vacations during a year;
- increasing the share of experienced tourists whose waiting level is higher;
- expansion of business tourism;
- accentuating the problems related to the quality of the environment;
- the increasing use of modern information and marketing tools.

The key elements that increase the curiosity of tourists to visit cities are:

*Historic areas.* Historic areas are generally very welcoming representing a mix of attractions and facilities that are accessible to all. Beyond the educational aspects, the historical regions offer the visitor memorable experiences. Cities endowed with such legacies are a point of attraction that has led to the development of urban tourism.

*The waters.* Urban waters have always attracted visitors. Lately, cities and private investors attach great importance to urban waters because they offer many opportunities for tourism, economy and local development.

*Business centers and exhibitions.* They are seen as the most important attractions of urban tourism. In some cities, about 40% of visitors come from business tourism. Business centers and exhibitions are perceived as growing sectors because visitors spend large sums and because they are open all year round. The increase of the number of employments, the publicity, the improvement of the image, the urban development are the effects that justify the financial investment in these centers. In addition to these advantages, it should be remembered that these business conferences cannot be separated from the rest of the tourism industry, due to the fact that most of the participants seek urban attractions in an attractive environment.

*Festivals and organized events:* become more and more numerous, thus contributing to the development of urban tourism. Over time, they have grown from world-class exhibitions to annual art events. Shows like this are important, but their impact on the urban tourism industry depends largely on the presence of visitors from outside the cities.

*Special tourist regions:* are a combination of tourist attractions such as: cultural, entertainment, sports or other facilities brought together in one location. These regions are not only seen as strategies for attracting tourists or developing better conditions for residents, they are used to facilitate the renewal of cities. Special tourist regions offer visitors the opportunity to easily move from one attraction to another and due to a diverse range of attractions, visitors are tempted to visit these cities. In many parts of the world, these special areas have been the starting point for the development of those cities.

*Tourism employees and residents.* Kindness is probably one of the most important socio-cultural features of tourism seen as a product. The professionalism and quality of the services offered to the visitors start with kindness. The kindness and

hospitality of the people are key factors that underlie the decisions to visit a certain place.

*Trade and catering facilities.* Although restaurants and shopping are seen as secondary elements of tourism, they play an important part in the tourism economy, as visitors spend large sums of money on shopping and food. Shopping has become a pleasant activity for visitors, as they walk through the shops even without a specific purpose. For others, however, shopping is a real sport. Visitors go from one store to another to find out what is being sold and compare the prices of the products with those at home.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, tourism marketing and hosting services will have to be integrated into other urban marketing strategies, attracting economic agents through integrated marketing policies determining the attraction of tourists arriving for business and promoting the destination as a location for a company or component unit of a company. Thus, by harmoniously integrating the marketing strategies with the other development actions, it will be possible to consecrate the image of a place and to transmit the appropriate messages.

The low number of foreign tourists in urban tourism in Romania is caused on the one hand by the lack of increased frequency of music, theater or film festivals with international echo, the sustained promotion of cultural tourism objectives in major cities, because in small towns they are completely missing, this aspect being attributed to the lack of a historical heritage, the cities being created as a necessity for the development of the industry during the communist period. That's why these town should attract tourist by festivals. At the same time, the lack of exhibitions organization with renowned and business centers to host congresses or conferences with world renown, is still a weak point of Romanian urban tourism.

The economic effects of tourism are multiple: both positive and negative. The arrival of tourists in a locality, contributes to the increase of sales, to obtain profit, to increase the fiscal incomes, to create jobs and to the general incomes of the respective locality. The effects are felt directly and most quickly in the tourist reception structures, public catering units, transports, entertainment and retail trade. And the side effects are felt in most sectors of the economy.

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