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Analysis of the Tourism Services Quality in Romania's Third Macro-Region

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Abstract The content of this article analyzes the tourist traffic indicators in one of our countries' macro-region in order to quantify the quality level of the Romanian tourism services. The analysis was carried out in comparison with other Romanian macroregions studied in the work *Aspects regarding green economy's management*. In the paper's content are identified the level of the tourism indicators, such as the tourism traffic density and the average duration of the stay. At the same time, the tourism demand is analyzed in Romania's third macro-region, and also, the tourist offer related to it.

Key words Tourism traffic density, quality, tourism services, average length of stay, accommodation capacity

JEL Codes: M10, M20, Z32

1. Introduction

As has been shown in previous research, ecotourism in Romania has an economic and social outlook. Its importance highlights a good economic side for small entrepreneurs and local communities where ecotourism activity develops. Promoting green tourism in the virtual environment (via the Internet) and mass media (via television) leads to attracting a growing number of Romanian and foreign tourists, eager to know our traditions and apply the crafts acquired through the Romanian generations. The research in this paper is conducted in order to identify the level of quality of ecotourism services in Romania and to find directions for its improvement. For a better view of the subject, the studies are carried out in comparison with the other Romanian macroregions analyzed in other papers.

2. Literature Review

The literature in the tourism field highlights the importance of the tourism traffic indicators in quantifying the quality level of tourism services (Stanciulescu, 2013). The tourism traffic density provides information on the extent of the area's request and indirectly on the measures to be taken to ensure the needs of the tourists without disturbing the life and activity of the residents or the ecological balance of the areas (Minciu, 2004).

The tourism traffic density is determined as a ratio between the number of arrivals and the studied areas (Minciu, 2004): Romania's third macro-region is composed of Muntenia and Bucharest-Ilfov (National Institute of Statistics, Tempoonline, 2016).

According to the National Institute of Statistics, these two regions together have a total area of 36,300 sq.Km.

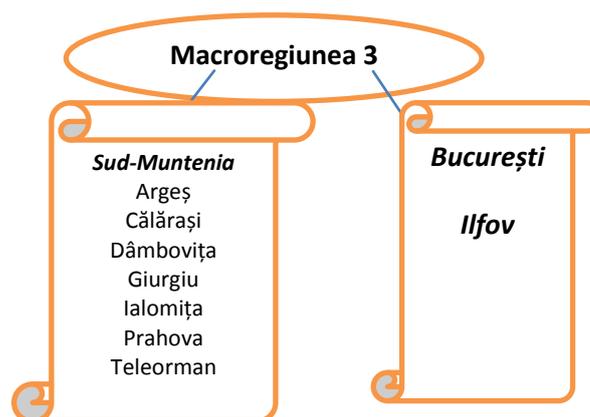


Figure 1. Romania's third macro-region

Source: National Institute of Statistics

The macro-region presented in the above figure consists of a series of urban micro-regions among which the capital of the country. Further, the two development regions will be studied from the touristic point of view, starting from their material base (see Table 1).

Table 1. Romania's third macro-region material base

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Hostels	19	22	28	33	34	39
Motels	37	39	42	46	45	46
Touristic villas	53	53	56	62	64	70
Touristic cottages	26	23	27	27	29	33
Bungalows	6	18	16	16	15	28
Holiday villages	1	1	1	1	3	3
Campgrounds	3	2	2	2	2	1
Touristic stops	4	3	3	3	4	6
Touristic houses	119	139	140	160	162	184
Touristic pensions	115	127	149	169	176	204

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Tempo Online, accessed at 16.06.2016

According to the data presented by the National Institute of Statistics, it is noted that rural accommodation units are much smaller compared to the first two Macroregions studied previously, taking as an example the agro-touristic pensions, which are largely concentrated in counties like Argeş, Dâmboviţa and Prahova. In the same situation are also the tourist villas, which account for less than half of the volume of the material bases presented in the work entitled Aspects regarding green economy's management (A, Gheorghe, F, Pârnu, 2016, pp. 21-35). The reason for this is the low demand for rural tourism and ecotourism in these developing regions from an ecotourism point of view.

Tourism has a real success in Prahova county, but niche tourism is in the process of development, and in other counties such as Ialomiţa, Calarasi, Giurgiu and Teleorman, it is almost absent. Unfortunately, the predominant relief is the plains, an aspect which disadvantages recreational services such as mountain biking. But a solution to the development of ecotourism-specific recreational services could be the replacement of mountainous cycling, specific to the Carpathian areas, with "cross-country cycling". Also, the traditions of these areas are interesting and could be exploited and offered for sale to ecotourists, using multiple ways of promoting cultural areas (Internet, Local and National Television). At the same time, it would be advisable to create cycling tracks on rural access roads.

Among the ecotourism specific transport services, services such as backpacking can be implemented with the purpose of presenting the traditional architecture of the traditional buildings by a double specialization guide (ecotourism one and architectural one). Another indicator specific to the tourism offer is the accommodation capacity in operation. Its evolution during the period 2010-2015 is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Evolution of accommodation capacity in operation of Romania's Macro-Region 3, within the timeframe 2010-2015

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Hostels	234333	238215	381028	511012	611921	660366
Motels	454470	507935	558505	632237	607750	595452
Touristic villas	329325	362819	391410	422132	433332	499223
Touristic cottages	342549	326618	304437	328987	341668	284011
Bungalows	39705	38999	39486	34783	35143	45345
Holiday villages	11036	21204	30024	14774	46964	58434
Campgrounds	27516	8202	9136	6024	8104	2750
Touristic stops	920	11968	12204	11940	8302	3850
Touristic houses	768320	882768	963513	1070349	1080523	1174766
Touristic pensions	498511	526861	554583	654612	690715	773231

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Tempo Online, accessed at 16.06.2016

As can be seen in Table 2, the places of accommodation in the Muntenia and Bucharest Ilfov regions available to ecotourists are fewer than in Transylvania, Bucovina, Moldova and Maramureş, renowned areas for offering high quality tourist services. Of the regional accommodation units that have the most functional accommodation places, according to the National Institute of Statistics, there are mentioned: the number of tourists whose number increased significantly from 2010 to 2015, the year when it reached the highest threshold, 1174766 places.

The tourist chalets register, in large part, an involution during the analyzed period. The accommodation capacity of rural tourism pensions has increased slowly over the six years of analysis. These aspects also point to a lack of interest of

entrepreneurs in improving the quality of the area accommodation services and the development of existing accommodation structures. To highlight the tourism context in this macro-region of Romania is presented the evolution of the number of tourists arrivals in the table below:

Table 3. Tourist arrivals in Romania's third macro-region, within the timeframe 2010-2015

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Hostels	18163	18203	29498	28399	26830	34767
Motels	44686	46734	52058	49646	49987	54572
Touristic villas	24103	25194	26555	30981	33538	48321
Touristic cottages	18698	17583	21073	22842	25636	20692
Bungalows	4785	4044	2466	2370	1981	5972
Holiday villages	265	500	260	130	762	1265
Campgrounds	1481	620	774	678	656	608
Touristic stops	93	695	1210	2453	909	328
Touristic houses	54960	67708	72629	73402	76340	93940
Touristic pensions	28435	29820	38064	46679	53421	65687

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Tempo Online, accessed at 16.06.2016

Table 3. shows that the number of tourists arrivals in rural accommodation units is lower compared to the first macro-region and the second one. Of the counties that contribute significantly to this tourism indicator, Prahova County is mentioned first, followed by Arges County, where the accommodation structures are bigger, due mainly to the many existing tourist attractions, and which, adequately promoted, attract dozens of thousands of tourists, both Romanian and also from other countries. Another indicator of tourism traffic studied in the paper is the number of overnight stays. This is highlighted in Table 4.

Table 4. The evolution of the overnight stays number in Romania's third macro-region, within the timeframe 2010-2015

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Hostels	37279	38166	68732	67091	77016	83358
Motels	92002	94714	92808	91949	86063	89096
Touristic villas	49281	50727	53284	67558	67042	93206
Touristic cottages	32740	30691	36052	40605	50015	40779
Bungalows	7624	7561	3947	3534	3017	7843
Holiday villages	3325	2000	600	455	1522	1846
Campgrounds	4673	688	903	760	770	736
Touristic stops	107	1224	1673	2723	1458	994
Touristic houses	113940	129539	135789	139039	149673	174481
Touristic pensions	50593	57022	72495	84339	95432	118786

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Tempo Online, accessed at 16.06.2016

Also the number of overnight stays is in close correlation with the number of arrivals. According to the database collected, it is worth mentioning that tourists' preferences for this macro-region of the country include tourist pensions and villas, agrotourism boarding houses and motels.

In the ranking, the least searched were the tourist cottages, which demonstrates the lack of interest of the tourists towards the ecotourism accommodation services. At great demand, on the other hand, there are recreational and specific transport services. Ecotourism services most often accessed by ecotourists include easy and hard adventure.

3. Methodology of research

This article analyzes the national tourism traffic indicators, having their applicability on the Romania's four macroregions. The study aims at identifying the level of quality of national niche tourist services.

Quantification of the quality of rural and green tourist services can be done directly by the consumers of these services or indirectly by means of the main indicators of tourism traffic applied in Romania's macro-region.

4. Analysis of Romania's third macro-region's tourism traffic indicators

In the present paper, a main indicator of the tourism circulation is highlighted, namely the tourist traffic density identified in the third macro-region (see Figure 2.)

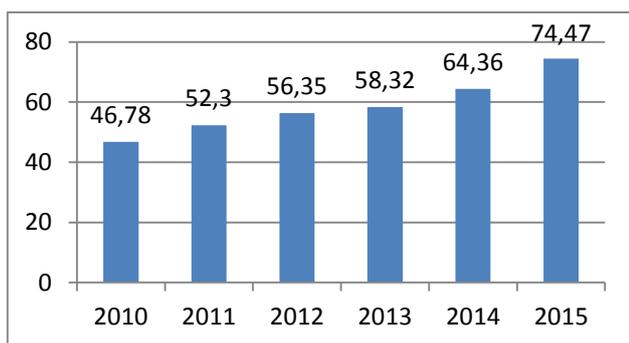


Figure 2. The evolution of tourism traffic density in Romania's third macro-region, within the timeframe 2010-2015

Source: Made by author

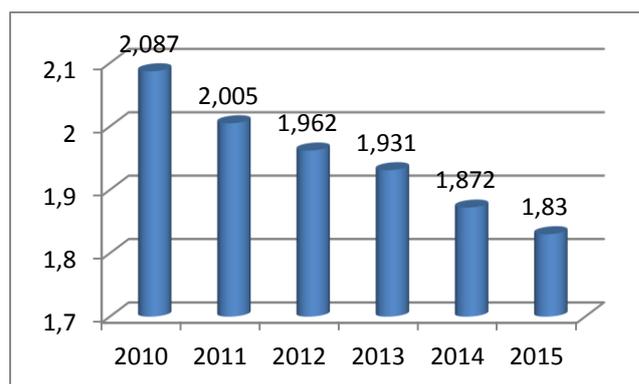


Figure 3. The average length of stay in Romania's third macro-region, within the timeframe 2010-2015

Source: Made by author

The figure above shows a higher tourist traffic density than in the other four developed regions. This is mainly due to the mass tourism activity and then to the rural tourism services in Arges County, which year after year attract a larger number of tourists interested in the Romanian tourist attractions and satisfied with the serviceability of the hosts of the small accommodation units. Also, a steadily increasing tourist flow density can be explained by the high quality of food services in rural areas. At the same time, attractive recreational services contribute to this development: rafting on rivers, mountain biking competitions, skiing on difficulty levels s.o. The average length of stay in the two regions comprised of the studied macroregion (Muntenia and Bucharest-Ilfov) is shown in the figure 3.

As can be seen in Figure 3. this tourism indicator is continuously decreasing, the average length of stay not exceeding the threshold of 2,087 days. The highest tourist density registered in this macroregion is found in Prahova County, 99 tourists / kmp (See Figure 4). In the ranking of the studied macro-region, with a tourist density of almost 29 tourists/kmp, is ranked second, Argeş County, rich in ecotourism destinations and with a developed rural tourist material base (Gheorghe, 2016).

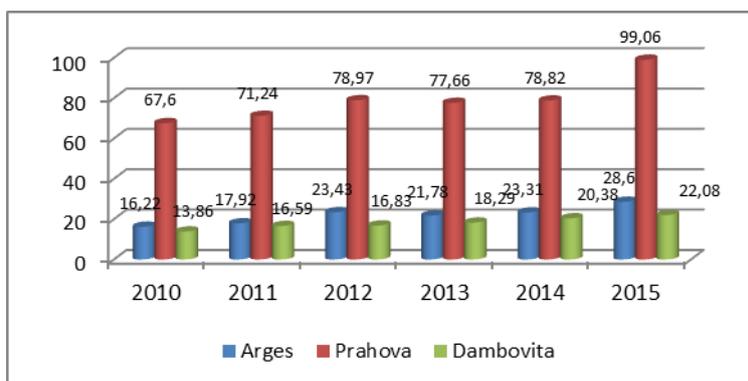


Figure 4. Evolution of the tourism traffic density in Romania's third macro-region's most visited counties, within the timeframe 2010-2015

Source: Made by author

It is known that, in most cases, Romanian tourists who spend their free time in counties like Prahova and Argeş resort to recreational escapades in tourist areas throughout the weekend. In these two counties there are also organized excursions lasting one day. From field research, it results that a large number of Romanian tourists who go for Prahova County come from big cities such as Constanta, Ploiesti and Bucharest (Mountain Hiking Association, 2016). The main advantage of the tourist areas in Prahova is the short distance from the above-mentioned cities through easy road access.

Next, the evolution of the average length of stay in the three counties studied within the third macroregion of our country is to be presented (see Figure 5).

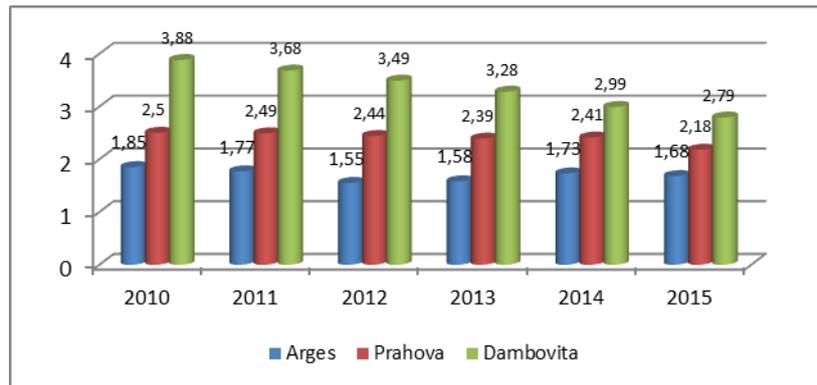


Figure 5. Evolution of the average length of stay in Romania's third macroregion's most visited counties, within the timeframe 2010-2015

Source: Made by author

According to the data presented in the above figure, it is noted that although Dâmbovița has a lower tourist traffic density than that of Prahova or Argeș County, tourists who opt for the tourist attractions of Dâmbovița spend more time in the areas (between 2 and about 4 days), than the Arges or Prahova tourists who do not spend longer than 2.5 days.

4. Conclusions

In this Romanian macro-region, the Natural Park Bucegi is a great natural phenomenon, which attracts annually a significant number of tourists eager to explore the surface resources in Romania. Azimut Association's tourism specialists claim that the Bucegi Natural Park covers an area of 32497 hectares. This ecotourism objective is carried out on the areas of three counties: Prahova, Dâmbovița (approximately half of its area) and Brasov. The eastern limit of the Bucegi Natural Park is the Prahova Valley, the northern one is the Râșnov Corridor, and the western one is the famous Rucăr-Bran Passage. Geological and geomorphological diversity of the park makes this area an ideal ecotourism destination. The area is also dedicated to scientific research in various fields.

According to the Azimut Ecotourism Association, the main tourist attractions are natural monuments (46), true works of art, and these are: Sfinxul, Cascada Urlătoare, Cheile Zănoagei, Babele, Peștera Tătaru, Sfânta Ana, Poiana Stâniei s.o. The Azimut Ecotourism Association identifies the areas that make up the Bucegi Natural Park, protected by law.

According to the Azimut data, among the protected areas of the Bucegi Natural Park are mentioned (Azimut Ecotourism Association, 2013):

- Abruptul Bucșoiu - Mălăiești - Gaura mixt natural reserve (1.634 ha- Brașov County);
- Valea Horoabei-Cocora protected natural area with its Peștera - Cocora (307ha- Dâmbovița County);
- Abruptul prahovean Bucegi natural reserve (3.478 ha- Prahova County);
- Muntele Colții lui Barbeș protected area(1.513 ha- Prahova County);
- Plaiul Hoților fosile place (Dâmbovița and Prahova county border).

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