

## PERCEPTION OF THE ROMANIAN TOURIST OFFER IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL TOURISM FLOWS

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**Abstract:** *Currently, at worldwide level, there is a strong crisis between the environment created by man and the natural world, a crisis that has materialized in the continuous degradation of the natural environment, the only alternative in overcoming it is being the realization of a viable, sustainable human society, based on the compatibility of the environment created by man with the natural one, as well as the creation of regulations that meet the requirements of ensuring the ecological balance in the conditions of the human society, both economically and culturally or politically. Starting from the aspect above, we find that in the early 1980s, the entrepreneurs from tourism based on natural resources began to prosper all over the world, along with the growing interest for the environment and for outdoor travel.*

*Today, tourism is a huge, global market where is manifest the consumers demand for a huge variety of products and services. Not only its size and rhythm of growth make this market very attractive, but also its future potential, not at all exhausted. The implications of the tourism development and the efficient use of tourism resources and of other related resources are known, the purpose of the paper being to identify the main tourist basins, as well as aspects related to the European tourist activity or the perception of the Romanian tourist offer on the international market.*

**Key words:** *tourism, international tourism flows, Romanian tourist offer*

### INTRODUCTION

Specialists say that in the global perspective, tourism and travel will be next to information and telecommunications technology [1,2,5,10,14], the three industries of services with the highest fiscal value. This is happening, because, tourist services will attract permanently, regardless of the conjuncture conditions and the mutations from tourism demand, a higher segment from the world's population. Today, tourism represents a huge, global market where manifest itself consumers demand for a huge variety of products and services. Not only its size and rhythm of growth make this market very attractive, but also its future potential, not at all exhausted. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the volume of tourism flows at global level knows a growth of 27.6% between 2004 and 2020 period, reaching about 1.56 billion tourists in 2020.

The European tourism industry will deal with a growing competition, both inside and outside the region. A whole range of factors compete to this situation (economic and financial competition, political factors, social and demographic changes, technological innovations, etc.), including promotional activities of competing regions. At the same time, a number of goods and services come in competition with tourism to take away the leisure time of potential tourists, which creates another form of competitive pressure. Expanding leisure offers in residential areas (for example, theme and entertainment parks, health clubs, cultural and sports events) will lead to shorter holidays and to holidays spent closest to home. It is expected that this trend to be marked, in time, by a more moderate economic growth. [7,8,11,14]

Are known the implications of the development of tourism and the efficient capitalization of tourist and other resources, especially in international tourism, to: increase foreign exchange earnings and balancing the external payments balance, absorbing the labor force by restructuring some economic sectors, the development and diversification of economic sectors supplying goods and services for tourism, economic and social growth at

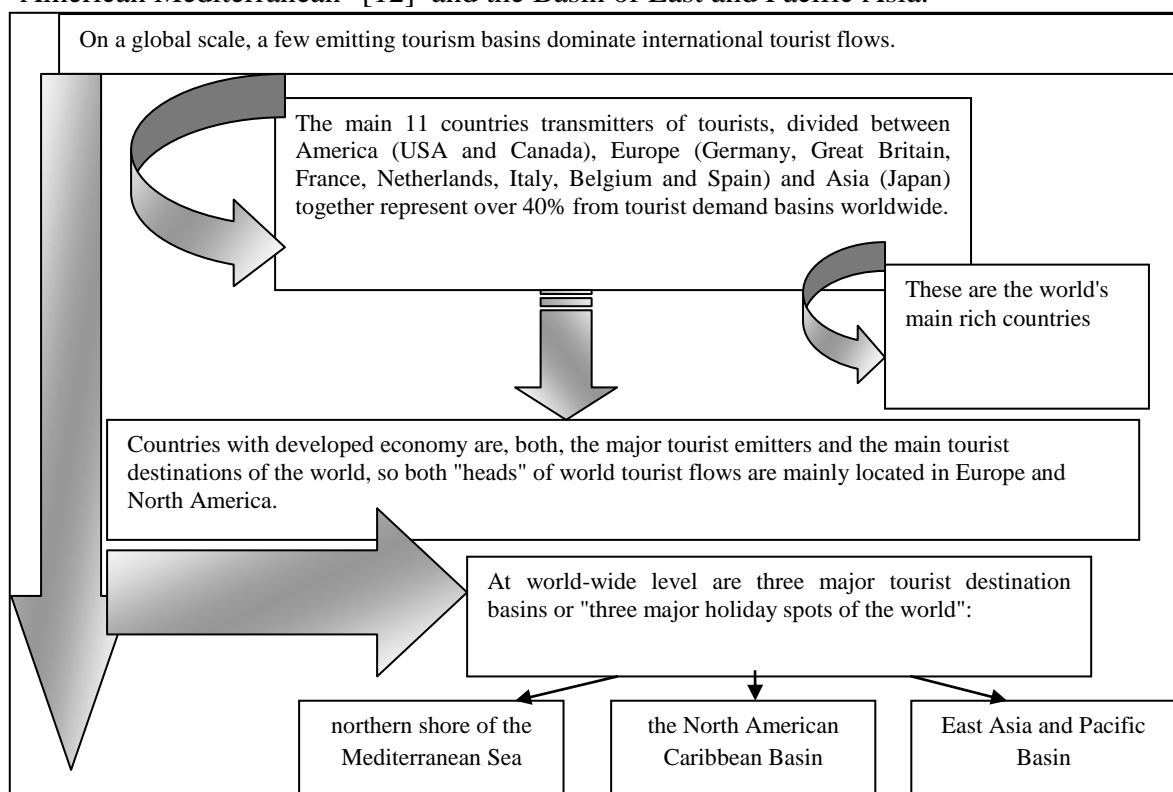
local and regional level and the increase of local population incomes, sustainable development of rural areas, protection and preservation of the environment, natural tourism resources and cultural-historical traditions of the country, improving the health of the population, educating and raising its level of training, etc.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The authors of the paper were used as methods of work: data collection, processing, analysis, observation and their interpretation. The main research activities carried out in this paper are: theoretical research (identification and evaluation of sources of information, collection and analysis of secondary information, preparation of the theoretical framework), and making some concrete proposals based on the information obtained

### RESEARCH RESULTS

Countries with developed economy are, both, the major tourist emitters and the main tourist destinations of the world, so both "heads" of world tourist flows are mainly located in Europe and North America. In fact, at world-wide level are three major tourist destination basins or "three major holiday spots of the world", [2] located around the periphery of the major emitting regions, which are the "heart" of the system, as well as the borders of emerging tourist destinations. The most important of these is the Euro-Mediterranean basin, with a greater tourist concentration on the northern shore of the Mediterranean. The other two are: the North American-Caribbean basin, the area called the "American Mediterranean" [12] and the Basin of East and Pacific Asia.



**Figure 1. Important basins for the formation of international tourist flows**

The distribution of tourist flows around the three major basins of destination highlights the discontinuity of the tourist space and characterizes, at world's scale, the inequalities at economic level, of the development level or of the purchasing power of different regions of the world.

The three major tourist basins have three *common features*, [12,3,10] namely:

1) The proximity to the great "sources of wealth", which constitute the "tanks" of tourists which hold a significant part of the population with purchasing power that is large enough to allow important tourist consumptions, with recreational tourist character, during the stays abroad.

2) These basins overlap two areas consisting of countries with extremely contrasting levels of life. Thus, the oldest countries frequented belong to the category of the richest countries, while their "extensions" correspond to the category of countries in developing. The economic and social benefits favor a "slip" of tourist flows from one shore to the other, of the Mediterranean, to the South-East Asia borders and to the South of the United States of America or Mexico, to the shores of Central America. These streams respond to a strong tourist attraction for the sunniest regions, regardless of the fact that is Mediterranean, subtropical or tropical climate case. In these places, tourist seasons are much more prevalent over time. Each of these pools is dominated by regional, privileged clientele, which represents between 2/3 and 3/4 from the total of the tourists, a situation that can be explained by the geographical proximity between the place of residence and the one of tourist destination. These movements, which follow almost the same time zones, facilitate the realization of short stays, without the tourists to suffer for the inconvenience of the time slopes.

3) The existence of privileged links, historical, cultural, linguistic, political, etc. Thus, the old colonies generally retained the use of European languages, facilitating the reception of people of different nationalities who speak these languages. Touristic circulation is also facilitated by the procedures for simplifying the border formalities, through bilateral agreements regarding the adaptation of some common measures to this purpose.

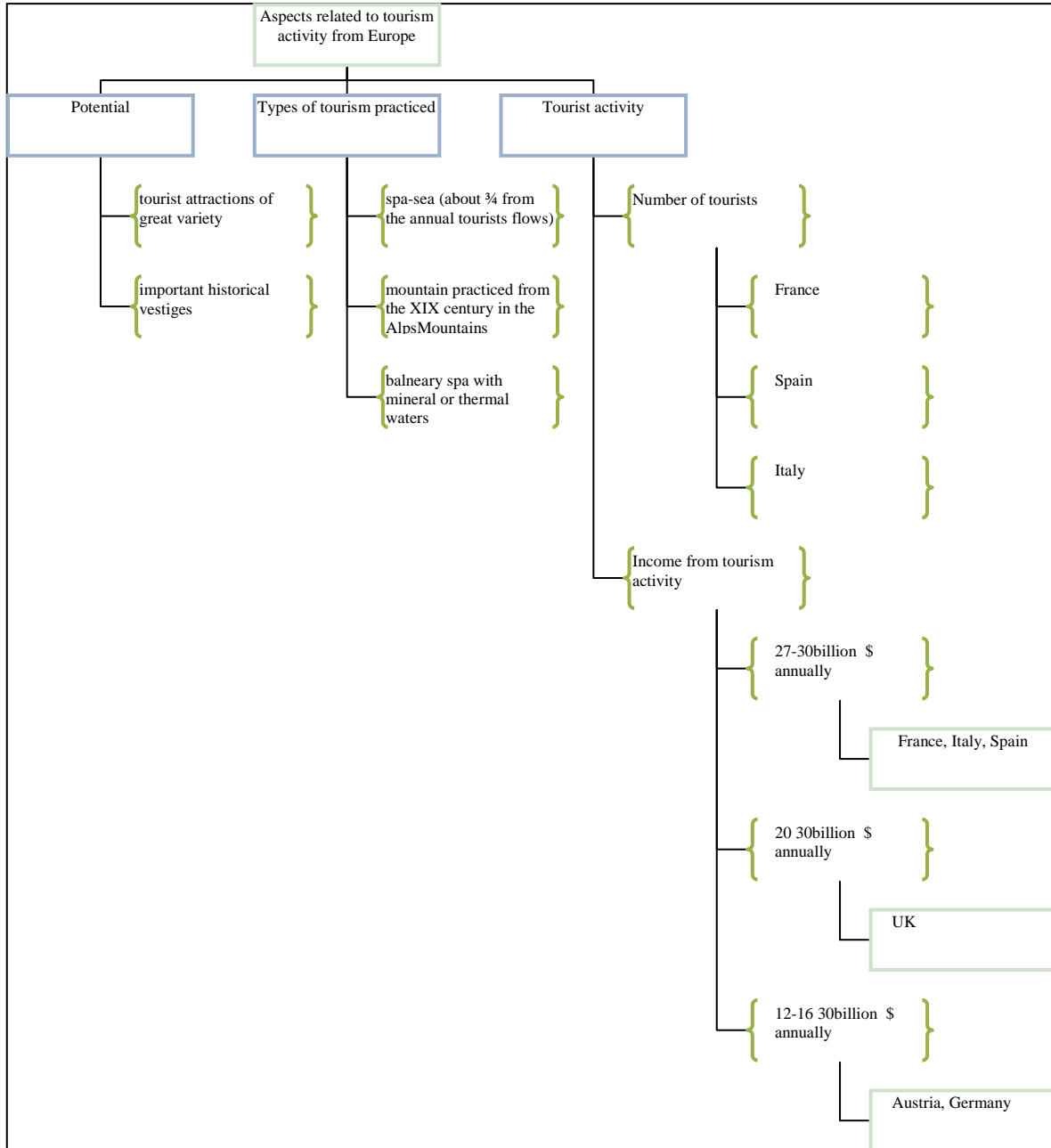
Tourist flows are also generated, by important historical vestiges or "art treasures", some countries such as Italy, Greece, France, Belgium, Great Britain, Spain, having, from this point of view a privileged position. They have preserved numerous testimonies of past civilizations, including the works of the great Renaissance artists, and have been the largest museums in the world.

Regarding the tourism potential, Europe, through its natural position, is part of tourist attractions of great variety and spectacularity, and through its multimillenary history has left tremendous material and spiritual traces of great value that remain to this day and which are of great interest. [4,9]

- The most important type of tourism practiced is the spa-sea one (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the annual tourists flows). The main areas are: the Mediterranean Sea basin, with Spain's coastal landscapes with the famous "costa", the Balearic Islands, the coast of France, Italy with "riviere"; Adriatic Sea, Aegean Sea; the Baltic Sea and the North Sea where this type of tourism is practiced in a shorter season; Atlantic Ocean, Black Sea.

- Another type of tourism is mountain tourism practiced from the XIX century in the Alps, where there are numerous resorts in the high zone and in the area of glacial lakes from the valley. Other facilities for practicing this type of tourism also exist in the Tatra Mountains, the Carpathians, the Rhodopes, the Pyrenees and the Scandinavian Alps Mountains.

- Balneal tourism with mineral or thermal waters is the oldest form of tourism practiced since the Romans.



**Figure 2. Aspects related to tourism activity**

The studies elaborated within the OMT, [15] based on the information and market analyzes carried out in the countries big generating of tourist flows from Europe, characterize the Romanian tourist offer through the following aspects:

- all types of programs offered by Romania face a fierce competition on Western European markets;
- competing destinations offer a wide range of facilities for all categories of tourists;
- the Romanian offer is relatively limited, restricted to a few resorts, and within it, only to a few hotels;
- the services are inferior to those on competing destinations such as Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece or Cyprus;
- the recreation does not rise to the level of the offer from other destinations;
- technical infrastructure is inadequate;

- the lack of some hotels of superior comfort in major cities and tourist resorts of international interest;
- in terms of quality-price report, Romania has stopped to be an attractive tourist market.

The World Tourism Organization summarizes the impact factors in the development of Romania's international tourism, as follows:

Table 1

**The perception of Romanian tourist offer on foreign markets**

The field	Positive factors	Negative factors
Tourist product	the existence in the study phase of investment projects for the construction of new hotels, both in the big cities and tourist resorts	the lack of a coherent and stable action program regarding tourism development
	adopting new normative acts regulating the development and control of tourism activities and contributing to the improvement of tourist services	the lack or poor condition of public services in numerous resorts and rural areas
	significant increase of accommodation capacity in especially as a number of private rooms and suites	The lack of credits for investments and restoration of patrimony, insufficient funds allocated for tourism development
	improvement and development of the offer for some tourism products and programs	lack of credits for promotion activities
	modernizing existing hotels and building new hotels and other reception facilities	strong competition from countries in Central and Eastern Europe
	the development of agrotourism	
	development and diversification of leisure facilities and equipment	
increasing professionalism in personnel training		

Source: WTO

After making economic and social balances, that highlight the effects of tourism and express future opportunities: the type of tourism development, which can have a positive or negative character in time and space; the interest in seeking an increase of the economic consequences of tourism through various actions; the need to accompany the development efforts through an effort of management, [5,6,13] concentrating of all local efforts, are needed some development measures.

a) *in training and educating potential tourists, about the possible consequences, of their presence and behaviors can have on the environment:*

- creation some forms of documents (flyers, brochures, guides) that will act as "codes of good conduct" and a well-developed broadcasting system;
- organizing events.

b) *choosing the best solutions for using of resources for tourism purposes:*

- the development of some documentation for zoning the territory, especially in the areas with the highest tourist pressure and establishing the priorities for the development of tourism.

d) *implementing projects or solutions based on the complementarity concept of activities:*

- the construction of multi-purpose equipment (the realization of aquatic accumulations with dual use, agriculture and tourism);
- using of associated methods of planning with tourist valences.

**Table 2**

**Measures to capitalize tourism resources through tourism**

<b>Objectives/specific directions</b>	<b>Necessary measures to achieve the proposed objectives</b>
<i>Tourist infrastructure and landscaping</i>	Developing infrastructure easy to be visited
	Development of sightseeing centers and tourist information points
<i>Human resources management</i>	Conceiving training programs for the specific realities of each area
	Establish appropriate structures in order to provide specialist training
<i>Business development and local development</i>	Stimulate local authorities and encourage them to develop a complete offer
	Developing high quality tourism products
<i>Conservation and protection of nature</i>	Active participation of economic operators and tourists from destinations with tourist potential to biodiversity conservation
<i>Marketing and promotion</i>	Development of research activities regarding the national and international market
	Creating integrated product offers/programs
	Developing the distribution system

Source: the author's proposals

*e) inclusion of tourism projects in a global framework; from this point of view, it is necessary to integrate them into an arrangement plan. The role of such a plan can be interpreted through:*

- diagnose study of the opportunities, which allows searching, and identifying complementarities and competitive elements and proposing viable solutions;
- attracting the permanent collaboration of the population and local administration for effective participation in the development of tourism in order to create the concrete conditions for the realization and implementation of the selected projects. Thus, establishing a partnership between all stakeholders has the role of diminishing the conflicts of interest, the global approach of the development issues.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Today, tourism is a huge, global market where is manifest the consumers demand for a huge variety of products and services. Not only its size and rhythm of growth make this market very attractive, but also its future potential, not at all exhausted. The main arguments that determine the necessity of developing tourism, result from the following aspects:

1. Tourism resources are inexhaustible, tourism being one of the economic sectors with real perspectives on long-term development.
2. Exploitation and complex capitalization of tourism resources accompanied by an efficient promotion on the foreign market can be a source of increase of the foreign exchange revenues of the state, contributing to balancing the external balance of payments.
3. Tourism represents a safe labor market and redistribution of the redundancies in other highly restructured economic sectors.
4. Tourism, through its multiplier effect, acts as a dynamic element of the global economic system, generating a specific demand for goods and services which leads to an increase in their production, thus contributing to the diversification of the structure of the sectors of the national economy.
5. The harmonious development of tourism across the country contributes to economic and social growth and the reduction of imbalances between different areas and is also an important source of growth of the population's income.

6. Tourism is a means of developing rural areas, by expanding the area of specific supply and creating jobs in rural areas other than traditional ones, improving living conditions and increasing the incomes of local people.

7. Diversifying the local industry by supporting the creation of SMEs.

8. Development of non-polluting industries related to tourism and goods for consume (handicrafts, furniture, leather goods etc.).

9. By adopting a sustainable tourism development strategy and imposing measures to protect the environment, of the fundamental values of human existence (water, air, flora, fauna, ecosystems, etc.), tourism also has an ecological vocation.

10. On social plan, tourism is manifested as an active means of educating and raising the level of training and civilization of people, having a special role in the use of the population's free time.

In the perspective of the 2020s, the main trends in tourism demand and supply, both at the level of Romania and at European level, could be:

- an increasing number of tourists want to satisfy their hobbies and special interests, based on nature, historical places, economic activities and professional interests;
- ethnic tourism, represented by those who want to visit the places where they were born or their ancestors is growing; a special aspect is formed by the religious tourism made up of people who, through pilgrimages, visit holy places related to their religious beliefs;
- increasing the demand for new destinations with repercussions on the development of new areas or improving and expanding the existing ones;
- increases the concern for maintaining or improving health, and thus stimulates the development of spas and spa treatment centers; classic resort hotels are beginning to adapt to new demand orientations, including facilities for gymnastics, fitness, other treatments and non-traditional procedures, etc., increasing the interest of applicants;
- there is a tendency to increase the number of shorter holidays, allowing the development of several tourist destinations, and for satisfying the demand, the opportunity to offer facilities and activities for tourists in all seasons;
- there is an increase in the number of people of the third age who are more active and eager to travel, with no reduction in the number of middle-aged or young people;
- tourists become more experienced and sophisticated and expect high-quality attractions, utilities and services as well as prices appropriate to the quality of their travels;
- business trips or congresses, conferences, meetings, etc. continues to grow, bringing ever greater benefits to organizers; many people participating in such actions are also tourists who want to know the area they visit;
- increases the number of tourists who are concerned about natural or social environmental issues and increase the researches of some destinations that are poorly polluted and without environmental or social problems. As a result of these guidelines, many destinations are concerned about the adoption of some development programs and want to encourage good quality tourism that avoids environmental or social problems, while also optimizing economic benefits.

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