

STUDY REGARDING THE TOURISTIC MOVEMENT IN THE FRENCH ALPS

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Abstract: *The paper demonstrates that the winter season is preferred more by tourists than the summer season, because in winter, the tourists can practice many winter sports as: skiing, snowboard, skiing fond, skiing outside the arranged slopes etc., but the Rhone-Alps region has some of the best skiing resorts (Chamonix, Val d'Isere, Alpe d'Huez, Courchevel etc.), they have very good facilities regarding slopes and hotels. In Rhone-Alps region, 37% of tourists preferred to spend their winter holidays, and the rest of 63% preferred the summer season. The request of mountain tourism evolved under the influence of some different and banal factors for general or specific tourism.*

Key words: *mountain tourism, tourists' arrivals, spending the night, the touristic offer.*

INTRODUCTION

Rhone-Alps, the Alpine tourist region is situated in the south-east of France (with a territory of 43 698 km², 8% of the French metropolitan territory), positioned between the Central Massif (to west) and Alps Mountain Chain (to east) split by the beautiful valley of Rhone river and the Saone river (that confluence to Lyon), situated at the French border with Switzerland and Italy, Rhone-Alps region benefits from the largest area of the French Alps mountain chain, a paradise of the sports winter season. Important touristic area in Europe, Rhone-Alps assures touristic access through a broad road network, a railroad system and two major airports Lyon and Grenoble.

The second French touristic region in Rhone-Alps (national leader for the touristic mountain winter stays (37% of the national total) and for the green tourism) offers a wonderful natural frame, but also with multiple contrasts, with a large diversity of landscapes and is one of the only French regions with touristic offers during the whole year.

The touristic offer for winter sports is attractive because of the 30 international skiing resorts, 19 skiing fond resorts, 455 mechanical climbing system for ski runners at the superior end of the tracks (20% of North Alps Park) and last, but not least, because of the 2 500 km of slopes.

Rhone-Alps region, the French capital of the "white gold" (snow), has over 150 resorts for winter sports (also named the rhone-alps mountain resorts) that are mainly in the North Alps region (Savoie, Haute-Savoie and Isere), but also in Drome departments (Vercors), Ain (Jura) and in Loire (Pilat), served by 115 500 employees in the touristic sector[1]. Glad to receive tourists, the people from Rhone-Alps have prepared over 139 764 beds in hotels and 212 823 beds in camping areas. The Savoie department has the most searched areas in the white season, meanwhile Ardeche waits tourists especially in summer. Haute-Savoie is advantaged for spending free time, in summer and also in winter. The region has a big number of centers interesting from a touristic point of view, has over 160 skiing domains and concentrates an important part of national centers for sports of the white season.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research meant gathering the data regarding the system of indicators for touristic movements in Rhone-Alps regions. For this purpose, it had been consulted the publications of the National Institute of Statistics and of the French Economics Studies. Within the existent data, it is analyzed a lot of indicators for touristic movement, with the role to highlight the development of tourism in the French Alps.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Rhone-Alps region is classed on the first place in France for the number of touristic stays and on the second for the nights, the accommodation capacity covers 847 737 beds and the touristic offer unreels three types of accommodation:

- Touristic resident ship (the first French region, has over 30% of the national capacity, especially in Savoie and Haute-Savoie), cottages and touristic villas;
- Furnished facilities classified for tourism (the first place at a national level with a capacity of 26% of national capacity);
- Touristic hotels (the second French region with a number of facilities with 12,7% of classified hotels in France and the third region regarding the touristic receiving capacity (after Ile-de-France and Provence –Alpes-Cote d'Azur (PACA)), with 11,3% of rooms at the beginning of 2014.

Table 1

The accommodation capacity in Rhone-Alps region, in 2014

Number of beds	Rhône-Alps
Hotels	139.764
Camping places	212.823
Second residence for a tourist	178.639
Guesthouses	254.556
Holiday villages and family houses	44.383
Accommodation with Bed and Breakfast – B&Bs	14.233
Youth Hostel	3.339
Total	847.737

Source: www.rhone-alpes.cci.fr

The biggest number of beds offered to tourists is registered in Guesthouses (254.556), the second place is taken by Camping places (212.823), and the last place is taken by Youth Hostels (3.339). So, Rhone-Alps region can house a total number of 847.737 tourists.

The hospitality of Rhone-Alps region (the third hotels area in France as capacity) registered 139.764 occupied beds in the 2.049 hotels and 18,5 millions nights (wherefrom 27% belong to the foreign tourists), that represents a growth of +2%.

Hotels in fresh air hold in France 8.600 Camping places and 935.000 locations of what Rhone-Alps region has 212.823 beds in 813 Camping places (8% of the national capacity) with 70.941 locations (11% land and 8% of the national capacity), 523 developed lands according the new touristic European norms and 290 lands in course of the new standards.

In the last 10 years was filed a comedown (-17%) of the Camping places number classified with 1 – 2 stars, a light growth (+2%) for the ones with 3 stars and a remarkable growth (+33%) for the ones cu 4 stars, the reason wherefore from 2005 to 2015 Rhone-Alps region had a gain of 1,7 million nights (shared between the French and foreign clientage).

Collective accommodation units (grouped in 3 categories: tourism and assimilated resident ship, holiday villages and villas, inns for youth and sportive centers) have in total

229.500 beds wherewith they realized 21,5 nights in winter from 2014 to 2015, splinted as following:

- Tourism and assimilated resident ships → 16,6 million nights (meaning 75% of the sector frequency) and represents 11% of touristic frequency in Rhone-Alps. The percentage of foreign night is of 29%, this means an occupancy rate pretty high regarding the average commercial locations.
- Holiday villages and villas → 4,1 million nights (meaning 3% of touristic frequency in Rhone-Alps). This sector had 15% of foreign clientage, average stay duration in total, the clients are 6,4% of weekly nights.
- Youth inns, stay international centers and sportive centers → 0,8 million nights, whereby 19% are foreign clients.

Tourism and hotels resident ships are 518 (places Rhone-Alps region on the first place in France) have in total 179.000 beds (27% of the national offer and three times more towards hotels) and accounted in winter 2014-2015, the frequently for this accommodation category represents 68% in the white season and 29% during summer, the explanation is: the importance of offers for Alpine skiing resorts.

Holiday villages and villas contain 195 locations with a total capacity of 44.383 beds (meaning 16% of the national offer, this is the reason it is on the second place) whereby at a regional level, 53% are concentrated in Savoie department.

The social and solitary tourism, in 2014, in total represented 1,6 nights in the 18 villas, designed for this sector, 394.000 nights and a turn-over of 73 million euro. The Rhone-Alps region is the most important regional agency in the National Alliance of Social and Solitary Tourism, it follows to purchase 4 new destinations in 2015.

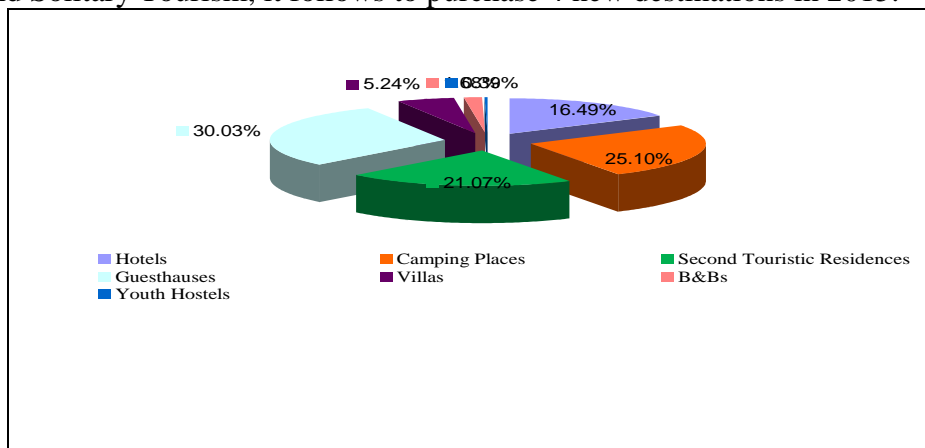


Figure 1 Accommodation units (%) Rhone-Alps

Source: www.rhone-alpes.cci.fr

The realized quest from 20th to 22th April 2015 about Observatoire de Rhône-Alpi Tourisme on a sample of 502 professionals from the alpine touristic sector distinguished that the occupation rate of commercial accommodation was around 56% on a average and 60% in the mountain areas. Ski runners clientage was represented pro rata 78% of Frenchmen originated from the regions: Rhone-Alps (59%), Ile-de-France (52%) and North-Pas-de-Calais (22%), meanwhile the foreign ski runners came from UK (61%), Belgium (49%), Germany (36%) and Russia (9%). The ski runners who came in the alpine resorts in Rhone-Alps region, they practiced alpine skiing around 53% and only 265 fond skiing.

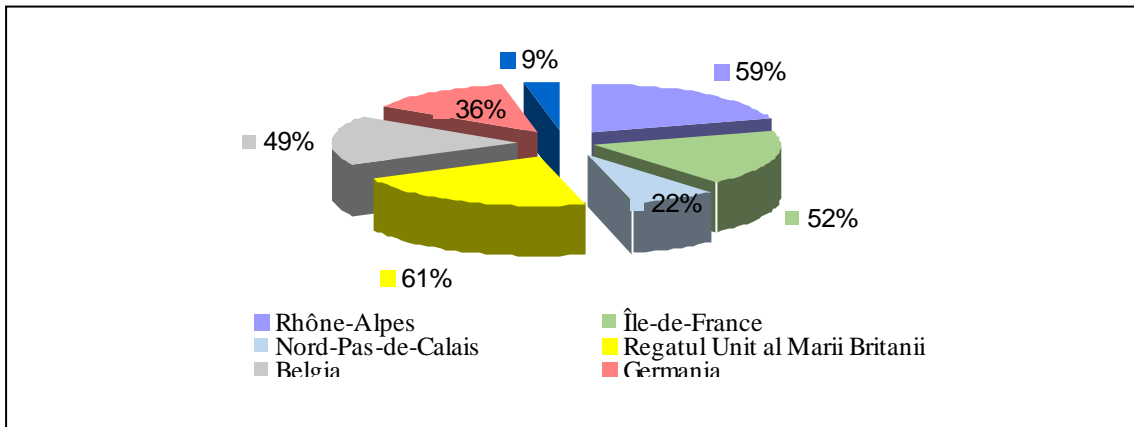


Figure 2 Ski runners clientage in Rhone-Alps region in winter 2014-2015

Source: www.actumontagne.com

Rhone-Alps region has the most 3 stars hotel, meaning 661, followed by 2 stars hotels, and the least hotel in this region, but the most luxurious and the most expensive hotels are of 5 stars, meaning 45. The tourists can benefit of a total number of 1.541 hotels where they could stay at different prices according to the established budget.

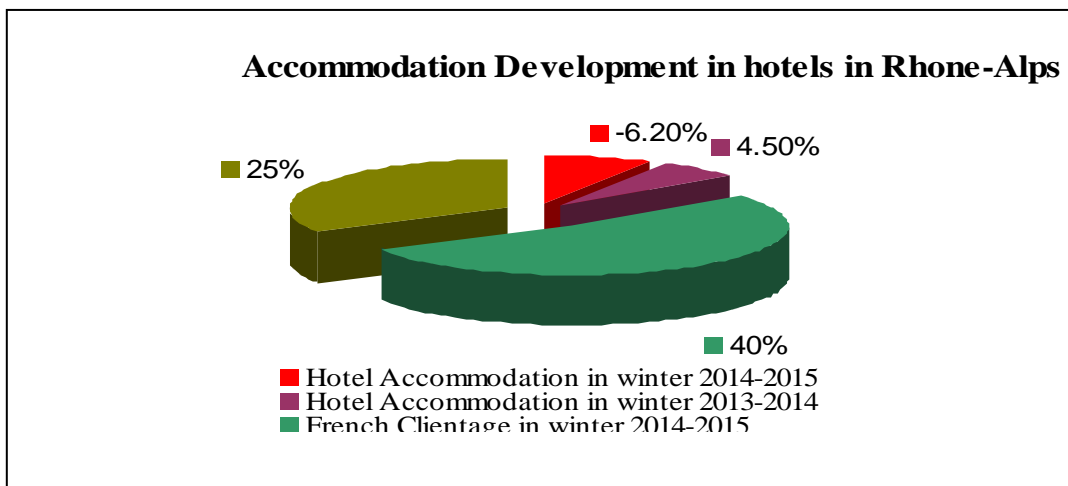


Figure 3 Accommodation in hotels in Rhône-Alps in 2014-2015 the 2013-2014

Source: www.insee.fr

Relating to the accommodation in the hotels, the white season 2014-2015 recorded a decrease in the region of the Rhône-Alps in proportion of 6.2% compared to the 2013-2014 which had an increase of 4,5 %, the French ski runners clientage being 40 % and the foreigner of 25 %. The overnight stays recorded by the French in the winter 2014-2015 were in the number of 3.727.700 while the foreign had 1.945.500 nights.

For the region Rhône-Alps, the winter season is much more sought by tourists than the summer season, since the winter tourists can practice many winter sports such as skiing, snowboarding, ski fund, skiing outside the adapted slopes etc., but the region Rhône-Alps has one of the best skiing resorts (Chamonix, Val d'Isere, Alpe d'Huez Courchevel, etc.), equipped very well both from the point of view of the slopes and of the units of accommodation.

Table 2**The most visited tourist attractions in the Rhône-Alps regions, in 2014**

Name	Tourists Number
Vizille Departmental Domain (Vizille, Isère)	811.234
Aiguille du Midi Cable car (Chamonix, Haute-Savoie)	719.092
Railway Montenvers- sea of ice (Chamonix, Haute-Savoie)	693.390
Brévent Cable car (Chamonix, Haute-Savoie)	454.713
The Burned Basilica (Ars-sur-formans, Ain)	432.281
Total	3.110.710

Source: www.rhone-alpes.cci.fr

In the table above can be noted that most tourists in number of 811.234 visit "Field Vizille departmental (Vizille, Isère)", then on the second place with a number of 719.092 of visitors is the "Aiguille du Midi Cable car (Chamonix, Haute-Savoie). In this top 5 with the most visited tourist attractions, to the last place is the Basilica of burned (Burned-SUR-formans, in)" with a number of 432.281 of tourists. In conclusion we have a total of 3.110.710 tourists who visited the most important tourist attractions in the region Rhône-Alps.

The frequently of French Tourists skiers in the region Rhône-Alps (who booked in the winter 2014-2015 a value of 144,1 million tourist nights, (-1%) against the 2013-2014 winter) has been highlighted as being of 41 % in the months January ÷ April and December 2014 (stable values in relation to the equivalent of the winter 2013-2014) and in proportion of 52 % in the months January ÷ April 2015 (a reduction of (-2%) against the equivalent period of winter 2013-2014).

Table 3**The structure of the nights by category of establishments of accommodation in the region of the Rhône-Alps in the year 2014**

Accommodation (% nights)	Summer	Winter	Autumn	Rhône-Alps
Relatives	35,9%	36,8%	53%	38%
Locations, rural motels and hotel rooms	17,2%	24,9%	7,8%	19,3%
Villas	14,7%	12,5%	20,0%	14,2%
Friends	7,9%	11,3%	3,0%	9%
Camping	7,2%	6,9%	10,3%	7,5%
Hotel	10,5%	1,1%	0,9%	5,6%
Other forms of accommodation with payment	4,6%	5,2%	3,4%	4,7%
Other forms of accommodation without payment	2,1%	1,4%	1,6%	1,8%
Commercials	40,2%	42,5%	15,1%	38,6%
Non-commercials	59,9%	57,6%	84,9%	61,5%

Source: data validating date www.pro.rhonealpes-tourisme.com

The number of nights of tourists in the region Rhône-Alps recorded an increasing production over the past ten years. From 2004 until the year 2007 is a constant evolution of the number of nights, about 18 million, and then for 2 years up to the year 2010 progress is descending order to reach 17 million nights. In the year 2010 the number of nights increases from year to year, reaching to the highest value in 2013 with 18.5 million nights.

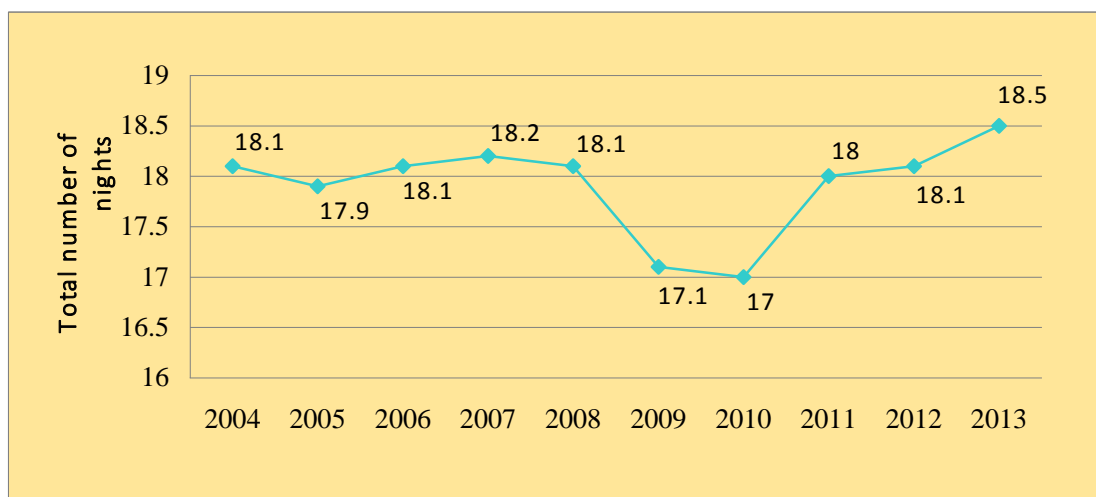


Figure 4 The evolution of the tourist flow in the region of the Rhône-Alps

The mountain tourism has recorded 10.458.005 arrivals, 179,8 million nights and an average stay between 1,50 % ÷ 3.60%, the situation being balanced in terms of both the flow of tourists from Europe and other continents and European clientage. As a means of transport have been used: cars in proportion of 80,2 %, camping-car 0,5 %, coach 1,4 %, train 16.1%, boat 0,1 %, aircraft 1,5 % and other means of transport 0,2 %. On the whole, 72 % of the accommodation units have benefited from a good attendance by tourists, 78% in mountain areas within the urban and 57 % in the rural areas.

CONCLUSIONS

In the winter 2014-2015, the alpine sport activity alpine totaled: 39.9 million days of good skiing (72 % of the total white season sports of the region, 39% regional stays in relation to the 21% average to national) which have produced 1 billion € and splined 18.410 restaurants (69% traditional and 31 % fast).

In these circumstances, Rhône-Alps shall ensure the future (is still in second place as a tourist region French Montana) 12 poles of competitiveness and 13.6% Innovative enterprises which represents the engine of growth and renewal of the offer, the territory mountain biking at international level, the dynamics of which is applied in the field of tourism athlete in the open air and at the locations adapted for the specific competitive white season, tourism and cultural heritage. The exploitation and the putting into practice of the latest technologies represents a different direction for development in relation to the competition.

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