

## STUDY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADVENTURE TOURISM IN ROMANIA

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### Abstract

*Today the world faces a lot of problems: an unstable economy that leads to joblessness, population growth, but also to a poor population in some areas of the world, environmental degradation, political instability, etc. All these problems could be alleviated in some countries, and they could be further alleviated through the income generated by tourism development. One form of tourism that does not necessarily require high investments is adventure tourism, which must be practiced responsibly precisely because it is close to nature and because we do not want to destroy this nature that is already in imbalance. This requires responsible behavior and government policies that ensure sustainable tourism. In this paper we intend to analyze the place that adventure tourism occupies among developed countries and developing countries starting from the existing data for the period 2010-2018. We will analyze how this ranking has changed over time, but also the ways in which Romania could develop adventure tourism. The working methodology involved the revision of the specialized literature on the definition of adventure tourism and the way of calculating the Adventure Tourism Development Index, the collection of data from various international databases, their processing, so that based on the analysis we could draw conclusions regarding the development stage of adventure tourism in Romania and its development prospects.*

**Key words:** tourism, adventure, sustainability, globalization

### INTRODUCTION

Adventure tourism began to develop when people wanted more for leisure and how they choose to spend their vacations. Adventure tourism is defined as a journey made outside the environment in which a person lives, for more than 24 hours, but not more than one year in a row. The appearance of this form of tourism was also determined by the tourist profile because it is clear that the profile of the modern tourist has changed. In a material developed within the SkillsOnBoard project - Soft skills for professional skippers in a changing tourism industry, the profile of the modern tourist is presented. Thus, if in the past the tourist was inexperienced, not using complex tourist services, preferring vacations in sunny areas, preferring relaxation, at present the tourist has become more mature, combining different activities for spending the

holiday (sightseeing, practicing sports, relaxing, etc.) . Thus, vacations are no longer private just as a way of pausing, leaving the routine, but of continuing life [10]. This is also the case of the millennial traveler who has other goals regarding leisure and whose profile is represented by young people between the ages of 18-34, very social, expect technology to work, who love their phone, who like sharing ideas , passionate about values and crave adventure [4]. Thus, we see how globalization, through its advantages, can contribute to the development of tourism and its quality [5].

To determine the satisfaction of tourists, Khuong and Ngauyen identified a number of factors, classified as follows: cultural and historical attractions; local cuisine - as a factor of differentiation of destinations; the price charged by the tourist; safety and security of the tourist destination; the natural

environment; entertainment and recreation activities; the image of the tourist destination; negative factors of the tourist destination [6]. All this, because the current tourism must find solutions that adapt to the needs of modern tourism [9]. Or adventure tourism is such a form of tourism, niche, that can offer people ways to spend their free time in a way that they want.

If at the beginning the adventure tourism was a tourism that included natural, cultural and physical elements, consisting of activities described in Roman, literature or unique experiences, which would transform or model the tourist's personality, at the moment he means more. It means new things, new experiences, it means going beyond limits and

creating sensations. The specialized literature recalls 34 activities that characterize adventure tourism, including: hiking, climbing, speleology, ecotourism, hiking, fishing, hunting, expeditions, camping, cruises, kayaking, rafting, diving, surfing, trekking, safari, sailing, sailing, snowboarding, cultural activities, educational programs, etc. Knowing the preferences of consumers of such services can be a support for those in the field of tourism who will be able to respond as quickly as possible to the wishes of adventure travellers. At the same time, adventure tourism can bring many benefits, economic, social and environmental (Figure 1).

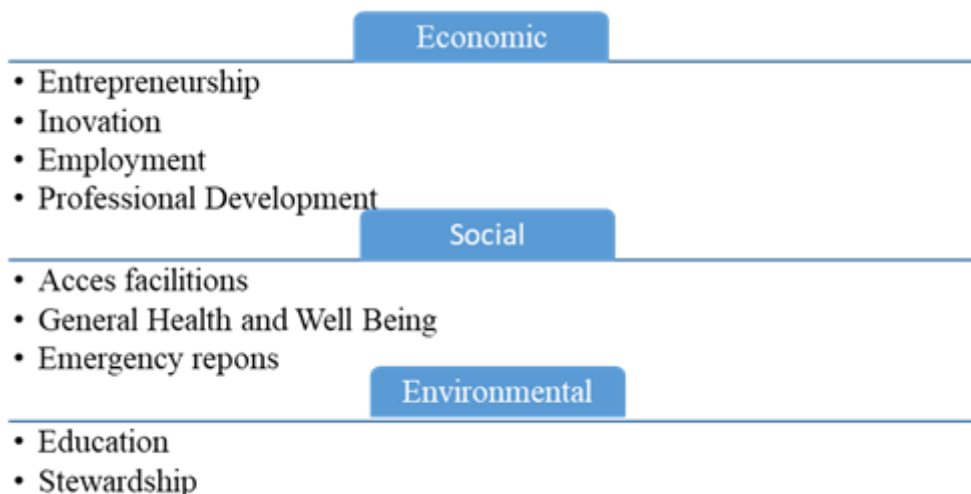


Fig. 1. Benefits of Adventure Tourism  
 Source: own processing after [11].

Tourism, as a branch of the global economy is the most dynamic sector in the field of services that contributes to the growth of GDP not only at the level of each country, but also at the global level [8]. According to a 2018 World Bank study, Strengthening Tourism Competitiveness in the OECS countries: Market Analysis, although the number of tourists practicing adventure tourism is much smaller than that of Cruise tourists and Overnight package tourists, in this case 65% of revenues remain in the country, compared to 14% in mass tourism. Also, adventure tourism provides 2.6 local jobs for \$ 100,000, compared to 1.5 local jobs for \$ 100,000 in mass tourism [4].

Worldwide there is The Adventure Travel Trade Association which follows year after year which are the best destinations for adventure tourism. Starting from countries recognized by the United Nations, these have been classified into two categories, namely developed and developing countries. Starting with 2008 Adventure Travel Trade Association, The George Washington University and Xola Consulting began calculating the Adventure Tourism Development Index year by year, establishing both the method of calculating the indicator and the ranking of countries involved in adventure tourism. The methodology used to determine this index was aimed at developing

models from which the world can see, learn and reproduce [7].

Thus, starting from quantitative data in the form of international indicators, and from data taken from surveys that respect the principles of sustainable tourism development, the index is calculated on the basis of ten elements grouped into three categories that follow: Safe and Welcoming, Adventure and Readiness [1].

In the Safe and Welcoming category are: sustainable development, safety, health and natural resources. In the Adventure category are: the tourism entrepreneurship and resources of Adventure, and in the Readiness category are: humanitarian, infrastructure, cultural resources and image [2018 Report].

The ten elements or pillars based on which the index was calculated are as follows:

(1) Sustainable development policy which, through two indicators, the Environmental Protection Index and the Unemployment Rate, the first must be as high as possible and the second as low as possible, allow the sustainable development of tourism, also supported by government policies.

(2) Safety and security can be assessed on the basis of The Corruption Perceptions Index, Foreign and Commonwealth Travel Warnings and Expert Opinions and which provides information on travel safety, the facilities offered in case of accidents, the appearance of medical problems, the degree of risk related for traveling.

(3) Healthy. This pillar measures the level of social assistance that is provided at the level of a country. A well-developed health system can provide tourists with support in case of need, and the pillars on which to determine the pillar are Hospital beds (per 1,000 people) and Physicians (per 1,000 people).

(4) Natural Resources. This pillar is characterized by four indicators, namely: Urban Concentration, Population Density, Kilometers of coastline and Ratio of coast to total area.

(5) Cultural Resources are one of the important elements that are explored by adventure tourists, and the indicators that characterize this pillar are: UNESCO World

Heritage Sites and Protected Area (% of Total Land) because it just indicates the existence of cultural resources.

(6) Adventure activity resources (cycling, climbing, hiking, rafting). This pillar can be assessed on the basis of the following indicators: Threatened Species and Forests, Grasslands, Drylands, which appreciates the quality of the environment and the existence of resources favorable to the adventure tourism.

(7) Humanitarian can be assessed by: Happy Planet Index (HPI), NGO Density and NGO Presence. Life expectancy, ecological footprint, number of NGOs, their density are elements that indicate the degree of development of a country.

(8) Entrepreneurship is closely linked to the economic development of a country and the possibility of practicing adventure tourism. The indicators based on which the barriers for entrepreneurs can be monitored are: Business Freedom, Fiscal Freedom, Trade Freedom, Government size, Investment Freedom, Monetary Freedom, Financial Freedom, Freedom from Corruption, Property Rights and Labor Freedom.

(9) Infrastructure is appreciated both on the basis of hard tourism infrastructure (roads, highways, airports, accommodation structure, etc.), as well as on the basis of soft tourism infrastructure (maps with tourist routes), but adventure tourism is closer to the second category.

(10) A country's Image is a pillar on which to develop its sustainable development.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The working methodology involved on the one hand the bibliographic study, and on the other hand the collection of statistical data, their systematization and interpretation, which were the basis for formulating the conclusions regarding adventure tourism. The bibliographic documentation was done by consulting the specialized works in the field of tourism in general, and on adventure tourism, in particular. In the process of collecting the information needed for the

research we used data collected from secondary sources, ie data made available by official statistics, such as the World Bank, the World Tourism Organization and which have been processed, analyzed and interpreted and summarized in the tables. We took into account both the national and the global context, the bibliography constituting in particular studies and articles published on the specialized sites. The processing of data and information has allowed us to formulate some views on the evolution of adventure tourism, as well as on the influence of the determining factors on its sustainable development. Although the work has a fundamental character due to the fact that it has analyzed and highlighted theoretical concepts, it is at the same time an applied research because based on the obtained results, conclusions

regarding the development of adventure tourism are formulated. Thus, the deductive approach has been tested using existing empirical data, the limits of the research leaving room for future research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The reports published for the period 2015-2018 made a ranking of the countries in which the adventure tourism has developed and in which there are 28 developed countries and 163 Developing/Emerging countries. The top 10 countries, both from the developed countries category and from the emerging countries category, show that there were some changes in the adventure tourism sector in 2015-2018 compared to 2010 (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Top 10 Developed Countries regarding adventure tourism

	2010	2015	2016	2018
1	Switzerland	Switzerland	Iceland	Iceland
2	Iceland	Iceland	Germany	Switzerland
3	New Zealand	Germany	New Zealand	Germany
4	Canada	Norway	Norway	New Zealand
5	Germany	New Zealand	Switzerland	Norway
6	Sweden	Austria	Canada	Sweden
7	Ireland	Canada	Australia	Canada
8	Norway	Finland	Finland	Finland
9	Finland	Sweden	Austria	United Kingdom
10	Austria	France	Denmark	Australia

Source: own processing after [1, 2, 3].

Following the top of the 10 countries we find that Switzerland ranked 1st for two years, 2010 and 2011, 2nd place in 2015 and 5th place in 2016. Iceland also ranked 1st and 2nd in the years analyzed. What stands out is the rise of Germany, Norway and Ireland and the

descent into this top of Canada. Finland had a relatively constant position, and Austria had an oscillating evolution. The entry into the top of France is only seen in 2015, Denmark in 2016 and United Kingdom in 2018.

Table 2. Top 10 Developing Countries in Adventure Tourism

	2010	2015	2016	2018
1	Israel	Czech Republic	Czech Republic	Czech Republic
2	Slovak Republic	Slovak Republic	Israel	Israel
3	Chile	Bulgaria	Estonia	Estonia
4	Estonia	Estonia	Chile	Slovak Republic
5	Czech Republic	Chile	Slovak Republic	Poland
6	Bulgaria	Poland	Slovenia	Chile
7	Slovenia	Israel	Bulgaria	Romania
8	Jordan	Slovenia	Poland	Bulgaria
9	Romania	Korea	Korea	Slovenia
10	Latvia	Costa Rika	Romania	Jordan

Source: own processing after [1, 2, 3].

For Developing Countries, it is noted that the Czech Republic climbed from the 5th position in 2010 to the 1st position in the following years. Estonia also climbed from the 4th position in 2010 and 2015 to the 2nd position in 2016 and 2018. Chile is the country that has descended to the top, and Bulgaria and Slovenia have had oscillating evolutions. The new top countries are Korea, Jordan, Latvia or Costa Rica.

As for Romania, at the beginning of the achievement of these tops, that is, 2008, it is on the 21st position. In 2009 it reached the 11th place, and then in 2010 it reached the 9th place, then in 2016 it was on the 10th place. In 2018 Romania reached the 7th place. Given this position, we will analyze the factors that determined Romania's position in this top.

Table 3. The pillars of the Adventure Tourism Development Index for Romania in 2010

	Pillar	Value
1	Sustainable Development	8.14
2	Safety	6.33
3	Healthy	3.96
4	Natural Resources	6.34
5	Cultural Resources	5.69
6	Adventure Activity Resources	7.29
7	Humanitarian	3.83
8	Entrepreneurship	7.32
9	Infrastructure	8.29
10	Image	8.86
	ATDI	65.68

Source: own processing after [1, 2, 3].

Starting from the data that were the basis of the ATDI calculation in 2010, it is found that Romania with an index of 65.68 was on the 11th place. from the other countries in the top. In 2018 Romania ranked 7th among developing countries as a result of improving the values attributed to the 10 pillars. From table 4 we find that the index had value 62, observing the progress made during this period.

Values increased for pillars: Sustainable Development, Safety, Healthy, Adventure Activity Resources and Entrepreneurship. The other pillars, Natural Resources, Cultural Resources, Humanitarian and Image had lower values than in 2010. It is worth mentioning that these values are calculated according to the methodology that changes every two years.

Table 4. The pillars of the Adventure Tourism Development Index for Romania in 2018

	Pillar	Value
1	Sustainable Development	8.34
2	Safety	6.79
3	Healthy	4.24
4	Natural Resources	5.98
5	Cultural Resources	5.32
6	Adventure Activity Resources	8.91
7	Humanitarian	3.75
8	Entrepreneurship	7.67
9	Infrastructure	6.03
10	Image	6.75
	ATDI	62

Source: own processing after [1, 2, 3].

Precisely to show this, we will present the value of pillars and for the other countries that

are in the first six places, before Romania (Table 5).

Thus it is found that the first place is the Czech Republic for which the index has the value 33, a place that was assured due to the high values related to Sustainable Development, Adventure Activity Resources

and Entrepreneurship. The same indicators also had high values for Estonia and Slovak Republic. For Israel, the best pillars were Adventure Activity Resources and Infrastructure.

Table 5. The pillars of the Adventure Tourism Development Index in 2018

		Country					
	Pillar	Czech Republic	Israel	Estonia	Slovak Republic	Poland	Chile
1	Sustainable Development	8.69	8.24	8.48	8.06	8.20	7.94
2	Safety	6.46	5.44	7.11	6.36	6.74	6.94
3	Healthy	5.21	4.32	4.45	4.63	3.93	1.84
4	Natural Resources	6.23	6.57	6.12	6.12	6.02	7.04
5	Cultural Resources	5.95	5.43	5.19	6.36	6.46	4.70
6	Adventure Activity Resources	8.64	8.94	8.66	8.60	8.67	8.99
7	Humanitarian	4.03	3.82	3.66	3.67	4.08	3.63
8	Entrepreneurship	8.47	8.20	8.89	7.76	8.05	8.93
9	Infrastructure	6.13	6.88	6.62	6.48	5.90	6.35
10	Image	6.33	6.62	6.09	7.35	6.11	7.53
	ATDI	33	38	43	48	52	53

Source: own processing after [1, 2, 3].

Slovak Republic, ranked 5th, registered high values for pillars Image, Infrastructure, but also Adventure Activity Resources. Poland has high values for Adventure Activity Resources, but also for Safety and Cultural Resources.

Chile has the highest value for Adventure Activity Resources, Entrepreneurship and Image, and the lowest values for Healthy, Humanitarian and Cultural Resources.

We find that Romania has climbed to the top of adventure tourism, which can be further developed because it represents an opportunity for our country benefiting from natural resources (Carpathian Mountains, Danube Delta, Transfagarasan, Transalpina, etc.), but also cultural, infrastructure, safety, etc. for its development.

The adventure involves suspense and the unknown in need of increased security, which can be ensured at the present time much easier due to the development of technology that allows faster location, quick access to maps and numerous other information, access to information presented on lovers' blogs adventure activities, the possibility of capturing images in digital format, which amplifies the adrenaline desire of the lovers of

this tourism sector, but also the means necessary for its development.

In Romania, more and more tourist agencies or sites have appeared that promote adventure activities, grouped into three categories: air sports (mountaineering, climbing, boating, zip line, airplane flight, balloon flight); water sports (kayaking, kiteboarding, rafting, diving) and ground sports (ATV, horseback riding, mountain biking, paintball, skiing, snowboarding, snowmobile, speleology, shooting bears, archery).

For the development of adventure tourism in Romania, there are a number of factors applied globally that can influence its development, namely: the demographic evolution - the increase of life expectancy influences the way of spending leisure time; employment models - that make people have many more days off or on vacation for leisure; changing the attitude towards retirement - increasing the retirement age and continuing the activity make the population more active and more involved in spending their free time; lifelong education - makes more and more people involved in the education process and wants their personal development, which can be achieved even through travel; consumerism

- there are categories of accessories and clothes for adventure tourism; culture - tourists will want to create their own world and have a sense of belonging to certain values; fitness and health - the world is increasingly interested in a healthy lifestyle, spending free time contributing to the development of adventure tourism. All these elements provide the premises for the development of adventure tourism.

## CONCLUSIONS

Adventure tourism is on the rise, being one of the forms of tourism that can contribute to the development of rural communities. It must be practiced responsibly, however, given that irresponsible behaviour could lead to the destruction of the natural environment that was the basis for adventure tourism. Therefore, in addition to their own responsibility, there is also a need for government policies to contribute to sustainable tourism.

Although adventure tourism has developed in Romania lately, with new forms of leisure spending appearing, there are still opportunities for growth in this sector that offers tourists the adrenaline rush they want.

The aspect that should not be neglected, however, is the sustainability and responsibility of adventure tourism, so that the actions taken have a minimal impact on the natural, social or cultural environment.

This is why adventure tourism should be analyzed in more depth because it represents not only a way of increasing the income locally, but also a way of practicing ecological tourism, with minimal effects on the environment.

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