

## POSSIBILITIES OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE SLOW TOURISM CONCEPT IN ROMANIA

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### **Abstract**

*Slow tourism, slow adventure are new ways to travel, are new ways of life that are addressed to a new generation of tourists, much more concerned with ecology, environmental protection, and who wants to have a relaxing break after life tumultuous it has, which needs both adrenaline, but also immersion in a natural, open space, which will allow them to disconnect from technology. Drawing from these concepts, appeared and developed by specialists from the Nordic countries, as well as from the examples of their good practices, through this paper we set out to analyze the evolution of tourism worldwide during the period 2009-2018, with the purpose of to identify the ways of adapting Romania to these new temptations. The research method consisted of two stages, one of bibliographic study and another of analysis and interpretation of statistical data, on the basis of which conclusions could be formulated and proposals made for the development of slow tourism.*

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

### **INTRODUCTION**

With the economic development that took place worldwide, the hierarchy of the economic branches has changed, the services playing an increasingly important role, especially in the developed countries economy, as a result of the computerization of the society, of the awareness of the role of protecting the environment, of increasing the standard of living of the population, of its urbanization, which contributed to the increase of free time. In this way, tourism has become an important branch of the tertiary sector which has registered increases due to the dependence between tourism and economic growth [3]. Among the beneficial effects of tourism can be listed: tourism is both creative and user of national income; tourism activities are a way of capitalizing on political resources; tourism is a generator of jobs; tourism contributes to the diversification of some branches of the national economy; tourism determines the growth of investments;

tourism contributes to lower inflation; tourism contributes to the growth of exports; and so on.

Therefore, tourism can contribute to the stimulation and training of some elements of the tourism industry, but also to other branches of the economy with direct or indirect effect on the economic growth.

Since the second half of the twentieth century, world tourism has recorded continuous growth, not being greatly influenced by the possible economic, natural, political or social shocks that intervene in the world economy on a regular basis.

Not the same thing will happen at this time, starting in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic began to cause major damage to the tourism market (economic operators, airlines, etc.).

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The working methodology used in the present work was represented by two stages, one in

which the literature review on the concept of “slow tourism” was performed and a second based on the analysis of the statistical data provided by the domestic and international databases on the evolution of tourism for a period of ten years.

The indicators used were: number of arrivals in international tourism; expenditures for passenger transport items; international tourism, expenditures; international tourism, receipts.

From their analysis and interpretation, conclusions were drawn and proposals were made regarding the possibility of developing the concept of "slow tourism".

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

According to the World Tourism Organization data for the period 2009-2018, the latest data published for this ten-year period, shows that 2018 was the 9th consecutive year of sustained growth in tourism.

In terms of tourist arrivals, of the 1,442 Billion registered worldwide 710 million come from Europe, 348 million from Asia and the Pacific, 216 million from the Americas, 67 million from Africa and 60 million from the Middle East.



Fig. 1. Number of arrivals in international tourism (Billion \$)  
 Source: own processing [12-21].

As for the increase in arrivals, the largest increase for 2018 was recorded by Asia and the Pacific, with + 7%, but also by Africa,

with + 7%, followed by Europe and the Middle East with + 5%, as well as Americas with + 2%.

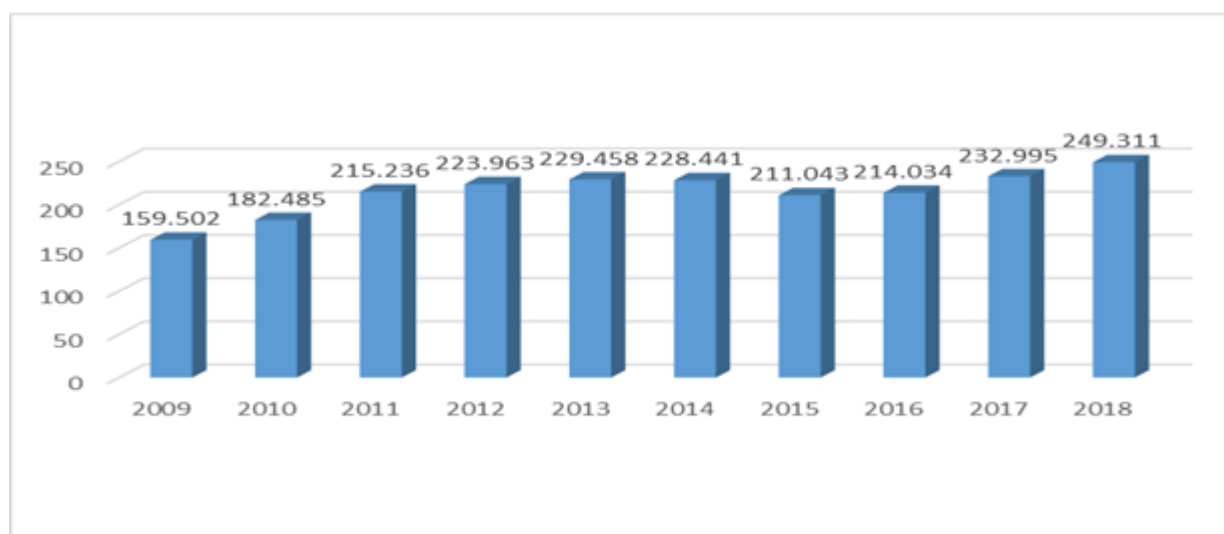


Fig. 2. Expenditures for passenger transport items (Billion \$)  
 Source: own processing [12 - 21].

The expenses for the transport of passengers had the highest value in 2018, with 249,311 Billion \$, year in which the trips of leisure, recreation and holidays represented 56% of

the total. VFR trips, health, religion accounted for 27%, business and professional trips 13%, the rest for other purposes

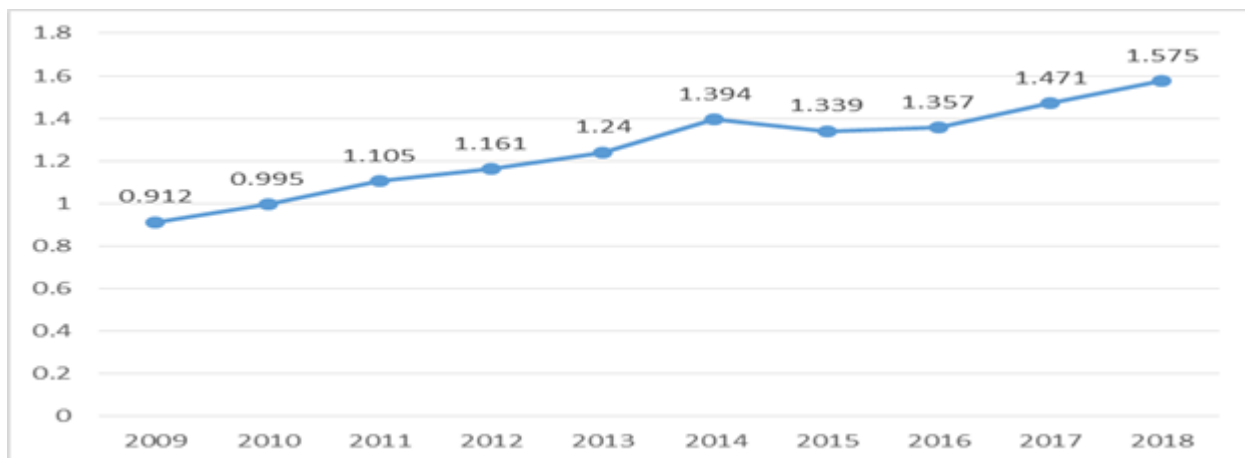


Fig. 3. International tourism, expenditures (Trillion \$)  
 Source: own processing [12- 21].

Analyzing the situation of tourism revenues, we find that they increased during 2009-2018, even if in 2014 and 2015 there was a slight decrease. At the level of 2018, the highest

revenues were registered in Europe (39%), followed by Asia and the Pacific (30%), Americas (23%), Middle East (5%) and Africa (3%).

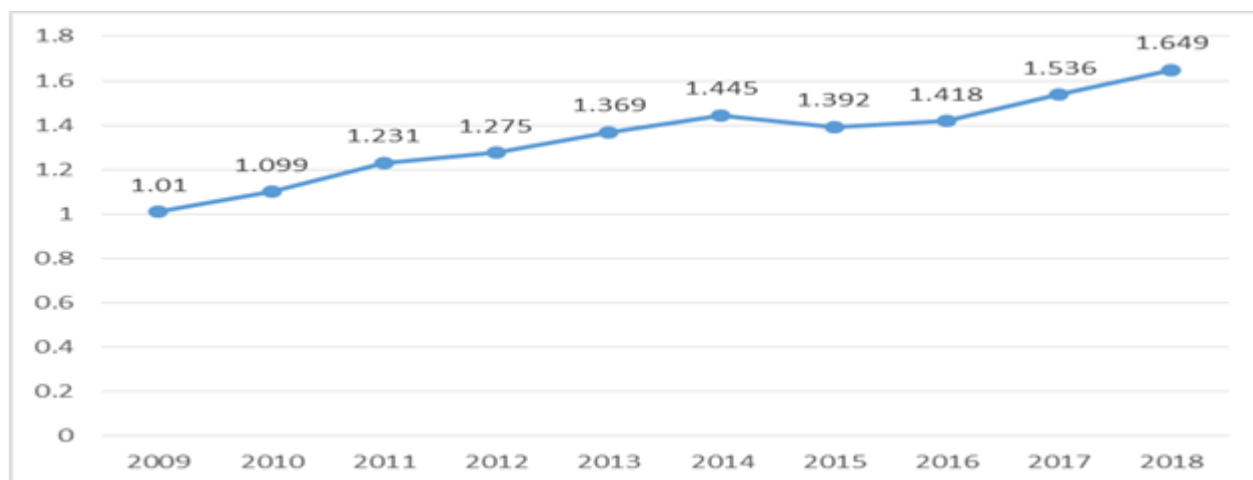


Fig. 4. International tourism, receipts (Trillion \$)  
 Source: own processing [12- 21].

International tourism revenues increased in 2018 compared to the previous year by \$ 121 billion.

China remains in first place in terms of the number of tourists traveling abroad, but according to the same statistics, it is found that 4 out of 5 tourists travel in their own region.

The analysis of all these data was intended to show that globally tourism has been growing

steadily over the last ten years. Another aspect noted is the fact that tourists have changed the way they spend their free time, becoming more concerned about practicing tourism that protects the environment. Given the fact that the environment is precisely the domain and the object of the tourism activities, a special attention must be paid to its protection, which implies the transition from practicing the classic forms of tourism characterized by an

uncontrolled tourist circulation, by surrealism or by misuse. of the natural resources with negative effects, to more modern forms of tourism, more friendly with the environment, which respond to the modern demands of life.

Let us remember that surrealism created the phobias of the inhabitants regarding tourists. In cities such as Venice, Amsterdam, Barcelona or New York there have been noisy events due to the negative effects such as blocking traffic in cities, invading beaches or increasing housing costs.

Therefore everyone is aware that there is a need for responsible and sustainable tourism. Such a form of tourism is "slow tourism" which involves accommodation and visiting less congested and less known areas, which will relieve the pressure of the overcrowded areas.

This concept of "slow tourism" was the subject of a project developed by the University of the Highlands and Islands', which wanted to be a brand, a movement, through which to be able to develop unique and authentic tourism products, to be a solution of leisure time by the inhabitants of the big cities that have a tumultuous and hectic life and thus could move to a slower lifestyle, by which they can approach nature and experiment with new things [8]. Moreover, the concept of "slow tourism" wants to change the behavior of tourists, wants to make them move from selfies to another life pace, in which to learn new things, to share experiences and to slow down their pace of life.

Varley considers that "slow tourism unfold at human pace, meals take time to prepare; time is spent directly in the effort of journeying and living"[9]. The activities carried out in this way involve smaller groups of tourists who will have a smaller impact on the nature, who need to be accompanied by a guide to supervise their safety, guide them and facilitate them to gain memorable experiences. "Slow tourism" capitalizes on landscapes, traditional food, hospitality, traditions and people.

The advantages of its practice are: development of tourism in rural areas, in a

sustainable way, with minimal risks for the environment; increasing revenues for local communities; ensuring stable incomes considering that it is less dependent on seasonality; acquiring unique experiences.

On the other hand, the practice of "slow tourism" in the areas not explored yet, could lead precisely to their destruction, to their pollution, which is why the concept must be very well managed, so as not to reach precisely what was wanted to be avoided. .

Imposing clear rules and continuous monitoring are elements that support the promotion and practice of "slow tourism".

Therefore, for those who want to use this concept, there are a set of criteria that need to be respected, namely: "Human or nature-powered journeys; an inspiring connection with the outdoors; environmental and cultural interpretation; local, wild or slow food; elements of storytelling, to convey the importance of the above elements"[1].

Romania has a natural heritage that allows it to develop a slow tourism. The experience of the Nordic countries, published in the form of examples of good practices, could be a point of reference.

Numerous such activities can be found on the specialized sites in Norway:

- Dogsledding which is a trip with the sled dog Husky; tourists are provided with accommodation in mountain huts without electricity and are offered the opportunity to enjoy the scenery, the meeting with the reindeer living in those areas or the northern lights;
- Another experience is offered by staying in a 5000-star hotel, as it is presented on the site, and which actually offers accommodation in nature, promising to those wishing that the offered landscape will change four times a year, once every season; the meal is provided through local products (trout, reindeer, forest mushrooms, etc.); there are organized camp fires and different activities that bring nature tourists closer;
- Another example is the photo adventure in the mountains of Norway that allows tourists to explore and photograph the flora and fauna of the rugged coasts.

Scotland is also a fan of slow tourism, and among the activities proposed on the specialized sites are:

- Cycling and canoeing, accompanied by tasting of local cuisine, ensuring accommodation in traditional homes; the purpose of the trip is also to provide psychological comfort, the creation of friendship bonds trying to create a new generation of explorers;
- Organizing trips on and around Scottish islands, tasting traditional products, experimenting with specific activities (gardening, weaving, etc.).

Sweden proposes the organization of private hunting parties, with accommodation in wooden cottages that ensures the comfort of a sauna or a "mountain spa", as well as the mass of local products.

In turn, Romania offers such vacations, which fall into the "slow tourism" category. There are numerous pensions or associations that provide hunting tourism services, precisely because Romania has unaltered ecosystems

with enviable biodiversity. Beyond the ethical aspects, hunting tourism has many followers, and its practice contributes with important revenues to the development of local communities.

Another example is the transformation of sheep into tourist stalls, where tourists can participate in activities and taste the products with Shepherd specific.

Fishing tourism, which provides trips, walks, but also fishing parties, especially in the Danube Delta, but also in other areas of the country are activities that attract more and more nature lovers.

The ice hotel from Balea Lac is another way of spending the holiday in a unique place, where tourists can enjoy accommodation and meal provided from traditional Transylvanian products. The development of different routes, such as "Road of wine", "Road of salt", "Road of the King" are also ways to promote niche tourism [2, 7], which can be associated with "slow tourism".

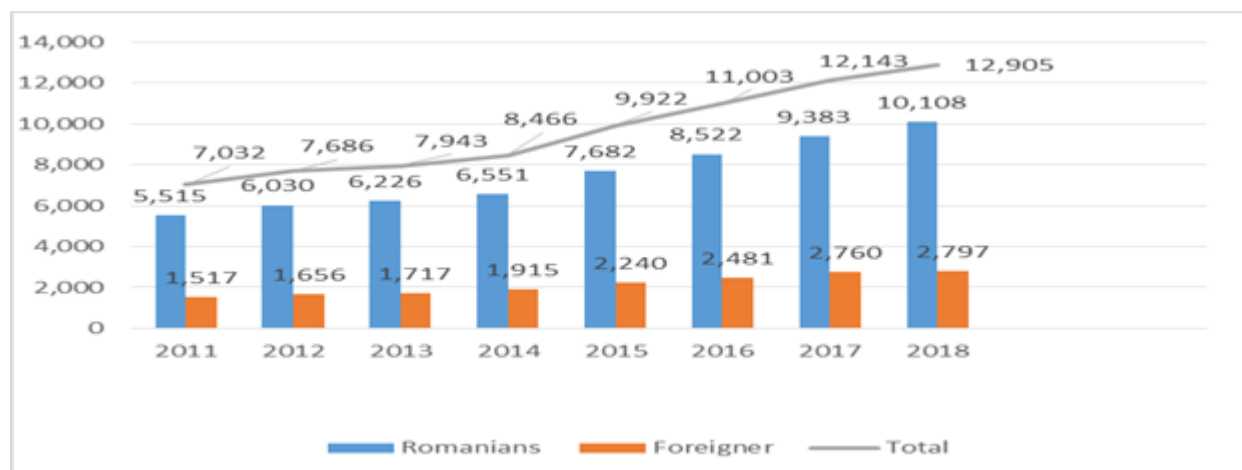


Fig. 5. Tourists accommodated in the establishments of tourists' reception in Romania, 2011-2019 (thousands)  
 Source: own processing [6].

In Romania, the number of tourists increased in 2009-2018, from 6,141 thousand tourists in 2009 to 12,905 thousand tourists in 2018. As for the increase in the number of Romanian

tourists, they increased 2.8 times in 2018 compared to 2009, and the number of foreign tourists increased 2.1 times during this period.

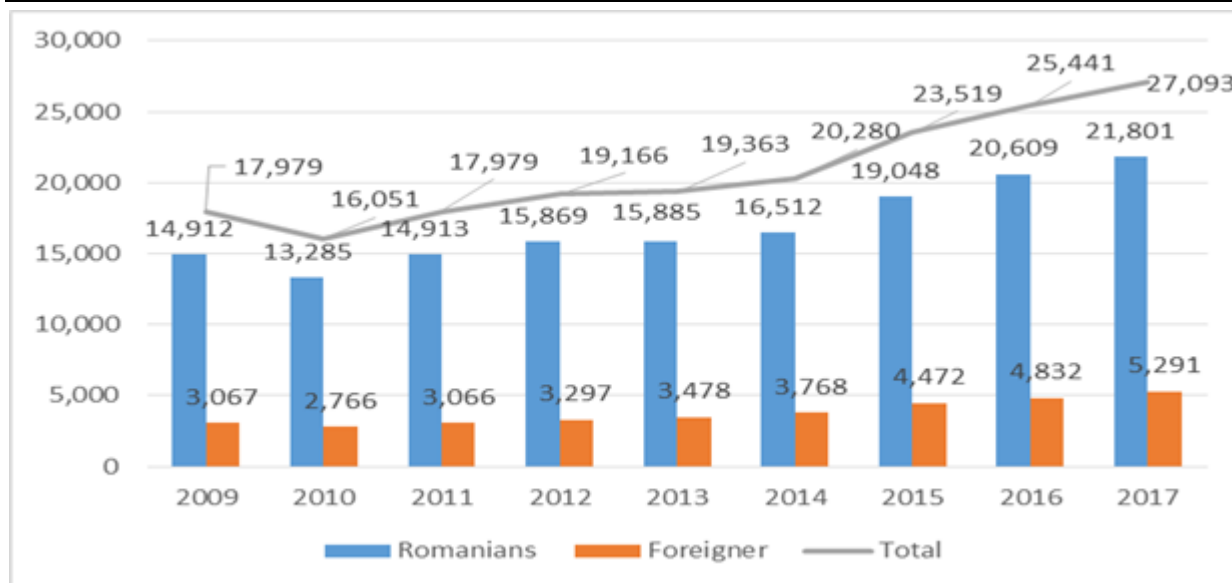


Fig. 6. Overnight stays in the establishments of tourists' reception (thou)  
 Source: own processing [6].

Regarding the number of nights, they increased from 17,979 in 2009 to 27,093 in 2017. The nights of Romanian tourists increased 1.4 times, and those of foreign tourists 1.8 times in 2017 compared to 2009.

Given these evolutions, Romania is part of the tourism trend that exists globally.

Therefore, although in Romania there are models of practice of "slow tourism", these can be developed in the region and can contribute to promoting the country, attracting tourists, both foreign and Romanian, contributing to the increase of alternative incomes for communities rural.

Romania has benefited from a real promotion through the two projects "Discover Romania Wild" and "Romania Wild" belonging to Dan Dinu and Cosmin Dumitrache in collaboration with the World Wide Fund for Nature, which presents the most spectacular images and areas in the natural and national parks.

More than this, the beauty of Romania as a tourist destination has been definitely promoted by the well known British journalist, Charlie Ottley, who traveled all over the world. He could be named "the ambassador" of Romania, promoting the country over its frontiers in Europe, the Americas and Asia in his wonderful serials "Wild Carpathia" and "Flavours of Romania" [4, 10, 11].

He visited Romania more than ten years being surprised by the beautiful landscapes, mountains and the awesomeness of their peaks, forests, meadows, wild animals, biodiversity, historical and cultural heritage in terms of old villages, houses, churches, fortresses, castles, folk traditions, architecture, music, suits, handicrafts. He considers that this is a valuable heritage which make Romania an unique destination, and that its treasures have to be put in value and known by tourists as an alternative to classic tourism, that he named "a termite-tourism" like in the Prahova Valley where there are too many visitors per square kilometer [4].

The old villages like in the area where Charlie Ottley bought an old traditional house in Sirnea, Brasov County, must be preserved and restored and included among the tourists travels to discover the beautiful and fascinating landscapes and old traditions and culture in architecture, customs, rural population activities, and hospitality [4].

Romania is also a model in which life is running in the most harmonious way between the Romanian people and the large mixture of minorities, based on friendship, mutual respect, understanding and peace.

He considers that "if tourists will be attracted to visit these places far away from the civilization of the cities could stop migration

of the people to the urban localities and the cuttings of the forests" [4].

This is "an alternative to run away from the usual things in the urban areas and come back to the simple life and enjoy living in nature" [4].

But we must not forget that HRH Prince Charles is also an admirer of Romania expressing his love for the wild diversity and charming landscapes: mountains, forests, springs, wild flowers and animals, the Danube Delta, the largest in Europe and natural reservation, and the cultural heritage of various regions: churches, monasteries, villages, which are old for hundreds of years and are unique in Europe and in the world [5]. In his opinion, "these treasures have been preserved by the Romanian people and also must be seen and appreciated by tourists and not only by the local population" [5].

The pandemic with co-vid 19 has deeply affected the classical tourism, and tourists will be obliged to change their habits for spending their spare time in week-ends or holidays looking for unique and healthy destinations where to closer to nature, where there are many places to explore and enrich their spiritual life.

HRH Prince Charles affirmed that" he visited Romania during the last 20 years and this country has a special place in his heart and every time when he return he feels like being at home" [5].

## CONCLUSIONS

"Slow tourism" is a necessary movement in this stage where humanity is found and which needs to slow down, to take care of both the health of the planet and the people. The advantages of "slow tourism" are, on the one hand, the fluidization of the classic tourist attractions, and on the other hand the connection of people with nature, offering the opportunity to experience adventure, simplicity, living outdoors, creating social relationships, which will lead to the well-being of all actors involved in tourism.

Not surprisingly, the concept is developed in the Nordic countries that are well known for

advocating for a change of pace of life, for eliminating stress and health problems.

Romania can benefit from this concept, the good practices presented by the other countries, so that it can attract a number of tourists in this niche sector, which can contribute to the well-being of the inhabitants of these areas.

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