

STUDY ON TOURISM ACTIVITY IN THE WESTERN DEVELOPMENT REGION OF ROMANIA

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Abstract

In this article the authors present the tourist activity in the Western Development Region, analyzing the evolution of the following indicators: tourist accommodation facilities, accommodation capacity in operation, the number of incoming tourists and the total number of overnight stays in tourist accommodation facilities. The information needed for this study were provided by the local authorities, the National Institute of Statistics and other bibliographic sources. The analysis, centralization and processing of the obtained data allowed the elaboration of the most important conclusions regarding the evolution of the main tourist indicators found in the studied area. Tourists arriving in the Western Development Region are attracted by the natural tourist potential, which is represented by rich natural resources and the existence of unique natural elements, recognised and protected through the numerous protected natural areas, including the Retezat National Park, the most important in Europe, but also by the existing anthropic potential. On the territory of the region, there are 14 tourist resorts, 6 of which are of national interest and 8 of which are of local interest. The authors of the work made a diagnosis regarding the evolution of the tourist accommodation structures, the capacity of the tourist accommodation structures, existing and in operation, but also other very important aspects for the tourist activity in the analyzed area. The tourist accommodation structures in the Western Region had an upward trend in the analyzed period, the same evolution can be observed in terms of the existing accommodation capacity. Instead, the accommodation capacity in operation had an oscillating evolution from one year to the next, with the most accommodation places being found in 2015, and the fewest in 2020. The total number of tourists arriving in the region recorded an upward trend until 2019, and in the pandemic, arrivals drastically decreased, but then, from 2021 they began to register slight increases. The number of overnight stays followed a similar tendency, the lowest number being recorded in 2020, both for Romanian and foreign tourists. Therefore, the development of tourism in the Western Development Region is accessible also thanks to the accommodation possibilities for tourists who want to spend their leisure time in this region.

Key words: Western Development Region, tourist accommodation, tourist facilities, tourists, accommodation capacity, Romania

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is, first of all, an economic activity, because many tourist regions have tourism activity as their main source of income [4, 6]. The role of tourism in the national economy of various countries is particularly important, due to the complexity of this phenomenon, the scope of activities determined by its emergence, maintenance and development [11]. Therefore, we can state that tourism activity has a complex content, and the tourism product is, in fact, the organic unity

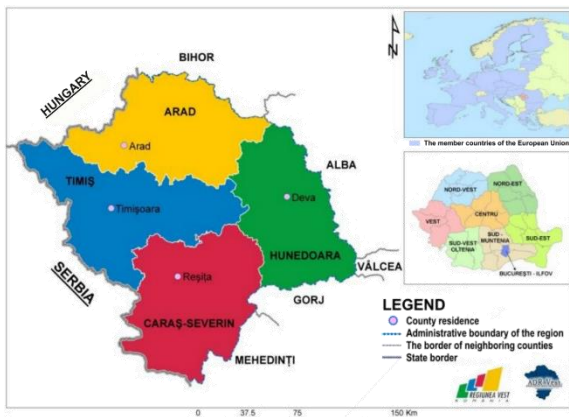
of tourism effects, resources, goods and services [2, 3, 5].

Therefore, tourism services are presented as a set of activities aimed at satisfying all the needs of the tourist during and related to the period of travel [7, 8].

The tourist values of the Western Development Region are given by a particularly rich and varied natural setting, with a multitude of types of relief, climate elements under oceanic and subsouthern influences, a representative hydrographic network and a rich and varied forest and game fund, all of which constitute tourist

destinations with a high degree of attractiveness [10].

West Development Region is of Romania is located on the border with Hungary and Serbia, which was created in 1998 and comprises the territories of four counties: Arad, Caraş-Severin, Hunedoara and Timiş [14].



Map. 1. Location of the Western Development Region within Romania and Europe
Source: Adapted by authors after 15 [15].

The Western Development Region has an area of 32,034 km² (13.4% of the country's area) and is organized into 42 cities (of which 12 municipalities) and 276 communes (318 territorial administrative units) [12]. The most economically developed counties, Timiş and Arad, have a predominantly lowland relief, which makes tourism based on anthropic objectives predominant. On the other hand, the economically less developed counties, Caras-Severin and Hunedoara, enjoying a predominantly mountainous relief, have a tourism activity based on natural resources and objectives.

The outstanding natural tourism potential of the Western Development Region is given by a diversified relief, rich natural resources and the presence of unique natural elements, which are recognised and protected through numerous protected natural areas, many of them of national and even European importance.

The purpose of the work is to highlight the diversified tourist potential of the Western Region, which is not known in Romania as a tourist region, the main reason being the lack of promotion of the tourist offer it has.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to make this article we used as research methods: documentation, analysis, comparison and interpretation of statistical data obtained from various local, county and National Institute of Statistics sources.

After collecting the data, we followed the stage of their interpretation, through methods of processing the information, both quantitatively and qualitatively, but also through a detailed analysis. At the end of the paper, the main conclusions of the research were formulated.

The period taken into study in this article was between 2010-2022.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

On the territory of the region, there are 14 tourist resorts, 6 of them are of national interest and 8 of them are of local interest. In the countryside there are 8 of them.

Therefore the development of tourism in the Western Development Region is accessible thanks to the possibilities of accommodation for tourists.

According to some specialists, a tourist accommodation structure is any construction and arrangement intended, by design and execution, for the accommodation of tourists, the serving of meals for tourists, recreation, special transport for tourists, spa treatment for tourists, together with related services [9].

In the following, we will analyse the evolution of the existing tourist accommodation structures, in the period 2010-2022.

From Figure 1, it can be seen that, at national level, the West Development Region holds the 5th place, out of the 8 regions, with 882 accommodation units, i.e. 10% of the total accommodation units.

The Centre Region has the highest percentage, 26%, followed by the South-East Region (18%) and the North-West Region (16%).

Tourist accommodation facilities in the West Region in the period 2010-2022 are shown in Table 1.

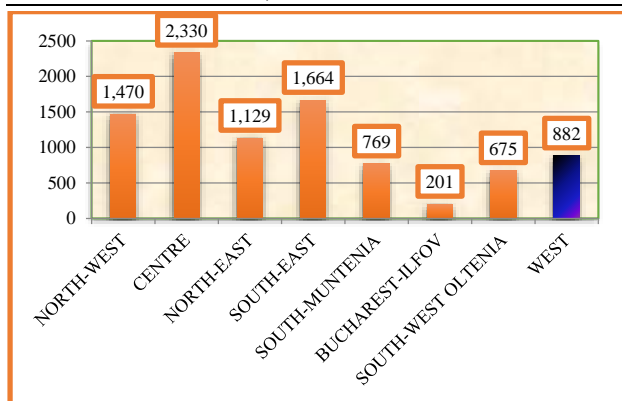


Fig.1. Tourist accommodation structures by development region in 2022 (number)
 Source: The authors' processing according to the NIS [10]

Table 1. Evolution of tourist accommodation facilities in the Western Region, 2010-2022 (number of units)

Specify	2010	2015	2020	2021	2022
WEST Region	497	652	888	874	882
Arad	138	145	156	153	152
Caras-Severin	143	231	258	268	267
Hunedoara	94	108	313	301	323
Timiș	122	168	161	152	140

Source: NIS, <http://statistici.insse.ro> [10].

An increase in the number of tourist accommodation facilities between 2010-2020 were noticed in the regions, in 2021 being a slight decrease and from 2022 there was an upward trend (Figure 2).

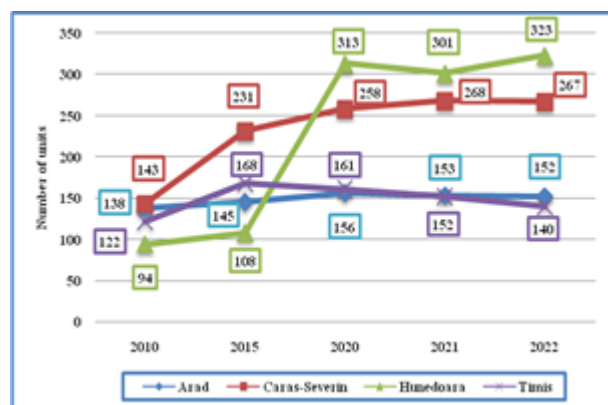


Fig. 2. Evolution of tourist accommodation facilities in the Western Development Region, 2010-2022
 Source: The authors' processing according to NIS [10].

In the period 2010-2022, at the level of the counties in the region, a similar situation is observed, with the exception of Timis county, which shows an increasing trend in the period 2010-2015, and from 2020 a decreasing trend, reaching 140 tourist accommodation units in

2022.

The highest number of tourist accommodation units can be found in Hunedoara county, with 323 units, followed by Caras-Severin county, with 267 units, Arad county with 152 units, and the last place is Timiș county, with 140 units.

The evolution of the existing tourist accommodation capacity at regional level was slightly increasing, as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Existing accommodation capacity in the West Development Region between 2010-2022 (places)

Specify	2010	2015	2020	2021	2022
WEST Region	23,257	27,821	30,929	30,173	30,407
Arad	5,554	5,695	5,288	5,261	5,042
Caras-Severin	7,139	9,159	9,623	9,924	9,590
Hunedoara	3,707	4,942	8,531	7,911	8,587
Timiș	6,857	8,025	7,487	7,077	7,188

Source: NIS, <http://statistici.insse.ro> [10].

The counties of Arad and Caras-Severin, from 2020 until now, have recorded a downward trend, while the counties of Hunedoara and Timis have had a slightly increasing trend in 2022.

As for the tourism capacity in operation, in the period 2010-2022, it can be observed that this fluctuated from one year to another.

Regarding the accommodation of tourists, they preferred to stay in hotels, agritourism guesthouses and tourist guesthouses, and on their last in their preferences are tourist stops and tourist villas.

Accommodation capacity in number of places-days is shown in Table 3 and Figure 3.

Table 3. In operation Accommodation capacity in the Western Development Region, 2010-2022 (number of places-days)

Specify	2010	2015	2020	2021	2022
WEST Region	5,950,545	7,453,990	5,348,982	6,799,426	6,975,223
Arad	1,349,551	1,557,800	1,019,822	1,229,576	1,404,356
Caras-Severin	1,525,136	2,040,177	1,520,210	2,051,632	2,126,193
Hunedoara	933,333	1,293,654	1,001,781	1,444,533	1,491,958
Timiș	2,142,525	2,562,359	1,807,169	2,073,685	1,952,716

Source: NIS, <http://statistici.insse.ro> [10].

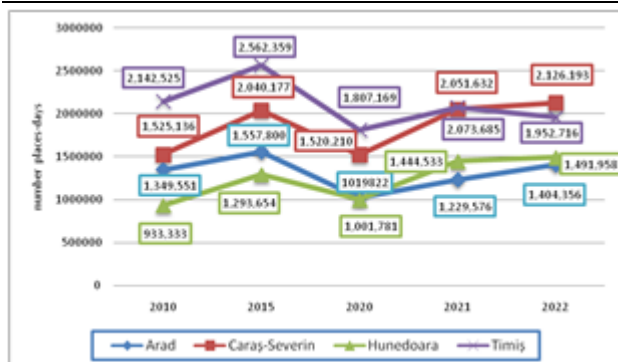


Fig. 3. Evolution of accommodation capacity in operation in the West Development Region, 2010-2022 (Number of places-days)

Source: The authors' processing according to NIS [10].

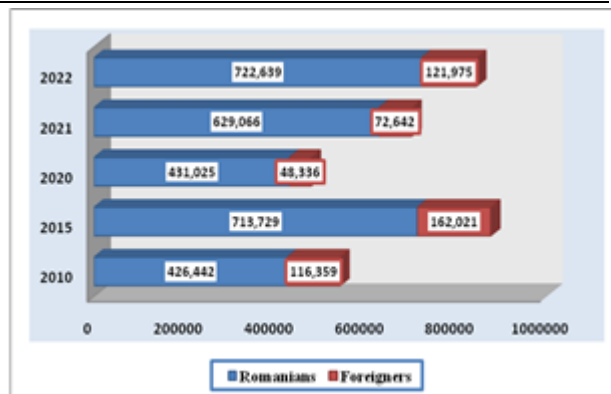


Fig. 5. Evolution of the total number of tourist arrivals in the West Region, 2010-2022

Source: The authors' processing according to NIS [10].

In terms of total number of tourist accommodation units, Timiș county attracts the most tourists in the West Region (Figure 4).

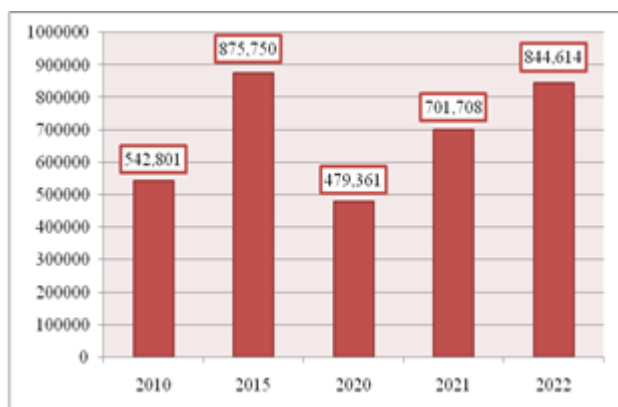


Fig. 4. Evolution of the total number of tourist arrivals in the West Region, 2010-2022

Source: The authors' processing according to NIS [10].

Figure 4 presents the dynamics of the total number of tourists arriving in the Western Development Region which has fluctuated from one year to the next. In 2020, due to the COVID pandemic, the lowest number of tourist arrivals in the region was recorded, 479,361 tourists, compared to 875,750 tourist arrivals in 2015 and 844,614 tourist arrivals in 2022.

Between 2010 and 2022, tourist arrivals, by type of tourist, in the Western Development Region fluctuated from one year to the next. The highest level of Romanian tourist arrivals was recorded in 2022, with a number of 722,639 tourists, and in terms of foreign tourist arrivals in the region in 2015 (Figure 5).

If so far we have analysed tourist arrivals in the Western Development Region, we will now analyse the total number of overnight stays in tourist accommodation and by type of tourist (Table 4).

Table 4. Evolution of the number of overnight stays in tourist accommodation establishments, by type of tourists, in the West Region, 2010-2022 (number)

	2010	2015	2020	2021	2022
WEST Region	1,504,943	2,233,754	1,099,737	1,528,016	1,778,195
Arad	304,879	379,994	171,695	274,440	310,218
Caraș-Severin	471,000	711,026	439,922	594,593	664,558
Hunedoara	222,679	343,788	126,412	241,505	234,555
Timiș	506,385	798,946	361,708	417,478	568,864
Romanians					
WEST Region	1,254,705	1,872,194	993,352	1,378,249	1,545,162
Arad	239,028	298,635	150,441	224,832	240,823
Caraș-Severin	453,654	666,286	432,274	585,674	651,028
Hunedoara	205,625	325,422	119,966	236,842	226,770
Timiș	356,398	581,851	290,671	330,901	426,541
Foreigners					
WEST Region	250,238	361,560	106,385	149,767	233,033
Arad	65,851	81,359	21,254	49,608	69,395
Caraș-Severin	17,346	44,740	7,648	8,919	13,530
Hunedoara	17,054	18,366	6,446	4,663	7,785
Timiș	149,987	217,095	71,037	86,577	142,323

Source: NIS, <http://statistici.insse.ro> [10].

Important fluctuations were noticed in the number of overnight stays at regional level. The peak of stays was in 2015 and the lowest level in 2020. Since 2021 the number of overnight stays has started to show an upward trend (Figure 6).

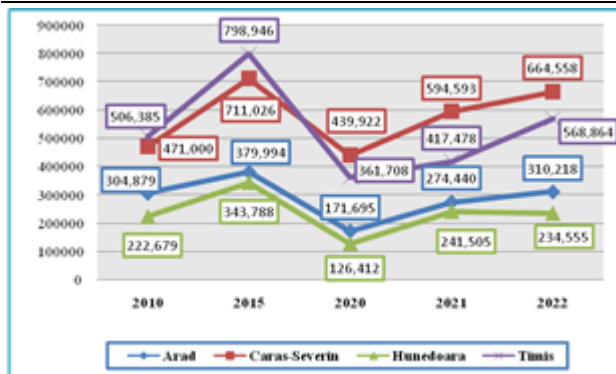


Fig. 6. Evolution of the number of overnight stays in the counties of the Western Development Region between 2010 and 2022

Source: The authors' processing according to NIS [10].

Between 2010 and 2022, the number of overnight stays, at county level, is similar to that at regional level.

In 2015, the overnight stays reached the peak level, accounting for 798,946 in Timis county, but in 2020, it was registered the lowest level, only 126,412 in Hunedoara county.

The same situation is observed for the number of overnight stays, at county level, by type of tourists (Figure 7).

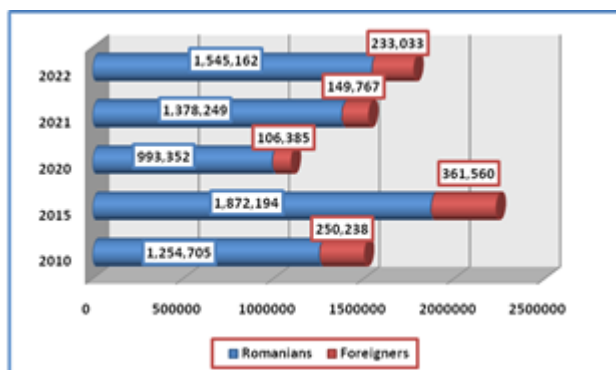


Fig. 7. Evolution of the number of overnight stays, by type of tourists, in the West Region, 2010-2022

Source: The authors' processing according to NIS [10].

Both Romanian and foreign tourists registered the lowest number of stays in 2020, in all the counties, except Hunedoara county, which carried out the smallest number of stays in 2021, while in the other years it fluctuated from one year to another.

This sharp drop from 2020 was due to the restrictions imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic, affecting not only tourism activity in the region, but also nationally and globally [1].

The development of the Western

Development Region has been driven and continues to be supported by the existing natural resources, which have a diversified relief and include the plains of Timis and Arad counties, the hilly areas with important mineral resources, as well as an important segment of the Southern and Western Carpathians, which includes one of the most significant natural parks in Europe, namely the Retezat National Park. Therefore, it can be said that, at the moment, we cannot speak of a full exploitation of the existing natural and man-made resources within the Western Development Region [13, 16].

CONCLUSIONS

Although the region has a great variety of tourism resources, the West Development Region is not known as a tourist region in Romania. The main reason for this is the lack of promotion of the tourist offer, with emphasis on the development of those tourist sectors that have a great natural and anthropic tourist potential.

The West Development Region ranks 6th out of the eight regions at national level in terms of the number of tourist accommodation facilities.

At the level of the region there is an increase in the number of tourist accommodation facilities, a similar situation is recorded at the level of the counties in the region, with the exception of Timis county, which in 2022 will have 140 accommodation units.

Timis county, even though it has the fewest accommodation units, attracts the most tourists in the Western Development Region.

The lowest number of tourists arriving in the region was recorded in 2020, due to the restrictions imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The higher and higher number of tourists obliges the owners of accommodation units and also the local authorities to adapt and modernise their resorts.

COVID-19 pandemic affected all the branches of the national economy, but especially tourism which registered the lowest level of tourists as a result of the travel restrictions imposed by the authorities, and consequently

the income from this sector has also fallen drastically. Tourism is the most vulnerable sector when it comes to threats related to a medical, economic or military crisis.

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