The 14th Economic International Conference: Strategies and Development Policies of Territories: International, Country, Region, City, Location Challenges | May 10-11, 2018 | Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Romania

Strategies and Development Policies of Territories: International, Country, Region, City, Location Challenges

Particularities and Trends of Tourism in the Central and Eastern Part of European Union

Adrian-Liviu SCUTARIU

<https://doi.org/10.18662/lumproc.78>

How to cite: Scutariu, A.-L. (2018). Particularities and Trends of Tourism in the Central and Eastern Part of European Union. In C. Năstase (ed.), *The 14th Economic International Conference: Strategies and Development Policies of Territories: International, Country, Region, City, Location Challenges | May 10-11, 2018 | Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Romania* (pp. 255-267). Iasi, Romania: LUMEN Proceedings. <https://doi.org/10.18662/lumproc.78>

The 14th Economic International Conference: *Strategies and Development Policies of Territories: International, Country, Region, City, Location Challenges* | May 10-11, 2018 | Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Romania

Particularities and Trends of Tourism in the Central and Eastern Part of European Union

Adrian-Liviu SCUTARIU^{1*}

Abstract

In this paper we aim to analyse some aspects related to tourism in the East and Central European regions of the E.U. Tourism become one of the most important economic activities in the world and also in the European Union. In the Eastern and Central regions of the E.U there is not a tourist activity as high as in other regions of the Union. However, the tourism tends to concentrate in some areas: seaside, capital cities and mountainous ones. The poor promotion and the poor infrastructure are the main brakes for the tourism development in the Eastern and Central Europe regions. We observed insignificant increases of the net occupancy rates of bed places and a slowly decreasing trend of the average length of stay. These facts can change also by the diversification of the tourist offer. Our correlative analysis revealed that in most cases the regions registering a high net occupancy rates of bed places and a high average length of stay, also record a high tourism intensity. So, diversifying the offer will contribute to the increase of the length of stay and of the net occupancy rates of bed places, bringing more incomes in the economy of the area and efficientizing the use of resources.

Keywords:

Tourism, Central and Eastern Europe, Regions, net occupancy rates of bed places, average length of stay, tourism intensity, correlations.

¹ “Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Faculty of Economics and Public Administration, Suceava, Romania, livius@seap.usv.ro .

<https://doi.org/10.18662/lumproc.78>

Corresponding Author: Adrian-Liviu SCUTARIU

Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of the conference

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited

1. Introduction

In the latest decades tourist activity registered significant increases, becoming one of the most important economic fields in the world. Worldwide, international tourist arrivals have increased 49,4 times from 25 million in 1950 to 1,235 million in 2016 [9 p. 2]. Forecasts made by industry specialists estimate 1602 million international tourists in 2020, with an annual increase of 4,3% [4]. International tourism has 7% share of the world's exports in goods and services, being the third export category worldwide tourism (after chemicals and fuels and ahead of automotive products and food) [9, p. 2]. In the frame of the third sector, tourism is an important component, being also an industry with high potential and role in the economy of a country and a pillar of economic growth.

2. Problem Statement

Within the EU, there are large differences in the tourist market and holiday destination. On the one hand, in the case of some countries such as Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands or Slovenia, more than half of the residents' holidays were spent abroad and, on the other hand, in Greece, Spain, France, only about 10% of the holidays were destined for other countries [1]. Among the main factors that determine this heterogeneity, we find: the country's size, the geographic position, the tourism potential, but also the living standards.

Tourism activity is primarily determined by the natural environment, but it also depends on the economic development, studies showing that developed countries attract the most visitors; in this case tourism is well integrated into the economy, buying goods and services produced by other branches. After 1990, in the Eastern European countries, domestic tourism recorded a downward trend, in the context of rising prices and decreasing the purchasing power of the population. Also, the number of foreign tourists, the majority of whom were still from Central and Eastern Europe, also dropped. As a result, the effects were bad particularly where resident tourists and the Eastern and Central European ones had the highest shares in total tourists. Since the accession of the Eastern and Central European countries to the EU, there has been an increase in the number of tourists from the older EU Member States. In the Center and East of Europe there is an opportunity to increase the number of tourists from the EU, which remains the most important source of foreign tourists for Eastern and Central European countries [5].

The implications of EU membership are manifested in a multitude of forms, and adhering to community space brings, including for tourism, certain advantages, such as [2]:

- creating new jobs and opportunities for the migrant labor force;
- the freedom of movement of EU citizens;
- increasing business investment opportunities;
- access to EU funds;
- the liberalization of civil aviation, with effects on the growth of the low-cost air transport sector;
- simplifying trade with Member States;
- better information on the protection of nature and cultural heritage;
- raising standards of living and quality of life.

One of the best ways to highlight the level of tourism activity is using the values of tourism intensity. Tourism intensity is the report between the total number of nights spent and the total population of the area/region. Tourism intensity averaged 5 292 nights spent in EU-28 tourist accommodation establishments per 1 000 inhabitants in 2015 [11].

The Figure 1 shows the tourism intensity at regional level, the different nuances showing the values of this indicator. Overall, there are some regions in EU that stand out in terms of tourism intensity: the Greek island region of Notio Aigaio (69 777 overnight stays per 1 000 inhabitants), followed by the island regions Illes Balears in Spain and Ionia Nisia in Greece (which includes Corfu) (56 000–58 000 nights spent per 1 000 inhabitants), and also the Alpine region of Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano/Bozen in northern Italy (between 40 000–50 000 nights spent per 1 000 inhabitants), the Canarias island region in Spain, two Alpine regions, Tirol and Salzburg (both in Austria), and two coastal regions, Jadranska Hrvatska (Croatia) and Algarve (southern Portugal) [11]; in the EU, the highest tourism intensity is recorded in the island/coastal regions, but also in some Alpine regions, in some regions of the capital cities (Prague, Ljubliana, Bratislava) and in other regions.

Number of nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments relative to population size, by NUTS 2 regions, 2015
(per 1 000 inhabitants)

Note: London (UK): NUTS level 1, EU-28 and Iceland: 2014. The United Kingdom: 2012. EU-28, Ireland and Greece: estimates.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: [tour_occ_nin2](#))

Figure 1. Number of nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments relative to population size, by NUTS 2 regions, 2015 (per 1 000 inhabitants)
Source: [10]

As our previous analyses showed, in the Eastern and Central European regions of the EU, the tourist activity (arrivals, overnight stays and tourism intensity) recorded increases in the latest years, except for the period of economic crisis (2009-2010). However, there is also a tendency of concentration of tourist activity in some areas. Over time the regions ranking maintained almost the same. With the EU integration of Eastern and Central European countries the opportunity of attracting tourists from the old EU Member States appeared, but not all these countries took equally advantage of it. This fact, together with the geographical position and touristic potential contribute to the maintenance of big differences in terms of tourist activity among the regions in Eastern and Central Europe. The principal tourist attractions can be considered the seaside, the cultural heritage and the mountains. By far the most visited region is HR03 - Adriatic Croatia, followed by CZ01 - Prague, PL12 - Mazovia, HU10 - Central Hungary, PL21 - Lesser Poland and PL42 - West Pomerania [3].

3. Research Questions/Aims of the research

The objective of this paper is to analyse the evolution of net occupancy rates of bed places and of the tourists' average length of stay in the Eastern and Central European regions of the E.U. and to reveal if the touristic regions are the ones with the highest levels of these indicators.

4. Research Methods

We analysed the trend of some tourism indicators. This can be seen by using appropriate graphic representations, but also by calculating evolution indexes. We also used the study of correlations, which is a useful tool for the economic research, being able to reveal a predictive relation between two indicators that can lead to a deep analysis. A correlation is a statistical link between two random variables that are not independent of probabilistic point of view. There can be a causal relation between two variables, a common dependence of another variable or even a more complex interdependence. Along with the correlations, some further information can tell us in which of the above situations we can be, the certitude being that corresponding statistical data vary simultaneously. In this case, the Spearman correlation coefficient is used because it is suitable for analysis of variables without normal distribution and with nonlinear variation, such as those we have here.

5. Findings

5.1. Evolution of net occupancy rates of bed places and of tourists' average length of stay

The tourist activity aims to use as much as possible the existing accommodation capacities. In order to measure the use of the tourist capacities, there is the *net occupancy rates of bed places* indicator. The efficiency of using existing tourism capacities is of great importance. Its evolution is ascending in many of the analyzed regions. The value of the rates ranged between 19,5% and 59,5% in 2012, and in 2016 it was between 19,7% and 63,5%. The regions with the highest values in 2016 were: CZ01 - Prague, HR03 - Adriatic Croatia, BG34 - Southeastern Region, PL42 - West Pomerania, SI04 - Western Slovenia, HU10 - Central Hungary and the lowest values were in BG31, BG32, RO31, PL33 Regions (Figure 2). As a rule, it is noted that the regions with the highest occupancy rates are also those with the highest number of arrivals and overnight stays. However, in order to increase occupancy rates where the values of this indicator are small, measures should be taken to increase the number of arrivals and to increase the length of stay by diversifying the tourist offer.

Figure 2. Evolution of net occupancy rates of bed places by NUTS 2 regions in Eastern and Central European regions of EU
Source: own processing based on data from Eurostat [6]

Another important indicator is the *tourists' average length of stay*, calculated by dividing the number of overnight stays in the number of arrivals. The importance of this indicator comes from the fact that the longer is the tourist stay, the more money he/she spends in the economy of the area. So, we can see that the in the Eastern and Central regions of the EU the trend of this indicator is a slowly descending one, even in the most touristic regions. The highest values since 2000 were about 7 days. In 2016, the regional values range from 5,5 to 1,63 days (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Evolution of tourists' average length of stay by NUTS 2 regions in Eastern and Central European regions of EU

Source: own processing based on data from Eurostat [7], [8]

The highest values are registered by far in HR03, BG34, PL42, BG33 (seaside regions) and CZ04 (mountainous region). They are followed by RO22, which is also a seaside region.

The explanation for the fact that tourists spend less time in a destination can be that they want to visit more places. Also, many are weekend tourists, or they make a tour. However, the tourist “sellers” are more and more interested to keep the tourist as much as possible in a place, so there are some cases where the length of stay increased slowly or maintained at almost the same values.

5.2. Correlative analysis

Until now we studied the evolution of some indicators, and in the following lines we will calculate some correlations among these indicators.

Firstly we analysed the link between *tourists' average length of stay* and *tourism intensity*. We noticed the existence of a significant correlation, positive and of high intensity (0.567) (Annex, Table no. 1).

Table 1. Spearman correlation coefficient for average length of stay and tourism intensity at regional level in Eastern and Central European regions of EU

Correlations			
		average length of stay	tourism intensity
Spearman's rho	tourists' Correlation	1,000	,567**
	average Coefficient		
	length Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000
	of stay N	56	56
tourism	Correlation	,567**	1,000
	intensity Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000 .	
	N	56	56

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: own elaboration using data from Eurostat

This means that in most cases in the regions where there is a high average length of stay, there is also a high tourism intensity. In other words, the length of stay influences the intensity of tourism.

Graphically, this positive correlation of high intensity is represented in Figure 4, where one can see that high levels of average length of stay correspond to high values of tourism intensity and similarly for small values.

Figure 4. Graphical representation of the correlation average length of stay – tourism intensity at regional level in the Eastern and Central regions of the EU

Source: own elaboration using data from Eurostat

Another link analysed is the one between *net occupancy rates of bed places* and *tourism intensity*. In this case the correlation is also positive and of high intensity (0.522), as it can be seen in the Annex, Table no. 2.

Table 2. Spearman correlation coefficient for net occupancy rates of bed places and tourism intensity at regional level in Eastern and Central European regions of EU

Correlations				
		net occupancy rates of bed places		tourism intensity
Spearman's rho	net occupancy rates of bed places	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,522*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000
	N		56	56

tourism intensity	Correlation	,522**	1,000
	Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000 .	
	N	56	56

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: own elaboration using data from Eurostat

This correlation is significant, having according to the test made a low probability of error. So, in most cases, in the regions where net occupancy rates of bed places is high, there is also a high tourism intensity.

Graphically, this correlation of high intensity is shown in Figure 5, where there are observed the associations between the high values of the two indicators and, respectively, between the small values.

Figure 5. Graphical representation of the correlation net occupancy rates of bed places – tourism intensity at regional level in the Eastern and Central regions of the EU

Source: own elaboration using data from Eurostat

6. Conclusions

Tourist activity significantly increased in the world and in the European Union, too. In the E.U. the tourist activity is heterogeneous, the most visited areas being the coastal ones, but also the capital cities ones and some mountainous ones. Our study focuses on the Eastern and Central regions of the E.U. These regions do not register a tourist activity as high as in other parts of the Union, except for the HR03 region, which is one of the most visited regions. In the Eastern and Central Europe regions there is a tourist potential not fully exploited, including rurality, gastronomy and traditions, which is, at the moment, still quite far from the eye of the potential tourist due to poor promotion and poor infrastructure.

Insignificant increases were registered by net occupancy rates of bed places, in some regions being very small, especially due to the less diversified offer. The average length of stay has a slowly decreasing trend because tourists want to visit more places or make a tour. The diversification of the offer can make the tourist stay a bit longer. Using the statistical instrument of correlations we revealed that in most cases in the regions where there is a high net occupancy rates of bed places and a high average length of stay, there is also a high tourism intensity. Increasing the length of stay there will be more incomes in the economy of the area. It will also increase the net occupancy rates of bed places, having in this way an efficient use of resources. We must also mention that the sizing of the accommodation capacity to the demand is also important, a oversized capacity leading to a low occupancy rate, which means a inefficient use of resources.

References

- [1] Eurostat, European Commission. Europe in Figures, Eurostat Yearbook 2010. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. 2010.
- [2] Hall DR, Marciszewska B, Smith MK (Eds.). Tourism in the new Europe: the challenges and opportunities of EU enlargement. Wallingford, UK: CABI Publishing; 2006.
- [3] Nastase C, Scutariu A-L. Evolutions of Tourism and Tourist Attractions in the Central and Eastern European Countries of European Union. 13th International Conference Topical Issues of Tourism „Authenticity in a context of tourism“. Jihlava, Czech Republic: College of Polytechnics Jihlava; February 28th - March 1st; 2018, pp.391-402.
- [4] Neacșu N, Baron P, Snak O. Economia turismului. București: Editura Pro Universitaria; 2006.

- [5] Scutariu A-L. Cercetarea fenomenului turistic din perspectivă regională. București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică; 2016.
- [6] Eurostat [Internet]. Eurostat – Data Explorer; 2018 [cited 2018 April 5]. Available from:
http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=tour_occ_anor2&lang=en
- [7] Eurostat [Internet]. Eurostat – Data Explorer; 2018 [cited 2018 April 5]. Available from:
http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=tour_occ_arn2&lang=en
- [8] Eurostat [Internet]. Eurostat – Data Explorer; 2018 [cited 2018 April 5]. Available from:
http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=tour_occ_nin2&lang=en
- [9] UNWTO Tourism Highlights, 2017 edition, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284419029>
- [10] Eurostat [Internet]; 2018 [cited 2018 April 5]. Available from:
http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/6/69/Number_of_nights_spent_at_tourist_accommodation_establishments_relative_to_population_size%2C_by_NUTS_2_regions%2C_2015_%28per_1_000_inhabitants%29_RYB17.png
- [11] Eurostat [Internet]. Tourism statistics at regional level – Statistics Explained; 2018 [cited 2018 April 5]. Available from:
http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Tourism_statistics_at_regional_level&oldid=282983