
TOURISM - HISTORY, STATISTICS AND REALITY

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Abstract

As it is known, tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon that involves people moving to countries or places outside their usual environment, for personal, professional or business purposes. Obviously, tourism activities have repercussions on the economy, on the natural and built environment, on the local population of the destination and on the tourists themselves. For this reason, tourism has become a popular global recreational activity. In the early 2000s, revenues from tourism activities increased significantly, but with the onset of the global economic crisis and the H1N1 virus there was a decline. But now, at the end of the second decade of the 21st century, tourism is becoming more and more like a mass phenomenon. Thus, the states have introduced, more recently, in their political speeches references to the facilities they offer to those who would be interested in visiting them, cities and regions compete with ingenuity to capture as many of the tourist flows as possible. But many examples from around the world show that the will to develop tourism activities can sometimes conflict with the expectations of local people. For this reason, we must ask ourselves whether the overexploitation of tourist areas does not lead to their degradation or loss of authenticity, instead of contributing to their development and the preservation of elements that define them. In conclusion, we believe that what we should be concerned about now should be responsible tourism and how it can be done in Romania.

Keywords

Tourism, development, globalization, geopolitics

JEL Classification

Z32, L8, R58

Introduction

As it is known, tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon that involves people moving to countries or places outside their usual environment, for personal, professional or business purposes. These people are called visitors (and can be tourists or hikers, residents or non-residents), and tourism refers to their activities, which involve some tourist expenses (The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2012).

Obviously, tourism activities have repercussions on the economy, on the natural and built environment, on the local population of the destination and on the tourists themselves. This generates multiple impacts, the range and variety of production factors needed to produce these goods and services purchased by visitors and the range of agents interested or affected by tourism, it is necessary to adopt an integrated approach to tourism development, management and control. This approach is strongly recommended for the formulation and implementation of national and local tourism policies, as well as the necessary international agreements or other mechanisms on tourism.

Practice has shown that tourism directly and indirectly generates an increase in economic activity in the visited sites (and not only), mainly due to the demand for goods and services to be produced and supplied (Nistoreanu et al., 2018). From this point of view, the multiplier effect of tourism activities on the areas where there is tourism was discussed and studied. In the economic analysis of tourism, a distinction must be made between the "economic contribution" of tourism, which refers to the direct consequences of tourism and is assessable, and the "economic impact" of tourism, a much broader concept, which is the synthesis of direct effects, indirect and induced tourism and to be assessed by applying models. Economic impact studies aim to quantify the economic benefits, ie the net increase in the wealth of residents resulting from tourism, measured in monetary terms, above the level that would exist.

Tourism beyond definitions and cold statistics

Tourism has become a popular global recreational activity. It is one of the strongest economic branches in the world. Here are some figures that show us what results have been obtained in this sector.

According to the World Tourism Organization, in 2004 about 623 billion U.S. dollars were made. \$; in 2008, more than 922 million international arrivals were recorded, an increase of 1.9% compared to 2007 (Nistor & Nedelea, 2018).

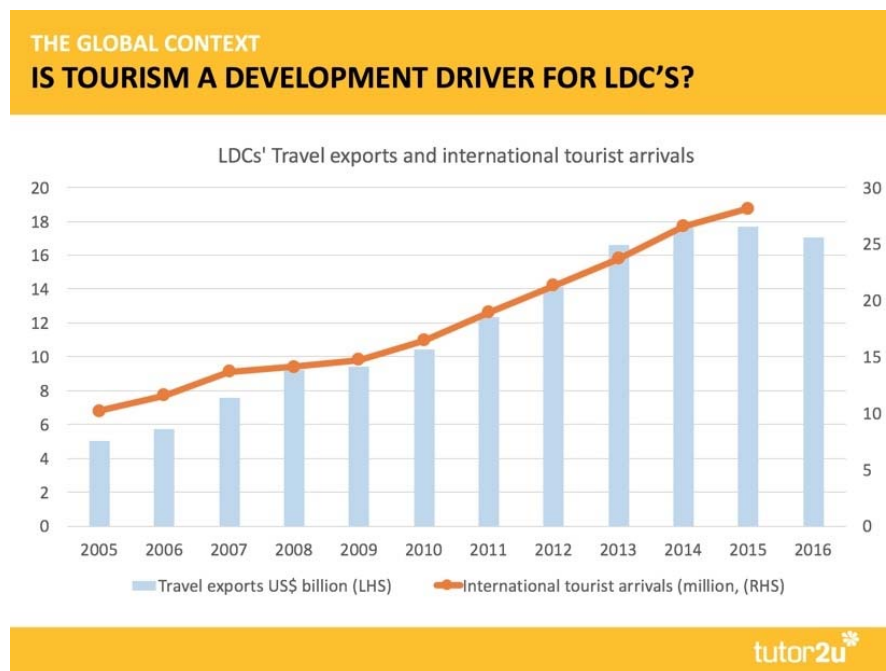


Fig. no. 1 Tourism and Economic development

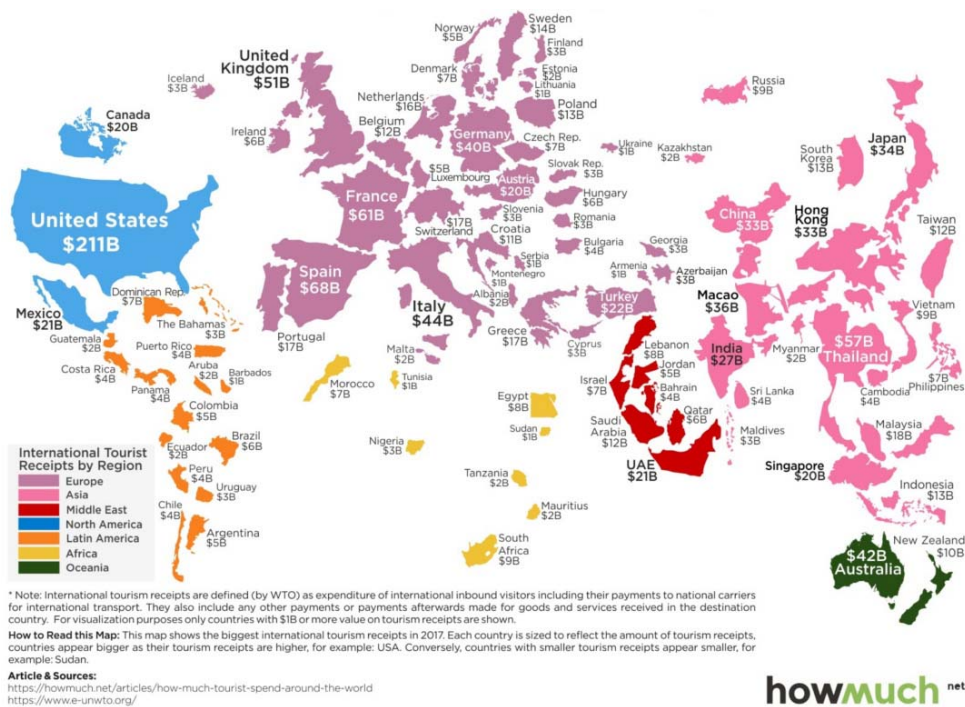
Source: <https://www.tutor2u.net/economics/reference/tourism-and-economic-development>

International revenues from tourism increased in 2008 to US \$ 944 billion (642 billion euros), which corresponds to an increase in real terms of 1.8% (Fig. no. 1). With approximately 100 million employees worldwide, tourism also stands out as the most important employer. Cross-border travel accounts for 25 to 30 percent of world trade in services.

Following the recession that affected the world economy after 2000, international tourism demand slowed sharply since June 2008, with a 2% drop in global arrivals during the boreal summer months (UNWTO). This negative trend intensified in 2009, in some countries exaggerated by the H1N1 virus, and led to a 4% global decline in 2009 with 880 million international arrivals, and an estimated fall in tourism revenues of 6%.

Tourism has proved vital for many countries, such as Egypt, Greece, Lebanon, Spain and Thailand, and for some island nations (Bahamas, Fiji, Maldives) due to the substantial financial contribution obtained from the goods and services business and employment opportunities in the service industry associated with tourism (Onete et al., 2018) . The service industry includes transport services (air transport, cruises, taxis) and hospitality services (accommodation, including hotels and resorts, entertainment revenues such as parks, casinos, malls, music revenues and theaters).

Now, at the end of the second decade of the 21st century, tourism is becoming more and more a mass phenomenon. From Paris to Shanghai, from Buenos Aires to New York, tourism is ubiquitous today (Fig. no. 2). Ubiquitous in a small number of places that concentrate more and more tourist flows. Ubiquitous in political discourses in which cities and regions compete ingeniously to capture these flows.



beginning of the twenty-first century. In the early 1970s, Europe accounted for 2/3 of international tourist arrivals and North America by just under 20%. Today Europe is almost 50% and should account for only 40% in 2030. In contrast, Asia Pacific (2% of tourist arrivals in 1970) already captures 22% of the tourist flow and should capture 30% (Daum and Girard, 2018).

What is happening at the national level? The developments are even more symptomatic: while the United States has always remained in the top 5 most visited countries, Canada (the second most visited country in the world in 1970) has won the top 15 destinations. On the contrary, China, the tenth most visited country in 1990, is now in fourth or third place (if we integrate Macao and Hong Kong). The challenge for the 2020s will be to know whether France remains the world's number one tourist destination (a place it has occupied since 1990) or whether China will take that first place.

At the scale of sites and tourist areas we see more and more Chinese or Russian tourists. Authoritarian regimes are no longer synonymous with restrictions on freedom of movement (except for dissidents challenging the regime); this is a major difference from yesterday's cold war world. Only North Korea is holding the entire population under house arrest.

These tourists from emerging societies change the world tourist landscape less by their still low presence than by their expectations and nature of what happens there: Europeans in front of Mona Lisa remember, even vaguely, the Renaissance, the emergence of individualism and the status of women in society. But the Chinese: what do they see in front of Mona Lisa and why do they want to see her? Is the Eiffel Tower still a testament to Europe's industrialization or a mere global icon? And the opposite is true - for non-Chinese tourists: what do we see in front of a Chinese temple or walking in the Forbidden City?

Are we dealing with an involution of the wishes of tourists? Is tourism still in the "entertainment society", as Guy Debord has analyzed since 1967? Is it just to offer spectacular and emotion or to be able to see, to stage the satisfaction of tourists who want almost everything because they pay the ticket to this huge reality TV show, like *Mondo cane*?

And as if all this were not enough topics for reflection, social networks are coming to us. They have become an integral part of the social practices of a large part of the world's population. Their use changes tourism practices and puts us in front of new challenges.

Social networks change tourism practices on many levels (Maiorescu et. al., 2014). They contribute to an image circulation that contributes to the structuring of the information and imagination of our contemporaries because "digital natives" are also "digital nomads" (Sârbu et al., 2018). And so in the fall of 2017, the Scottish Tourist Board opened "the first Instagram travel agency" called #Scotspirit. It offers tourists itineraries based exclusively on photos taken by network users. More comments, few guides and mystifications, just images, which are not supposed to "lie".

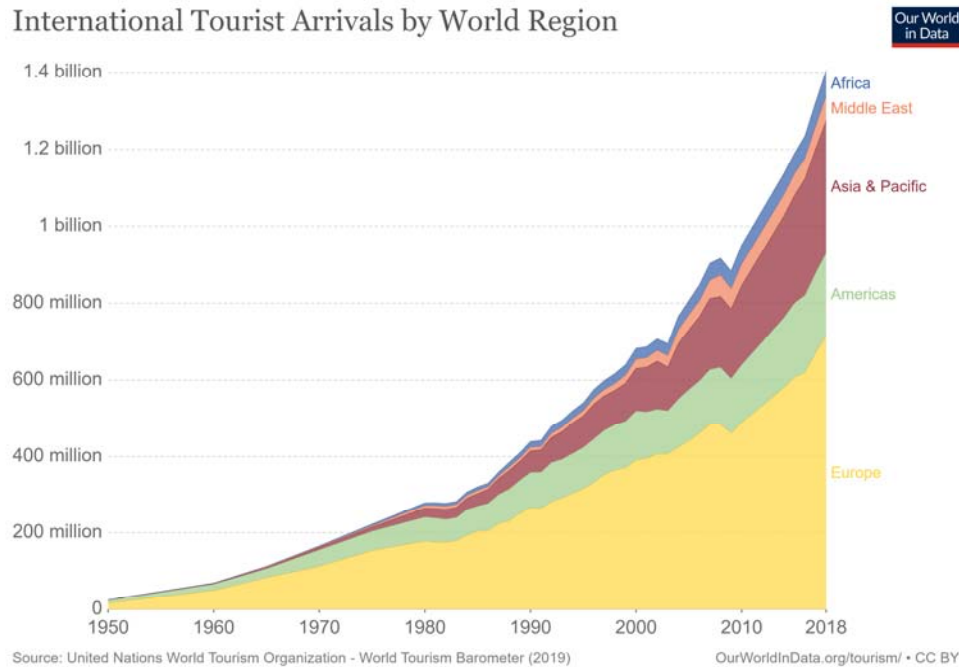


Fig. no. 3 International tourist arrivals by world region

Source: <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/international-tourist-arrivals-by-world-region>

Social networks have also changed accommodation practices: Airbnb, couchsurfing, woofing. However, many people still cross the threshold of travel agencies looking for a contact or to consult. Similarly, it would be inaccurate to believe that paper guides have disappeared: almost 8 million travel guides sold in 2017 in France, even though 10 million had been sold in 2014 (Fig. no. 3). This says that the freedom to decide how to travel is growing.

Tourism from travel to geopolitics

Many examples from around the world show that the will to develop tourism activities can sometimes conflict with the expectations of local people. Today, tourism is starting to turn into a geopolitical tool.

Tourism - an activity that is at first distant from the spheres of work or civic life that is supposed to be relaxation - is becoming more and more a political issue, both due to the attraction of the spaces it allows (competition in territories) and the appeal it provokes. And this for two reasons: because it has negative effects for the inhabitants: land prices in tourist hypercenters; replacement of daily shops with tourist shops; clutter and noise. This is the case in Barcelona, Venice or Dubrovnik: demonstrations, hostile graffiti, the beginning of municipal regulatory policies are the signs. But also because the tourist rent, captured by a few, reveals the empty economic and social situation of the inhabitants. This is the case on the island of Capri, as well as other 36 Italian island spaces, where the inhabitants demand the organization of a referendum for the classification of Capri in ... "the missing island"! Indeed, for the 14,000 inhabitants, access to health care, because the functioning of public services depends on the connection, random and expensive, of the continent, the subsidies that could be improved.

But the coexistence of tourists / locals is not inevitable confrontation: living in one place today is a notion that refers to the coexistence of different populations (for example aborigines and

tourists) who do not feel the same, the same places. Or the way students of an old university campus who usually go to the library and the thousands of tourists passing through that place live the experience of "living"; which is a commonplace and regular fact for the former can be an exceptional and ephemeral course - which they probably do only once in their lives, those in the second category.

Once here, it is necessary to reflect on the fact that it is paradoxically possible for a massive tourist exploitation of places and regions to make disappear exactly what was their attraction. This is the consequence of a major contradiction of such a strong increase in tourism, which can hide greater disservices than we might think. On the one hand, the tourist arrangement of a place requires the development of transport infrastructures, housing, food products; providing space for public access, a redevelopment of so-called degraded natural spaces (Voinea, et.al, 2019). It transforms spaces whose a priori attraction is based on their authenticity, low density, apparent wildness. Increasing tourist traffic thus means standardizing them under the effect of the triple need for security, access and consumption; hence the feeling of frustration that can be felt. But this frustration today is that of a gentle, internationalized elite who often travel abroad.

Conclusion

However, it cannot be said that all tourists prefer this stamp of authenticity more than comfort, opportunities for organized leisure and souvenir shops. Chinese tourists arriving in Siem Reap to visit the temples of Ankor are certainly not in the romantic mood of André Malraux who arrived there in the 1930s. others will satisfy their curiosities in souvenir shops, rather than admiring the temple pieces for a long time.

In August 2017, Charlotte Cieslinski - starting from an article published in the big daily "El País" - spoke about "tourismophobia" (Cieslinski, 2017). About the fact that communities in Spain, Italy, Iceland or Croatia - countries in the top of holiday destinations - were beginning to take a stand against what too much tourism means. In the years that followed, there was more and more talk about "overtourism". Manifestations of this kind have increased in recent years in Barcelona, Venice, Dubrovnik, Paris, London, Prague, even Budapest. What is it about?

In short, excessiveness occurs when there are too many visitors to a particular destination. "Too many" is of course a subjective subject, but it is defined in each destination by residents, hosts, business owners and tourists. When rental prices push local tenants to make room for holiday rentals, this is tourism. When narrow roads become blocked by tourist vehicles, this is tourism. When wildlife is scared, when tourists can't see landmarks because of the crowds, when fragile environments become degraded - all these are signs of excessiveness.

What we should be concerned about now should be responsible tourism. Harold Goodwin, director of responsible tourism, Manchester Metropolitan University's Institute of Management, even suggests a treatment of pre-tourism in an article published 2019. The conclusion of the article is that we can do tourism in this situation as well if we are aware of the existence of growth limits (Goodwin, 2019).

Fortunately, Romania does not have these problems yet. Again we could be like El Dorado ...

Acknowledgement

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