

## “INGREDIENTS” FOR AN ATTRACTIVE TOURIST MARKET?

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**Abstract:** *To the over 1.2 billion tourists traveling around the world in 2014 and to those making plans for 2015, something tangible and of quality, unique and unforgettable must be provided.*

*International tourist arrivals grew by 5% in 2013, reaching a record 1,087 million arrivals, according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer. Despite global economic challenges, international tourism results were well above expectations, with an additional 52 million international tourists travelling the world in 2013. For 2014, UNWTO forecasts 4% to 4.5% growth - again, above the long term projections.*

*Who has invested more and will collect less? Which country will be the favorite tourist destination in 2014? It's all about marketing, and knowing how to make yourself remembered by tourists!*

*It is difficult to make forecasts for the newly begun 2014, but perhaps the Russians will have their piece of “the cake” because of the Winter Olympics in Sochi. Latin America, with Brazil, Mexico and Argentina, will, of course, be one of the favorite destinations, especially as the Football World Cup will put a lot of money in Brazilian pockets. Similarly, Asia remains among the well purchased destinations of 2014, experts say.*

*But I do not know who might doubt that Romania will attract enough tourists to register further increase, at least similar to that of 2013, as well as other countries in Eastern Europe, which have favorable prognoses. Although the main destinations for Romanian tourists in 2014 remain the external ones, and not internal, such as Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, mainly due to the accessibility of transport, prices, services and tradition. Multiple metamorphoses, multiple opportunities; remains to be seen how we can profit from them in tourism!*

**Key words:** *tourism, market, destination, trends, strategy.*

International tourist arrivals grew by 5% in 2013, and reached a record of 1.087 million arrivals, according to the latest Barometer of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Despite global economic challenges, international tourism results were well above expectations, with an extra 52 million international tourists who traveled abroad in 2013.

For 2014, the World Tourism Organization forecasts a growth between 4 and 4.5%, again above the long-term estimate of 3.8% per year between 2010 and 2020. UNWTO Confidence Index, based on

feedback from more than 300 experts worldwide, confirms this estimate indicating prospects for 2014 better than the results from previous years. If we want to hold our ground in 2014, if we want to gain market shares and the confidence of tourists, we must truly understand clients and focus on the potential ones – those who still are not loyal or committed to work with any travel agency.

For Romania, the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) announced that arrivals and overnight stays in tourist establishments increased last year compared to 2012 by 3.5%, and 1.1%, respectively. Thus, arrivals totaled 7.91 million, and overnight stay 19.3 million. The Romanian tourism promotion campaign between 2014-2015 will include outdoor and media advertising in the country and abroad, and will cost more than 25 million Euros... I hope that this time we'll be able to also enjoy the effect of this promotion!

The NTA (National Tourism Authority) has a programme ready for compelling promotion on European markets, and travel agencies want to be partners in this program. 12,000 Japanese come annually to Romania, and tourists from Nordic countries show interest for combined packages. It is estimated that the incoming of tourists will significantly increase in Romania in 2014. Among Romania's strengths as a tourist destination are the trekking segment, adventure tourism and cultural tourism.

Note that there are also further changes in the typology of tourists visiting Romania. Thus, tourists interested in Romania are aged 35 to 90, and prefer Prahova Valley, northern Moldavia and Transylvania.

Finns are among those eager to discover Romania. A general contract for 2015 has already been signed with an organization in charge of tourism for retirees in this country, and will offer seven-day packages, priced at around 750 Euros, with accommodation in 3- and 4-star hotels in Prahova Valley and Transylvania.

Spaniards are also keen to know more about Romania, and we are referring in this case to persons over 40. Promoting on the Spanish market is particularly important since Spaniards go on vacations regardless of the crisis, and Romania is a quite cheap destination.

The NTA is working on an intensive promotion program for a period of 2-3 years in key markets such as the United Kingdom, Israel, Germany and Spain.

Regarding the **changing of demographic profile of tourists**, estimates show that if we consider the increasing costs from only two population groups globally – i.e. millennials and Chinese tourists, the hospitality industry worldwide is expected to record solid performances for the next few years.

The millennials – or Generation Y (Young) – represent a third of the market, and estimates show that over the next five years they will come to represent half of the market. The influence of expenses incurred by them on the hospitality industry business prompted hoteliers to modify facilities and services to better meet their requirements in terms of value, innovation, quick access, convenience and mobility.

However, expenses incurred by Chinese tourists could outshine even those of millennials. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), expenses incurred by Chinese tourists in 2013 exceeded those made by Germans and Americans, reaching over 100 billion USD, and ranking them first globally in terms of expenses incurred by tourism. Chinese tourists are the fastest growing segment on the market.

As a result, more and more hotels accommodate various facilities aimed at the Chinese guests’ expectations, such as slippers, Chinese teas, newspapers and TV channels in Chinese, adaptation of restaurant menus by including Chinese dishes. This means adjusting “on the fly” to tourism market trends.



Fig. 1. International tourism arrivals worldwide in 2013 (info graphics, WTO, 2014)

Among the imperative objectives applicable starting with 2014 in tourism on defining Romania as an attractive and durable tourist destination at the horizon of 2015: (these will be achieved if the Master Plan is successfully implemented), note the following “ingredients” that would position Romania on a honorable place on the ultra-competitive tourism market:

- Creating a positive image of Romania as a tourist destination both nationally and internationally, as well as a country brand.

- Ensuring the sustainable development of tourism to promote the natural and cultural potential and to preserve it for future generations.
- Ensuring the recognition of tourism as a key element in economic development and as a generator of new jobs.
- Creating Romanian awareness on our country's tourism potential and on their desire to present it potential visitors.

As an EU member, Romania certainly enjoyed a number of advantages, but also faced a number of disadvantages that will not be easily overcome unless they are more realistically researched and anticipated.

We are taking into consideration:

- ✍ the simplification of travel formalities which, of course, will have the possible effect of tourism import growth and the amplification of illegal immigration.  
In order not to face an even greater imbalance in the tourism balance, in order to reduce imports of tourism, it is necessary for Romanian resorts to intensify their actions to increase the competitiveness by offering Romanian tourists compatible services at lower prices compared to those found in the destination countries of the Romanian outbound.
- ✍ tourism experts will have more opportunities to work in other countries with likely effects on the labor market, with particular reference to the tourism workforce.
- ✍ Romania has benefited from a number of structural funds for tourism development, but, for their use, a number of projects need to be developed that will also require the support of the private sector for their co-financing. The rate of absorption of European funds in the National Tourism Authority (NTA), one of the priorities of this institution for the current year, has increased significantly in 2013 to over 22%, from about 6%, as it was in 2012.
- ✍ Romania as a tourist destination and as a destination for capital investment will have an increased number of visitors who will be able to use the services of the "low cost" airlines.
- ✍ another marked priority for the first half of 2014 is to have a Tourism Law.
- ✍ a better and more efficient promotion of Romania as a tourist destination both nationally and abroad. This year, the activities of external promotional and tourist information offices will be optimized, offices operating on target markets.

Also, at least two other tourist promotion offices will be opened abroad, one in Japan and one in the United Arab Emirates. The blogosphere also has an important role in the effort to raise awareness on Romania among Romanian tourists. Of all European countries, Romania ranks second in terms of web browsing; also there are blogs that have almost half a million unique visitors per month.

- ✍ in Romania tourism, investments in 2013 were 7.4% of total investments. This figure should decrease by 0.2% in 2014, and will increase by 6.8 % per year over the next ten years to reach 7.7% of total investments by 2023. (Fig. 2)

ROMANIA: CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN TRAVEL & TOURISM



Fig. 2. Capital investment in tourism (WTTC - Economic Impact Romania 2013-2023)

Given these recommendations, it is clear that the development of tourist business requires satisfying a combination of factors that reflect the importance of the natural environment and local community from the conceptual phase to actual operation.

- ✍ Another key aspect for the long term success of a tourism initiative is time.
- ✍ The targets for 2014 include the adoption of the Law on holiday vouchers, supported by the line Ministry, the support to the development of new alternative packages such as the tour of caves, salt mines and waterfalls in Romania, or the development of cultural circuits.
- ✍ Also in 2014, special attention will be given to spa tourism. With the adoption of the European Directive which provides the settlement of health services anywhere in Europe, it is imperative to encourage healthcare and medical tourism for 2014.

- ✍ Another important project on next year's agenda will be to promote the main cities in Romania (Bucharest, Sibiu, Brasov, Timisoara, Iasi, Constanta, Cluj, etc.) as destinations for city-break packages.
- ✍ Another important announcement pending 2014, made yesterday, was that Romania will host in the spring of 2014 the meeting of tourism ministers of member countries of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP).

At the beginning of this century and millennium, travel and tourism industry is the most dynamic business sector in the world, and, at the same time, the most important generator of jobs. Economically speaking, tourism is also a main source of recovery of national economies for those countries with important tourism resources that exploit them properly.

In this context, the main arguments and ingredients that make it necessary for Romanian tourism to develop, result from the following<sup>1</sup>:

- a) Since tourist resources are practically inexhaustible, tourism is one of the economic sectors with real prospects for long-term development;
- b) The operation and complex exploitation of tourism resources accompanied by effective promotion on foreign markets can be a source of increasing foreign exchange earnings, contributing to a favorable balance of external payments;
- c) Tourism is a safe employment market, and also a market for the redeployment of laid off persons from other heavily restructured sectors;

In 2013, according to the WTTC (World Travel Tourism Council) the Travel & Tourism industry directly supported the creation of 193,000 jobs (2.3% of total employment).

This is expected to increase by 7.3 % in 2013, and is expected to expand by 0.7% per year of 223,000 jobs (accounting for a share of 2.8% of total employment) by 2023.

In 2013, in Romania, the total contribution of the tourism industry on employment, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry, was 5.7 % of total employment (479,000 jobs). This is expected to increase by 3.1 % in 2013 to 494,000 jobs, and to increase by 1.1 % per year to 551,000 jobs by 2023 (6.8% of total) – (Fig. 3)

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1 Mazilu Mirela Elena, *Competitivité et excellence dans l'aménagement touristique durable du territoire*, Annales de l'Universite Valahia de Targoviste section: Sciences Economique, anul XIV, nr. 26:

<http://journals.indexcopernicus.com/karta.php?action=masterlist&id=1740>

ROMANIA: TOTAL CONTRIBUTION OF TRAVEL & TOURISM TO EMPLOYMENT

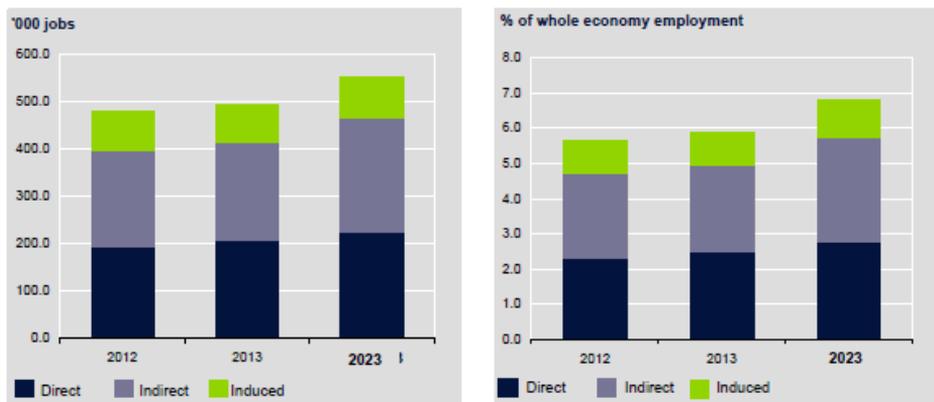


Fig. 3. The contribution of tourism to employment (WTTC – Economic Impact Romania 2013-2023)

- d) Tourism is a means of promoting the image of a country, thus participating in the promotion of exports of goods and services on the global market, both implicitly and explicitly;
- e) Tourism, through its multiplier effect, acts as a global economic system activator, generating a specific demand of goods and services that result in an increase in their production area, thus contributing to the diversification of the national economy sectors.

The harmonious development of tourism throughout the territory contributes to the social and economic growth and to reducing the gaps between different areas, also constituting an important source of household income increase.

It is known that Romanians and foreigners see things differently, including when it comes to tourist attractions: if for Romanians the colorful Roma people are cause for embarrassment, like cattle fairs, traditional sheepfolds or carts hauled by horses through the outskirts of cities, for foreigners these are foreground targets.

Taking into account **tops made by foreigners**, the authors of the prestigious guide *Rough Romania* made their own main attractions top: Peles Castle, the seaside, the Carpathians, the Danube Delta, caves, Bicz Gorges, Bukovina hills, Fagaras mountains, wolves and bears, ski resorts, Bucharest, Brasov, Sibiu, Sighisoara, Transylvanian Saxons villages, painted monasteries in Bukovina, Maramures seen by traveling by the Mocănița along the Vaser valley, the wooden churches and the Merry Cemetery in Săpânța, Junii Sibiului Festival, Dracula, the sculptor Constantin Brancusi, sheep cheese, plum brandy, Mulsul

măsurii (Milking of the Measure), authentic rural accommodation, and folk and Gypsy music.

*Lonely Planet* sees as essential hiking in the Carpathians, the painted monasteries, the Delta, Bran Castle, the Parliament Palace in Bucharest, the wooden churches of Maramureș, Sibiu, plum brandy, sarmale and polenta.

*National Geographic Traveler* recommends Bucharest, the Carpathians, monasteries, caves, resorts, Dracula, Bran, Maramures and Bukovina as main objectives.

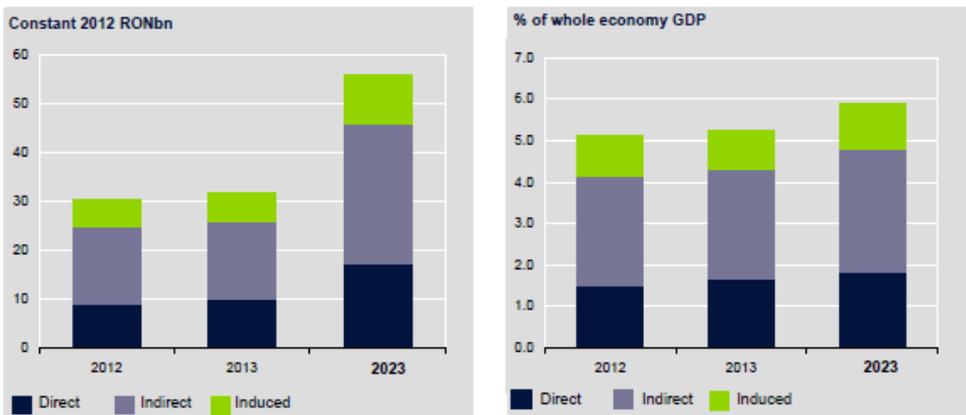
According to the very well informed French guides *Bleu Evasion*, you must see: Bucharest, Bran Castle, Curtea de Argeș, Horezu, Târgu Jiu, Tismana, Cazanele Dunării, Nera gorge, Beiuș country, Padiș plateau, Rimetea, Mărginimea Sibiului, Sibiu, Mediaș, Sighișoara, Brașov, Biertan, Viscri, Prejmer, Harman, Târgul Mureș, Harghita mountains, Maramureș with Vaser valley, the wooden churches, Săpânța and Cosaului valley, Bukovina with the painted monasteries, Iasi, Neamț mountains and Biczac gorge, the Danube Delta and Histria.

An interesting 2012 market survey (conducted by CSP Plus Consult on the behavior, expectations and motivations of foreign tourists) revealed that they appreciate most traditional customs and local culture, landscape and nature, the hospitality and kindness of local people, and traditional Romanian cuisine.

In order for Romanian tourism to grow in 2014 and thus to generate revenue and significant contributions to the GDP, a legislative environment able to stimulate the private industry is necessary, and the state's greater involvement under a legislative form.

There are still no data available for 2013, but we want this share to rise to 3-4 % in the coming years and I believe that by applying a coherent, integrated strategy, and with the multiannual promotional campaigns we have launched this year, we will have the results we want. The new marketing approach and new brand incorporating globally recognized and diversified tourism experiences will definitely help us achieve the international competitiveness level, attractive for both domestic tourists and international ones, an equally important role being played by contribution of tourism to the national GDP (Figure 4).

ROMANIA: TOTAL CONTRIBUTION OF TRAVEL & TOURISM TO GDP



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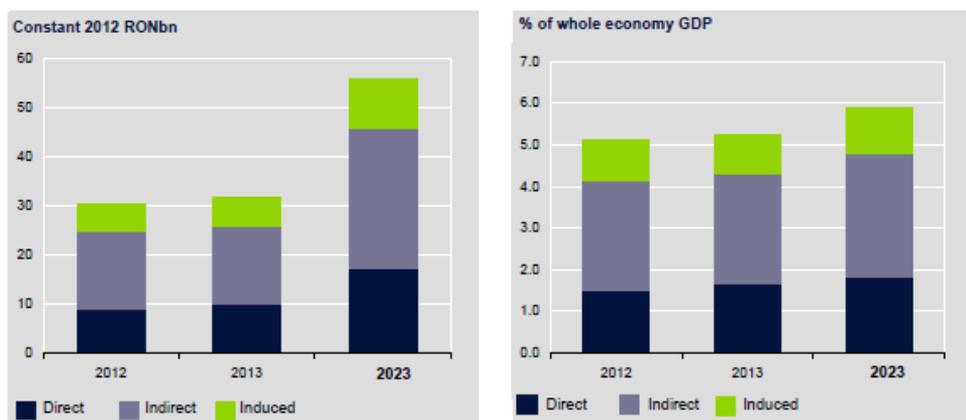


Fig. 4. The contribution of tourism to the GDP – Romania (source WTTC-Economic Impact Romania 2013-2023)

If Romania continues to be promoted as a tourist destination on both target markets and those of opportunity in the following 10 years, Romania aims to become a globally competitive destination for a number of selected products and experiences. To achieve this goal, Romania needs to use tourism **as an ambassador and promoter of the main natural and cultural values**. In this context, the SME, Environmental Affairs and Tourism Department together with the NTA organized in 2013 a series of international events, such as the International Conference “*Competitive advantages of a tourist destination – opportunities and challenges in the context of the sustainable development of tourism*” in Bucharest and the Danube Delta, under the high patronage of the World Tourism Organization, and

the International Danube Tourism Conference in Bucharest, in order to promote Romanian tourism values.

In 2014, an interesting and novel action was the designation of personalities from various fields, with a great reputation in public life, as **Romanian Tourism Ambassadors** (those who have been awarded with the title of Ambassador of Romanian Tourism are Dumitru Prunariu, Maia Morgenstern, Oana Pellea, Dan Puric, Dinu Săraru, Constantin Chiriac, Ovidiu Lipan Țăndărică, Nicolae Voiculeț, Octavian Bellu, Nadia Comăneci, Mariana Bitang, Helmut Duckadam).

All these are part of the project titled “*Romania promoted by values*”, started in May 2013; it is a partnership marked by a series of events organized every six months, this concept project embodying several actions to promote Romanian authenticity, which included the production and international distribution of the three productions in the “Wild Carpathia” documentary series on Travel Channel.

In conclusion, we can say that Romanian tourism encompasses a wide variety of products, types of tourism and destinations, and involves many different stakeholders, both from the public and private sector, with very decentralized areas of competence, often at regional and local level, ingredients to make a tourist market attractive being related to legislation, intuition, effective marketing and not to chance!

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