

THE ROMANIAN TOURISM THROUGH THE TRAVEL AGENCIES IN PERIOD 2012-2017

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Abstract

Travel agencies carry out complex activities such as organizing tourism programs and actions that they sell further to either intermediate sales agents or end-users. Representing an important segment of the tourist market, namely tourist offer, travel agencies, whether they are tour operators or with sales activity, are clearly delineated in the tourism activity through the volume and structure of the touristic activities carried out. The evolution of tourism activities supported by tourism agencies lately has attracted my interest because it can once again argue, along with other aspects related to the positive evolution of Romanian tourism. Tourism is considered to be an area of activity that can make a significant contribution to the development of any economy and especially those economies in countries with significant tourism resources with the prerequisites for sustainable tourism development, as is Romania.

In this paper I will present the concerns of the specialists in this field, highlighting the most important aspects found in the specialized literature on this topic and to carry out an analysis of the official statistical data referring to incoming activity, domestic tourism activity, outgoing activity, number of Romanian tourists taking part in domestic tourism activities.

Key words: Romania, tourism, travel agencies,.

JEL Classification: Z32

I. INTRODUCTION

Romania possesses a very rich tourist potential, which entitles us to explore the potential as an inherent element of the general strategy of domestic economic development. Tourism has brought about major changes in the tourism market: it has emphasized the need to rethink the service industry and the great variety of customer needs and preferences. One of the many evolutions of international tourism envisions the creation of tailor-made, individualized and specialized tour packages that differ in quality, resources, advantages and presentation. (Postelnicu and Dabija, 2016)

Romania has a huge tourist potential, insufficiently exploited. From a tourism point of view, the state has remained behind neighboring countries such as Hungary or Bulgaria. However, prospects are encouraging, with Romanian tourism having a good chance of becoming competitive. (Popescu, R. I., 2012).

In the tourist package trade sector, as a result of globalization, partnerships, integration and franchise are highlighted. Tour operators and travel agencies have made partnerships with hotel chains, charter airlines, travel agent distributors, and cruise companies, some of whom have joined in. At the European level, the German TUI group is highlighted (Hociung I.G, and Frâncu L.G, 2012).

Tourism represents an important domain in the revival and modernization of any economy because businesses are rather small sized and capital needs reduced imprinting investments a fast rhythm. Investments in tourism also imply investments in those sectors the activity of which are strongly correlated with tourism hence the double impact of tourism: stimulating the investments specific to tourism as well as the national ones. At world level, investments in tourism represent 7% of the total investible efforts.(Mazilu, M and all, 2017)

II. TRAVEL AGENCIES AND THEIR ROLE

Tourism as a mass phenomenon was the precursor to the appearance and development of organized tourism, which takes place only on the basis of a perfect contract between the tourism agencies and the tourist service units (tourist accommodation units, transport, leisure facilities, etc.)

We find the notion of travel agency for this function in the literature of the field but also in the texts of the WTO (World Tourism Organization), this being different as a Romanian terminological concept.

Thus we find in the countries with intensive tourism activity the definition of the travel agency as "an independent company or a network of companies having the purpose of booking and selling tickets for means of transport and selling of tourist products" manufactured "by tour operators."

Travel agencies are the group of companies that provide travel and hotel services for tourists to travel or stay. Jobseekers must be part of the staff of an accredited agency or be a correspondent of an agency.

Thus in Romania the travel agency is the main distributor of tourism products. It has the monopoly of sales because it has two big advantages over other forms of distribution: the almost total protection of the tourist consumer and the financial guarantees granted to both tourists and providers.

On the tourist market we find two major categories of travel agencies, namely tour operator travel agencies and travel agencies with sales activity. Tour Operator travel agencies are those travel agencies specialized in the organization of tourism programs and touristic actions, which they market directly or via other travel agencies, on the basis of contracts and conventions. Travel agencies with sales activity are those travel agencies selling tour operators' programs and actions.

Private travel agencies represent the core link of institutions that activate in the tourism industry. Tourism agencies can be considered as economic units that have the means of production and circulating funds appropriate for the design and provision of services in order to meet the tourist demand.

III. STAGE OF TOURISM THROUGH TRAVEL AGENCIES

As all tourism service providers contribute to the development of tourism as a whole, tourism agencies come and make a substantial contribution to the development of this segment of activity. Their primary role is to end the economic irritation of the tourism product, through the travel agencies being sold and collected their counter value from the customers.

For a picture of the activity of travel agencies we present data regarding the activities performed by the two major categories of agencies in Romania, namely: tour operator agencies and agencies with sale activity during 2012-2016.

According to the data provided by the Ministry of Tourism, in Romania there were on 19.05.2017, 2640 licensed tourism agencies. At the same time, at the request of the economic operator, tourist licenses were issued for 64 travel agencies. At the same time, the ministry has withdrawn 20 travel agency travel licenses, of which the vast majority of 12 agencies in Bucharest.

According to the data provided by the database www.topfirme.ro in Romania in the field of activity with the CAEN 7911 code - Activities of the travel agency (activities of the agencies, engaged primarily in the sale of travel services, excursions, transport and accommodation, wholesale or retail, to the general public and to the commercial clients) was 1.865

economic agents in 2016, accounting for 0.10% of the total Romanian economic agents with a turnover of ROL 1.8 billion (EUR 409.1 million) employing 4,888 people, or 0.12% of the total number of employees in Romania, and earned a profit of 84.1 million lei (19.1 million euros). In 2017, the situation was the following 1,832 economic agents with 33 fewer than in 2016, but they had a turnover of 411 million euros, they have the same number of employees and a profit of 19.2 million euros, which determines us to say that the less efficient economic agents have been eliminated from the market

Regional statistics are as follows:

Table no. 1 Regional distribution of CAEN 7911 companies

Region/counties	No. of companies
Bucharest – Ilfov- Bucharest and Ilfov County	650
Central Alba, Braşov, Covasna, Harghita, Mureş and Sibiu.	244
North-East- Bacău, Botoşani, Iaşi, Neamţ, Suceava and Vaslui.	176
South-East- Brăila, Buzău, Constanţa, Galaţi, Tulcea and Vrancea.	239
South – Muntenia- Argeş, Călăraşi, Dâmboviţa, Giurgiu, Ialomiţa, Prahova and Teleorman.	166
South-West Oltenia- Dolj, Gorj, Mehedinţi, Olt and Vâlcea.	74
West- Arad, Caraş-Severin, Hunedoara and Timiş.	115
North-West- Bihor, Bistriţa-Năsăud, Cluj, Maramureş, Satu-Mare and Sălaj.	200
TOTAL	1865

Source: <https://www.topfirme.com/caen/7911/>

It is noticed that the largest concentration of tourism agencies is located in the Bucharest-Ilfov region in a significant proportion of 34%, followed by the regions where touristically developed areas are located, namely the Center region where they are representative from the tourist point of view are the counties of Brasov and Sibiu and the South-East region in which Constanta and Tulcea are located. The fewest travel agencies are in the South-West Oltenia region, where tourism generally has as negative factors the lack of highways, roads and modern public transport, the lack of effective promotion that puts the importance of resources at the forefront tourists from this region, such as Constantin Brancusi's works, lack of tourism organization and infrastructure in relation to seasons and types of locations.

Regarding the tourists coming to Romania, the data are presented in table no 2:

Tabel. no 2 Number of tourist participating in the Incoming Activity*Number of tourists - total*

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Tour operator agencies	240101	115712	217705	253507	74125	105310
Agencies with sale activity	23295	14326	1808	2163	3417	8766
Total	263396	130038	219513	255670	77542	114076

Source: National Institute of Statistics – Romanian Tourism statistical abstract 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018

From the data presented, it is noticed that in 2012 tour operators tourism agencies recorded 240101 tourists, number of which in the following year dropped by half. It follow two years of growth, in 2015 there is a maximum after which a major reduction, representing only 29% compared to 2015. This does not translate into a decrease in the number of tourists who have used tourism in our country, but in a decrease in the number of tourists that have purchased a travel product from an operating tour operator in Romania. A significant decrease is also registered in the case of sales agents, in 2016 only 3417 tourists compared to 23295 in 2012.

This evolution is explained by the tendency of tourists to appeal directly to tour operators, to become their own organizers of their stay or to resort to travel agencies in their own country. In 2017, the number of tourists participating in Incoming Activity showed an increase compared to 2016, registering an important increase for both tour operators (42.07%) and sales agents (156%). We can say that in total, the number of foreign tourists who participated in tourist activities in Romania increased in 2017 compared to 2016 with 47.11%, a favorable aspect for the Romanian tourism and implicitly for the Romanian economy.

Tabel. no 3 Number of tourists in activity of domestic tourism*Number of tourists*

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Tour operator agencies	642268	401726	374667	430832	590500	670428
Agencies with sale activity	41395	122527	127434	133502	162618	93791
Total	683663	524253	502101	564334	753118	764219

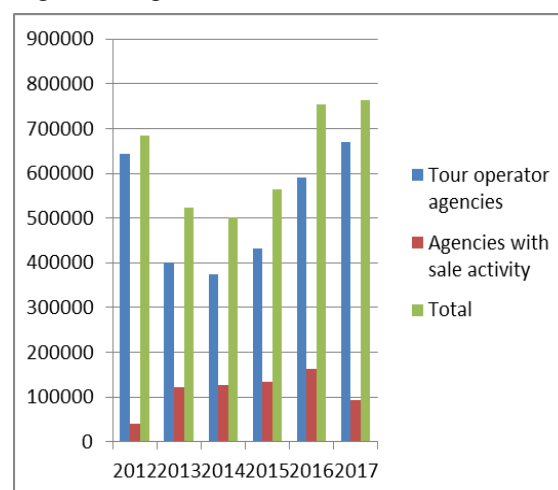
Source: National Institute of Statistics – Romanian Tourism statistical abstract 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018

Regarding the number of tourists participating in tourism activities organized by the Romanian travel agencies in the period 2012-2016, there is an ascending trend starting in 2013, both in terms of tour operators and sales agents. If, in 2012, a large number of tourists, more precisely 642268 used tour operator agencies, compared to those who used the agencies with sales activity only 6% in total, in 2016 the situation changes in the sense that in a number of 753,118 tourists, much more than 2012 in intern activity, 21.6% of the tourists used the agencies with the sales activity and 78.4% the tour operator ones.

In 2017, the growth trend is continued regarding the total number of tourists participating in the internal tourism by 1.4% more than in 2016, an increase supported by the number of tourists that reached to the tour operators higher by 13.52% and diminished by the decreasing number of tourists that reached to sales agents with lower sales activity by 42,33%.

To complete the analysis on the number of tourists who have used the travel agencies in Romania,

we also present the situation of Romanian tourists traveling abroad and acquiring their tourist services through travel agencies.

**Fig no 1. Evolution of the number of intern tourists who used travel agencies in 2012-2017****Tabel. no 4 Number of tourists in Outgoing activity***Number of tourists*

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Tour operator agencies	1055919	466683	709977	506183	541037	746928
Agencies with sale activity	263070	213360	317487	323741	409225	152791
Total	1318989	680043	1027464	829924	950262	899719

Source: National Institute of Statistics – Romanian Tourism statistical abstract 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018

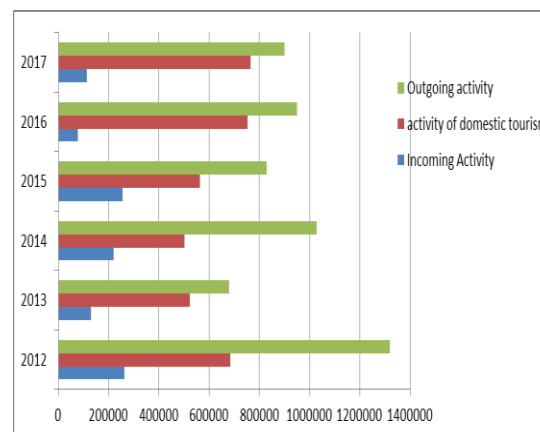
It can be noticed that Romanians who use tourism services from abroad are becoming more and more numerous, as they appeal to tourism agencies to eliminate the risk of being unsatisfied with the services found at the destination. In 2016, a total of 950 thousand tourists used agencies, of which 43% chose agencies with selling activity and 57% chose tour operators agencies. In 2017, we are downgrading from the previous year, with many Romanian tourists preferring to spend their holidays in their country.

For an overview we present the evolution of the total number of tourists who have used the travel agencies: foreign tourists coming to Romania, Romanian tourists for intern tourism and Romanian tourists who go in foreign countries.

We observe that most tourists were in outgoing activity in 2012 and, as they progressed over time, they are balanced with intern activity, with a significant drop in the number of foreign tourists arriving in Romania through a travel agency.

Figure no 2 Total number of tourists that chose Romanian travel agencies in 2012-2017

The activity of Romanian travel agents can also be characterized by the number of Romanian



tourists that reached to them for the consumption of internal tourism packages at the travel agencies.

Table no. 5 Number of Romanian tourists participating in internal tourism activities, by tourist areas

	Tour operator agencies				Agencies with sale activity		
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016
Tourists - total	374667	430832	590500	670428	127434	133502	162618
Seaside area	183081	248174	340949	346005	55075	50302	61437
River cruises	235	151	282	123	70	-	31
Sea cruises	82	114	125	172	600	25	79
Danube Delta	5129	8984	6043	5090	1947	849	1587
Cultural tourism	3608	5120	15356	4982	9426	7257	9145
Religious pilgrimage	1024	2484	21014	28886	308	1366	1871
Mountain area	58037	63105	76758	80595	19671	21068	24155
Spa area	28438	29212	24892	30994	8001	9009	13159
Other area	95033	73488	105081	173581	32336	43626	51154

Source: Anuarul statistic al Romaniei, 2017, pag 662 and 2016,

http://www.insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/turismul_romaniei_2018_breviar_statistic.pdf

In total, the number of tourists who have chosen to resort to travel agencies to buy tourist packages is on the increase, most of which are those that require the location of the sea, then the mountain and spa areas. We also find that cruises and river and sea cruises are better sold by touroperating agencies than by those specialized only on sale, being tourist products less addressed to unorganized individual tourism. A significant increase is also found for SPA locations, especially for sales agents, this increase being 24.51% in 2017 compared to 2016, 46% in 2016

compared to 2015 and 64% over 2014. The religious pilgrimages offered by tour operators have registered an increase in the number of tourists in 2017, with 28886 tourists registering the same as in 2016 when we have 21014 tourists compared to only 2484 tourists in 2015. These types of tourist packages sold well by sales agencies except for the year 2017 when the reduction is drastic, it should be noted that those willing to use such tourist services have appealed to a large number of tour operators.

Tabel no 6 Number of Romanian tourists participating in external tourism

	<i>Tour operator agencies</i>				<i>Agencies Sale activity</i>		
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016
TOTAL	355853	430629	426134	635816	186178	215707	270856
Europe – total from which	333591	412906	408301	588295	177825	207791	255603
European Union	265117	347219	335650	466432	138931	166473	217260
Africa	7522	4622	1024	4480	555	585	818
North America	2959	2117	1966	9423	3955	984	981
South and Central America	3812	1930	2114	2956	793	2904	3354
Asia	7581	8874	11852	30449	3050	3331	9585
Australia, Oceania and other territories	388	180	877	213	-	112	355

Source: Anuarul Statistic al Romaniei, 2016 pag 658 si 2017, pag 664

http://www.insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/turismul_romaniei_2018_breviar_statistic.pdf

For external tourist activities, most tourists were registered with the tour operators, increasing from one year to the next. The most attractive regions for tourists were the European Union countries as well as other European countries. Then followed by Asia with a number of tourists who used tour operators, 11852 in 2016 and 9585 tourists who turned to sales agents. Cropping over previous years is important if we consider that in Asia, in 2014, 7581 tourists have traveled through tour operators and 3050 through sales agencies.

IV. CONCLUSIONS.

From the above we draw the conclusion that the tourism agencies have a growing activity especially for the intern tourism and for the Romanian tourists going abroad. The possibility to travel abroad and the necessity of purchasing a package of tourism that does not present major risks gives the importance of the activity of the travel agencies that can contribute to the development of the Romanian tourism in various ways.

According to the above presented in Romania in the field of activity "Activities of the travel agencies" were 1.865 economic agents in 2016 and in 2017 by 33 fewer but which did not affect the data on the profit obtained by the 1832 economic agents

In total, the number of tourists who have reached to travel agencies to buy tourist packages is increasing both in internal and external tourism. The safety offered by the purchase of a tourist package has led to such an evolution in expense of self-made traveling.

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