

## PRACTICING A RESPONSIBLE TOURISM IN BUKOVINA BY ANALYZING THE MAIN STATISTICAL INDICATORS FOR THE PERIOD 2019-2022

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**Abstract:** *At the social level, tourism provides people with access to „trees of civilization” and the beauty of society, promotes the exchange of opinions, ideas and thoughts, thus equally promoting the intellectual formation of individuals. At the economic level, tourism has become a factor of economic progress and has a broad and positive impact on the development of society as a whole. The need for sustainable economic development increasingly reveals to us the importance of developing and approving strategies, whose ultimate goal is that the natural and anthropogenic tourism potential of Bukovina is not negatively affected by tourism, but, on the contrary, to protect the interests of future generations. A trip to Bukovina, in addition to traveling through a fascinating geographical space, also means entering a mythical universe and coming into contact with a unique spirituality and human attitude. Due to ancient traditions and customs, unique monuments and special craftsmanship, and not least to a cultural center of international importance, Bucovina must regain the attention of tourists as a purely ecotouristic area.*

**Keywords:** *green destination, ecotourism, tourism brand, sustainability.*

**JEL Classification:** *M31, Q57.*

### 1. Introduction

Bukovina, as a tourist destination, has many resources (natural, cultural, historical and balneary) and is actually like a vast open-air museum where it remained inscribed in stone, wood, etc, color and speech are a significant part of the struggle, the dreams and efforts of our ancestors.

Suceava County, gifted by nature with an exceptional landscape, it is from a tourist point of view a prime area of the country and occupies one of the first positions in terms of economic, human and tourist potential, and this land of Suceava means history, traditions and customs of certain originality, monuments and crafts of rare ingenuity.

The tourist destination Bucovina must be promoted as effectively as a ”loc single” both on the domestic and international market.

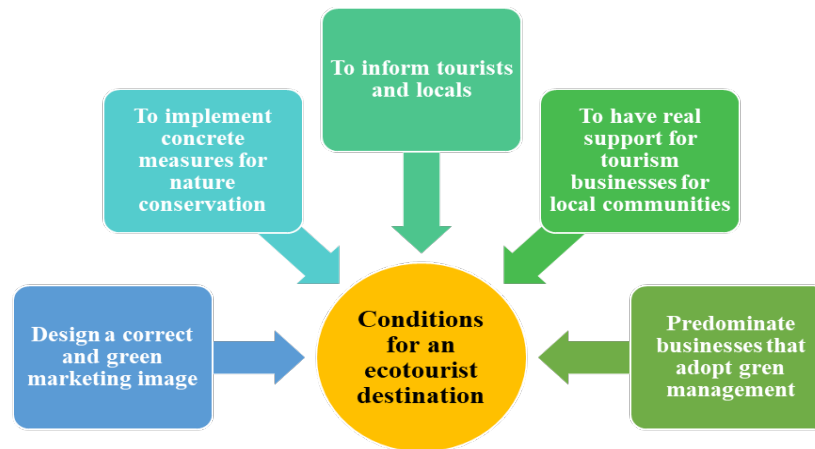
The tourism industry is very fragmented, consisting of many different large and small companies, and the development of tourism in this area requires coordination, investment, training and marketing, and, essentially coordination between government and local authorities, businesses and local communities.

For many years, we have been using terms such as agrotourism or ecotourism to refer to a type of rural tourism characterized by accommodation in a traditional home and kitchen based on products collected from the household.

The pressure on this type of tourism is quite strong and some real estate investments have turned some traditional villages into real residential villas, affecting the environment.

Fortunately, there are many places in Romania that are not very accessible, and in these places nature is protected and local cultural traditions and cuisine are preserved.

According to the principles of ecotourism, an ecotourism destination must meet the following conditions:



**Figura nr.1. Conditions that an ecotourism destination must meet**

Source: own processing

In Romania, ecotourism is represented by several non-governmental organizations, which aim to stimulate the development of sustainable practices, such as the Dorna Country Ecotourism Association, the Ecological Association, Center for Protected Areas and Sustainable Development Bihor, National Association for Rural Ecological and Cultural Tourism of Romania. Romania and ECO-Romania Association (Candrea A.N., Hertanu A., 2015). One of the entities, ECO-Romania Association, has developed an accreditation system for accommodation units in ecotourism and tourist routes (AER).

## 2. Literature review

The tourist destination is the geographical place or place where a visitor or tourist stops either for a night of accommodation or for a period of time, or the terminal point of the holidays of the tourists, or, whether they travel for tourism or business purposes (Stancioiu A.F., 1999).

The Ecotourism Destination concept has been developed since 2012 by the central public authority for tourism, in partnership with nationally representative institutions and organizations (Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests, and, The National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism and the Ecotourism Association of Romania), based on the National Ecotourism Strategy, Global Criteria for Sustainable Tourism (GSTC) and the European Ecotourism Standard (EETLS).

Unlike attractions, considered to be generally single units, places or geographical areas of small size and easy to delineate, based on a single distinctive feature, tourist destinations are larger areas, which include a number of individual attractions, as well as services offered to tourists (Vellas F., Becherel L., 1999).

Ecotourism involves nature-based activities and has as main principles to mitigate the environmental impact (Singh S. et. all, all, 2015) And have a wide range of benefits for the local community (Dorobantu MR., Nistoreanu P., 2012).

According to the definition of the World Tourism Organization, it has the following characteristics: it is designed for small groups and involves small and local enterprises, has an important educational aspect, which is, with a high focus on mitigating the negative impact on the environment, including on communities and supports the socio-economic development of the natural area (UNWTO).

### **3. Responsible tourism in times of pandemic and postpandemic**

Sustainable travel has driven European tourism policy in recent years, driven by growing demands and expectations from travellers and host communities. While the COVID-19 crisis has paralyzed the travel industry in recent years, it has also been a unique opportunity to reset, change cultural mindsets and build resilience.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created greater awareness of the need for the transition to green tourism, providing additional incentives and opportunities to address these issues throughout the tourism ecosystem.

This disruption creates significant opportunities for reshaping tourism, and, accelerate the transition to greener and more sustainable tourism development models through innovative policies and ensure that recovery plans are in line with the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Given that Russia's war in Ukraine is exerting further increasing pressure on prices, this could provide an additional impetus to accelerate the transition to net zero, as economies reintroduce energy security priorities and businesses move to more resource-efficient practices.

The problems caused by the emergence of an epidemic, pandemics have a strong impact on the tourism industry.

The tourism industry has been the most affected by the suspension of activities and travel restrictions. There have been situations where tourism operations have been completely suspended for a period of time.

### **4. Methodology**

The purpose of the research is to analyze the evolution of accommodation activity in Bucovina in the last 4 years. Based on the proposed purpose, the following objectives have been set:

- analysis of the literature referring to reception structures and accommodation activity through the practice of responsible tourism;
- evolution of the main tourist indicators in Bukovina between 2019-2022.

As a result of the research, we found that the accommodation units in Bucovina register increases in some of them (hotels, hostels, tourist and agrotourism hostels), but also decreases or stagnations in others (tourist pops, motels, cottages), due to factors of objective and subjective nature.

In order to achieve the purpose and the achievement of the objectives, the following research methods were used: the analysis of the scientific-methodical literature, the observation, the statistical-mathematical method of data processing and interpretation.

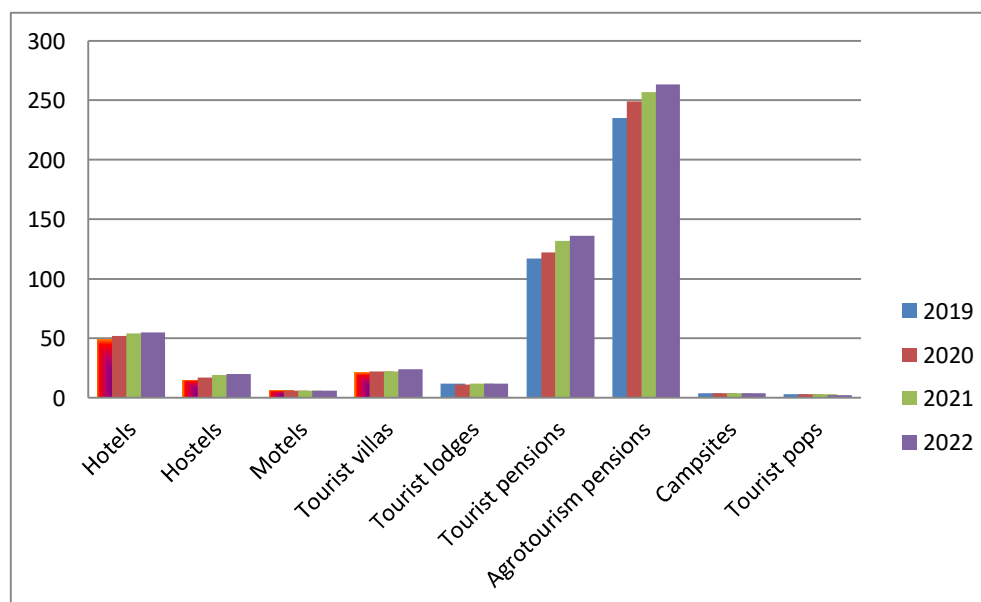
It is found that Romanian tourists, but especially foreign tourists who visit Bukovina, tend to choose accommodation units from rural or ecotouristic areas, the latter being the most appropriate form of hospitality in Bucovina.

As a result of the research we could see that from an economic activity representing almost 3% of GDP, at country level, tourism has decreased, in Romania, to zero. For 3 months (march-may), in Bukovina almost 95% of the accommodation capacities were closed, leaving only those that hosted people in quarantine or medical staff.

**Table no.1. Evolution of the number of tourist accommodation structures in Bucovina in 2019-2022**

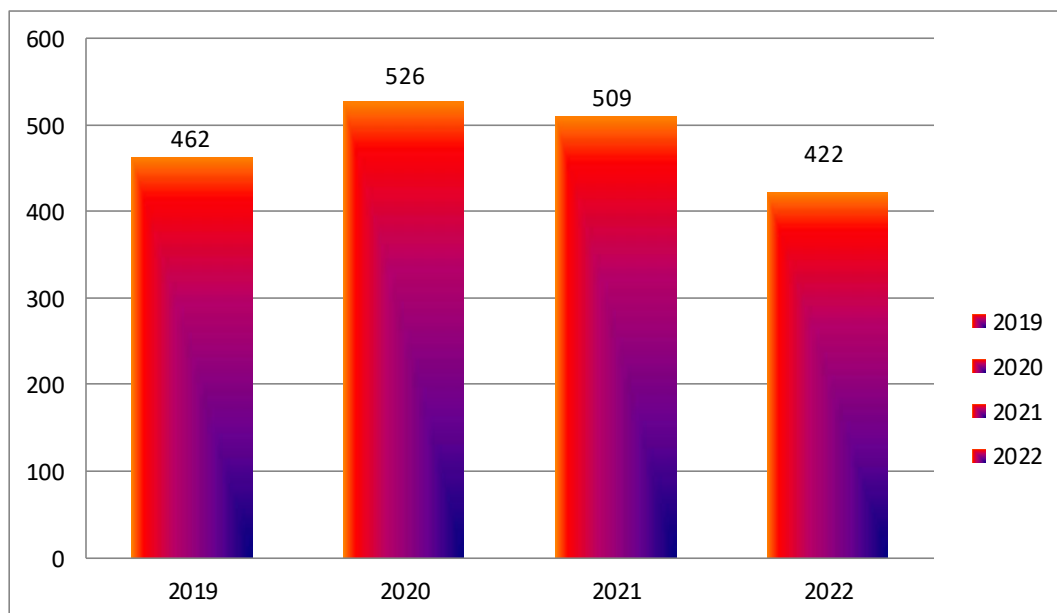
Tourist accommodation facilities with accommodation functions	2019	2020	2021	2022
Hotels	49	52	54	55
Hostels	15	17	19	20
Motels	6	6	6	6
Tourist villas	21	22	22	24
Tourist lodges	12	11	12	12
Tourist pensions	117	122	132	136
Agrotourism pensions	235	249	257	263
Campsites	4	4	4	4
Tourist pops	3	3	3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>422</b>

**Source:** Statistical data processed from the Tourism Breviary of Suceava County, National Institute of Statistics Bucharest, Suceava County Department of Statistics - <http://statistici.insse.ro>



**Figure no.2. Evolution on reception structures with functions of tourist accommodation in Bucovina in 2019-2022 (own processing)**

**Source:** <http://statistici.insse.ro>



**Figure no.3. Evolution of the total number of reception structures with functions of tourist accommodation in Bucovina in 2019-2022 (own processing)**

Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro>

The spectacular increase in the number of agro-tourism hostels is very important because tourism activities in rural areas are an economic alternative for Bucovina and contribute to economic growth.

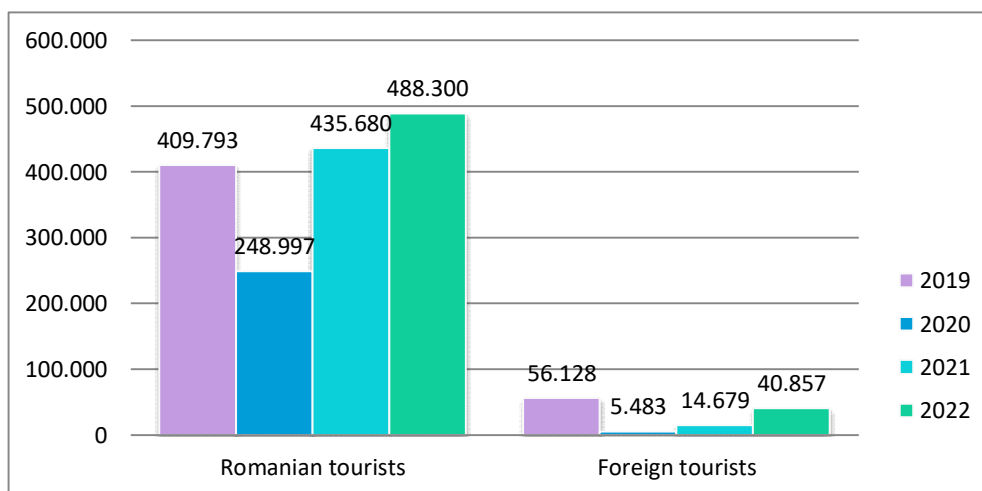
The development potential of the region is extremely high, and this can be seen in the growing trend of the tourist dynamics of Bucovina.

The COVID-19 crisis has changed the way we see our lives and the tourist activity in Bucovina has been strongly affected.

**Table no.2. Evolution of arrivals in tourist accommodation structures with functions of tourist accommodation in Bucovina in the period 2019-2022**

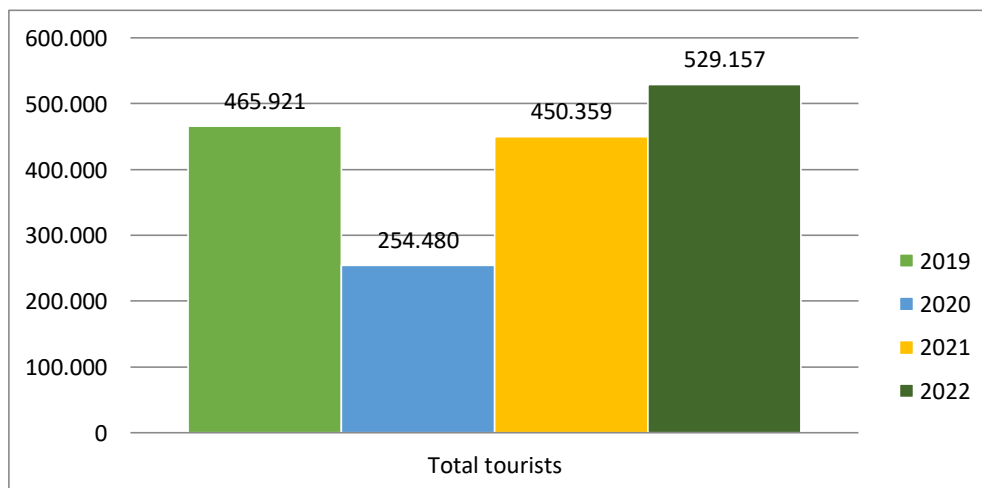
Tourists/Years of reference	2019	2020	2021	2022
Romanian tourists	409.793	248.997	435.680	488.300
Foreign tourists	56.128	5.483	14.679	40.857
<b>Total tourists</b>	<b>465921</b>	<b>254.480</b>	<b>450.359</b>	<b>529.157</b>

Source: Processing of statistical data processed from the Tourist Breviary of Suceava County, National Institute of Statistics Bucharest, Suceava County Directorate of Statistics <http://statistici.insse.ro>



**Figure no.4. Evolution of arrivals by types of tourists in reception structures with functions of tourist accommodation in Bucovina in the period 2019-2022 (own processing)**

Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro>



**Figure no.5. The total evolution of arrivals in reception structures with functions of tourist accommodation in Bucovina in the period 2019-2022 (own processing)**

Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro>

Analyzing the data provided by the National Institute of Statistics (Figure 4 and 5), we note that the number of arrivals in 2020 decreased by 45% compared to the number of arrivals of tourists registered in 2019. This decrease occurs against the backdrop of the COVID-19 crisis, with strong repercussions on the tourism industry in Bucovina.

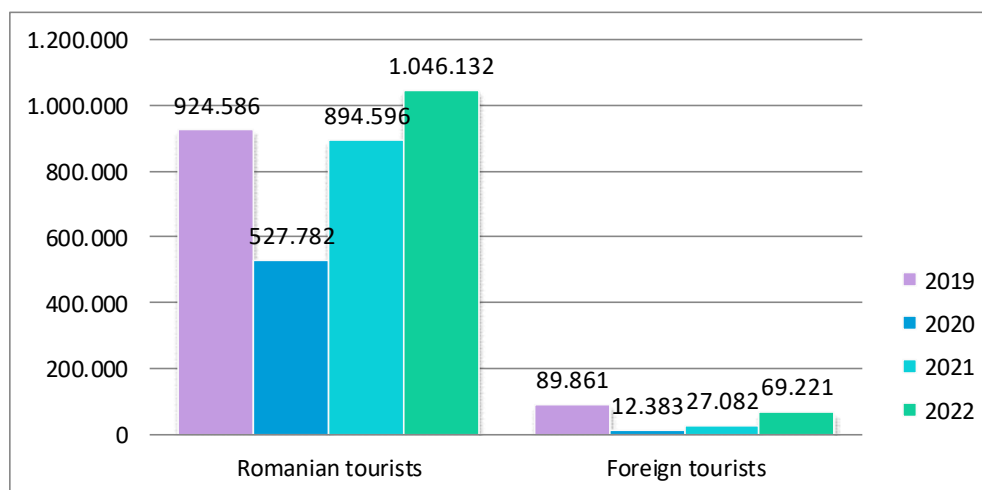
Restricting or even banning travel, the suspension of the activity of reception structures with tourist accommodation functions in Bucovina led to a drastic decrease in the number of arrivals in the region.

We can also see that the highest number of arrivals of tourists was recorded in Bucovina (529,157 arrivals) in 2022.

**Table no.3. Evolution of overnight stays in tourist accommodation structures with tourist accommodation functions in Bucovina in 2019-2022 (number of overnights)**

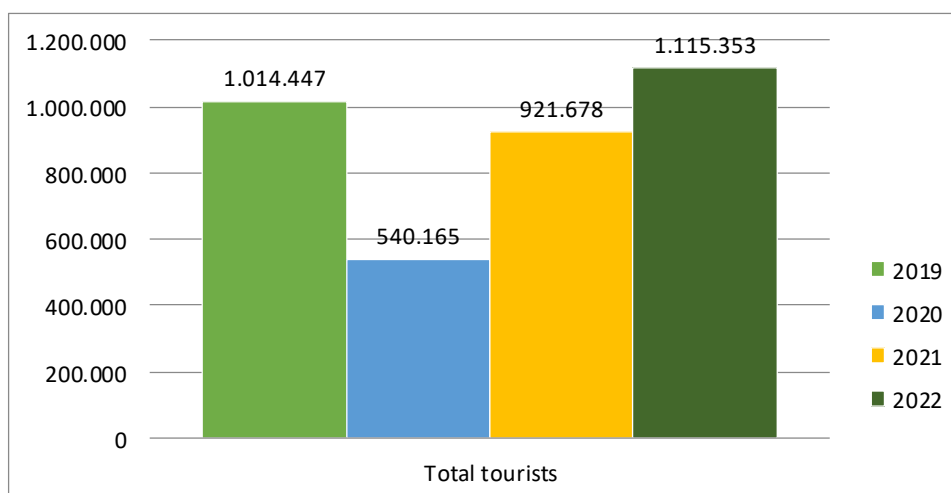
Nights/ Years of reference	2019	2020	2021	2022
Romanian tourists	924.586	527.782	894.596	1.046.132
Foreign tourists	89.861	12.383	27.082	69.221
<b>Total tourists</b>	<b>1.014.447</b>	<b>540.165</b>	<b>921.678</b>	<b>1.115.353</b>

**Source:** Statistical data processed from the Tourism Breviary of Suceava County, National Institute of Statistics Bucharest, Suceava County Department of Statistics - <http://statistici.insse.ro>



**Figure no.6. The evolution of overnight stays by type of tourists in accommodation establishments in Bucovina in 2019-2022 (own processing)**

**Source:** <http://statistici.insse.ro>



**Figure no.7. Total evolution of overnight stays in tourist accommodation establishments in Bucovina in 2019-2022 (own processing)**

**Source:** <http://statistici.insse.ro>

Figure 7 shows the evolution of the indicator "Overnight stays in tourist accommodation establishments in Bukovina" from which we can observe a decrease in 2020 caused by the COVID 19 crisis. The recorded data show a decrease of about 54% in the number of overnight stays in 2020 compared to the values recorded in 2019. From the year 2021 onwards this indicator has registered a gradual increase reaching 1.115.353 overnight stays in 2022.

The structure of tourists by origin (Romanian-foreign) is clearly unequal, in favour of local tourists. This highlights the regional character of tourism in Bucovina and calls for an aggressive promotion of this tourist destination at international level.

More and more local and foreign tourists are coming to stay in the countryside, attracted by the possibility of discovering the environment, the change of lifestyle, and sports activities in nature.

## 7. Conclusions

A good development of tourism in rural areas can contribute to the development of entrepreneurial initiatives among local people, with a high chance of success if the value of the attractive elements of the Bucovina area is realised.

In the context of globalisation, Romania needs to make many changes in order to compete in the tourism sector.

Although Romania's tourism potential has been and is still considered promising by Romanian and foreign researchers, Romanian tourism is still in a stage of development and recovery.

On the road to efficiency, Romanian tourism must adopt a global mentality and take into account the existing international competition.

The sustainable development of the travel and tourism industry depends directly on the sustainable development of other related sectors.

Therefore, improving the general infrastructure, raising the standard of living, improving hygiene and health conditions are the direction to follow.

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