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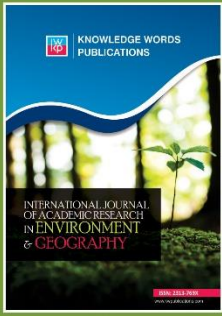
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Social Tourism for Children and Young Pupils, in Romania

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Abstract

One can notice that there is a tendency, at international level, to develop a tourism dedicated to children, with many tourist destinations customized to their particular taste. The best formulas for practicing tourism are through various camps. But tourism and education are two ways that put these young people in contact with reality and in which they get to know it. The new vision of the educational system proposes tourism as a real means of gaining knowledge and socialization. The environment in which we live influences and changes attitudes and mentalities. The more backgrounds and cultures children get familiarized with, the more progress they make. Tourism education itself is an interdisciplinary education.

At the same time, tourism education teaches children how to become tomorrow's tourists, by adopting appropriate conditions during voyages, by direct participation in the development of tourist programmes, and by developing positive and open attitudes towards those around them. High quality tourism cannot be ensured in the absence of a 'tourist school', without education, without models. People who are involved in the field of tourism educate the public and must be models for future tourists.

The analysis performed in this paper is intended to illustrate the context in which school education combines the most with tourism through the network of camps dedicated to pupils. This network has the merit of supporting extra-curricular activities, which represent the non-institutionalized way of performing the education process.

Keywords: Tourist Education, School Camps, Social Tourism for Children.

Introduction

Prior to 1990, educational tourism consisted in organizing bus trips for pupils, and less in holidays spent in camps. After 1990, things have changed. In children or educational tourism we find today a few peculiarities such as: personalized services corresponding to the needs of the client, namely camps varying in duration and thematic, with a wide range of types of activities

featured (language camps for learning a foreign language, active camps for experiencing various sports etc.), and they convey an alternative to the current educational system of Romania. There is also a social side to this type of tourism through which categories of underprivileged children can benefit from, free of charge, in a series of school camps. Illustrative for this type of tourism in Romania is *camp tourism for pupils and preschool children*, as this category of accommodation is found in the records of the National Institute of Statistics as a typology of accommodation units.

The earliest definition of social tourism was pronounced by Hunzicker (1951), who defined social tourism as "the relationships and phenomena in the field of tourism resulting from participation in travel by economically weak or otherwise disadvantaged elements in society. Minnaert, Maitland and Miller (2007, 2009, 2011) define social tourism as a form of tourism with a moral added value, whose main objective is the benefit gained by the host or by the visitor during the tourist exchange.

In practice, social tourism usually refers to low-budget holidays that take place in the very country of the tourist, either individually or as part of a group or, in some cases, the term refers to one day trips to theme parks, museums and attractions, which are state funded or made available at very low prices by charities or public sector agencies. The beneficiaries of social tourism are those who want to travel, but cannot do so because of the low incomes they earn or of health problems, or moderate disabilities that hinder their tourist activity. In many countries of the European Union, social tourism is subsidized by the state, being offered at very low costs, which at the same time stimulates the local economy and increases state revenues through taxation of the process and reduced unemployment (Minnaert et al., 2011).

The concept of social tourism has been implemented in different ways to suit national contexts: several countries apply holiday voucher schemes (e.g. France and Hungary), while other countries have established public private partnerships in this respect (e.g. Spain, Portugal, and Belgium) (McCabe et al., 2011).

In the United Kingdom and the US, social tourism is traditionally not a part of public policy but this service is mostly provided through charities.

Methodology

Through "Nucleu" research programme of Romania that has benefited from government funding it has been initiated a study with several phases of work and that are all dedicated to social tourism. It has highlighted the stage of development of social tourism for the following social categories: tourism directed at children and that covers organized forms; tourism for families with several children and who have a low income; tourism for different categories of young people; third-age tourism – for seniors; tourism for people with disabilities.

The analysis has put an emphasis on the evaluation of information from bibliographic sources related to the field of tourism for children. Only little important information has been retained in relation to the definition of this type of tourism. Subsequently, a statistical evaluation of the main tourism indicators, referring to the youngest of tourists, has been approached. These have been associated with the manner of running tourism directed at children, in Romania. Later, a comparative analysis has been carried out based on a series of demographic data attesting to the evolution of the number of children in our country and the number of tourists registered among them.

Current State of the Art of the Development of Social Tourism Directed at Children

Over the last two decades, education reforms have had a negative effect on the drastic reduction of school camps, even in the period of economic growth. It cannot be minimized that the activities carried out in them help to develop personality, creativity, the child's imagination, knowledge and self-sufficiency, teamwork, responsibility towards the environment, and other good personal features as well. Therefore, they are manners of ensuring the right climate for the phenomenon of self-assertion of a child in a personal manner to take place. From the statistical data approach, a clear distinction cannot be made between the educational camps and the tourist camps, because the camps are dealt with jointly, irrespective of their profile.

The current accommodation capacity shows, for the past 27 years, a rapid involution of the number of accommodation units such as the camps for pupils and preschool children. This contrasts with the general situation of the evolution of the number of accommodation units in Romania (Figure 1).

Thus, the number of pupil and preschool children camps has significantly decreased from 203 in 1990, to just 58 in 2016 (consisting in a reduction of more than three times). In 1989, there were 218 camps at national level. Out of the 27-year timeframe, the period 2006-2011 seemed to be the period when the dynamics of the decline in the number of accommodation units was more pronounced.

Even though the big picture shows that the number of accommodation units in tourism has doubled nationwide, instead, school camp tourism has dropped a lot. The involution of the accommodation capacity is also reflected in the reduction of the number of accommodation units.

Against the 1990 baseline, existing accommodation units in pupil and preschool children camps has experienced a significant decline (from 46,598 in 1990, to 6,002 in 2016); in other words, in 2016, the accommodation capacity in pupil and preschool children camps ranked less than 15% of the accommodation capacity that the same units had in 1990.

There was a tendency for a sharp decline in pupil and preschool children camps between 1990 and 2002, followed by a slight increase after 2003 (excluding 2007 and 2011). This increase was due to the establishment of a larger number of private camps. The same phenomenon was also true for the number of existing boarding places in accommodation units dedicated to children.

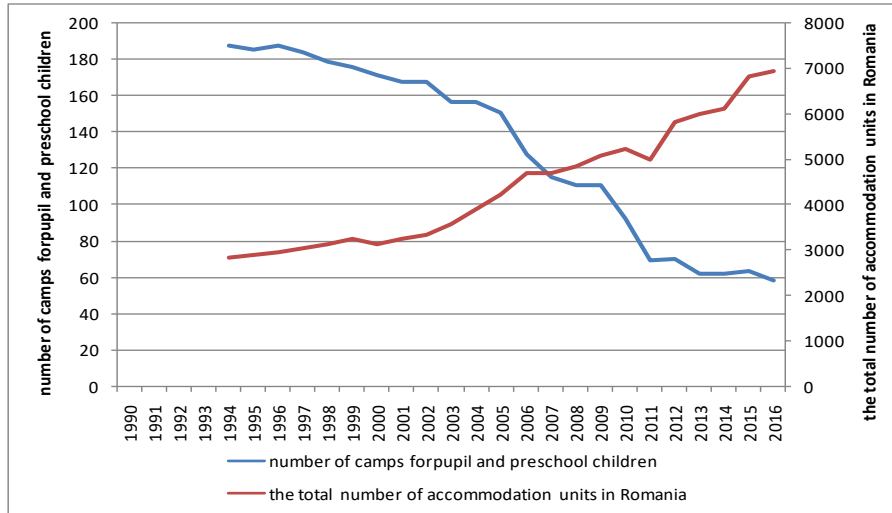


Figure 1. Evolution of the number of camps for pupils and preschools compared to the total number of accommodation units in Romania (1990-2016)

Source: National Institute of Statistics, processed data.

In 2016, more than half of the accommodation capacity of pupil and preschool children camp was concentrated cumulatively in mountain resort areas (25%), seaside resorts, excluding Constanta (15%), and spa resorts (11%). An important weight (in fact the largest share) was held by the residual category "Other localities and tourist routes" (31%). A fairly small share of units was concentrated in the following category: "Danube Delta including the city of Tulcea" (4%) (Figure 2).

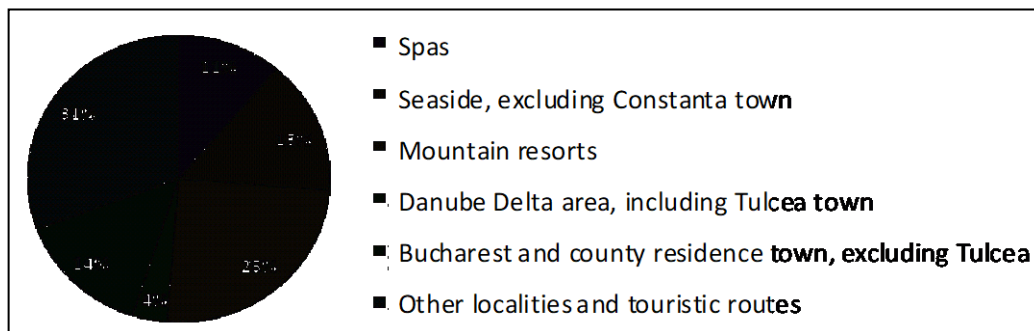


Figure 2. Distribution of accommodation capacity of the camps for pupils and preschools in tourist areas (2016)

Source: National Institute of Statistics, processed data.

To this analysis need to be aggregated the statistical data provided by the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MTS) on the accommodation capacity present in school camps and termed as "leisure centres" and that operate under its aegis.

Thus, according to the Ministry of Youth and Sports there are 62 recreational units located in 33 counties, which sum up to 6,047 accommodation units (we notice that there is a difference,

but not very high, compared to the data provided by the National Institute of Statistics, indicating a number of 58 camps and 6,002 accommodation units in 2016; as for the number of accommodation units, data provided by the National Institute of Statistics are 10% higher than the data provided by MTS). Of these recreational facilities, about 46 are recreational centres, eight are tourist bases, eight are youth hostels, and comfort categories stem from I to IV. In terms of territorial distribution, most of them are located at the seaside, in the county of Constanta (10.7%), followed by mountain areas in Buzau (8.2%), Sibiu (7.8%), Bihor (6.3%), and Valcea (5.5%).

Based on the data provided by the Ministry, it results that during 2015 and 2016 in these recreational centres were organized recreational camps, national camps, thematic camps, camps for pre-school children, pupils and students with disabilities. In effect, an auction is held each year for programme proposals for about 49 camps (2015); for the camps organized there, funding is also provided from the state budget. Of these proposals, approximately 39 are for national camps and 10 for thematic camps. Most of them are concentrated in the mountain and seaside area.

It should be noted that 13 of the 33 counties where there are recreational centres together hold almost 70% of the total accommodation capacity of these recreational facilities owned by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Most counties have one or two leisure centres. Only Buzau County has three, Valcea County has three and in Sibiu County there are five of them.

Recorded tourist flows. As far as travel is concerned, as the OMT and the WYSE Travel Confederation notice, children and young people are invariably at the forefront of change and innovation in this area. They are the users who perform online reservations, interact with other travelers through social networks, make use of mobile devices to plan routes on the go, and download applications for planning different internal or external travel routes. Young tourists are the first to embrace, use, approve or reject all these innovations and to set the *future trends*.

In Romania, such trends are not yet observed, not even internally. The tourist flow analysis takes into account the number of arrivals, the number of overnight stays, the duration of the stay and the occupancy rate of the accommodation capacities.

The number of arrivals viewed as a whole, along with the number of tourists registered in pupil and preschool children camps, expressed by the number of arrivals, was generally invoked during the period of 1990-2016. This is associated with a decrease in the number of boarding places. However, there are two distinct periods in terms of evolution: the period of 1990-2000 – marked by an oscillatory evolution – and the period of 2001-2016 – when the decline was even more obvious.

Consequently, the share of arrivals in pupil and preschool children camps out of the total number of arrivals of tourists was the same: it presented an oscillation in the range of 2-5% between 1990 and 2000, and a sharp decline after 2001, when the share dropped from 5.1% in 2001 to 0.4% in 2016. In absolute figures, the maximum number of tourists accommodated in pupil and preschool children camps was reached in 1996 (over 350,000), up by almost 100,000, as compared to 1990. This number fell to a significant rate, reaching less than 50,000, in 2016 (46,468). There was a more than dramatic decrease of more than seven times over a period of 20 years (in 2016, as compared to 1996). The fastest decrease is observed starting with 2005 and is still in progress, in terms of even lower values (Figure 3).

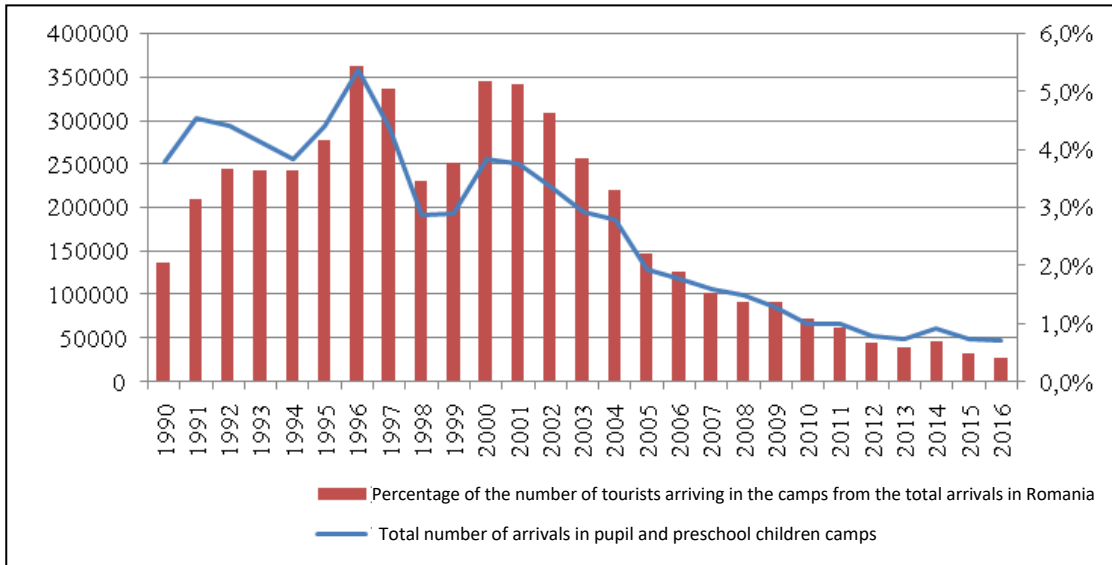


Figure 3. Evolution of the number of tourists arrivals in pupils and preschool camps (1990-2016)

Source: National Institute of Statistics, processed data.

This phenomenon is due to the reduction of the number of children and youth as a young population, but also to the increase in the degree of poverty of families, that triggers a reduced participation in tourism. On the other hand, higher-income families prefer camps placed in other European countries, with more varied tourist programmes and higher quality tourism services. No institution in Romania holds cumulated statistical data related to the travels of children to foreign camps (Figure 4).

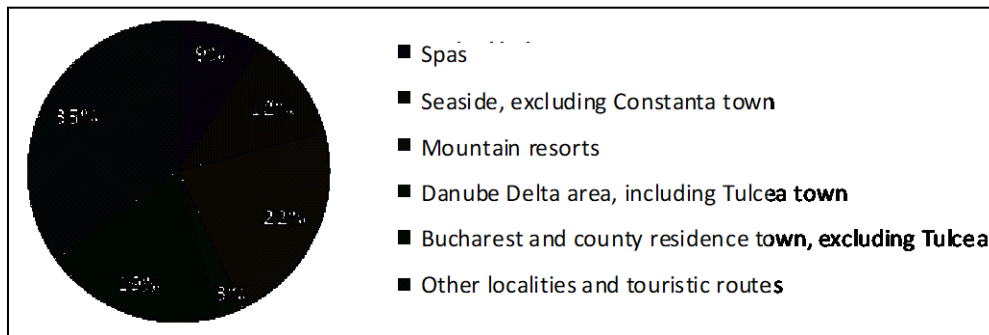


Figure 4. Distribution of the number of tourists registered in camps for pupils and preschools in tourist areas (2016)

Source: National Institute of Statistics, processed data.

In 2016, the most tourist flows are recorded in the tourist category of "Other localities and tourist routes" (35%), followed by mountain resorts (22%). The third destination class is represented by county capitals – except for Tulcea – with a share of 19%. Chart no. 6 shows the phenomenon of the distribution of very young tourists broken down by areas of tourist interest.

There is no data related to the presence of tourists in rural areas, in spite of the fact that many villages have a rich tourism potential and hold hostels that operate as private camps.

Only 9% of the number of tourists accommodating units for pupils and preschool children are found in spa resorts, and only 3% are in the Danube Delta. It should be recognized, however, that this distribution is closely related (even if there are some differences) to the distribution of the accommodation capacity.

The number of overnight stays – there is a better evolution during the period of 1990-1996, followed by a period of decline in the later period, more significant in 1998 and between 2002 and 2005. In absolute terms, there is practically a dramatic drop in the number of overnight stays - that rank nearly 15 times lower values (from almost 3 million overnight stays in 1991 – 2,905,506 to less than 200,000 overnight stays – 194,241 – in 2016. The situation is similar in relative terms also (in terms of the percentage of total overnight stays in accommodation units in Romania); so from a share of over 10% in 1996, the share dropped below 1% (0.8%) in 2016 (Figure 5).

Consequently, a decrease of more than 10 times in relative terms was noticed (as a weight in total overnight stays in accommodation units in Romania). The lack of financial resources of pupils and the small number of scholarships granted make their stay in classified tourist units a much reduced one. There is also no system of subsidizing tourist packages directed at this category of people, especially those who are engaged in different forms of education. Boarding places in free camps are much reduced in amount and are granted under certain restrictive conditions. One or two facilities are provided only until the age of 12, provided that the young children are accompanied by their family.

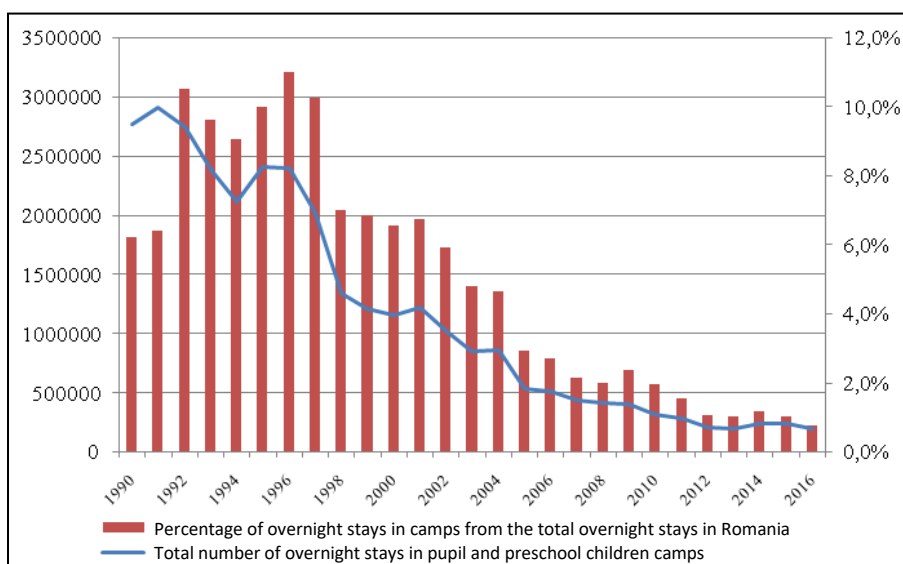


Figure 5. The evolution of the number of overnight stays in camps for pupils and preschools (1990-2016)

Source: National Institute of Statistics, processed data.

It is interesting to keep track of the distribution by type of tourists (both Romanians and foreigners). For this class of tourists, data are only available from 2006 onwards. As expected,

until 2013 there is a quasi-presumption of Romanian tourists (over 99% of the overnight stays being recorded on the account of Romanian tourists). However, starting with 2014, there is a slight increase in the share of foreign tourists who account for almost 5% of the total overnight stays. In absolute terms, over 9,000 overnight stays of foreign tourists (9,209) are recorded in 2016 (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Distribution of the number of overnight stays in camps for pupils and preschools by types of tourists (2006-2016)

Source: National Institute of Statistics, processed data.

A strong seasonality for July and August can also be highlighted, with season limits being June and September. The other months of the year are obviously off-season months, with a fairly low volume of overnight stays. On average, over the analyzed period of 2010-2016, for which data are available, more than half of the overnight stays are recorded during the peak season - a cumulated period of July and August (Figure 7).

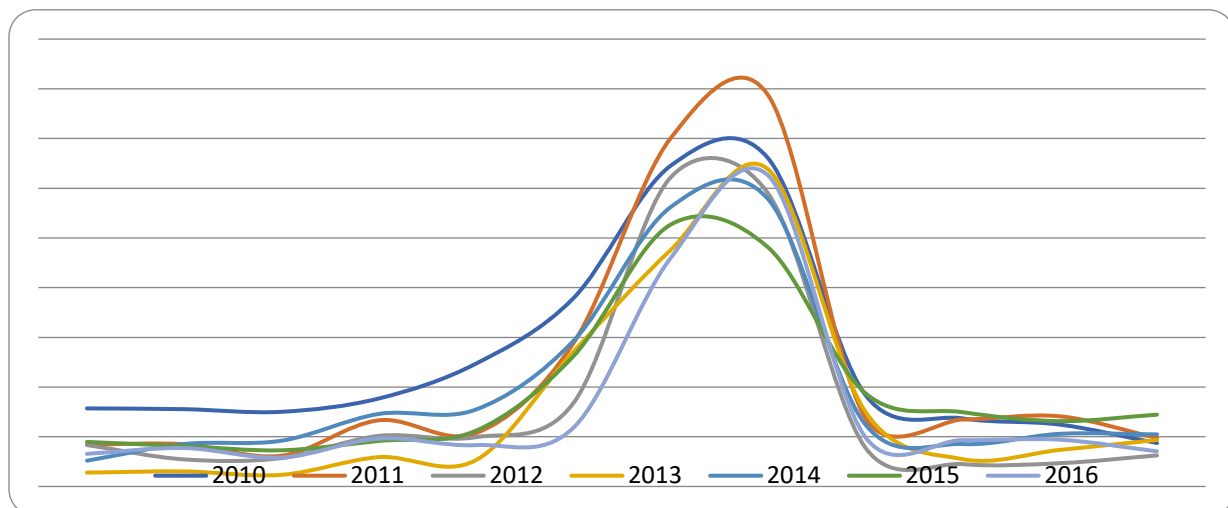


Figure 7. Distribution of overnight stays in pupils and preschool camps by months (2010-2016)

Source: National Institute of Statistics, processed data.

It was impossible that *the duration of the stay* as an indicator that reflects the relationship between overnight stays and arrivals would not experience the same significant decline. Thus, this indicator drops from 11 days in 1990, to a little more than four days in 2016 (a practically a reduction by two-and-a-half times). In fact, it should be noted the accelerated decline in the duration of the stay between 1990 and 2000, followed by a somewhat oscillatory evolution between 2001 and 2016, when the duration of the stay did not oscillate too much, preserving its value above the four-day level, but below the five-day one (Figure 8).

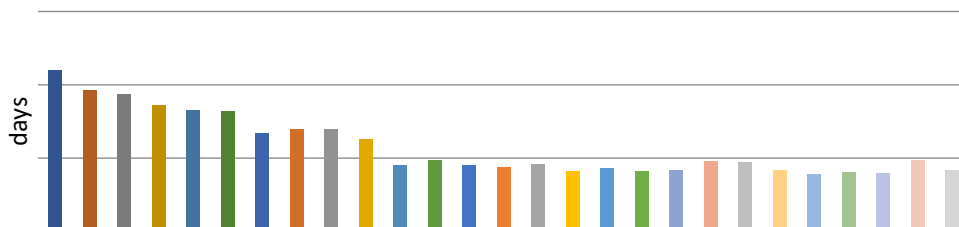


Figure 8. Length of stay in camps for pupils and preschool (1990-2016)

Source: National Institute of Statistics, processed data.

It is important to note that in general the duration of the stay in pupil and preschool children camps is higher than the length of stay at the level of accommodation units (reaching the value of 2.3 days in 2016). This is due to the specificity of this form of tourism which involves a longer period of stay, being also linked to the length of the school holiday period, that is higher than that of a holiday from work.

The occupancy rate is another important indicator as to how much are accommodation units used. Except for the years 1992 and 1996, during the analyzed period (i.e. 1992-2016, for which data are available), the occupancy rate in pupils and preschool children camps was generally lower than that recorded for all accommodation units (Figure no. 9).

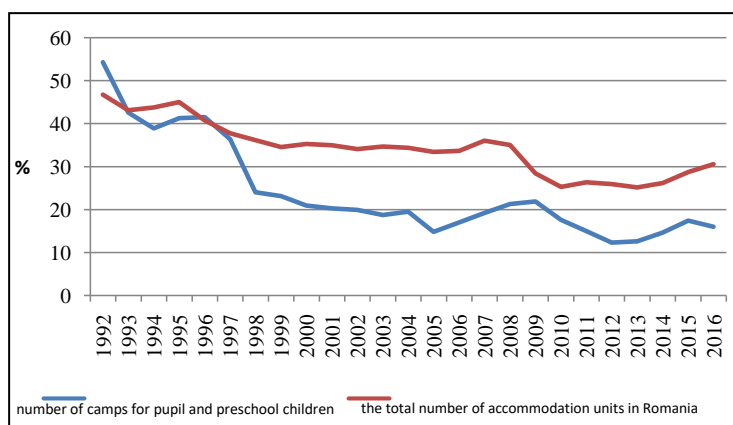


Figure 9. Evolution of the occupancy rate in camps of pupils and preschools compared to total Romania (1992-2016)

Source: National Institute of Statistics, processed data.

From a level of above 50%, starting with 1997, the occupancy rate of pupil and preschool children camps drops below 30%, and starting with 2010, it drops to less than 20%. The occupancy rate variation across all accommodation units is somewhat lower, and has risen in recent years and slightly exceeds 30%. The same cannot be said about the occupancy rate in pupil and preschool children camps that has started to feature fluctuations since 2010, the values recorded being below the 20% threshold.

Statistical Connections for Establishing the Development of Tourism Directed at Children

The comparative analysis of demographic and tourist data shows that a very small percentage of pre-school children and pupils are sent to camps by parents (Table 1). This phenomenon decreases every two to three years and becomes more and more accentuated. The reason for this is the increase in poverty among families with more than one child, but also the lack of confidence to leave children in the care and responsibility of foreigners. In addition, there is a tendency for children to be overprotected by parents who have a better income.

Another explanation consists in the fact that the duration of the stay in these camps is up to seven days and most include four to five days, and this incurs relatively high costs for families with several children. For a certain category of young people, the authorities offer the possibility of spending a free holiday in one of the summer camps in Romania. There are nearly 300 boarding places available.

Table 1. Determination of the degree of participation of preschools and pupils in the program of camps in Romania

Year	Total population in Romania *	5-9 years	10-14 years	15-19 years	Total population of preschools and pupils	% of the total population	Number of tourists arrived	Preschoolers and pupils % of total
2002	21675775	1146024	1569875	1634322	4350221	20,06	223172	5,13
2003	21574365	1140407	1551061	1627760	4319228	20,02	193901	4,48
2004	21451845	1133605	1527552	1621585	4282742	19,96	183368	4,28
2005	21319673	1123577	1452664	1551570	4127811	19,33	127700	3,09
2006	21193749	1113906	1383531	1476252	3973689	18,74	117720	2,96
2007	20882980	1094178	1305076	1384855	3784109	18,12	105659	2,79
2008	20537848	1069805	1169551	1228238	3467594	16,08	97578	2,81
2009	20367437	1059143	1102014	1140809	3301966	16,21	84414	2,55
2010	20246798	1055894	1095101	1120135	3271130	16,15	65528	2,00
2011	20147657	1055782	1092151	1106819	3254752	16,15	65720	2,01
2012	20060182	1058078	1085580	1096839	3240497	16,15	51183	1,57
2013	19988694	1062299	1072924	1089489	3224712	16,13	47822	1,48
2014	19916451	1068457	1061388	1084669	3214514	16,13	58774	1,82
2015	19819697	1065716	1052183	1082404	3200303	16,14	46504	1,45
2016	19706529	1049007	1049871	1079165	3178043	16,12	44705	1,40

Source: National Institute of Statistics, 2017, processed data.

The Offer Provided by the Camps in Romania

Before 1990 and for another two decades, youth tourism was run under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and Instruction. According to the Law no. 1/2011 of National Education, as amended and supplemented: "the State grants prizes, scholarships, boarding places in camps and other such incentives to pupils and students who have proven a rich school and university performance, as well as outstanding results in their professional education or training, or in cultural and sports activities".

Starting with 2011, the Ministry of Youth and Sports is responsible for the issue of granting the boarding places in camps (Youth Act No. 350 of 2006). There are also social camps for pupils that are organized during school holidays, camps for disabled students and university students, where they can be joined by their personal assistants and by their professionalized personal assistants. But the allocated budgets are low and do not cope with existing requirements.

At present, the organization of camps is under the authority of the Ministry of Youth and Sport that owns the leisure facilities. It is responsible for organizing several types of camps, namely:

Rest camps – include the highest number of boarding places. They are patronized by the County Department for Sport and Youth in each county. The duration of a camp is of 7 days, and the camps start on the 21st of June and end on the 15th of September.

Social camps – consist of mini-holidays of 6 days, which are organized both in locations owned by MTS, as well as in private guest houses accredited by MTS. There are 4,600 boarding places in these locations, where students who benefit from social scholarships and foster children can go for free. Students, or, as the case may be, accompanying staff may apply for receiving these scholarships at the Department for Sport and Youth in their county. Students will be selected depending on the general average obtained in the latest completed school year (the highest average ensures the highest priority for receiving the scholarship).

Thematic camps – cover 3,000 boarding places. Depending on their abilities and preferences, students will contact the Department for Sport and Youth in their county, where their home is, or the Department in the county where the camp will take place. Accommodation, meals and transport are covered by state funds, and recreational activities are free of charge.

National camps – are dedicated to students with outstanding results in a particular field or who are involved in extracurricular activities. More than 50 national and thematic camps are organized in areas such as journalism, painting, and survival techniques. More than 2,500 beneficiaries are provided with a large share of the money amounts that cover accommodation, meals and courses delivered according to the theme of the camp. A camp series extends over 7 days.

Olympic camps – offer only 400 free boarding places in seaside areas, for one week, for students who have participated in national and international competitions.

"Young talents" camps – offer only 200 boarding places for young people with artistic skills - poetry, dancing, vocal and instrumental music, painting, sculpture, modeling, etc.

Beneficiaries of social camps that took place during the summer holiday of 2017 received 50% of students from families whose average monthly income per family member was below 50% of the gross minimum wage obtained in the economy. The remaining 50% are students who benefit from a special protection measure established under Law 272/2004 on the Protection

and Promotion of the Rights of the Child, republished, as amended and supplemented (<http://mts.ro/tabere/2017>).

If the number of students who would like to participate in these camps is higher than the number of approved positions, than the pupils will be selected based on the following criteria: the general average obtained in the latest completed school year, sports performance, and artistic performances. Priority will be given to students who have never benefited from a social camp scholarship before.

Institutions dealing with the participation of students with social problems in these camps are the County Departments of Youth and Sport who work with the School Inspectorates in each county for the preparation of the files needed for establishing the beneficiaries of the camps. The Social Assistance and Child Protection Departments take over the files and approve them within the limits of the available boarding places. Therefore, the bureaucratic chain is large and many parents give up such an approach because of this reason. The number of places is very small; in social camps, for institutionalized children, there are 4,600 boarding places, while in camps for disabled children there are 1,600 boarding places for mini-holidays of 6 days.

For example, in 2017, at the seaside, in Constanta County, there were only 57 boarding places for students with social problems, and only 236 boarding places in camps for disabled people.

Also, children and youth from Child Protection Centres in each county can take part in camps. In other counties, the number varies from 25 to 75 boarding places, depending on how many recreational centres exist.

Since 2015, there has been established a training action for young volunteers who are willing to work in child camps under the patronage of religious organizations, especially Orthodox ones. This is a series of four to five day courses for acquiring practical skills in organizing a camp programme and specific camp activities; it also involves acquiring methods of working with children, adolescents, and young people who are placed in various situations, and focusing on developing the concept of a community camp.

An initiative that should be extended to each county is that of children's health camps. The Healthy Camp for Overweight Children (initiated in 2010), is organized annually in Straja Mountain Resort in Gorj County, and was one of the offers of Romania at the World Travel Market held in London, that took place on 6-8 November 2017.

Conclusions

Although worldwide more and more companies and destinations are directing their efforts to the area of tourism for children and youth in order to diversify their mix of clients, this segment, accounting for 20% of international travel, shows an amazing resistance to economic crises and natural disasters. The phenomenon is exactly the opposite in our country.

In 2002, in Romania, about 5.13% of the total number of preschool children and pupils participated in this kind of tourism, while in 2016, this kind of tourism reached a value of 1.40%, representing a decrease of four times, which is quite significant.

This approach shows that there are no initiatives related to the diversification of camps aimed at children and pupils and for expanding the formulas to obtain new funding for these camps. Therefore, a series of initiatives should be taken on by the responsible factors, namely:

- Granting of tax incentives, tax and contribution cuts for companies involved in the field of tourism, but also in other economic areas that support the organization of camps for the youngest of tourists;
- Diversifying the themes of camps to further encourage creativity and innovation among children – aeronautics and ship replica building camps, equestrian and light sports camps; gastronomy camps and camps dedicated to the discovery of nature; camps dedicated to fishing and water sports; linguistic camps for learning foreign languages; camps where survival and adventure techniques are learned; astronomy and celestial space oriented camps; camps dedicated to the cinema and to videos and comics; camps related to music and dances; theatre and role play camps; camps where DIY activities are thought and so on;
- Increasing the number of available boarding places in camps directed at children and students, by encouraging private initiatives in this respect;
- Developing public-private partnerships in rural and periurban areas in order to set up new camps or to modernize existing ones.

All statistic data related to the tourist activity that took place in pupil and preschool children camps in Romania has witnessed a considerable decline over the last 27 years. Of course, demographic causes have certain causality, but we must not neglect the lack of investments and the obsolete accommodation facilities as they can directly cause the restriction of the tourist activity with negative consequences in the formation of the children's personality and their later professional orientation.

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