

Aspects of tourism activity in Maramureş County between 1990 – 2022

Aspects de l'activité touristique dans le département de Maramureş entre 1990 – 2022

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ABSTRACT: The major objective of this study is focused on identifying the trend of the main tourist indicators in Maramureş county between 1990 and 2022. A subsequent objective is to find viable and implementable solutions to boost tourism. Geographical analysis and statistical processing methods were used, and the cartographic method. We found a remarkable increase in the number of tourist arrivals and overnight stays during the period analysed, as well as a reorientation of tourists' preferences in terms of types of accommodation structures during the studied period. To improve the temporal dynamics of the analyzed tourist indicators, it is necessary to increase the visibility of the Maramureş tourist destination by creating a logo that illustrates all the elements that give it uniqueness and attractiveness. Such a logo and a representative slogan was developed in this study, based on the specific elements of tourism in Maramureş.

KEY WORDS: Maramureş, tourism trends, tourism infrastructure, natural factors, logo, accessibility.

RÉSUMÉ: L'objectif principal de cette étude est d'identifier l'évolution des principaux indicateurs touristiques dans le comté de Maramureş entre 1990 et 2022. Un objectif ultérieur est de trouver des solutions viables et réalisables pour stimuler le tourisme. Des méthodes d'analyse géographique et de traitement statistique ont été utilisées, et la méthode cartographique. Nous avons constaté une augmentation remarquable du nombre d'arrivées touristiques et du nombre de nuitées au cours de la période analysée, ainsi qu'une réorientation des préférences des touristes concernant les types de structures d'hébergement au cours de l'intervalle de temps étudié. Pour améliorer la dynamique temporelle des indicateurs touristiques analysés, il est nécessaire d'augmenter la visibilité de la destination touristique Maramureş en créant un logo qui illustre tous les éléments qui lui confèrent un caractère unique et attractif. Un logo et un slogan représentatifs ont été créés dans le cadre de cette étude, à partir des éléments spécifiques du tourisme dans le Maramureş.

MOTS-CLÉS: Maramureş, tendances touristiques, infrastructure touristique, facteurs naturels, logo, accessibilité.

1. Introduction

Our study analyzes the dynamics of the main tourist indicators in Maramureş County between 1990 and 2022 in order to outline the image of the tourist phenomenon and to identify viable and implementable solutions to boost tourism. Ancient settlement (Alexandru Filipaşcu, 1997), this area, surrounded by the Maramureş, Oaş, Gutâiului, Țibleş and Rodnei Mountains, has developed and incorporated over centuries traditions, customs, occupations, stories and legends transmitted at the beginning by word of mouth from one generation to the next, until today. The mix of geographical, historical and cultural features of Maramureş County have led to the creation of tourist products that bear the mark of the place (wooden churches, wood carving, traditions, customs, folklore, ethnographic heritage).

The tourist guides written by Bandula (1971) and Nădişan et al. (1980), the sights presented in the monograph of Maramureş County by Posea et al. (1980), the wooden churches (Wendt et al., 2018), outline an extensive list of tourist attractions in this county. The elements that make up the Maramureş tourist dowry are numerous. Maramureş presents itself as a vast cultural ensemble in the open air (Cristea G., Dăncuş M., 2000), with a unique geographical setting as its material support, which has given it its identity, as well as numerous traditions (Pop, 1970; Ster, 1979). Woodcraft is the core of the development of authentic Maramureş. The way in which it is processed is presented in the work of Nistor (1983) and in the work "Judeţele Patriei" (1980). The legends about Maramureş which contribute to the cultural specificity of this county, arousing tourists' curiosity to visit those places, were collected and presented by Rîpă (1976) and Hossu-Longin (1989).

People visit Maramureş, attracted by the culture and preservation of ancestral values. The modernism of the present day puts its mark on the geography and culture of the places and disrupts the harmony between the elements that defined the traditional tourist and cultural framework of Maramureş (Ilieş et al., 2008; Ştef , 2013; Catrina, 2016; Simion et al., 2018).

The accessibility of tourist destinations plays a key role in the development of any form of tourism, including rural tourism. Communication routes to tourist destinations connect places of interest and direct tourist flows (Wendt et al., 2021). Tourist routes and trails need to be promoted (Gheorghiu, 1975), always upgraded and properly marked. The tourism indicators used by us in this study are validated in a number of previous studies (Hontuş et al., 2012; Giambaşu et al., 2016; Popescu et al., 2017). The development of tourism in Maramureş County cannot be achieved in the absence of a tourism brand (Ilieş et al., 2015). It represents practically the region's business card, summarizing the tourist specifics of the place.

The main purpose of this study is to capture the trend of tourist indicators in Maramureş County between 1990 and 2022 based on statistical data quantifying tourist flows and the state of the tourist accommodation infrastructure, in relation to the natural geographic framework.

The study objectives:

The major objective of this study is focused on identifying the trend of the main tourist indicators in Maramureş county between 1990 and 2022, in relation to their determining factors (the natural setting with its specificities, the demographic and socio-economic setting, etc.)

A subsequent objective is to find viable and implementable solutions to boost tourism by designing an attractive tourist logo.

2. Study area

The study area is located in the northern part of Romania. It covers an area of 6215 km² (Posea et al., 1980). To the north, and for a significant part of the eastern part, the Tisa river is the natural border of Maramureş county, beyond which the neighbouring country, Ukraine, stretches. In the south-east it borders Suceava county, followed to the south by Bistriţa-Năşăud, Cluj and Sălaj counties. In the west, Maramureş county borders Satu Mare county (Figure 1).

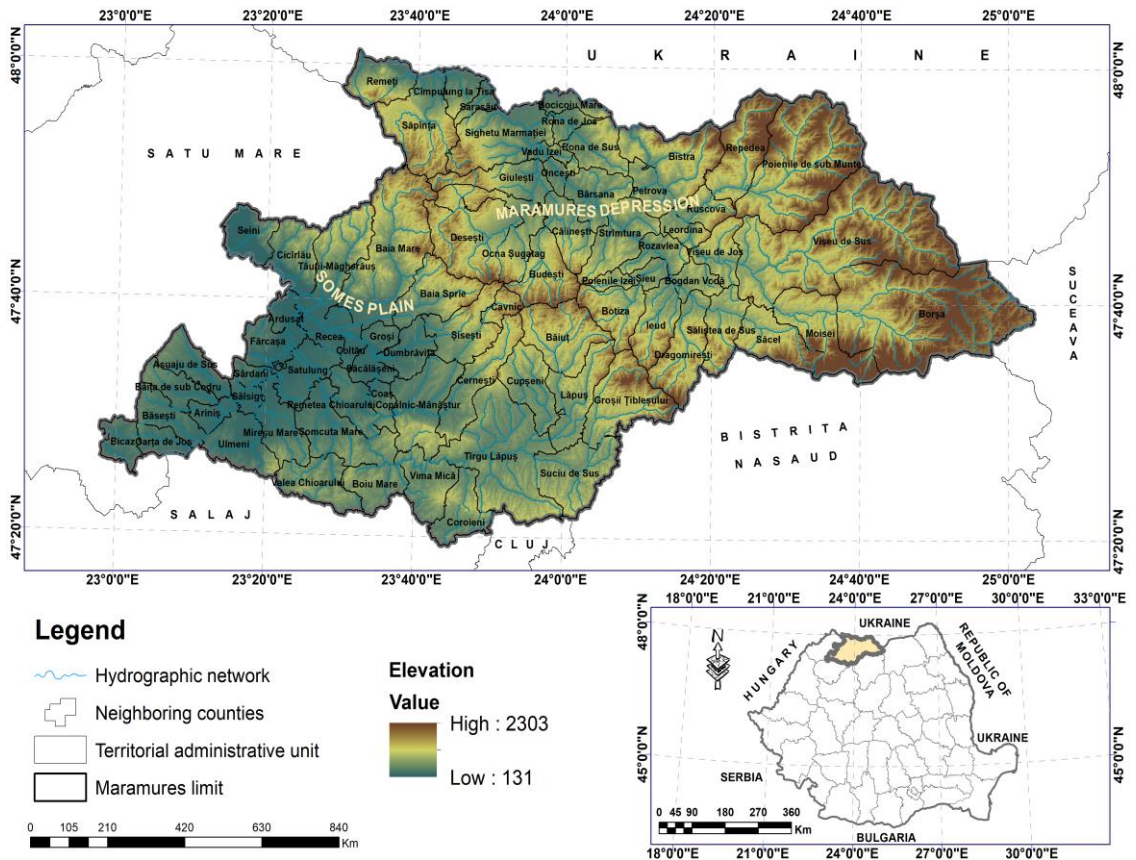


Figure 1 Geographical location of Maramureş County within Romania and its neighbours.

From a relief point of view (Figure 2), the studied area is part of the Maramureş and Bucovina Carpathians mountain group, with altitudes ranging from 131 m to 2303 m.

Altitude values generally increase from west to east (Figure 1). The highest mountain massifs are Rodna, Maramureş Gutâi and Țibleş (Retegan et al., 1980). These mountain peaks surround the Maramureş Depression, drained by the Vişeu and Iza rivers, tributaries of the Tisei river. Numerous forms and types of (volcanic to fluvial and glacial) relief are encountered.

The petrographic diversity is remarkable, with magmatic rocks dominating in the volcanic mountains, crystalline rocks in the Rodna and Maramureş Mountains, and sedimentary rocks in the Maramureş Depression and Someş Plain.



Figure 2 Overview of the Rodna Mountains, photographed from the Prislop Pass. Source: personal archive.

The layered climate imposes vegetation layering and diversification of natural landscapes, which have been anthropized to varying degrees over time (Mihăilă et al., 2021).

3. Methods

Our study is based on a statistical analysis of tourism indicators, including public data taken from the website of the National Institute of Statistics of Romania (Tempo Online), which are processed in order to highlight the trends of tourism infrastructure indicators and tourist flows.

The method of analysis of the selected indicators is comparative for two time frames: 1990 and 2022. These two years were chosen for the analysis because many aspects related to the specifics of tourism activity have changed between the two time points.

The raw statistical data were modelled, analysed and compared in order to obtain the most realistic information possible on the changes in tourism indicators between 1990 and 2022. Both geographic analysis methods (which involved visits over time to the area studied, through on-site observations, consolidating the framework image of the geography of the place) and statistical processing, using one of the specific programs for analysing data strings (Microsoft Excel 2021) were used.

In addition to the above means, methods and data, in order to provide a clearer picture of what was observed, the synthetic information was represented using the cartographic method. In order to create maps with reference to the distribution of numbers indicating tourism indicators, we

used the method of representation by sized circles. All the presented maps were made with the ArcGIS software, version 10.7.1.

The creation of the logo presented in this study sums up the defining components of the analysis area. For example, to sketch a logo of this space, a conceptual image was used that is already in a high proportion known by potential visitors.

The most famous elements of the Maramureş area are: the carved wooden gates, the churches with the highest roofs in the country, cetera, the specific folk costume and the merry cemetery in Săpânța (Simion et al., 2018).

After establishing this logo, the next step is to apply an appropriate and useful marketing policy to be presented to as many people as possible. We are witnessing the technological evolution, and the implementation of technology in the promotion of the desired element considerably reduces the efforts to spread the information. With the help of the Internet, the spread of information is growing exponentially. For tourism promotion, the Internet represents a great real advantage (Moisuc et al., 2011). The logo designed by us hopes to help promote this place rich in tourist resources. When creating the logo proposed by us, we used the Microsoft PowerPoint 2021 application.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. The elements that define the geographical framework of Maramureş and that give it tourist appeal. Tourist indicators related to the accommodation base and tourist flows

4.1.1. The geographical framework of Maramureş. Diversity and specificity

The geographic framework supports all tourism activities and the infrastructural elements on which they are based. At the same time, certain elements of the geographical setting have a high tourism potential and are exploited for tourism purposes. Analysis of Figure 3 helps us to easily observe two elements of the natural environment that directly favour or disfavour tourist activity.

The first natural factor is the relief. Within the study area the relief is varied in typology and shape. With an altitude of more than 1900 metres (Maramureşului Mountains), the north-eastern part is more difficult to access, more massive and less fragmented. In this area, the construction of tourist accommodation structures is difficult, being directly influenced by the morphology of the place. Certainly, the massiveness of the relief is also attractive, and local entrepreneurs have found ways of providing suitable accommodation, even if the mountain limits the space available for construction and makes investment more expensive.

The second natural factor of significant importance is the waterways that flow through Maramureş County. The river terraces favour the accessibility of the access routes, a primordial aspect in directing tourist flows.

The whole of Maramureş county configures a space with varied resources (clean, oxygenated waters, rapids, mineral springs, salty springs, unique agro-pastoral and forestry landscapes, valuable faunal elements, etc.) that support economic activities in general, and on those in the tourism sphere in particular. Prospects for tourism development in this area are particularly promising, the most representative form of tourism being agritourism due to the existing resources.

From the point of view of the demographic component, an important indicator for our study is represented by the number of the population. The figures presented on Tempo Online show a decrease in the population of Maramureş County.

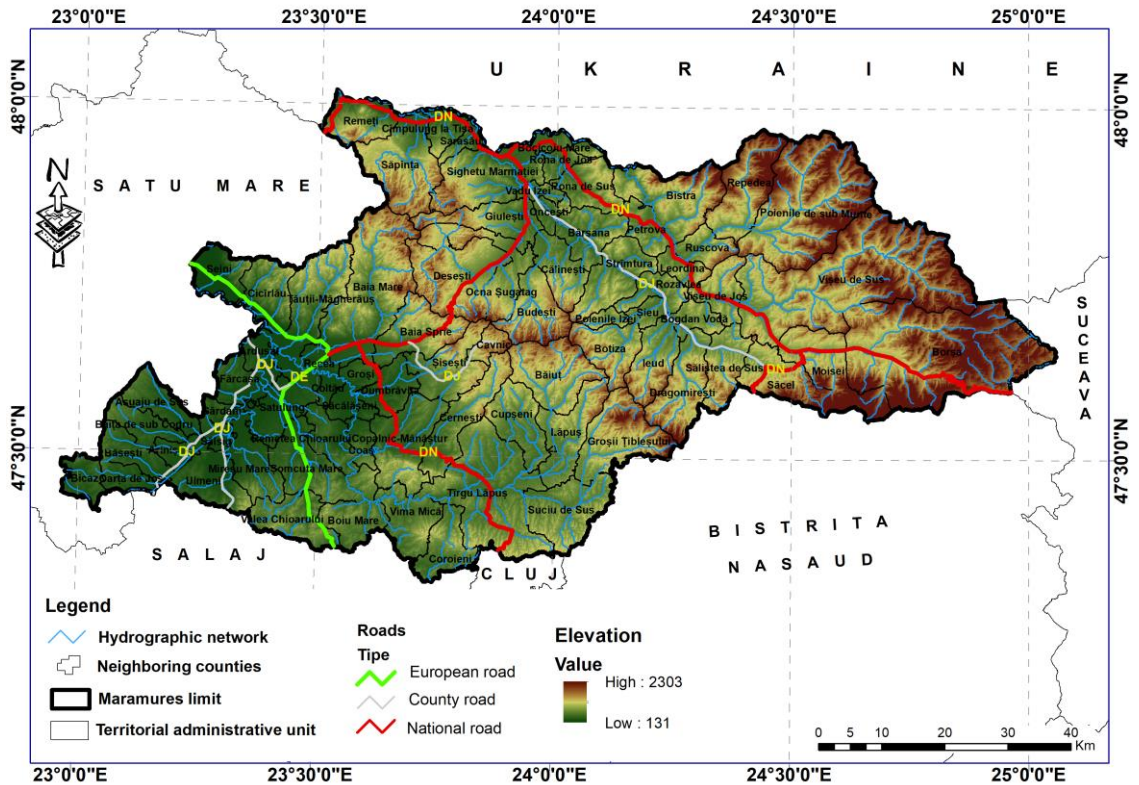


Figure 3 Representative elements of the natural (the relief) and anthropic (county boundaries, the network of roads and settlements) geographical setting with importance in the tourism activities of this county.

In 1992, the county had a total of 554,896 inhabitants by residence. Gradually, the figures maintained the downward trend, and in 2010 a number of 534,365 inhabitants were recorded. This decrease was maintained, and at the beginning of 2024 the total number of registered inhabitants was 509,343. The distribution of the population according to the area of origin represents another important aspect in what a tourism analysis consisted of. Most of the inhabitants of Maramureș county live in the urban environment, the figures proving this aspect (in 1992, there were 295,728 inhabitants, at the level of 2010, there were 323,205, and at the beginning of 2024, there were 301,436). The differences compared to the rural environment are not discrepant (259,168 inhabitants in 1992, 211,160 inhabitants in 2010 and 207,907 at the beginning of 2024).

4.1.2. Indicators regarding accommodation structures and tourist capacity in Maramureș County in the period 1990 - 2022

A major factor influencing the location of accommodation and other tourist facilities is the morphology of the area. The accommodation base for tourists coming to Maramureș county is distributed territorially according to the tourist offer of the natural and anthropic environment. Entrepreneurs in the tourism sector must take these aspects into account when building a new accommodation or catering facility. The location of tourist accommodation close to tourist attractions is an advantage both for tourists in terms of time and transport savings, and for the accommodation establishment, as it increases its visibility when the tourist chooses the establishment.

The time pattern of the indicator expressing accommodation capacity is closely related to the number of tourist accommodation facilities. From the analysis carried out we have observed an increase in the number of accommodation beds directly proportional to the increase in the number of accommodation units.

Comparing the data presented in Figure 4 and Figure 5, we can see that in 2022, the accommodation capacity has increased especially in the localities with the highest tourist attractiveness: Baia Mare, a tourist resort of national interest and administrative residence of the county, Sighetu Marmăției, Vișeu de Sus, Borșa (localities with a strong tourist potential due to their natural setting and anthropic attractions) and Ocna Șugatag (balneoclimatic resort known for its chlorosodic waters used to treat rheumatic, locomotor apparatus, peripheral nervous system, respiratory and gynaecological diseases).

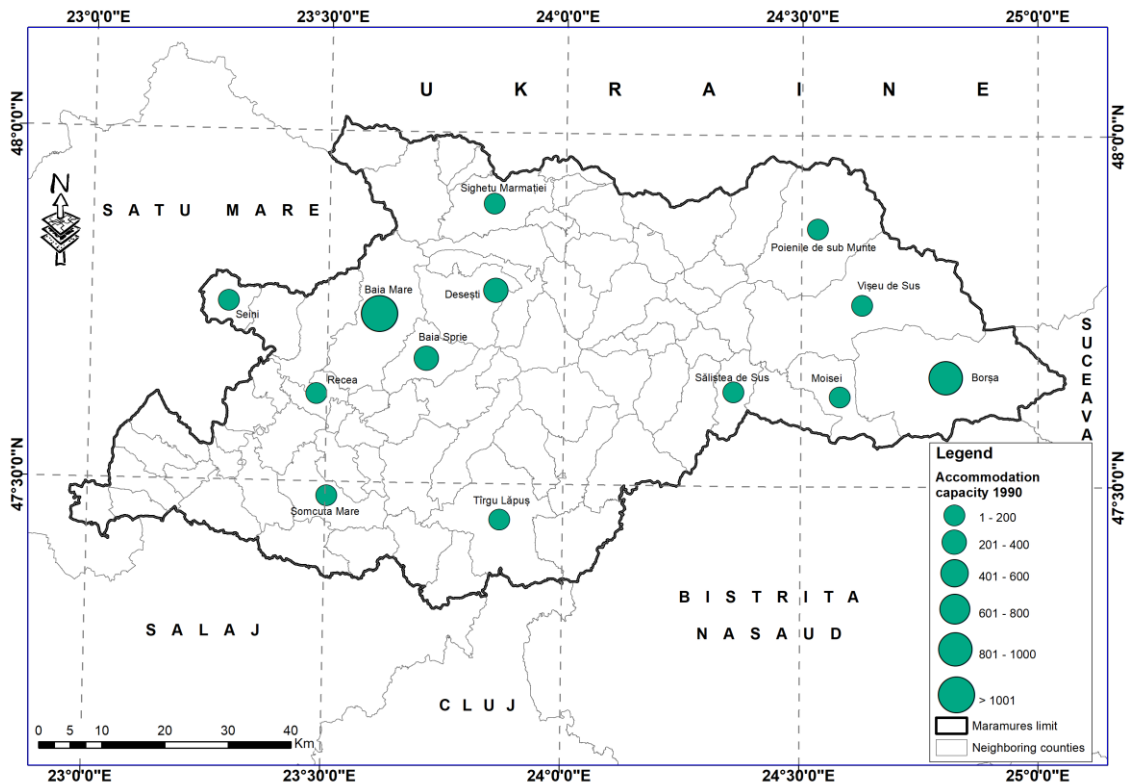


Figure 4 Tourist accommodation capacity in Maramureș county, by TAU (Territorial Administrative Unit), in 1990. Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

The data presented confirm the growth trends in accommodation capacities that these localities with tourist potential have registered over the 32 years. Certainly, in addition to the positive aspects of tourism in Maramureș, through proper destination management, the less developed or forgotten aspects will improve the tourism prospects of the region.

With the help of Figure 6, we have represented for the most important tourist destinations in Maramureș, the variation of accommodation capacities. Baia Mare is by far the first place for the accommodation capacity indicator in Maramureș, with remarkable figures during the years analysed (1521 beds in 1990, 2595 beds in 1995, 2212 beds in 2020 and 2298 beds in 2023).

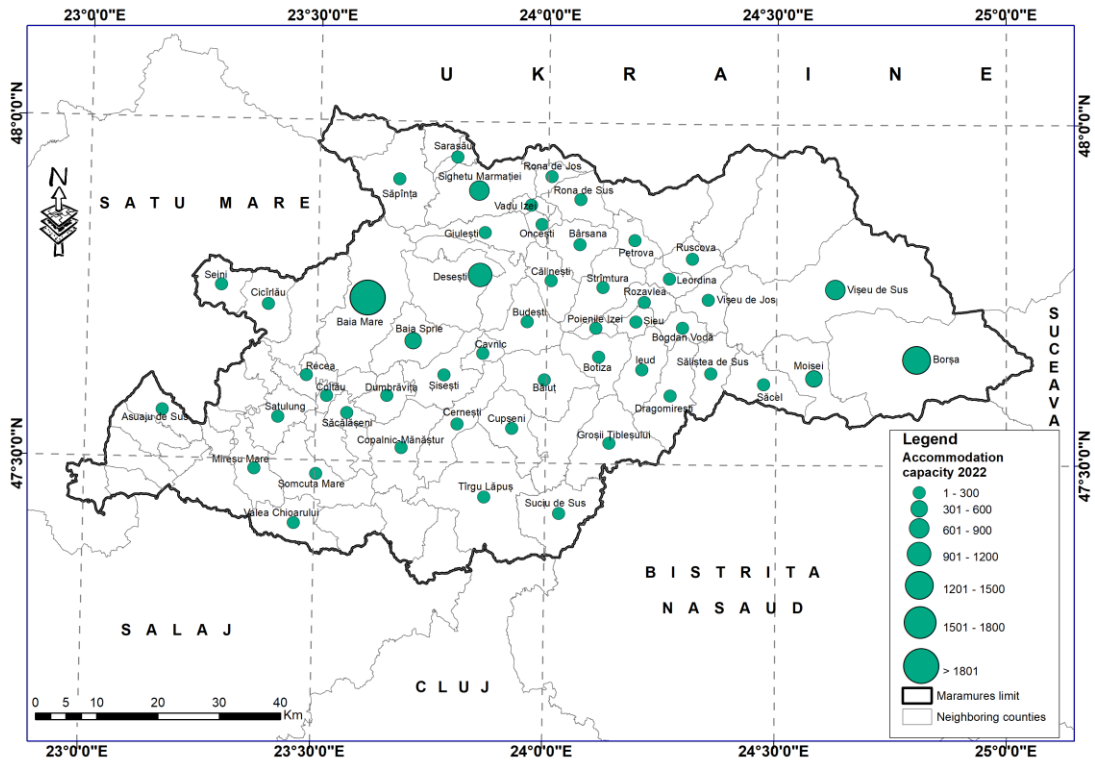


Figure 5 Tourist accommodation capacity in Maramureş county, by TAU (Territorial administrative unit), in 2022. Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

Borșa is the second destination in the analysed ranking. This town, like the others analysed, has seen fluctuations over time in terms of accommodation capacity (from 805 beds in 1990, to 192 in 1995, to 393 in 2010, to 623 in 2020 and a remarkable jump of 1465 beds in 2023). Ocna Şugatag is another locality with a high accommodation capacity compared to the other localities of Maramureş county. From the indicator analysed, we note the unequivocal evolution for the study period (from 290 beds in 1990 to 1242 in 2023).

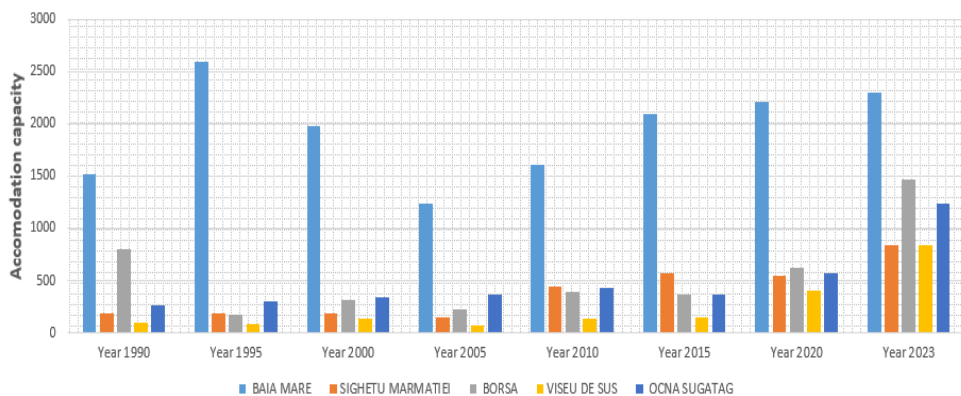


Figure 6 Accommodation capacity dynamics, from 5 to 5 years, for the most important tourist destinations in Maramureş. Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

Other localities with a significant increase in accommodation capacity are Sighetu Marmăției and Vișeu de Sus. Analyzing this statistical information, we can conclude that, in the analyzed period, there was a change in the economic dynamics of Maramureș County, with the tourist industry gaining more economic importance.

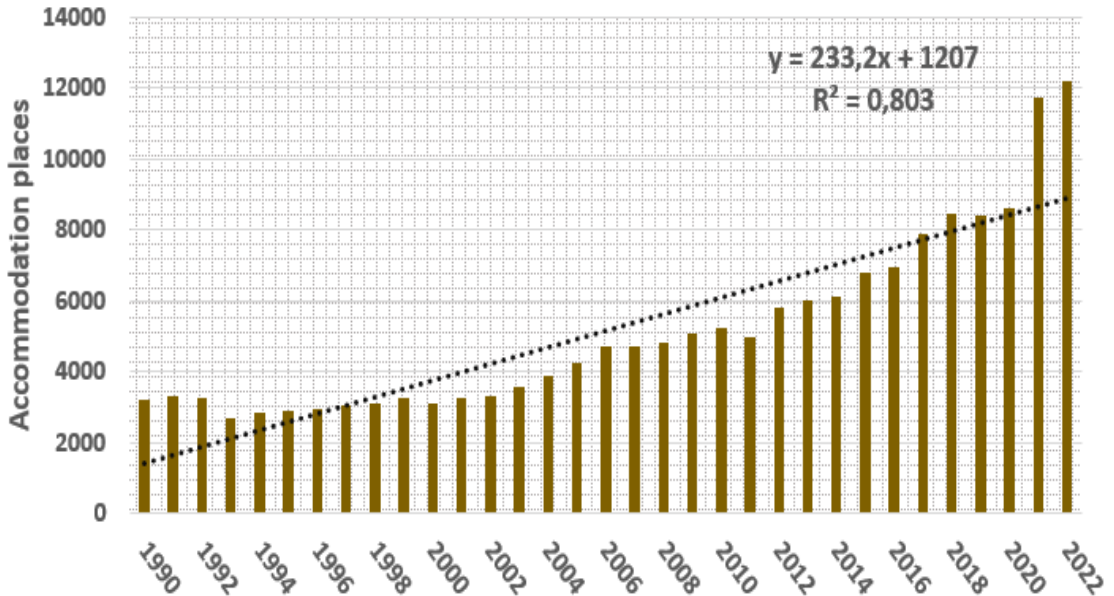


Figura 7 Number of accommodation beds covered in the period 1990-2022. Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

The confirmation of the evolution of the indicator is also supported by the data in figure 7. Thus, in 1990 a number of 3213 beds were registered, and in 2022 the number of beds rose to 12201.

In terms of the number of accommodation structures, this indicator showed a clear increase over the period analysed. A positive aspect of what this signal means for the tourist activity in the area analysed is represented in Figure 8. We can observe an upward trend of this indicator in all localities where such structures are found. The differences between the two time frames are quite remarkable, which confirms the increasing attractiveness of Maramureș among tourists.

The data in Figure 8 shows a remarkable increase in the number of accommodation units in Ocna Șugatag (70 accommodation structures in 2022, compared to only 2 accommodation units in 1990). The Ocna Șugatag balneoclimatic resort is visited by thousands of tourists every year (5792 arrivals in 2001, 6617 arrivals in 2010, 15251 arrivals in 2022), its attractiveness being due to the salt water, and the location near tourist attractions such as the Bârsana Monastery, the Mocănița from Vișeu de Sus, the Merry Cemetery of Săpânța, the Memorial of the Victims of Communism and Resistance in Sighetul Marmăției, the Maramureșean Village Museum in Sighetul Marmăției.

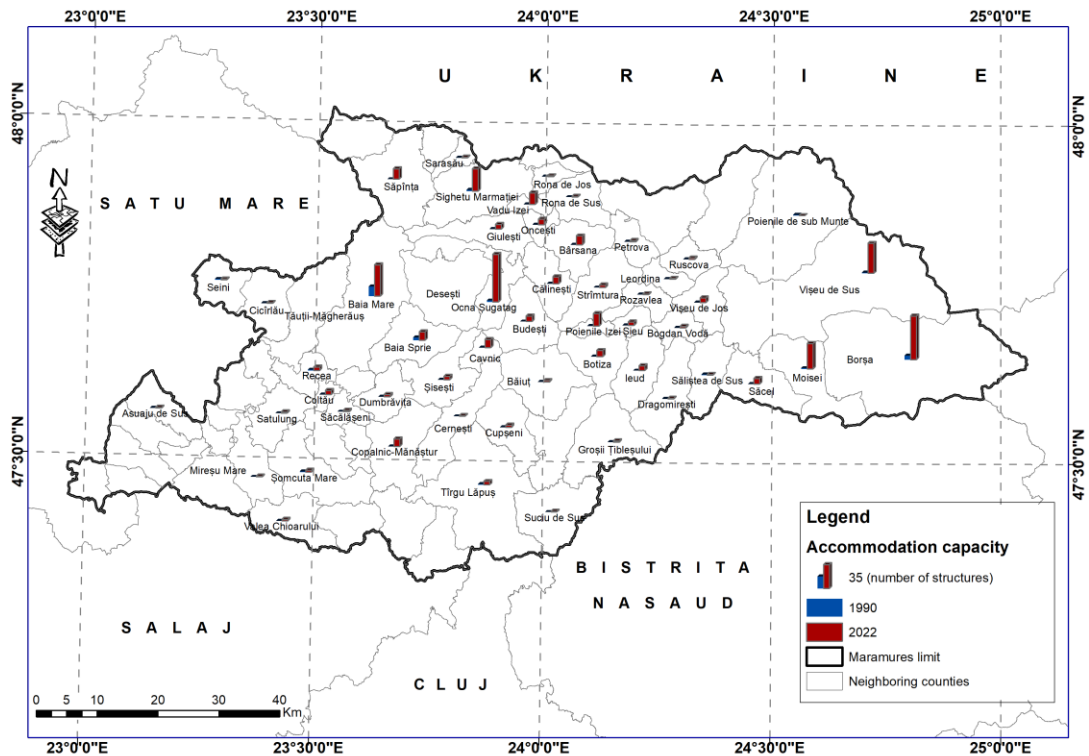


Figure 8 Dynamics of accommodation structures in Maramureș County between 1990 and 2022. Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

Significant increases in the number of accommodation units were also recorded in Borșa (64 accommodation structures in 2022, compared to 6 units in 1990), Baia Mare (46 accommodation structures in 2022, compared to 14 existing in 1990) and Vișeu de Sus (44 accommodation structures in 2022, compared to only one accommodation structure registered in 1990).

4.1.3. The most used types of accommodation in Maramureș. Comparison 1990-2022

At the level of 1990, Maramureș county was in a phase of reorganization, transition, reconstruction and change of tourism infrastructure. Tourists' preferences in terms of types of accommodation chosen were different in the 1970s and 1990s. The most widespread tourist accommodation spaces in the analyzed area were agro-tourist guesthouses in 1990. In second place in the preferences of the time were tourist lodges. Both agritourism guesthouses and lodges were developed in this area due to the existing resources of building materials. The raw materials used, mainly wood and rock, are the riches of the natural environment of Maramureș. Only some traditional resorts, such as Borșa, Sighetu Marmăției, Baia Mare had tourist hotels and villas (Figure 9). In 2022, according to Figure 10, the types of accommodation preferred by tourists were different from those in 1990, with small exceptions for hotels. Apartments and rooms for rent, the types of accommodation most commonly used by tourists today, have emerged. Another type of accommodation used is the tourist pension, but this does not have a layout that covers all the tourist areas of the county. Tourist pensions are found in the two municipalities Baia Mare and Sighetu Marmăției, but also in the following towns: Baia Sprie, Borșa, Cavnic, Seini, Șomcuta Mare, Târgu Lăpuș, Tăuții-Măgherauș and Vișeu de Sus. In the Maramureș countryside there are no tourist pensions, only agrotourism ones. According to the data available on the website of the

National Institute of Statistics of Romania (Tempo Online), in 2022, the number of agrotourist pensions (227) exceeded the number of tourist pensions (71).

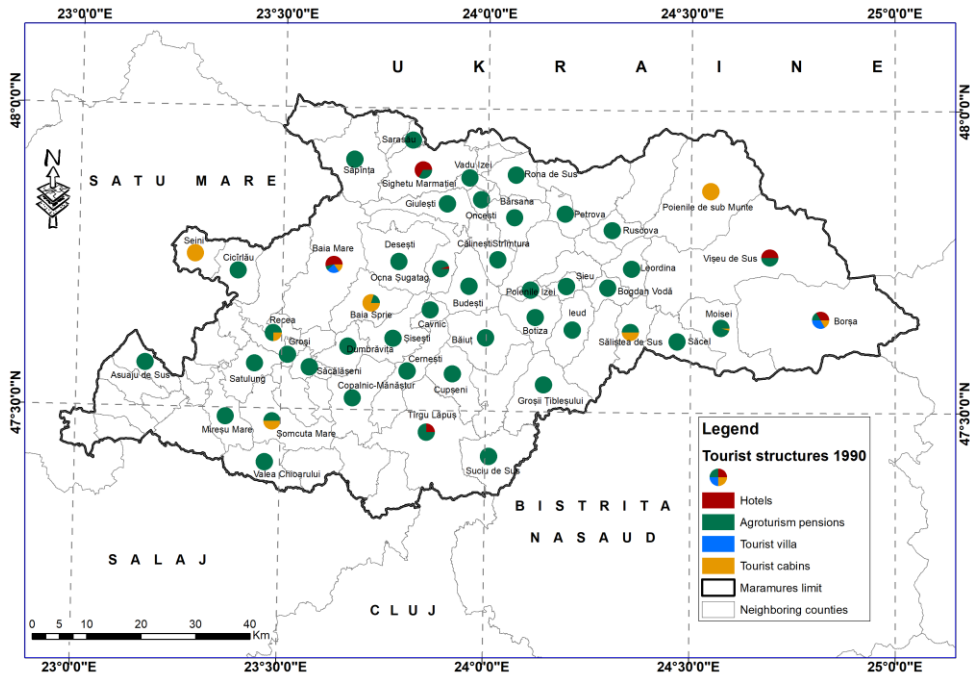


Figure 9 Types of accommodation in Maramureș County, at 1990 level. Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

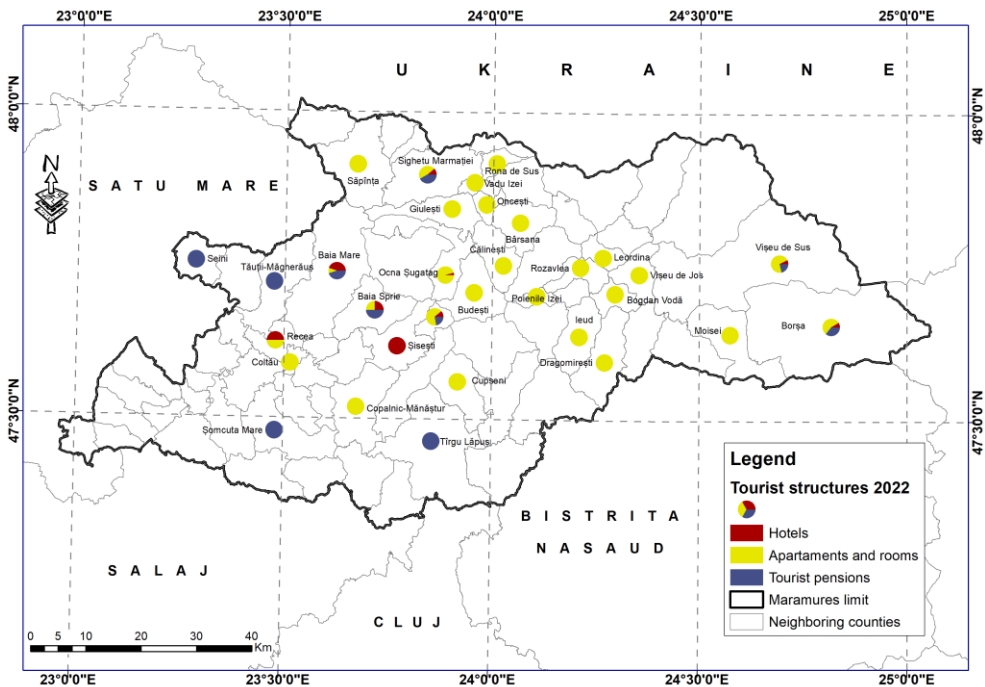


Figure 10 Accommodation preferences in Maramureș County, 2022. Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

Comparing the two time frames, we can appreciate that the development trend of accommodation structures is upward, an aspect that enriches the tourist offer of the place, the tourist having an increasingly diversified choice of place to stay.

4.1.4. Indicators regarding tourists arrivals in Maramureş county in the period 2001 – 2022

One of the tourism indicators analysed in this study is tourist arrivals in Maramureş County.

In the analysis area, a tourist season is highlighted, namely the summer season (Figure 11). In the warm season, hiking is a basic activity of the arrivals, in addition to visits to various monuments, recreation or spending time outdoors. The activities that tourists can do in the winter season are winter sports, and if the winter is not a snowy one, the whole activity of the arrivals, therefore the occupancy of accommodation facilities is compromised. The lowest numbers of tourist arrivals in Maramureş county are recorded in the two transitional seasons (spring and autumn), which is due to the specific weather conditions, but also to the lack of free time for tourists.

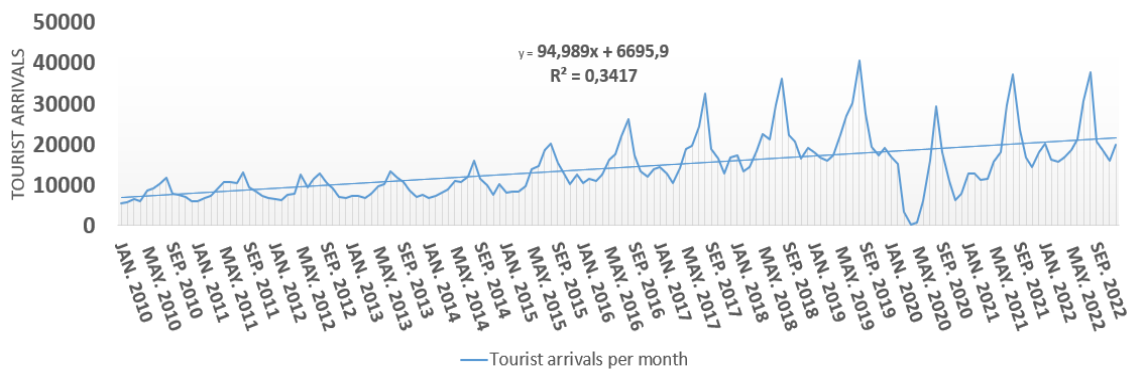


Figure 11 Total number of tourist arrivals per month in Maramureş County between 2010 - 2022. Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

At the level of the entire county, the total arrivals registered a number of 93806 in 2001, while in 2022 (Figure 12) they almost tripled (reaching 264330). In 2023, 298,238 arrivals were registered.

The remarkable increase in arrivals from one year to the next indicates the growing popularity of Maramureş as a tourist destination. The majority of tourists arriving in the analysis destination are from Romania (248759, in 2022). As for arrivals from outside Romania, a total of 15571 tourists arrived in Maramureş accommodation facilities in 2022. Most foreign visitors came to Maramureş in 2017 (35403 arrivals), followed by 2016 (33548) and 2015 (29170).

Figure 13 shows the number of tourist arrivals by TAU (Territorial administrative unit) in 2001. A close visual analysis of the map shows the main localities in the study area where arrivals were highest. In 2001, the number of tourist arrivals in Baia Mare did not exceed 60500 visits (more precisely 60316), a relatively low number, although the potential of the locality was high, even if the specific tourist infrastructure was not sufficiently developed.

Significant increases in the number of tourist arrivals in 2022 (figure 14) were recorded in the localities of Borşa (27,939 arrivals) and Sighetu Marmăţiei (27,022 arrivals). The recorded figures illustrate the high attractiveness of these destinations, but also the upward trend of their tourist development.

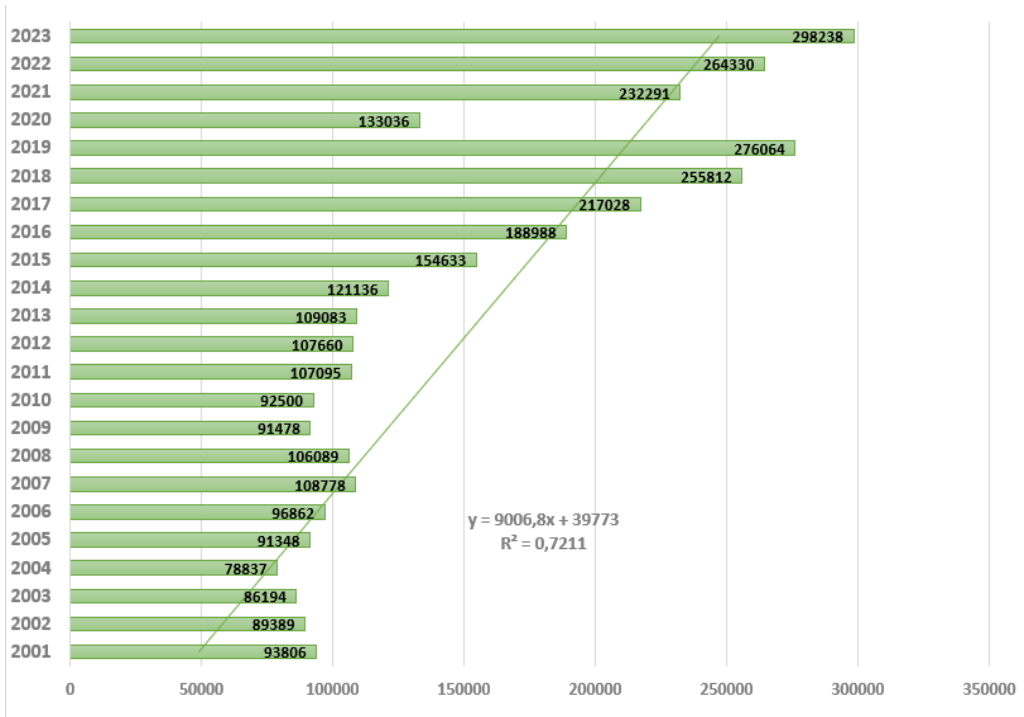


Figure 12 Total number of tourist arrivals in Maramureș county between 2001 – 2023. Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

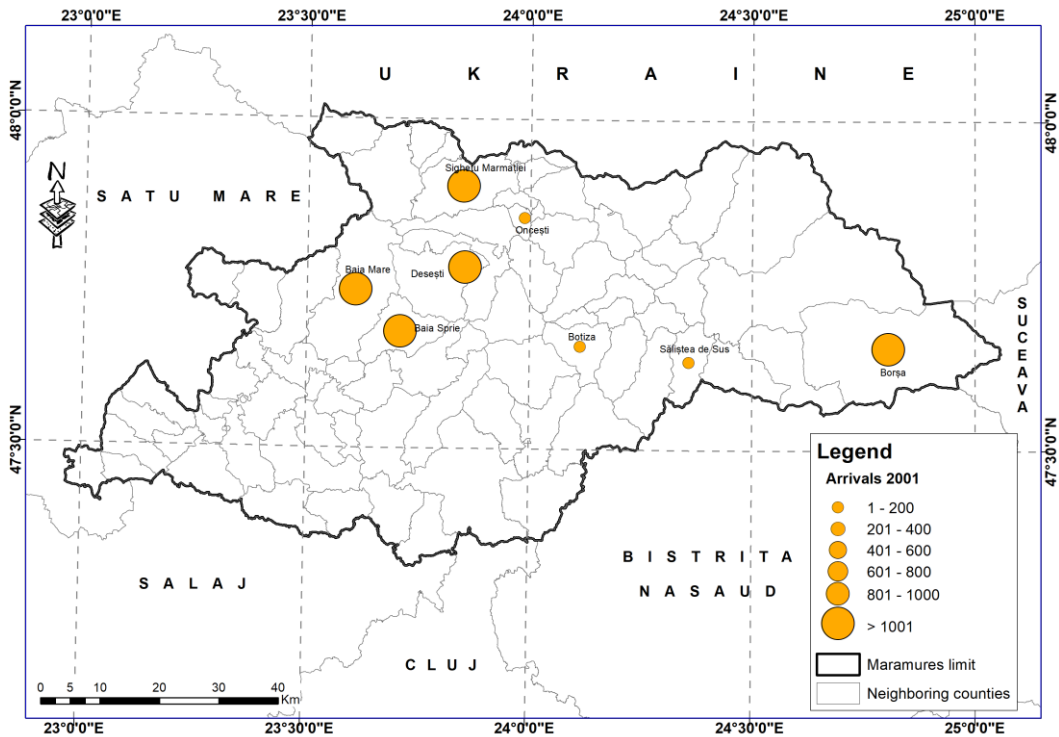


Figure 13 Tourist arrivals in Maramureș county, by TAU (Territorial administrative unit), in 2001. Data source <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

A remarkable increase in the number of tourist arrivals was registered at the level of Vișeu de Sus (31204). Declared a tourist resort in 2011, the city has a rich tourist potential represented by local architecture, traditions, ethnography and folklore, attractions conferred by the natural potential. A special attraction is given by the presence of the steam train, which attracts an impressive number of tourists every year.

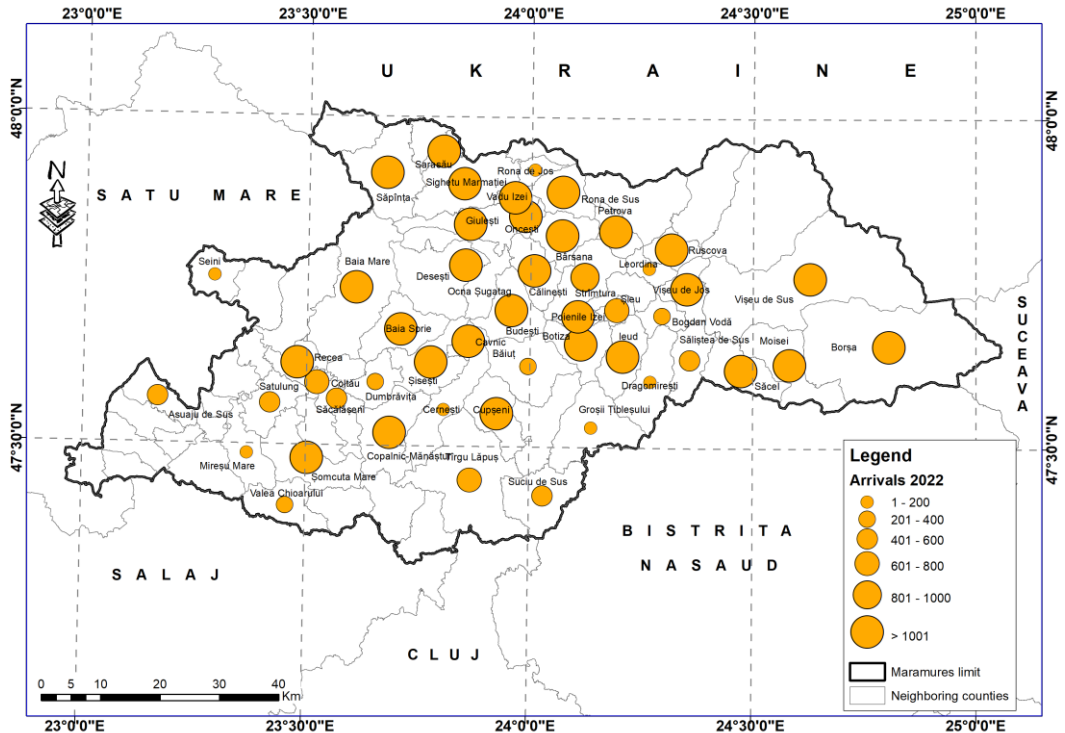


Figure 14 Tourist arrivals in Maramureș county, by TAU (Territorial administrative unit), in 2022.

Data source <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

Analyzing the statistical data, we can identify a series of fluctuations in tourist arrivals due to various threshold events felt at the level of the national economy, from the reorganization of economic sectors in 1990, the economic crisis of 2009-2010, or the pandemic waves of 2020.

However, the upward trend in the development of the tourism phenomenon at the level of Maramureș county is noticeable, a trend confirmed by the positive evolution of all the analyzed statistical indicators.

4.1.5. Overnight stays of tourists in Maramureș county, period 2001 - 2022

The evolution of the indicator "number of overnight stays of tourists in tourist accommodation facilities" is dependent on the evolution of the number of tourist arrivals. The highest number of overnight stays was recorded in Baia Mare municipality, a resort town with a high degree of attractiveness due to its administrative importance as well as its tourist attractions.

The comparative analysis of figures 15 and 16 also shows significant increases in the number of tourist overnight stays in 2022 compared to 2001 in Borșa (54,992 tourist overnight stays) and Sighetu Marmăției (44,550 tourist overnight stays), localities with strong tourism potential and on an upward development trend.

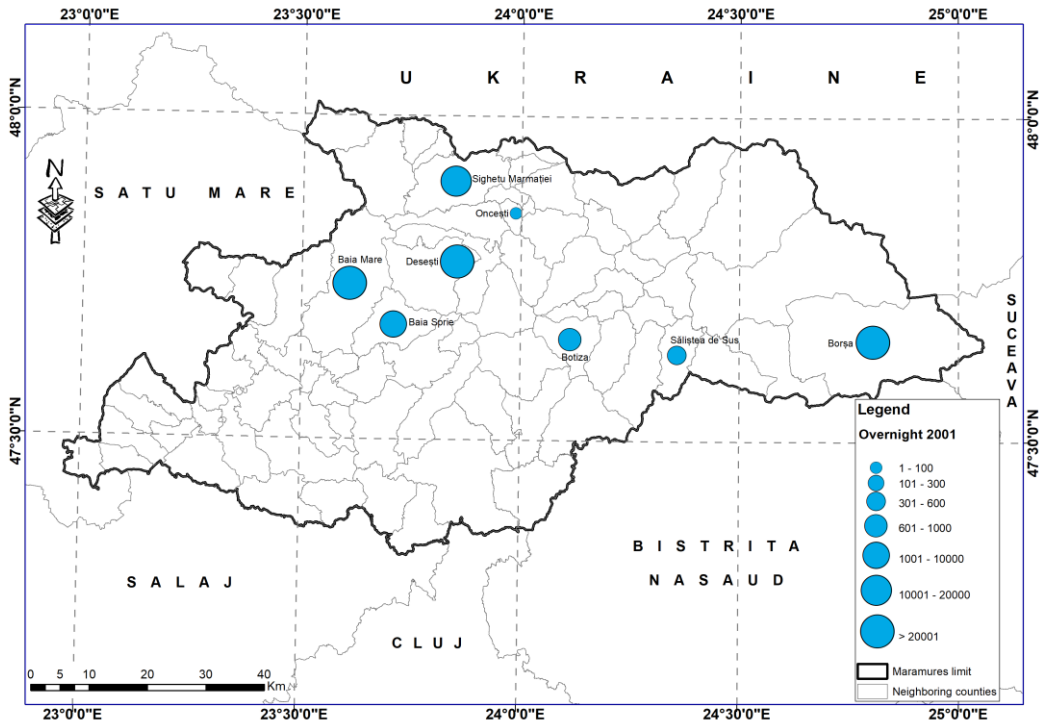


Figure 15 Tourist overnight stays in Maramureș County, by TAU (Territorial administrative unit), in 2001. Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

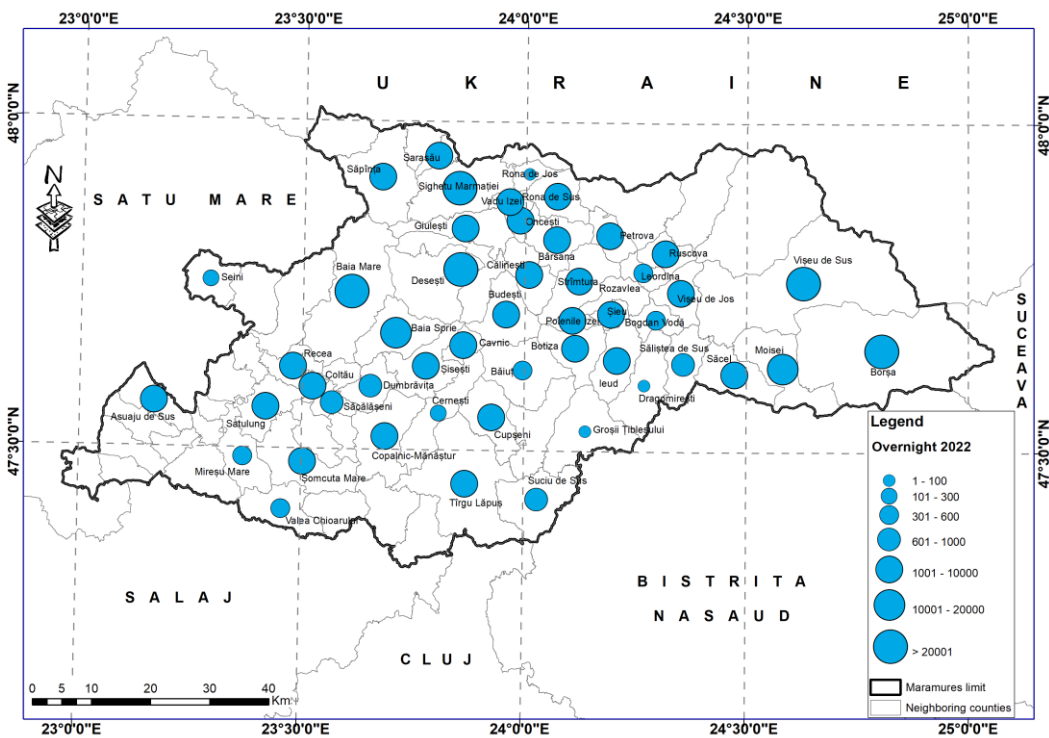


Figure 16 Tourist overnight stays in Maramureș county, by TAU (Territorial administrative unit), in 2022. Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

With the passage of time, a territorial dispersion of overnight stay preferences can be observed, an aspect that shows the development of infrastructure in other areas within Maramureş County. In this respect, we note the accommodation establishments in rural areas that have begun to attract more and more tourists, making an essential contribution to the financial balance of rural settlements. Among the rural localities that recorded significant figures for tourist overnight stays in 2022 (according to Tempo Online), the following stand out: Ocna Sugatag (34112 overnight stays), Moisei (19500 overnight stays), Petrova (8656 overnight stays), Vadu Izei (8271 overnight stays), Deseşti (8017 overnight stays), Recea (7949 overnight stays), Cupseni (5845 overnight stays), Sarasău (5432 overnight stays), Siseşti (5259 overnight stays), Poienile Izei (4372 overnight stays). The increased crowding of cities, the growing air pollution, the daily stress imposed by noise and vibrations, all add up to make an urban inhabitant want to spend as much time as possible in nature.

Tourist overnight stays are in direct correlation with the type of accommodation facilities and their accommodation capacity. Some of the tourists, especially the domestic ones, prefer the tourist guesthouses, rooms and apartments for rent according to the statistical analysis carried out, following the analysis of the data on Tempo Online. Foreign tourists wishing to stay overnight in Maramureş prefer in most cases hotels, tourist accommodation structures with higher comfort.

Seasonality in tourism activity is certainly among the main issues the whole tourism industry faces.

With the help of Figure 17, in which the values of tourist overnight stays in Maramureş county are averaged for the four seasons, we can form an overview of tourists' preferences regarding the period of stay in a destination in the geographical area analyzed in this study. Analysing figure 17, we can see the preference of overnight stays for the summer season (37029 overnight stays), and at the opposite pole is the spring season (20026 overnight stays).

One factor in the choice of time of year to visit a particular place is the holiday period, which is scheduled for most tourists in the summer season.

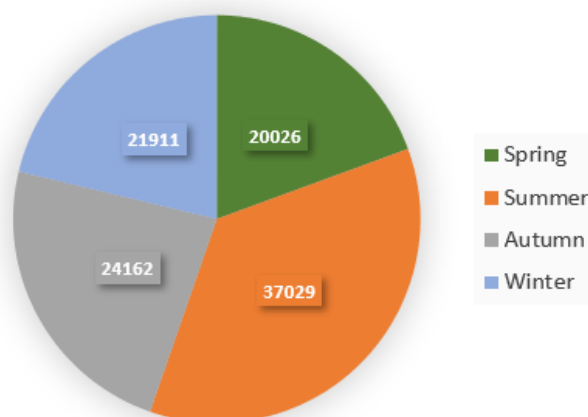


Figure 17 Average overnight stays in Maramureş County, between 2010-2022, for each season.

Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

4.2. Presentation of the logo that can boost tourist flows in Maramureş

Advertising is a very important element in attracting tourist flows to a given destination. Tourist advertising should illustrate the overall image of the destination and its strengths, being an important vector to attract tourists' attention and convince them to choose a destination. In tourism, advertising communicates through both images and message. The advertisement of a tourist product must capture and synthesize symbolic, suggestive elements of the destination, emphasizing the emotional experiences it inspires and creating a certain climate of affective attraction around the destination (Nedelea AI, 2003)



Figure 18 Logo concept representing tourism in Maramureș County.

By creating the logo in figure 18, we tried to include in a simplified and intuitive way, all the elements that define the tourist offer in Maramureș. In the foreground we brought the initials of the county (MM), within which we inserted the tourist resources (mountains, traditions, sculpture, crafts, wooden churches, dance, gastronomy). The colours reflect the purity of the natural setting, an environment conducive to relaxation, but also the serenity of the local people, smiling, welcoming, eager to share their customs with tourists.

Since the advertising message is very important, being the support of the visual advertisement (Nedelea Al, 2003), we considered that a slogan is also needed to support the visual message created by the proposed logo. Thus, "Gate of Tourism" leads to the curiosity to go beyond the Maramurean gate and discover the natural, cultural and historical richness of this area.

4.2.1. The applicability of other forms of tourism in Maramureș

The development of new forms of tourism is the way to development, attractiveness and new prospects. The monotony of the types of tourism practised, generates a saturation effect among tourism consumers. The notion of novelty is a pillar of marketing, with curiosity playing a polarising role.

A first step towards innovating new types of tourism is to put the countryside on the map of tourism potential. Rural tourism can be the starting point for the tourism development of Maramureș County. From the work written by Talabă et al. (2005), but also from the concept of an intelligent tourist village (Ciolac et al. 2022), ideas can be outlined regarding the development of this form of tourism that can support the rural economy. Rural tourism, as well as its component, agritourism, can be factors of economic development of the Maramureș rural environment, through the specific services offered to tourists and capitalizing on their need to relax in nature (V. Pop, Cecilia Pop, 2012). Increasingly, city inhabitants want a relaxing weekend oasis, choosing to travel to the countryside where the air quality is superior to that of the city, which is confirmed by

the increase (in the period 2016-2020) by 62% of agritourism guesthouses at the expense of tourist ones. In the same period, there was a 64% increase in the number of beds in agro-tourism guesthouses (J. Călina, A. Călina, 2022).

Nature and tranquillity are two of the basic elements that attract tourists, and these are certainly the attributes of rural settlements. Thus, we can appreciate that agritourism, ecotourism and rural tourism are forms of tourism increasingly practiced in places such as Ocna Şugatag, Moisei, Vadu Izei, Săpânţa, Poienile Izei, Deseşti, Copalnic-Mănăstur, Botiza, Săcel.

A second step is to develop the gastronomic component of the region, through various fairs and specific festivals, which by a specific promotion, will attract the curiosity of visitors to taste.

Another type of objective that can attract tourists is craft workshops where visitors can make various craft items themselves. Through these activities tourists can experience the local tradition.

The harmonious interweaving of the elements of the natural landscape and those of the anthropic landscape, creates favourable conditions for the development of cultural tourism and balneoclimatic tourism (relaxation, rest, cure and treatment), which can successfully complement rural tourism or other forms of tourism already established in Maramureş.

All these types of tourism with high development potential, combined with leisure, religious tourism, visits to cultural sites and winter sports, can form the core of the dynamisation of tourist activities in Maramureş.

5. Conclusion

The natural setting, through its components, plays an essential role in the tourist attractiveness of Maramureş County, both for the potential attractiveness of the landscape and for the capacity to support the development of tourist infrastructure through specific constructions and sites.

Accommodation structures and their capacity have developed and modernised considerably between 1990 and 2022. New accommodation preferences have emerged at the expense of hotels, lodges and tourist villas. Tourists now choose tourist pensions, apartments and rooms for rent.

The numbers of tourist arrivals and overnight stays have increased considerably in recent years, except during the COVID 19 pandemic when tourist activity was interrupted. These indicators show the upward trend of tourist activity in Maramureş. The analysis shows that tourists prefer to stay in the summer, a well-known period for holidays and summer vacations. Also, in recent years, there has been a preponderance of stays in rural areas of the county to the detriment of urban areas, which is due to the need for rest, peace, fresh air and a return to the origins that the Maramureşean village offers to tourists tired of the hustle of everyday life in big cities.

Another aspect that emerges from the research is the importance of increasing the visibility of Maramureşean tourism among tourists by creating an image of it, in the form of a logo. It must reflect, in a unified but also attractive way, the aspects that make the tourist destination unique and attractive. The logo proposed in this study brings together all these elements, making it attractive to potential visitors. Presenting the tourist offer with the help of a logo stimulates the tourist's desire to choose Maramureş as a destination for leisure time.

The new tourism realities are converging towards the diversification of tourist services and the development of specific forms of tourism to exploit local potential (rural tourism, gastronomic tourism), as well as through the integrated promotion of the local tourism product.

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