

ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF HOLIDAY VOUCHERS ON TOURISM IN ROMANIA

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Abstract. According to the decisions of the Romanian Government, the employees from the public system benefit (in practice since 2018) of the holiday allowance or the holiday bonus, as appropriate, in the form of a holiday voucher equal to the amount of the minimum gross salary in that year. The aim of these decisions was mainly to stimulate the tourism sector and to reduce the departure of the workforce from this domain to other states. The study we conducted follows the effects of these vouchers on the number of overnight stays in various tourist reception facilities. The results show an increase in the number of overnight stays in 2018 compared to 2017, but one that is not justified by the existence of holiday vouchers, the growth being in line with the trend of recent years.

Key words: tourism, holiday voucher, accommodation

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become in our days a strategic choice and very important for the development of national economy, due to its benefic effects in economic, social, and cultural plan [2]. It is an industry that allows both national and foreign currency receipts and contributes to the development of local communities through the creation of new jobs [4]. Also, the tourism industry is in a continuous dynamics, which implies a permanent adaptation and improvement of management [3]. The legislative, organizational and administrative measures are the institutional support necessary to perform tourist activities [5]. Through the governance program 2017-2020 [6], the Government of Romania has committed that all employees in the public system will benefit from a vacation or holiday bonus, as the case may be, in the form of a holiday voucher equal to the amount of the gross minimum wage in that year.

Holiday vouchers can be used to purchase accommodation or tourist packages in any of the above mentioned combinations in the Romanian tourist networks, partner of the issuers, units equipped with POS (in the case of electronic ones) and authorized according to the legislation. When using electronic vouchers, the debit of the amount on the card is equal and accurate with the value of the accommodation or tourist packages package, without rounding off as for holiday paper vouchers.

Thus, if we refer to the total of those who are working in the state budget system, in 2018 more than 1,300,000 [12, 13] such vouchers, with a validity of 1 year, worth more than 1.9 billion lei (i.e. over 400 million euros). They could be used in about 3000 tourist units, who accepted them in 2018.

Through this facility, it was primarily intended to stimulate the tourism sector in Romania, with all the beneficial consequences it could attract, the use of vouchers being limited to the territory of the country.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Various statistical data, from several sources (National Institute of Statistics, Eurostat, etc.), have been taken over to carry out the analysis, these being the basis for subsequent processing. The data mainly referred to the number of Romanian tourists who stayed and overnight in various tourist structures in Romania. These data have been taken

over and compared for the 2010-2018 period, with particular attention over the past year, in order to highlight the differences between them.

RESEARCH RESULTS

First, we wanted to see and choose the most representative holiday period by analyzing the number of overnight stays in each month of 2018. According to the results, July and August are represented by the highest influx of overnight stays in the whole year 2018 (Figure 1). This period corresponds in principle to the period of leave or holidays, being chosen for further studies. In addition, even if they have a lower number of overnight stays than other months, we also studied the months of December and January, which are also months of holidays and vacations.

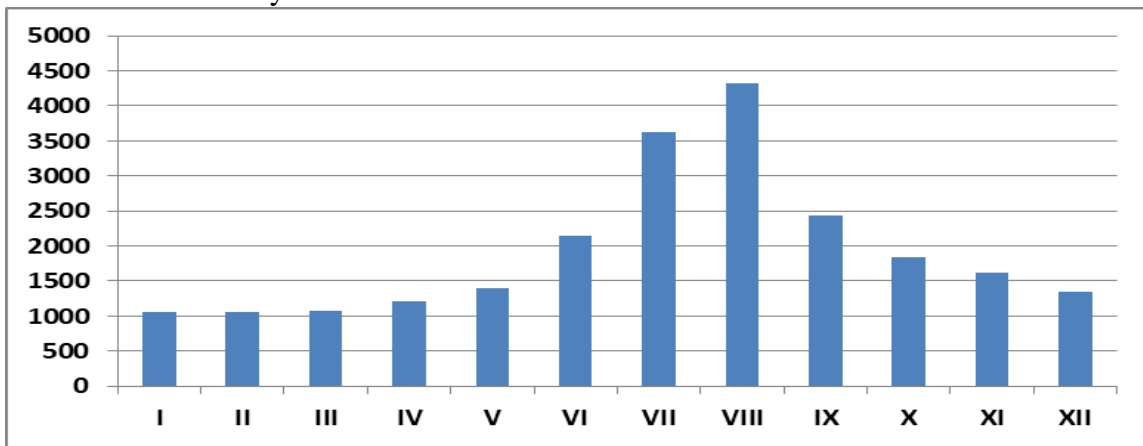


Figure 1. The distribution of overnight stays during the months of the year, Romanian tourists, 2018, thousands of people (own processing after [16])

According to the data analyzed, the number of overnight stays in December, January, July and August, registered increases from year to year, almost the whole period studied, respectively 2010-2018 (Figure 2). There was only one decrease, in 2013, when, possibly because of a calm year (both economically and for the exchange rate), the Romanians have been heading for more holidays outside the country [7]. Of the 4 months presented, the busiest was August, followed by July, December and January, the order presented remaining in all 9 years (2010-2018).

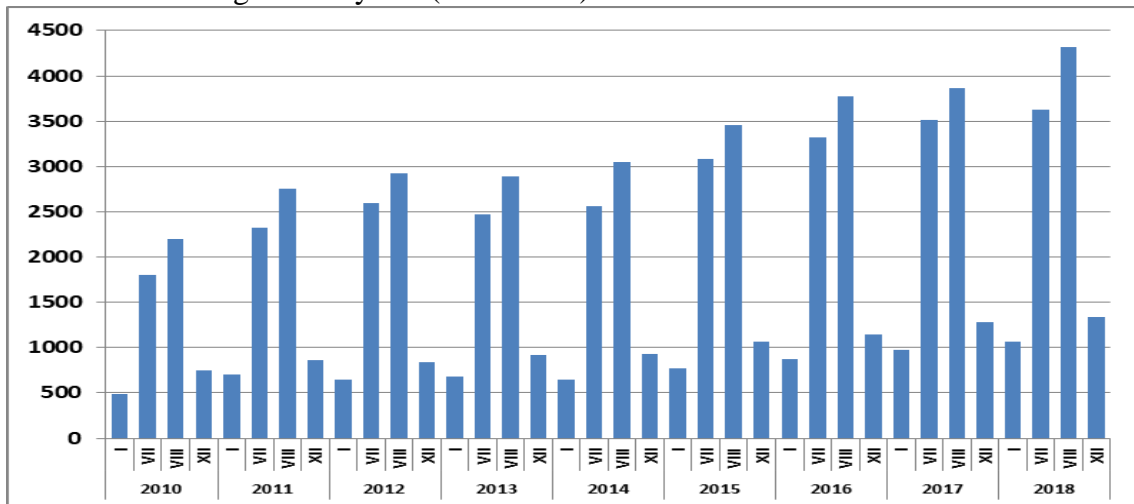


Figure 2. Variation in overnights stays (thousands of people) in the winter and summer months, Romanian tourists, 2010-2018 (own processing after [8, 9, 15, 16])

Going forward, we studied the differences in the number of overnight stays, each year data based on the year 2010 (Figure 3) and the differences in the number of overnight stays, each year data based on the previous year (Figure 4).

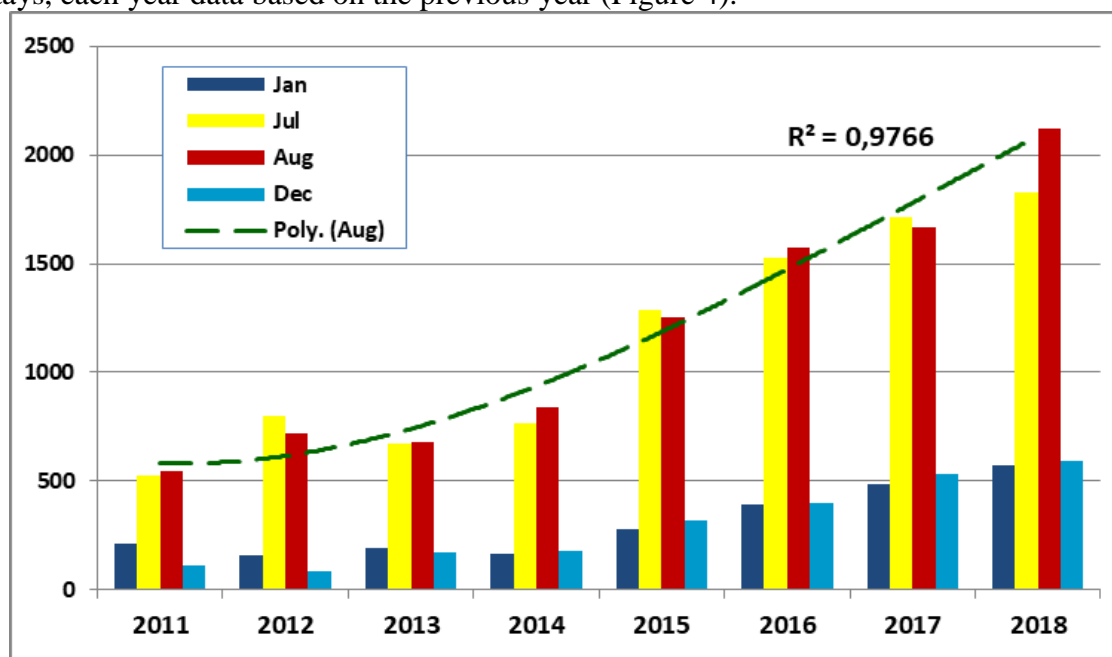


Figure 3. Differences in the number of overnight stays of Romanian tourists, 2011-2018 compared to 2010, thousands of people
(own processing after [8, 9, 15, 16])

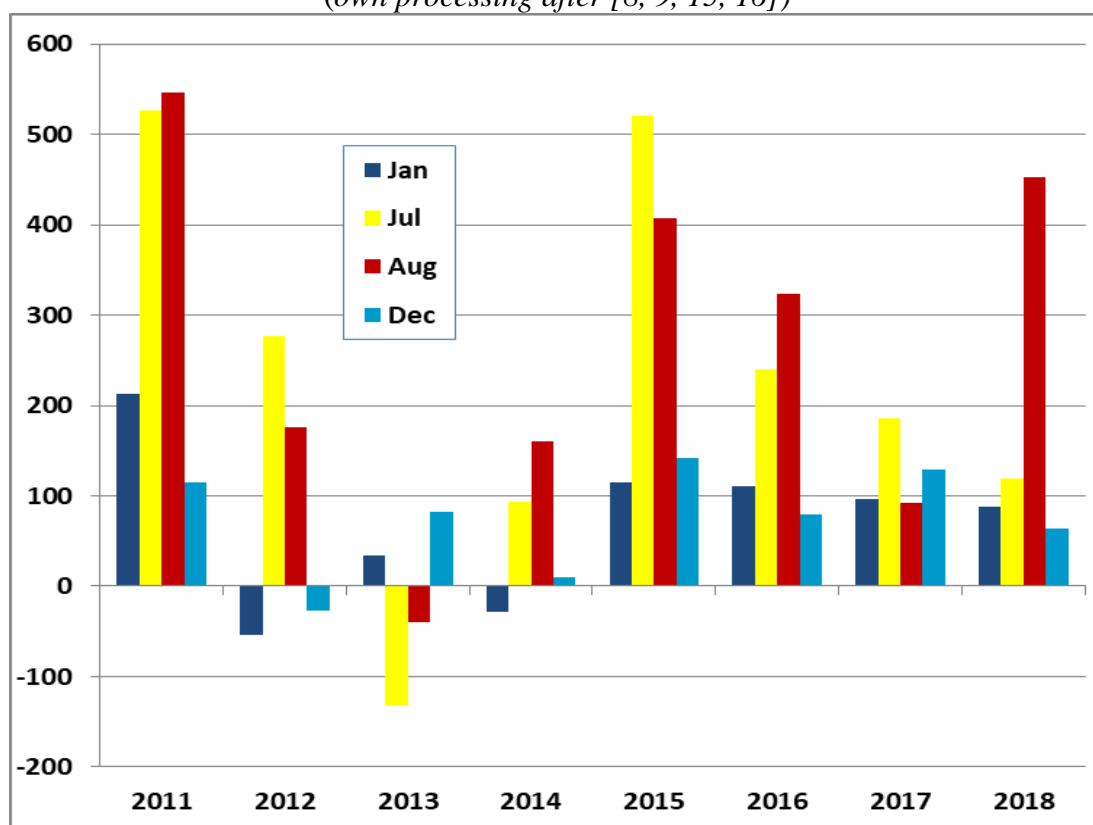


Figure 4. Differences in the number of overnight stays of Romanian tourists, 2011-2018 compared to the previous year, thousands of people
(own processing after [8, 9, 15, 16])

By plotting a 2nd grade polynomial regression curve for the values (Figure 3), the almost linear growth tendency in recent years is noticeably observed. The trace curve has a regression coefficient of 0.9766, very close to 1, i.e. it approximates with sufficiently high accuracy the existing values [1]. These results, therefore, do not show a spectacular leap in the evolution of overnight stays, especially if we refer to the past few years. Practically, the receipt of holiday vouchers did not have a dominant effect on the accommodation of Romanians, those who preferred tourism in the country are still travel here, and use their saved money to other destinations. In addition, analyzing accommodation establishments in hotels, boarding houses and agrotourist hostels, from the comparison of the years 2017 and 2018 (Figure 5), there is mainly a retention of the overnight stays or even a decrease in August and December (most frequented months).

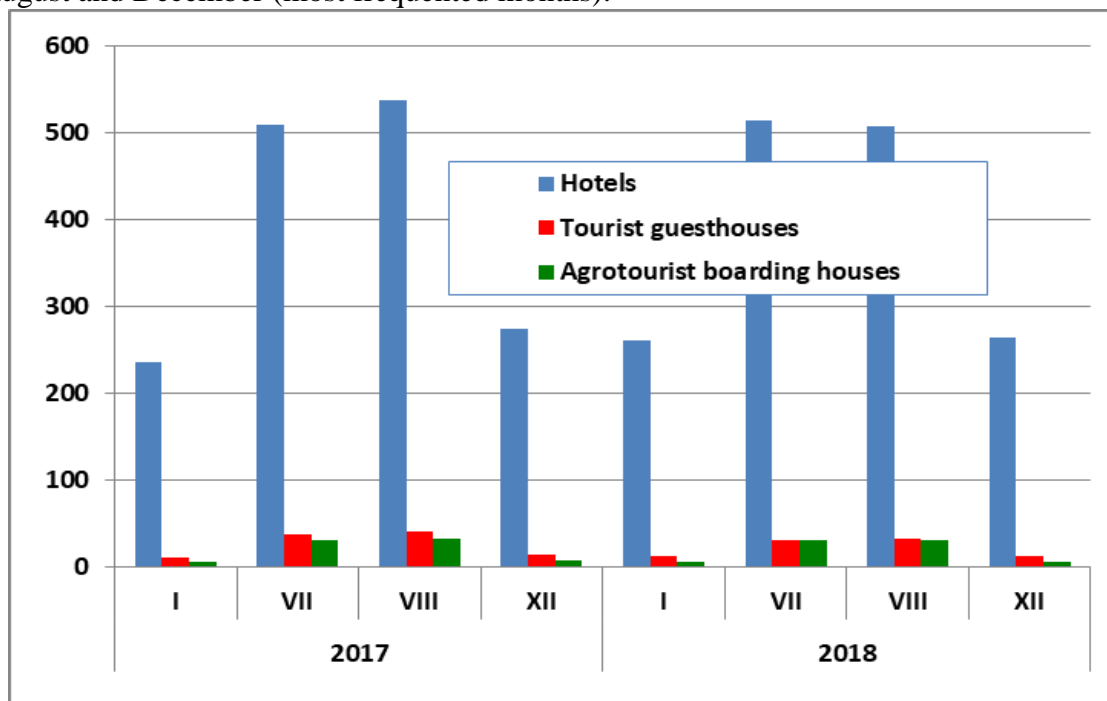


Figure 5. Differences in the number of overnight stays of Romanian tourists in various tourist structures, 2018 vs 2017, thousands of people
(own processing after [10, 11, 14])

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the holiday voucher facility did not have a spectacular effect on tourism in Romania. The number of overnight stays in the most popular months to spend the holidays varied, but the difference between years did not make a significant drop in 2018 compared to 2017. Even though the number of accommodation was higher in year 2018 than in year 2017 (720 thousand people), it was not the biggest difference, being overtaken by the differences in 2011 (1400 thousand people), 2015 (1,815 thousand people) and 2016 (755 thousand people).

In fact, the benefit was on the part of the holidaymaker, the accommodation and eventual meal costs being partly or totally covered with holiday vouchers. In terms of stimulating the tourism sector in Romania, at least at present, we cannot say that the introduction of holiday vouchers had the expected effect. It is possible that in the following years, when several tourist units accept vouchers, or they will equip themselves with POSs for reading electronic cards, these number of tourists will increase significantly.

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