

Importance of Recording the Number of Tourists Visiting Romanian Protected Areas

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SUMMARY

Researches on evaluating the tourism industry have emphasized the lack of information regarding the number of tourists visiting the Romanian protected areas. There are just a few park administrations that have officially reported the number of tourists recreating in the parks. However, the studies are not repeated and therefore it is difficult to predict the demand for recreation in these areas. A precise prediction of demand requires consistent and repeated track of the number of tourists, to create a database over time to capture the trend. The number of tourists visiting the Romanian protected areas is not reported by any governmental agency or by the National Institute of Statistics from Romania. Even if the number of tourists is captured in the other categories, this information does not help park administrations in planning actions needed to face the real flow of tourists. The categories are created too broad. Danube Delta is the only protected area analyzed separately. The National Master Plan for Tourism Development 2007-2026 provides some estimates of the number of tourists visiting the national and natural parks, but without revealing the method of estimation. One of the principles for sustainable development consist in monitoring visitor flows to reduce negative impacts in protected areas, as it was formulated by the Federation of Nature and National Parks of Europe in 1993 (EUROPARC, 2007). An overestimation of the number of tourists may result in negative impacts on the use of the natural resources, which may be avoided by well-organized tourism services. The underestimation of the number of tourists is not in the benefit of the areas neither because tourism development may increase the local and national economy. Moreover, the demand may differ among parks since some park characteristics are different, many recreation opportunities are different as well and welfare measures appear to be different too (Dumitras, 2008).

Keywords: number of tourists, demand, protected areas, Romania

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