



Received: 13-11-2025  
Accepted: 03-01-2026

ISSN: 2583-049X

## **New Approaches Regarding the Tours Structure: Case Study in Maramureş Region**

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### **Abstract**

The tourism market in recent years, especially after the COVID pandemic, has changed in several ways. If, until 2020, mass tourism is still sporadic, and the specialization of circuits is thematic, factors such as, firstly, tourists seeking knowledge, progress, development, quality, secondly, the measures to increase security at destinations, thirdly, increasing the level of tourism education and fourthly, introducing new technologies into all structures of the tourism market, determine the emergence of a new approach to the tourist destination market, much more disciplined,

organized, responsible. Thematic specialization, the niche one, which requires tiring trips, is reconsidered and adapted to practicing a much more responsible tourism and with a considerable positive impact on the sustainable development of destinations. The purpose of this article is to identify new trends in the evolution of the tourist destination market in recent years, by studying how the structure of tourist circuits has changed and adapted to new global trends of the word, in order to valorize a destination.

**Keywords:** Package Tours, Tourism Destination, Itinerary, Package Tours Structure

**JEL Classification:** M31, P25, Q01, Z32

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1 Theoretical and Practice Approaches Regarding Journeys**

At the beginning, it is necessary to clarify some very often confused notions on the tourism market: the scientific meanings of the notions of tourism, tourist, travel, traveler, visit, visitor, as well as the differences between these notions. The listed terms are very often used incorrectly due to the ignorance of the differences between the scientific meanings of each of them, both in the practice of tourism through various forms and in the theoretical scientific contents. In 2008, UNWTO published an international glossary of terms and notions used in the specialized industry where it explains the notions and meanings of the specialized terms visitor. A visitor in the UNWTO vision is a traveler who moves to a destination outside his usual residence, for maximum one year, for any purpose - business, pleasure or other - other than to practice a remunerative economic activity in the place visited. This movement is accepted in the UNWTO vision as a tourism journey. I will use the term journey instead the term trip, as the English dictionary indicate that the journey is a long distance travel and a trip is used to indicate an excursion or a short distance travel. The activity of these visitors is called tourism, practiced in three variants: domestic, inbound or outbound tourism.

A traveler is a person who travels between two or more geographical points for any reason and for any duration. Travel is, in the UNTWO sense, the activity practiced by a traveler. As in the case of tourism travel, it can be practiced in three variants: domestic, inbound and outbound tourism. Thus, tourism is a section of travel, and visitors are a section of travelers. A traveler is accepted as a tourist if his journey also includes an overnight stay. Without this overnight stay at the destination point, the traveler is an excursionist. (International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008: p. 9-10) [6]. The movement from the point of origin to the first stopover in the itinerary is in time a one-day journey, without any overnight stay, and the travel space is limited to a relatively short distance, around the point of origin. The excursionist becomes a tourist with the first overnight stay, from the second day of travel, until the end of his journey, when he returns to the point of origin.

UNWTO also establishes the characteristics of a tourism journey. Thus, first of all, a tourism journey must have a main purpose, that purpose in the absence of which, the journey would not take place. A tourist can travel by leisure, recreation or

visiting friends, by education, training or medical care, pilgrimages or shopping, transit or other personal main purpose as the main purpose or can travel for business and professional purposes. It is important to mention that a journey can only have one main purpose, even if the tourist can also have other secondary tourism activities. Secondly, a journey must be organized as a tourism product, meaning it must contain an association of components such as the type of transport, the type of accommodation, the visited sights, the practice of sports or beach activities, in different proportions. Thirdly, a journey has a duration. The limits imposed by theoretical aspects frame the duration of a journey between a minimum of a one-night stay and a maximum of a 1-year stay. Long stays are considered journeys with more than 4 nights and short journeys, journeys with 1, 2, 3 and 4 nights. UNWTO specifies that it is also necessary to differentiate the very long stays, with a large number of nights. Fourthly, a journey for tourism purposes must include a point of departure and a point of destination. The point of departure is considered to be the country of residence, which is also the point of return from the journey. The point of destination is a temporary residence of a tourist during his tourism travel. It is important to note that UNWTO does not impose the number of destinations in a journey and does not specify anything about this, but refers to the main destination of journey. UNWTO defines or establishes the concept of main destination, as a place which is the purpose of the journey. If this place does not exist, the main destination is a place where a visitor spends the biggest part of the journey's time. If also this place does not exist, the main destination is the farthest stopover place from the point of departure or the usual residence. (International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008: p. 24) [6]

Fifthly, a journey includes a mode of transport. It is considered to be the journey's transport mode, the mode in which the greatest part of the distance was covered or the mode in which the tourist spent the greatest time or the most expensive part of the total transport. The main mode of transport in international journeys is the transport by which the greatest distance is covered. Sixthly, a journey must include a type of accommodation (International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008: p. 40) [6].

Thus clarified these notions and analyzed them comparatively, a journey represents a movement from a starting point to a destination point, using a means of transport and having a purpose, while a tour and the practice of a tour, must be linked to a cultural context in which the movement takes place, to the curiosity to discover a territory, to the enthusiasm, exaltation and emotion of discovery. While travel means only movement, to travel only for traveling as a wanderer, a tour or to travel for developing yourself, loving learning, represents a strategy, a choice, a game of styles and multiculturality, starting with the art of living, and continuing with miscellaneous tastes and habits and different dispositions and spirits. (Poulot. 2016) [7] A tour should have an emotional impact through those who's moving, So, from these approaches, it can be make a subtle difference between a traveler and a tourist.

## 1.2 Theoretical approaches regarding package touristic tours

Another set of notions and concepts used in tourism market, which should be clarified, are those related to the tourism

product offered to tourists. In the same glossary of terms, UNWTO clearly defines the tour operator as a business that combines two or more travel services between transport, accommodation, food, entertainment and visited landscapes or sights and sells them to the tourist at a single, flat-rate price. The result tourism product is named package product which can be tailor as a stay or as a package tour, usually named circuit.. The procedure for forming or combining services is an "a la carte" one, those services being chosen and integrated in order to correspond to the consumer segments targeted by the tour operator. A package product should be seen as a completely new product in the UNWTO's vision. (International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008: p. 70) [6].

Regarding the specialized literature, in the works studied I encountered several clarifications of the terms or notions previously exposed, but these clarifications are presented in the same interpretation as the UNWTO. Thus in 1987, Sheldon & Mak, define package tour as consisting of many products and services sold to consumers at a flat rate. Sheldon & Mac's definition does not specify the kind of the services included and sold at a flat, unitary price, in what they define as a tourist package product. (Sheldon & Mak. 1987) [8] In 2011, Beritelli mentions that a package tour is made through the cooperation of several providers of accommodation, food, transport and guide services, but does not take into account the entertainment services that are essential in a package tour. (Beritelli. 2011) [2] In 2018, Avci mentions that a package tour depends on numerous factors, naming in addition to accommodation, food and transport or others such as the characteristics of the destinations, behaviors and attitudes, communication and highlighting the fact that the guide services that facilitate and mediate access to these components are the key to the success of a package tour. Again, entertainment and visiting tourist attractions are not mentioned as a component of a package tour. (Avci. P. 2018) [1].

The assembly of several components of tourist services excluding entertainment services does not give to the resulting product the value of a tourist product which in the specialized terminology is called a package tour. Usually, travel agencies include entertainment services in a tour as optional services and do not include their price in the fixed price of the tour. The approach of the specialized French-language literature, regarding to the notion of package tour, is a very pragmatic one. The tourist product is a set of elements, tangible and intangible, which determine the obtaining of certain benefits sought by one or more given clients. (Stafford. 1999) [12].

A current feature of a tourist product is that a consumer can build the different components of the tourist product himself according to his preferences - transport, accommodation, food, activities, which extends the scope of a tourist product from the product offered by a touroperator travel agency to a holiday organized in his own name by any tourism consumer. In addition, the essence of the tourism product is considered to be the elements of attractiveness and entertainment, the visited sights, which actually represent the benefits sought by tourism consumers. In the absence of this essence, we cannot speak of the existence of a tourism product. (Stafford. 1999) [12].

This extension of the concept of package tour eliminates an essential characteristic of this concept, the flat rate price. An individual tourism consumer purchases components of the

package tour only for his own consumption. He does not purchase a large quantity of each of these components and therefore cannot benefit from the advantages, knowledge, economic, financial and negotiating power of a tour operator agency. An individual tourism consumer will not be able to obtain a unitary, flat rate price for the entire association of services included in the package tour organized by him for his own consumption. Therefor this tourism consumer will pay an individual price for each of the components of his package tour. His satisfaction, in this case, results from the possibility to choose according to his own preferences and needs those components that satisfy his need for knowledge, relaxation and travel. The product tailored by him for his own consumption is, however, a package one, characterized by the lack of a flat rate price, lower than the sum of the prices of all integrated components.

Starting from this approach in French literature and from the fact that a package tour is a complex tourist product, I consider that in the case of a package tour, the essential element and the one that ensures its attractiveness are the entertainment elements and the included sights, in the absence of which the package tour loses its quality as a tourist product, from the approach presented above. The increased attractiveness of this essential element provides to package tour the added value and differentiates it between these categories of tourist products offered on the market. The package tour or the circuit is defined by Stafford as a journey to regions renowned for their landscape beauty or having a special cultural interest and contributing significantly to the regional development of the destination. (Stafford. 1999) <sup>[12]</sup>. Therefore, a package tour is approached very pragmatically as a tourist product that must engage countless actors in the tourist market of a destination. The goal is to ensure the sustainable development of the destination. The key, however, is the tourist who must obtain a consistent benefit from his journey, because accommodation, meals and transport services ensure this sustainable development of the destination through the destination's infrastructure. Emphasizing the entertainment component and cultural educational services and increasing the share of the cost of this component in the overall cost of the circuit, would increase the contribution to the sustainable development of the destination on the one hand, and on the other hand, the benefit obtained by the tourist in his trip will be an equally consistent one, based on personal development and knowledge. Implicitly, this also adds value to the package tour. Durand & Jouvet specify that a package tour has several characteristics that distinguish it from the rest of the tourist products. Thus, the first characteristic, mobility, is determined by the movement from one point to another, shaping an itinerary. The second characteristic, the curiosity, is considered the main feature of a tourist consuming package tours. He travels by the desire to learn and change his own values. The third characteristic, the desire to discover new places, new cultures, new values, comes from the curiosity of tourists and accompanies their movement within the circuit, covering the entire itinerary. The fourth characteristic, the pleasure of tourists while traveling along the itinerary, is actually fueled by curiosity and the desire to discover. The more attractive the itinerary is, the more it will arouse curiosity and the desire to discover it, fueling the pleasure and satisfaction of the journey. The fifth characteristic, circularity, is marked by the tourist's departure from a point of origin and return to the same point

or space from which he or she departed. (Durand & Jouvet. 2003) <sup>[11]</sup>.

A tourist circuit, in order to meet the condition of an itinerant product, must, in my opinion, include at least two nights of accommodation, at different stopping points. A tourist product with one night of accommodation is not itinerant. It has a single destination integrated, so that a comparison cannot be made between the destinations included and a main destination cannot be established according to the indications indicated by UNWTO. This tourist product is, in my opinion, a stay, which also allows visiting several tourist attractions at the stopping point and the inclusion of additional services, other than the basic ones and which also has a destination, but the only one. Marking these theoretical aspects related to the notion of tourist circuit, a complete definition of the notion of tourist circuit is the following: a tourist circuit is a journey made by circular travel, from a starting point, through several successive destinations, renowned for the beauty of the landscapes and/or special cultural properties and integrating at least two overnight stays in these destinations, followed by returning to the point or geographical space of origin, with the aim of ensuring, on the one hand, their sustainable development, and, on the other hand, of ensuring tourists the pleasure and curiosity of discovering new places, new cultures, new values. A tourist circuit is therefore the most complex tourist product existing on the tourist market and the one that provides tourists with the highest level of knowledge and growth of their own cultural values. Beyond the fact that it is promoted as a journey that must ensure the sustainable development of a destination, this sustainable development of the area is a consequence of the existence of the essence of the notion of a tourist circuit, namely increasing the level of knowledge and cultural values of tourists.

### 1.3 Theoretical approaches regarding tourism market's evolution

In the evolution of the tourism market, a substantial change can be observed in the way the market is approached, both by representatives of tourism demand and by representatives of tourism supply, every 20-30 years. Of all the sectors of the economy, the tourism sector is the one that most eloquently reflects the evolution of society. Whether it is approached qualitatively or quantitatively, the practice of tourism is a luxury, a luxury adapted to the level of each social class. People travel only if they have a supplementary income over the assurance of daily expenditure. Although it has a long evolution, starting from the first movements in the geographical space of antiquity in the Roman and Greek empires, tourism itself and the activities that we know today under the generic name of tourist activities began with Thomas Cook and his first organized circuit, by moving a group of 500 people by train through Europe. This was the point at which tourism activities took on an expanded dimension, from individual and short-distance tourism to mass tourism, organized, accompanied or not by tour guides and with long-distance travel.

The world politically, economically and geographically events of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the two world wars, slowed down and even stagnated the evolution of tourism, which began to evolve and develop immediately after the Second World War. Three successive periods can be clearly distinguished in the evolution of tourism activity

worldwide, after the Second World War in the specialized literature.

The first period, between the 1950s and 1970s, is referred in the literature as the period of the first generations of mass tourism. The main characteristics of this period are the accelerated growth of consumption, manifested in all areas, including tourism, and an intense desire to travel. Tourism is practiced in an undifferentiated manner, is accessible to everyone, and the preferred standard is seaside holidays, known as the 4S – Sea, Sand, Sun, Sex.

The second period in the evolution of tourism worldwide is between 1970 and 2000. It is known in the specialized literature as the second generation of mass tourism. The stage is characterized by the increase in the level of education and a certain maturity of the tourism consumer, who begins to give up quantity and seek quality. Society has evolved and with it the preferences of tourism consumers. They have several levers available through which they can increase the comfort of their travels and the quality of their choices in terms of tourism:

- regulations regarding air transport, which determined the reduction of travel time and the increase of travel comfort
- sexual freedom, which initiated new movements, trips of tourists, as well as the initiation and acceptance of new possibilities for practicing tourism and new possibilities for entertainment and relaxation
- freedom of cross-border travel, which determined the initiation of trips over much longer distances and with simplified formalities.

The period is one of progressive tourism, when new forms of tourism are developing: cultural, adventure, business, sports, and tourism for minorities.

The third period took place after the 2000<sup>th</sup> and is last one highlighted by the Durand and Jouvet. The end of this period is outlined by the COVID pandemic and marks the end of mass tourism and the orientation towards a direction of approaching the tourism market based on progress and development, discovery and knowledge. The stage is characterized by the segmentation of clientele by age groups rather than by social class groups, the search for quality and luxury in tourist trips and the deepening specialization of tourist products. Tourist products addressed for niche consumer segments appear on the markets that emphasize the pleasure of tourism and outline and delimit them very well within a well-established form of tourism. Visiting World War II camps or visiting communist prisons, as part of a cultural circuit, marks a deep specialization of cultural tourism, namely dark tourism. It is a stage of niche tourism, addressed to multiple consumer segments. (Durand & Jouvet. 2003) <sup>[11]</sup>.

So, it seems that a fourth stage begins in 2020<sup>th</sup>, immediately after overcoming the pandemic crisis and brings countless changes to the approach to the international tourism market worldwide, as a result of the global changes that are recorded worldwide. The COVID pandemic occurred simultaneously with an accelerated rise in technology and the introduction of innovation in the tourism market also in the destination sector. Innovation took place also in the way the offer of tourist products promoting a destination, arrives at the tourists through the reservation systems of the tourist attractions, events or sights. This coincidence was the chance for the revive of tourism worldwide, which tourism operators and government

institutions knew how to take advantage of and to adopt measures to revive the tourism market. Climate change and the global trend of environmental protection already manifested at the international level through the promotion of the circular economy and sustainability is another very important factor that has shaped the direction that tourism has taken after 2020 and the pandemic crisis. The fourth stage takes a few from the characteristics of third stage, through these trends borrowed from the sustainable economy, and those manifestation with such intensity and insistence at a global level, determined the sudden interruption of the direction that tourism had had until then and the change of this direction towards a completely different approach.

In addition to these three main factors, the first one, the COVID pandemic, the second one, technological innovation in the field of tourism and the third one, the focus on sustainability, there are other secondary factors which contributed to shaping this fourth stage of evolution of the tourism market, as follows:

- increasing the level of education of the population, which has determined the approach with a different vision of destinations
- reducing working time during the week and increasing free time and that allocated to relaxation, thus there is the possibility of traveling also on weekends and days off during the calendar year
- increasing the security of destinations imposed by national government measures and global organizations and institutions
- increasing the security of tourist attractions
- reducing the number of intermediaries on the tourism market and shortening the distribution chain of tourist products
- protecting UNESCO sites through restrictive visitation measures, increasingly imposed by governments and local administrations (for example, banning access by means of transport for a considerable distance from the UNESCO site, additional security measures, strict conservation rules, strict visitation rules)
- increasing demand for niche, highly specialized tourism products
- freedom of action for tourists in organizing their own vacation
- increasing number of charter and low-cost airline flights that allow fast and low-cost connections between different points around the world
- the accent placed by tourism market leaders on tourism activities at the destination, as an important source of income for nations' budgets

All these premises have determined the shaping of another era of tourism, another stage and other directions of approach, which I will try to identify in the case study presented in this article, analyzing the tourism market in the Maramureş area.

## 2. Methodology

In the present study, I focused on qualitative research, by studying several scientific works, mainly in French, and some scientific articles whose themes refer to the structure of tourism products and their evolution over time, in order to capture the changes that have occurred in terms of composition and to clarify some confusing notions on the tourist destination market. In parallel, I also studied

UNWTO publications to determine the meanings of some notions, in a pragmatic interpretation. To collect quantitative data, I studied in two years, the 2024<sup>th</sup> and the 2025<sup>th</sup>, the websites of travel agencies that offered tourist products that included the destination of Maramureş. In 2024<sup>th</sup>, the online research was carried out between 22.01.2024-16.06.2024. For 2025<sup>th</sup>, the 2024<sup>th</sup> database was used, which was completed through a new search using the Google browser. Other travel agencies than those in the previous database were searched to determine in their offers, tourist products that included the destination of Maramureş.

The search criterion on the Google browser was "tour in Maramureş". The websites of all travel agencies displayed on the first 7 pages were thus studied. Starting with the 8th page, the browser displayed web pages of agencies that presented outdated tours, information from previous years (2019-2024), as well as other information unrelated to the search criterion. The online research in 2025 was carried out between 14.03.2025 and 06.07.2025. The data collected were synthesized using a Google form and Excel software and then processed, analyzed and interpreted. For the analysis, weighted arithmetic means were used where the observed data were distributed into classes of equal intervals in size, in the case of heterogeneously distributed data, and the weighted arithmetic mean with frequency distribution, in the case of homogeneously distributed data. The independent variable was the number of nights of the identified circuits, and the dependent variable, the number of circuits identified for each interval of nights or each number of nights included in the circuit. In the case of the average by interval classes, the central value was calculated for each interval, which was multiplied by the number of cases corresponding to the observations obtained. After summing up all the values, the results were divided by the number of valid cases identified. The established intervals corresponding to the number of nights of the identified circuits are [2,4], [5,7], [8,10], [11,13]. The central values of the intervals, taken into account in the calculation of the average are 3,6,9 and 12. The data obtained are centralized in tables, in the analysis of each hypothesis. Tourist products with overnight stays only in one locality are not taken into account, being considered organized stays. By default, single-night tourist products are not itinerant, as they are also considered organized stays. In fact, they have a completely different structure than itinerant products. Products without any night of accommodation were not taken into account either, as they are considered excursions and not the subject to analysis. No circuits were identified without indicating the number of nights of the circuit.

In the case study, I will start from five working hypotheses, which I will try to determine through data analysis, whether they are confirmed or not, and I will formulate some conclusions:

H1: The structure of tourist circuits in the last years has not changed in terms of length, expressed by the number of overnight stays.

H2: The main destination of the circuits identified in the offers of travel agencies, including Maramureş in the itinerary, is the Maramureş area

H3: The identified circuits mostly include only basic services, accommodation with breakfast and transport and include in average of more than four nights of accommodation

H4: The identified circuits with additional services, additional meals and cultural entertainment and educational services include in average of at least for nights of accommodation

H5: The identified circuits modify their price by adding additional meals and cultural entertainment and educational services

### 3. Results and Discussions

#### 3.1 Case study. Touristic package tours in Maramureş region

The online study aims to identify changes in the structure of tourist circuit-type tourism products on tourism market, in two consecutive years, 2024<sup>th</sup> and 2025<sup>th</sup> and to outline some new approaches or trends in the manifestation of the tourist circuit offer of travel agencies. The study is limited to the Maramureş area, a very well-defined ethno-cultural and geographical destination in the Romanian space, but also in the European and international space. In order to obtain generalized results and formulate universally valid conclusions at an international level, additional studies are needed in other geographical areas or destinations.

Regarding the results obtained, they are very conclusive in order to achieve the aim of this article. The online research was carried out very rigorously, for two consecutive years. Since there is no possibility in the online environment to identify the prices of the circuits, an empirical analysis was carried out to demonstrate hypothesis five, but conclusive for the purpose of the article.

Hypothesis 1: The structure of tourist circuits in the last years has not changed in terms of length, expressed by the number of overnight stays.

To confirm or refute the first hypothesis formulated, we analyzed the structure of the circuits identified in the offers of travel agencies in 2024 and 2025, in terms of the number of nights they have.

In 2024, the offer of 256 agencies was analyzed and 165 circuits were identified. The online research was carried out between January and June 2024. The 165 identified circuits were organized taking into account the total number of overnight stays. The centralized data are shown in the following table:

**Table 1:** The structure of the tourist circuit offer in 2024, taking as a criterion the duration of the circuits - distribution by frequencies

Overnights	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	>13	Total
No. tours 2024	0	2	38	73	43	5	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	-	165

It can be seen that the number of overnight stays of the circuits compared to the number of identified circuits is not homogeneous. There are no identified circuits with 7, 8, 11 and 12 nights of accommodation included. Only 2 circuits with 9 nights, one circuit with 10 nights, one circuit with 13 nights and 5 circuits with 6 nights are identified. Most circuits have 3, 4 and 5 nights of accommodation. Therefore, the average number of overnight stays within the identified circuits was calculated, using the weighted average by interval classes, where the independent variable is the number of overnight stays and the dependent variable the corresponding number of circuits. The established intervals are [2,4], [5,7], [8,10], [11,13]. The central values of the intervals, taken into account in calculating the average, are 3,6,9 and 12.

**Table 2:** The structure of the tourist circuit offer in 2024, taking as a criterion the duration of the circuits - distribution by interval classes

Overnights	[2,4]	[5,7]	[8,10]	[11,13]	Total
No. tours 2024	113	48	3	1	165

The average number of nights is 3.87. The average reflects reality, since high values of the independent variables do not vitiate the result, as few values of the dependent variables corresponding to them were identified. The result indicates an average number of 4 nights within the circuits identified in 2024. According to the UNWTO, these circuits are short-term circuits or mini-circuits.

The research was resumed in 2025, with the same research methodology. The period studied was July-August 2025. Fewer circuits were identified than in 2024. Only 75 travel agencies had circuits in their offers that included Maramureş in the itinerary. The 75 travel agencies presented 108 circuits in their offers, out of a total of 136 tourist products promoted online. The analysis did not take into account organized excursions and stays. The information collected is summarized in the following table:

**Table 3:** The structure of the tourist circuit offer in 2025, taking as a criterion the duration of the circuits - distribution by frequencies

Overnights	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	>10	Total
No. tours 2025	0	4	32	44	15	7	1	1	3	1	-	108

As in 2024, the weighted average by interval classes was used for the analysis, with the independent variable being the number of overnight stays and the dependent variable being the number of circuits, and the same intervals [2,4], [5,7], [8,10], [11,13] and the same central values, 3, 6, 9 and 12, were considered. The collected data are summarized in the following table:

**Table 4:** Structure of the tourist circuit offer in 2025, taking as a criterion the duration of the circuits - distribution by interval classes

Overnights	[2,4]	[5,7]	[8,10]	[11,13]	Total
No. tours 2025	80	23	5	0	108

The average number of nights is 3.9. The result also indicates an average number of nights of 4 nights for 2025. The average number of nights in 2024 is therefore 4 nights, and in 2025 it is also 4 nights. The results obtained refute the hypothesis formulated. Thus, the tourist circuits in the last years have changed their structure in terms of the number of nights within the circuit

Hypothesis 2: The main destination of the circuits identified in the offers of travel agencies, including Maramureş in the itinerary, is the Maramureş area

To confirm or refute the second hypothesis, the definition given by UNWTO to the main destination was taken into account. Thus, the main destination was considered to be the locality or area where the person stayed the most or had the most overnight stays. In this sense, the data collected and processed were the number of nights spent in the destination of Maramureş, within the total number of nights of the circuit. In the online research, were also identified the tours where the number of overnight stays in Maramureş is not specified. In order to validate these tours, I analyzed the itinerary. All the identified circuits included in the itinerary, the visit of at least two relevant sights in Maramureş.

Usually these are chosen from the Merry Cemetery in Săpânţa, the Bârsana Monastery, the Wooden Churches in Ieud or Deseşti, the Museum of Communism and Resistance in Sighetu-Marmăriei. I appreciated that visiting the itinerary's included sights in Maramureş, required at least one day of stay in the area, taking into account the time for travel and serving meals. Correlated with the short duration of the circuit and taking into account my professional experience in the tourism industry, these aspects led me to appreciate that these circuits have at least one overnight stay in Maramureş. Therefore, I will appreciate that these circuits included one overnight stay in Maramureş and I will include them in the analysis.

In this case, the number of overnight stays in Maramureş compared to the number of circuits is much more homogeneously distributed. Therefore, the average number of overnight stays was calculated by weighted arithmetic mean with frequency distribution, where the independent variable is the number of overnight stays and the dependent variable is the number of circuits.

For the year 2024, 165 circuits with Maramureş in their itinerary are identified. The collected data are summarized in the following table:

**Table 5:** Structure of the tourist circuit offer in 2024, taking as a criterion the length of overnight stays in Maramureş

Overnights in MM	1	2	3	4	5	>5	Total
No. tours 2024	68	24	35	37	1	-	165

An average number of overnight stays of 2.27 was obtained, which indicates that at least 2 nights of the itinerary are in Maramureş. The assessment is based on taking into account the circuits where the number of overnight stays in Maramureş was not identified. Unable to accurately assess, without margin of error, the average number of overnight stays in Maramureş, the interpretation of the result obtained is as follows: the average number of overnight stays in Maramureş is at least 2 nights in an average number of overnight stays of a circuit. The result obtained is relevant taking into account the definition of the main destination as the destination where the most overnight stays are. Thus, it can be appreciated that the circuits identified in the offers of travel agencies in 2024, which include Maramureş in the itinerary, have the main destination as Maramureş zone and at least 2 nights of an average number of 4 nights of a circuit are spent in Maramureş.

For the year 2025, 108 circuits are identified, of which 4 do not have the number of overnight stays specified. For the reasons set out in the previous paragraph, I will consider these 4 circuits as having at least one overnight stay in Maramureş. The information collected is summarized in the following table:

**Table 6:** The structure of the tourist circuit offer in 2025, taking as a criterion the length of overnight stays in Maramureş

Overnights in MM	1	2	3	4	5	>5	Total
No. tours 2025	8	25	47	27	1	-	108

The average number of overnight stays in Maramureş obtained in the analysis in 2025 is 2.88, meaning 3 nights of accommodation, compared to an average number of overnight stays of 4-night circuits. The main destination of these circuits was Maramureş. In conclusion, hypothesis two is confirmed for both years: the main destination of the

circuits that include Maramureş in the itinerary is Maramureş, at least 2 nights in 2024 and at least 3 nights in 2025 of an average number of 4 overnight stays of the circuits that include Maramureş in the itinerary, is Maramureş.

Hypothesis 3: The identified circuits mostly include only basic services, accommodation with breakfast and transport and include in average of more than four nights of accommodation

In the case of hypothesis three, the information collected is again very homogeneously distributed and the weighted arithmetic mean with frequency distribution was used to calculate the average number of overnight stays. For the year 2024, out of the 165 circuits identified, 103 circuits included basic services, accommodation with breakfast and transportation, meaning 62,4 percent in a total number of tours. The number of overnight stays in the case of these circuits with basic services included is shown in the table below:

**Table 7:** The structure of the offer of tourist circuits with basic services, in 2024, taking as a criterion the duration of the circuits

Overnights	1	2	3	4	5	6	9	10	>10	Total
Basic services 2024	0	1	18	40	39	2	2	1	-	103

Most have 4 and 5 nights of accommodation with breakfast included and transport. A circuit with 10 nights of accommodation is also identified. The average number of nights of these circuits that include basic services is 4.36. From observing the frequency distribution, it can be seen that there is a considerable number of circuits with 5 nights of accommodation. Thus, it can be said that there are a minimum of 4 or at least 4 nights of accommodation in the itinerary of circuits with basic services.

In 2025, 52 circuits have basic services included, out of a total of 108 circuits: accommodation with breakfast and transport. The information is summarized in the following table:

**Table 8:** The structure of the offer of tourist circuits with basic services, in 2025, taking as a criterion the duration of the circuits

Overnights	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	>10	Total
Basic services 2025	0	2	10	21	10	4	0	1	3	1	-	52

The average number of overnight stays included in the identified circuits is 4.5, average calculated by the distribution by interval classes. By calculating the average with frequency distribution, the average number of overnight stays is 4.38. It can be appreciated that these circuits with basic services only included an average number of 4 nights of accommodation. The average number of overnight stays remains constant for the circuits with basic services, for the two years, 2024 and 2025, of 4 nights of accommodation or more than 4 nights. For both, 2024 and 2025, the hypothesis is confirmed: the identified circuits mostly include only basic services, accommodation with breakfast and transport and include more than 4 nights of accommodation, the average number of overnight stays included in the identified circuits. This demonstrates that four nights of accommodation is a border that separates circuits with basic services included, only accommodation, accommodation with breakfast and transport, from those that also include additional services such as additional meals in half-board and full-board and educational-cultural and

entertainment services. Circuits with basic services included include a greater number of nights of accommodation, above the average number of overnight stays, and have a higher share in the total number of circuits identified. In 2024, the share of these circuits in the total number of circuits is 62%. For 2025, the share does not exceed half of the identified circuits, being 48%. The results indicated in the analysis of this hypothesis very nicely outline the trend of evolution of the structure of circuits in the fourth stage of evolution after the pandemic and 2020.

Hypothesis 4: The identified circuits with additional services, additional meals and cultural entertainment and educational services include in average of at least for nights of accommodation.

Also for the fourth hypothesis, the information necessary for the analysis is very homogeneous, therefore the weighted arithmetic mean with frequency distribution will be used. In 2024 there are 62 circuits with additional services included, meaning half-board and full-board food services, cultural entertainment and educational services out of a total of 165. These represent 37.57% of the total number of circuits identified online, itinerary including the destination Maramureş. The distribution by overnight stays is as follows:

**Table 9:** The structure of the offer of tourist circuits with additional services, in 2024, taking as a criterion the duration of the circuits

Overnights	1	2	3	4	5	6	7-12	13	>13	Total
No. tours 2024	0	1	20	33	4	3	0	1	-	62

The average number of overnight stays is 4.03, meaning that complex circuits with additional meals and cultural educational and entertainment services have an average of 4 nights of accommodation. From the frequency distribution it can be seen that most circuits have 3 and 4 nights of accommodation, 54 out of the 62 identified, so that the result obtained can be interpreted as follows: circuits with additional meals and cultural entertainment and educational services include at most 4 nights of accommodation.

In 2025, 56 circuits are identified that include in the structure, additional meal services in half-board or full-board and cultural entertainment and educational services, out of a total of 108 circuits. The distribution of overnight stays for these circuits is as follows:

**Table 10:** The structure of the offer of tourist circuits with additional services, in 2025, taking as a criterion the duration of the circuits

Overnights	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	>7	Total
No. tours 2025	0	2	22	23	5	3	1	-	56

The average number of nights spent for circuits that include more than basic services is 3.87, representing a maximum of 4 nights of accommodation. As can be seen from the distribution of circuits, most have 3 and 4 nights of accommodation, a result also reflected by the average number of nights spent. 48 circuits out of 56, representing 85%, have 4 nights of accommodation or less than 4 nights of accommodation. The hypothesis formulated is confirmed for the year 2025: the circuits identified with additional services, additional meals and entertainment and educational-cultural services included, include a maximum of 4 nights of accommodation in the structure. Again, the

results obtained highlights very nicely, relevantly and in correlation with hypothesis three, the trend of evolution of the structure of circuits in the fourth stage of evolution, after the pandemic.

Hypothesis 5: The identified circuits change their price by adding additional food and entertainment and cultural educational services

The fifth hypothesis is formulated as a conclusion of the results obtained in the previous hypotheses. For circuits with basic services, the average number of nights is 4. From the detailed distribution, by frequency, it can be seen that in both 2024 and 2025, these circuits have the majority of at least 4 nights of accommodation.

For circuits with additional meals, entertainment and cultural educational services, the majority of circuits have less than 4 nights of accommodation or at most 4 nights of accommodation, both in 2024 and 2025. As additional meals or entertainment and cultural educational services are added, the number of nights of accommodation is reduced. The price difference for accommodation services resulted from the reduced nights is found transformed into these additional services. Transport services remain constant.

The empirical analysis, without information regarding to the price of the circuits, information unavailable online, highlights the fact that integration of additional services, other than accommodation, breakfast and transport, in the structure of the circuits, does not change or changes insignificantly the price of the circuits, in correlation with the decrease in the number of overnight stays.

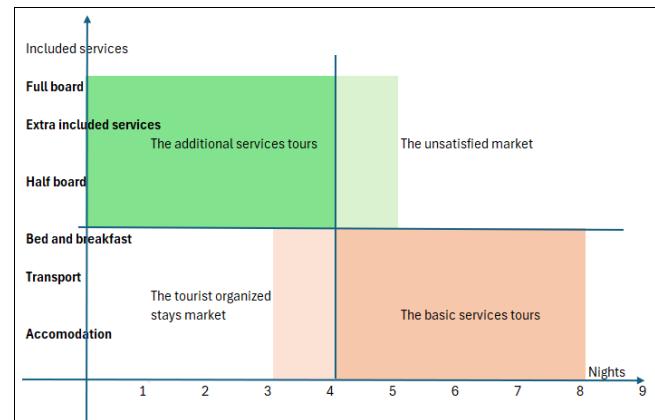
#### 4. Conclusion

As a result of the analysis carried out in the online market of tourist products of the tourist circuit type, including Maramureş in the itinerary, a change in the structure of the circuits can be observed compared to previous years or the previous stage of evolution of the tourist circuit market, before the pandemic. If until the 2020s mass tourism was promoted, with long circuits of at least 7-8 nights of accommodation and a dense, tiring itinerary and an alert pulse of mobility, after the implementation of increased security measures at destinations, tourist circuits have reduced their number of nights, being mostly short circuits and focused on one or two destinations. From my case study, on the destination of Maramureş, it results that at an average number of overnight stays of 4 nights of the identified circuits, the number of nights in Maramureş is increasing in 2025 compared to 2024, from 2 nights to 3 nights. Therefore, a trend of specialization of circuits on tourist destinations is observed, in this case on the destination of Maramureş. Previously, a trend of thematic specialization of tourist circuits was delineated.

Regarding the structure of services included in the circuits, in 2024 most circuits (62%) have only basic services - accommodation, transport and breakfast. In 2025, the share decreases to 38%. In 2024, there are 165 circuits on offer online, and in 2025, 136 circuits. Therefore, it can be seen that the offer of tourist circuits on the online market is decreasing, a decrease manifested simultaneously with the decreasing share of circuits that include only basic services. Additional services of half-board, full-board, entertainment and educational-cultural services in 2024 occupy 38% of the total number of identified circuits, and in 2025, 52% of the total number of identified circuits. Therefore, a trend of increasing the number of circuits with additional services in

the offer of travel agencies is noted.

Compared to the number of nights included, circuits with additional services reduce their number of nights, unlike those with basic services, whose trend is to increase the number of nights. The price of the circuits remains constant or changes insignificantly as a result of the change in the structure of the circuits.



**Fig 1:** The structure of tourist circuits on the Maramureş market, in 2024 and 2025 Elaborated by the author

The graph shows the distribution of circuits taking into account the number of nights included in the structure (OX axis) and the structure of services, represented on the OY axis, in order of the value they attribute to the circuits. Thus, accommodation is found at the minimum level, followed by transport. These two services determine the design of simple circuits with reduced value. Then, in order, on the OY axis, accommodation with breakfast is represented. This component determines the design of most circuits and is actually a border to transition to complex circuits with additional services included. The services are then represented in the order in which they are integrated into the circuits, assigning them additional value: half board, additional services and full board. Full board is a component that is very rarely found in the composition of tourist circuits, being specific to organized stays. As one moves from one level to another on the OY axis, the value of the circuit increases, by adding additional services. On the OX axis, I represented the 4-night limit resulting from the analysis, as the one that separates circuits with basic services from those with additional services. On the OY axis, bed and breakfast is represented, as the border that separates these two categories of circuits. Thus, the two areas corresponding to simple and complex circuits are outlined. These two areas actually correspond to the tourist market of simple circuits and the tourist market of complex circuits. The tourist market of organized stays is represented to the right of the OY axis, near the axis, up to the 4-night limit, represented on the OX axis. An area is observed, in the upper part of the graph, corresponding to a large number of nights and complex services. From my study on the Maramureş destination market, this area represents an unsatisfied market. However, additional research is needed in other destinations, in order to generalize this particular aspect of the Maramureş tourist market and to identify the causes of its formation. For the destination Maramureş, the area in the graph, corresponding to a large number of nights, over 4 nights, and additional services included, other than the basic ones, is an unsatisfied destination market. An

important trend in the current tourism market is emerging: the existence of an unsatisfied market made up of potential tourists, who would prefer long-term circuits and with additional services included. For such circuits, either there is no demand, so that travel agencies do not tailor such circuits, or the offer of travel agencies is oriented towards a segment of middle-income tourists willing to pay for a circuit with a small number of nights of accommodation and with basic services or very few additional services included. The factors that determined the emergence of this market are, firstly, the increase in number of city-breaks or stays in the days off during the year, except the scheduled vacations, secondly, the increase in the level of cultural-touristic education to the tourists, which rather prefer to discover a destination, than to mark it within an itinerary and thirdly, the deep specialization of the touristic market on the destination.

This stage can be characterized by several features, which result from my case study. The first feature, mentioned in the following paragraph, is the specialization of circuits on tourist destinations. The second is the reduction in the number of nights of the circuits, with short-term circuits being promoted. The third feature refers to the main destination of a circuit, which occupies at least half of the number of nights of the circuit in terms of number of overnight stays. The fourth feature is the decrease in the offer of circuits promoted by travel agencies on the online market. The fifth feature of the new stage of tourism evolution is the decrease in the offer of circuits with only basic services - accommodation, breakfast and transport, included, simultaneously with an increase in the offer of circuits with additional services - half board, full board, entertainment and educational-cultural services, included in their structure. And the sixth feature is the constant maintenance of the price level of the circuits, as a result of changing the structure of the included services, reducing the number of nights of the circuit by adding additional services.

The case study shapes the Maramureş destination's market in the recent two years and highlights a market much more organized, much more responsible and focused through the region's sustainable development. The case study could be used as a model for the others destination markets, so that the forth stage in tourism evolution to be complete shaped.

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