

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON TOURISM: THE EFFECTS OF THE POLICIES APPLIED IN CHINA *versus* ROMANIA

Ruxandra-Lumița, GHEORGHE

I. COVID-19 HISTORY IN CHINA *versus* ROMANIA

CHINA

- The outbreak in Wuhan (Hubei Province) related to the new coronavirus COVID-19 on Dec 27, 2019;
- Officially published on Dec 31, 2019;
- Jan 8, 2020 the official name of SARS-CoV-2
- Late reporting allowed the virus to spread early during the Chinese New Year holiday, when millions of Chinese moved through this important traffic point;
- After Jan 23, 2020, strict measures were introduced at local level (blocking the city and the province, wearing masks);
- The measures entered the whole country in the coming days;
- The total number of deaths not exceeding the threshold of 4,000.
- On Mar 21, 2020, most cities in China opened for domestic traffic, with the exception of the provinces of Hubei (central China) and Xinjiang (northwest).

ROMANIA

- The virus arrived on February 26, 2020, in Gorj County (in south-west) in off-season → The measures taken by Romania (banning public meetings, closing schools and borders) have partially proved their effectiveness, the number of infections and deaths is increasing.
- In April 2021, the number of cases exceeded the psychological threshold of 1,000,000 cases and over 25,000 deaths.

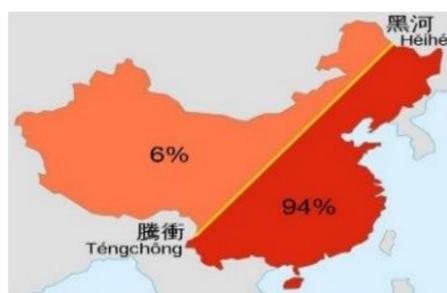
II. WHAT DID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC MEAN FOR THE TOURIST TRAFFIC IN CHINA and ROMANIA



Territorial administrative map of China Territorial administrative map of Romania

TOURIST SEASONS IN CHINA

- The peak season of Chinese tourism: first quarter of the year – the Spring Festival or the Chinese New Year (whose exact date is never the same);
- The second favorable period for Chinese tourism is in the fourth quarter, in October – China's National Day - October 1st.
- **The location of China** – between the parallel 18° (S) and 54° (N) – north hemisphere
- Various types of climate:
 - a) tropical-monsoon (S) – Hainan Province
 - b) subtropical-humid (Central-E) – Jiangsu (parallels 30°-35° north latitude), Zhejiang (27°- 31° N lat.), and Hubei (29°-33°N lat.) – the tourist core of China, **provinces visited in every quarter of the year**;



Population density in China

- Population density in China -94% in E and 6% in W- Hubei is in center of China, in the most populated area
- a) temperate-oceanic (NE) – Heilongjiang Province;
- b) temperate-arid (N and W) - in the north - Inner Mongolia Province (N), Xinjiang Province (NW), Tibet Province (SW);
- China's tourism industry not very affected by seasonality.

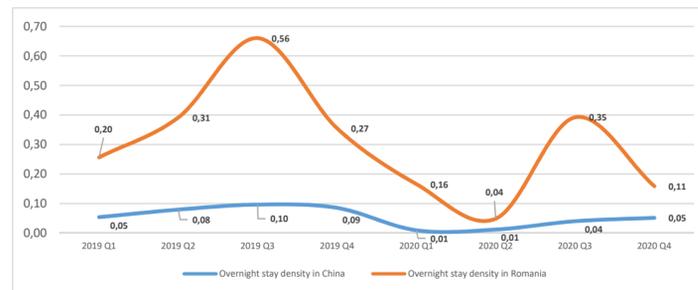
TOURIST SEASONS IN ROMANIA

- The peak season at the end of the second quarter (June) and in the first two thirds of the third quarter (July and August)
- The second tourist season of the year: the end of the second quarter - the third quarter, and the second part at the end of the fourth quarter, which coincides with Christmas (December 25-26) and New Year (December 31-January 2).
- **The settlement of Romania** – between the parallel 43° (S) - 48° (N) – north hemisphere
- temperate climate
- The tourist core: Constanta County – the Romanian coast
- a) tourism for relaxation only in the peak season (June, July and August)
- b) in the off-season tourism for business.
- The areas least affected by seasonality:
 - a) Bucharest - business tourism and cultural tourism
 - b) Brașov and Prahova counties - mountainous areas, attract visitors both in winter, for sports specific to this season, and in other seasons, for hiking.
- Romanian tourism has a very pronounced seasonal character.

III. QUARTERLY TOURIST TRAFFIC IN 2019 *versus* 2020

AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY, DENSITY OF TOURIST TRAFFIC, DENSITY OF OVERNIGHT STAYS OF TOURISTS

→ *average length of stay* (the ratio between overnight stays and arrivals) reflects the ability of the destination to retain tourists, how many days they stay at the respective tourist point;



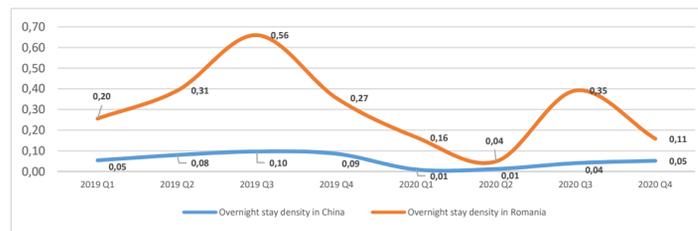
Tourist traffic density in China and Romania (2019 vs. 2020)

→ *density of tourist traffic* (the ratio between the number of tourists and the number of residents) has a socio-cultural influence on the resident population, but also vice versa, some tourist destinations attracting visitors through cultural events, sports, religious ceremonies;



Tourist traffic density in China and Romania (2019 vs. 2020)

→ *the density of overnight stays of tourists* (the ratio between overnight stays and the numbers of residents in the tourist destination) highlights the economic benefit brought to the local population.

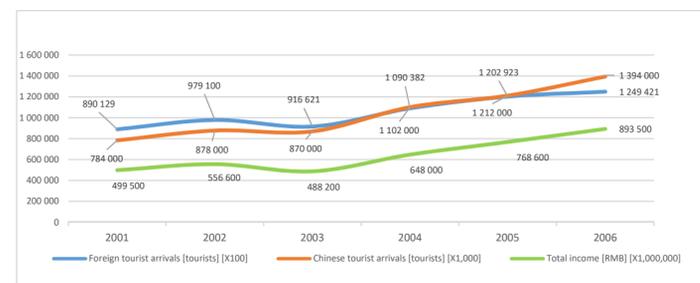


Overnight stay density in China and Romania (2019 vs. 2020)

IV. CHINA'S EXPERIENCE 2003 *versus* 2020

1. POLICIES FOR REVIVING TOURISM THEIR RESULTS IN CHINA IN 2003

- in 1992 - Beijing Minsheng Think Tank Information Technology Consulting Co., Ltd - research institution based on Chinese public opinion;
- in 2016 a think tank (Minsheng Think Tank) consisting of more than 50 professional consultants (professors and senior engineers), more than 100 researchers, and a nationwide research team using research results, high level and original ideas.
- The measures taken by the Chinese authorities after the SARS epidemic in order to recover tourism were:
 - a) *reduction and exemption of taxes*: for areas such as civil aviation, tourism, catering, trade, taxis and other industries, respectively for the reduction or exemption of participation in certain government funds.
 - b) *financial subsidies*: interest rate rebates on short-term loans to civil aviation and tourism;
 - c) *financial support*: partial return of quality assurance funds for travel agencies, respectively discount loans and lower loan rates.
 - d) *official press releases*: The National Tourism Association together with other professional associations had issued various initiatives for the safe resumption of tourism and related industries as quickly as possible.
 - e) *discussions and seminars*: the way to revitalize the economy, especially tourism, was widely debated.
- By 24 June 2003, the World Health Organization had already declared that the "SARS" epidemic had been extinguished.



Evolution of tourist arrivals and total income in China 2001-2006

2. Policies for reviving tourism and their results in China in 2020:

- a) *prevention and control of the epidemic*, which focused on direct support for related medical treatment and support for the production and transport of medical equipment and machinery;
 - b) *reduction of tax obligations for companies*, especially for social insurance premiums (pension, unemployment), occupational accident insurance, health insurance and personnel insurance.
 - c) *reduction of VAT for companies and small taxpayers* who rented commercial or residential space and reduced or deducted the rent, in order to maintain the current customers, respectively for the revenues from the transport of equipment and medical equipment.
- Strategic cooperation agreements have been signed between the Chinese authorities and banks (Industrial and Commercial Bank of China - ICBC, People's Bank of China) to help cultural and tourism enterprises by providing loan lines (*anti-epidemic loan, employment loan, tax loan*) to meet capital needs, i.e. loans and redistributions of funds to help small banks provide low-cost SMEs and the agricultural sector.

V. The plan of the policies for reviving the Romanian economy and its results

- A. **Macroeconomic developments and policies**: macroeconomic situation, budgetary policy, fiscal and budgetary support policies; employment support and protection programs for the jobs affected by the COVID-19 crisis; digitalization and de-bureaucratization measures in administration and economy sectors; Romania's development priorities financed from European funds in the period 2021 – 2027.
- B. **Grants, guarantee schemes and support programs**: support grants for companies; guarantee schemes and tools to support liquidity in the economy; financial-banking instruments for increasing capitalization and financing investments; active employment and social protection measures.
- C. **National investment plan**: transport infrastructure; investments in energy infrastructure, economy and business environment; health infrastructure; infrastructure for education; investments in local development; agricultural and irrigation infrastructure; environmental investments; sports infrastructure.

CONCLUSIONS

On the one hand, China, through its policies and measures, has recovered surprisingly quickly, and its economy has been the only world economy to register a growth in 2020. With experience based on SARS 2003, it has quickly updated its economic recovery plan, being able, after only 4 months from the outbreak of the pandemic, not only to produce for export, but also to partially restore domestic tourism. In addition, the population itself, also based on the experience of 2003, has been and continues to be very cooperative in preventing and combating the pandemic. At the entrance to absolutely any kind of public building and at the gates of the neighborhoods indications on the necessary hygiene rules to be respected are displayed - wearing a mask, hand hygiene, keeping distance between people, avoiding homelessness (although in February 2020 there were no new cases of COVID, school and offline jobs only resumed in May 2020), leaving neighborhoods based on signatures at the gate, checking the temperature at any entrance gate (including the entrance of home neighborhoods), using online shopping, work and school.

By creating a group of intelligent minds, which in recent years have studied the latest techniques and innovations in all fields, the plan was assured of success from the beginning, the Government of the People's Republic of China knowing exactly what to do in a situation like this. The situation of Hubei Province was, at the moment zero, one of the most populated and visited tourist centers, the pandemic being fatal for the natives, tourists and the national economy. On the other hand, Romania lost the bet with itself. The various Ordinances have done nothing but showed that it was not at all prepared to face such a terrible enemy, the measures and policies taken not being able to mitigate the negative impact on the population, but especially on the national economy. The imposed bans and the accepted relaxations led to the effective destruction of the HORECA industry, the situation being, at this moment, bankrupt. The population, being poorly informed, but also intoxicated by fake news on social media, played an important role in destroying the credibility of the Government to deal with the pandemic. The conclusions show that such a crisis can be overcome quickly with the least possible socio-economic impact, and can form the basis of a global model for analyzing these types of situations.

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