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DOMESTIC AND INBOUND TOURISM AS VECTORS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL IMAGE PROMOTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Elena Nirean ^{1*}, ORCID: 0000-0002-2593-5836,
Alexandru Nistiriuc ^{2*}, ORCID: 0000-0003-0709-2393

^{1*}Moldova State University, 60 A. Mateevici Str., Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

^{2*}Technical University of Moldova, 168 Ştefan cel Mare Blvd., Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

* Corresponding author: Elena Nirean, e.nirean@gmail.com

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Abstract. In the course of the research, the relationship between inbound tourism and domestic tourism was analyzed as complementary pillars of the tourism market in the Republic of Moldova, as well as their joint contribution to economic growth, social cohesion, and the promotion of the national image. The motivation for the research stemmed from the increasingly important role of tourism in sustainable development and from Moldova's recent international recognition, having been ranked among the Top 10 best-performing European tourist destinations in 2025. The main hypothesis formulated on the basis of the research results assumes that the expansion of inbound tourism, supported by domestic demand, strengthens the country's international visibility and contributes to the growth of the Gross Domestic Product and employment. The purpose of the study was to analyze the dynamics of inbound and domestic tourism and to assess their impact on the socio-economic development of the Republic of Moldova. The methodology applied combined quantitative analysis of statistical indicators for the period 2015–2024 with qualitative interpretation of policy measures and promotional outcomes. The research findings indicated a steady post-pandemic increase in tourist flows, a 62% rise in international arrivals compared to 2019, and an increase in tourism's contribution to the formation of the Gross Domestic Product to 1.8% in 2024. The conclusions highlighted that the synergy between domestic and inbound tourism enhances the competitiveness of the tourism sector and strengthens the image of the Republic of Moldova as an authentic and sustainable European destination.

Keywords: *international attractiveness, social cohesion, competitiveness, sustainable development, tourist flows, hospitality, cultural exchange.*

Rezumat. În procesul cercetării s-a analizat relația dintre turismul receptor și turismul intern ca piloni complementari ai pieței turistice din Republica Moldova și contribuția lor comună la creșterea economică, coeziunea socială și promovarea imaginii naționale. Motivația cercetării a derivat din rolul tot mai important al turismului în dezvoltarea durabilă și din recunoașterea internațională recentă a Moldovei, clasată în Top 10 destinații turistice europene cu cele mai bune performanțe în anul 2025. Ipoteza principală formulată în baza

rezultatelor cercetării efectuate, presupune că extinderea turismului receptor, susținută de cererea internă, consolidează vizibilitatea internațională a țării și contribuie la creșterea Produsului intern brut și a ocupării forței de muncă. Scopul lucrării a fost de a analiza dinamica turismului receptor și intern și de a evalua impactul acestora asupra dezvoltării socio-economice a Republicii Moldova. Metodologia utilizată a combinat analiza cantitativă a indicatorilor statistici pentru perioada 2015–2024 cu interpretarea calitativă a măsurilor de politici și a rezultatelor de promovare. Rezultatele cercetării au arătat o creștere constantă post-pandemică a fluxurilor turistice, o majorare cu 62% a sosirilor internaționale față de anul 2019 și o creștere a contribuției turismului la Formarea Produsului intern brut până la 1,8% în 2024. Concluziile au evidențiat faptul că sinergia dintre turismul intern și receptor amplifică competitivitatea sectorului turistic și consolidează imaginea Republicii Moldova ca destinație autentică și durabilă europeană.

Cuvinte cheie: *atractivitate internațională, coeziune socială, competitivitate, dezvoltare durabilă, fluxuri turistice, ospitalitate, schimb cultural.*

1. Introduction

Domestic and inbound tourism represent two fundamental components of the national tourism market, interconnected and complementary in nature. Although they target different segments of the public, both contribute essentially to the dynamics and stability of a country's tourism sector.

Domestic tourism, according to Law No. 352 of November 24, 2006 on the organization and conduct of tourism activities in the Republic of Moldova, refers to the travel of Moldovan residents within the national territory for tourism purposes [1]. Thus, domestic tourism reflects the population's mobility within its own borders and expresses citizens' desire to discover and make use of national tourism resources. Through its constant nature, domestic tourism provides a solid foundation for infrastructure development and for maintaining economic activity in the sector, even during periods of decline in international flows. It also plays an educational and identity-building role, contributing to strengthening the sense of belonging and to promoting the country's cultural and natural heritage.

In contemporary conditions, the development of a country's domestic tourism is extremely relevant, as the global pandemic and internal political events, such as wars, have had a major impact on the tourism industry. Such challenges and their consequences lead many countries to focus on domestic tourism as a means of maintaining economic stability. Mobilizing local resources and services becomes a priority for creating new jobs and developing local infrastructure [2].

The role of domestic tourism is complex and manifests itself through a series of positive effects on a country's economic, social, image-related, and ecological development, Figure 1.

Domestic tourism represents an essential pillar of the sustainable development of the national economy, making a significant contribution not only at the economic level but also in social, cultural, and ecological dimensions. Through its complex nature, it ensures the efficient use of internal resources and supports the balanced development of regions.

From an economic perspective, domestic tourism stimulates the demand for local goods and services, encourages domestic production, and contributes to the circulation of income within the country. It represents an important source of revenue for various types of businesses – from accommodation units and restaurants to artisans and local producers.

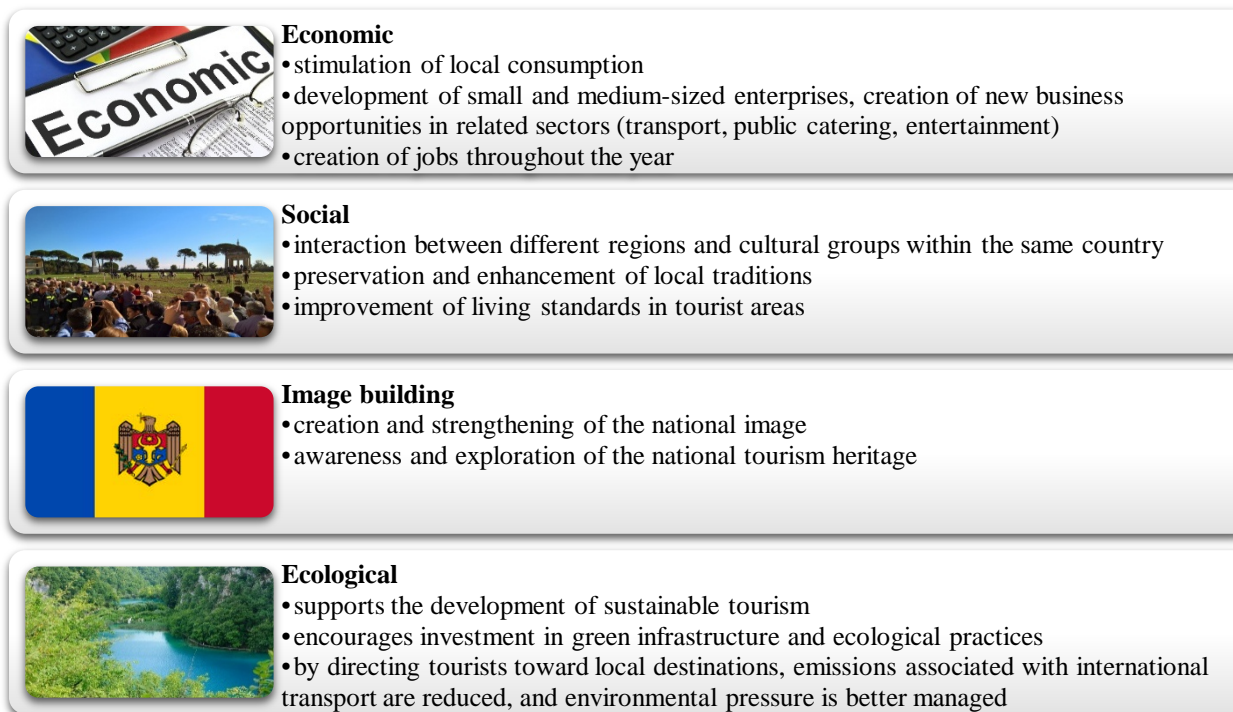


Figure 1. The multidimensional role of domestic tourism in the sustainable development.

Source: elaborated by the authors.

By energizing the services sector and creating stable jobs, domestic tourism becomes a constant driver of regional development, helping reduce economic disparities between urban and rural areas.

On a social level, domestic tourism promotes mutual understanding among residents of different regions, fostering intercultural dialogue and strengthening social cohesion. It supports the revitalization of local communities by offering young people employment alternatives and opportunities for professional development in less industrialized areas. At the same time, through the rediscovery of cultural heritage and traditions, domestic tourism contributes to strengthening the sense of identity and national pride. Thus, the best promoters of a country's tourism are its own citizens [3].

From a cultural perspective, it becomes a valuable tool for education and civic awareness. Participation in domestic tourism activities helps citizens understand the importance of preserving natural and historical heritage, fostering respect for the country's authentic values. By promoting areas with tourism potential, it creates stronger intergenerational ties and a deeper understanding of cultural diversity.

From an ecological standpoint, domestic tourism supports the transition toward a sustainable development model. The promotion of rural, ecological, and agrotourism encourages environmentally friendly practices such as the use of renewable resources, biodiversity protection, and pollution reduction. Moreover, by promoting nearby destinations, domestic tourism reduces carbon emissions associated with international travel, thus contributing to mitigating climate change.

In contrast, inbound tourism reflects a destination's ability to attract foreign visitors and integrate into international tourism flows. Through inbound tourism, a country projects its image globally, attracts foreign currency revenues, and diversifies its sources of economic growth [4]. Foreign tourists are a demanding audience, and their presence stimulates service

quality improvement, staff professionalization, and adaptation of the offer to international standards.

According to Law No. 352 of November 24, 2006 on the organization and conduct of tourism activities in the Republic of Moldova, inbound tourism refers to the reception, for tourism purposes, of foreign persons staying in the country for more than 24 hours [1].

Inbound tourism represents the activity through which a country receives foreign visitors for tourism purposes, including at least one overnight stay [5].

Also known as entry tourism, inbound tourism refers to tourism activities carried out by foreign visitors arriving in a country to spend a determined period of time there for recreation, business, cultural, or educational purposes, without engaging in remunerated activities in that country. It occupies a central place in the structure of international tourism, as it reflects the number of foreign tourists arriving in a country and the economic value they generate. Therefore, inbound tourism measures the international attractiveness of a tourist destination, serves as the main indicator of a country's competitiveness in the global tourism market, and constitutes the statistical basis for analyzing international tourist flows.

Inbound tourism is the main engine of international tourism development, as it transforms traveler flows into economic, cultural, and social benefits for host countries (Figure 2). It determines the balance of the international tourism account and directly influences a country's status in the global tourism market.

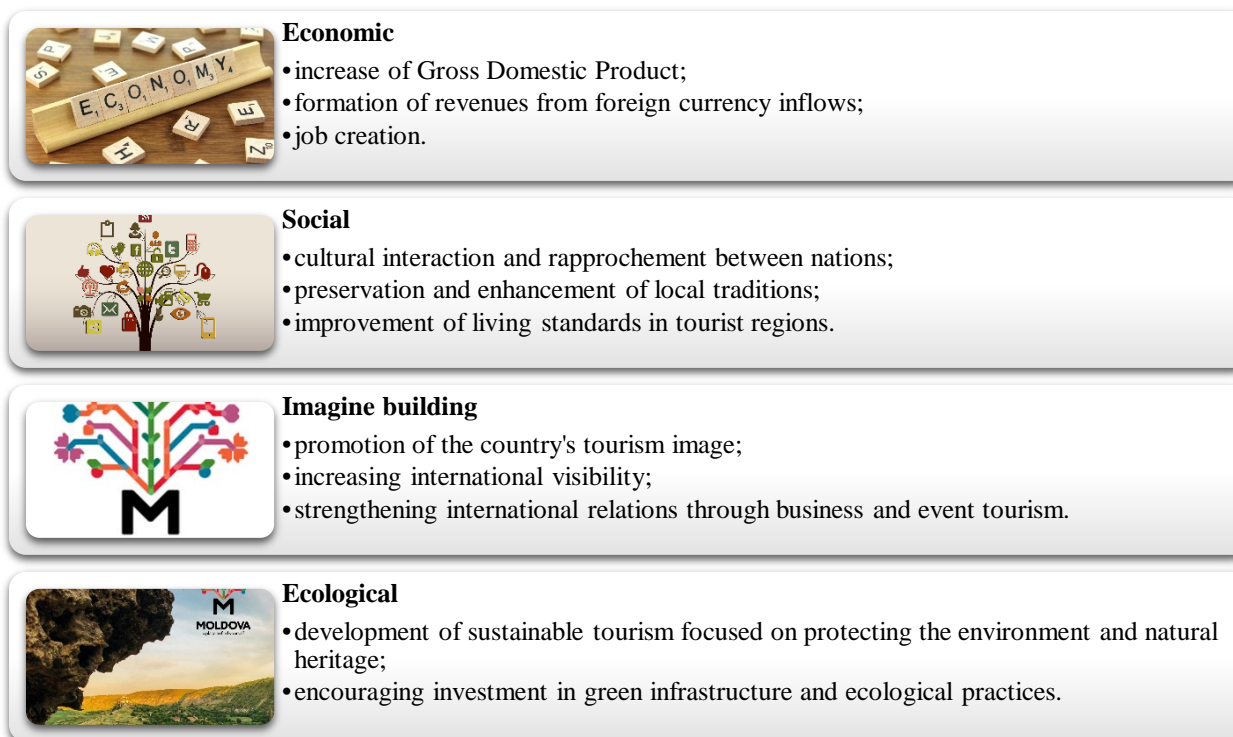


Figure 2. The role of inbound tourism in international tourism.

Source: elaborated by the authors.

By analyzing Figure 2, we can highlight that inbound tourism plays a complex and multidimensional role in international tourism, contributing simultaneously to economic development through Gross Domestic Product growth and foreign currency revenues, to social progress through cultural exchanges and improved living standards, to the strengthening of the country's international image, and to the promotion of an ecological

model of development based on sustainability and the protection of natural heritage. The tourism industry can play a significant role in the formation of a country's Gross Domestic Product, through contributions generated both by domestic consumption of tourism services and by revenues from international tourism. As a complex and multidimensional sector, it leverages the national tourism potential and a wide range of services, supporting economic development, the promotion of cultural identity, environmental protection, infrastructure modernization, and the improvement of quality of life [6].

Thus, inbound tourism represents one of the most important factors driving the national economy and integrating the country into the international tourism circuit. By attracting foreign visitors, it brings foreign currency and increases budget revenues, contributing to the balance of payments and the consolidation of the service sector. At the same time, it stimulates the development of transport, accommodation, and food service infrastructure, generating multiplier effects in other branches of the economy such as construction, agriculture, and trade.

The economic advantages of inbound tourism include the stimulation of local economies by the way in which foreign visitors generate income, create jobs, and boost local industries [7]. Tourism is of crucial importance in many countries, playing an essential role in the balance of payments and representing a significant source of foreign exchange earnings. Compared to the export of manufactured goods, tourism is the most efficient way to generate foreign currency income, as it is not affected by issues related to packaging and transportation [8].

From a social and cultural perspective, inbound tourism promotes the country's international image, enhances the recognition of local values, and increases the country's attractiveness as an authentic destination. It also encourages cultural and educational exchanges, facilitates intercultural dialogue, and strengthens friendship relations between peoples, thus contributing to better international understanding and cooperation. Governments also play an important role in this regard, by intervening in domestic tourism to stimulate employment, develop infrastructure, and reduce local poverty [9].

Other positive aspects can also be noted: international tourists spend, on average, three times more than domestic tourists per trip, and their booking periods are usually longer, which facilitates business planning [10].

According to research conducted by Coldwell Banker Richard Ellis, besides the advantages, inbound tourism can also create challenges related to the sustainable management of tourist flows, such as infrastructure overload and the loss of cultural authenticity of destinations [11].

Therefore, a relationship of complementarity is established between domestic and inbound tourism: while local tourists help maintain activity during the off-season, foreign tourists bring additional income and cultural diversity during peak periods. A country that capitalizes on its domestic potential builds a solid foundation for becoming attractive internationally. At the same time, the success of inbound tourism can stimulate national pride and the population's desire to rediscover their own country more deeply.

In other words, domestic and inbound tourism are two interdependent components of a whole. The former ensures the stability and continuity of the industry, while the latter brings global visibility and economic growth. Together, they contribute to strengthening a comprehensive tourism image and to the sustainable development of the destination.

2. Materials and Methods

The research is based on a mixed approach that combines quantitative analysis of statistical data, qualitative interpretation of trends and tourism policies, as well as scientific induction, deduction, and abstraction. The empirical material includes official data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), publications of the National Tourism Office of the Republic of Moldova, and the results of the authors' own calculations for the period 2015–2024. These data provide relevant insights into domestic and international tourist flows, tourism's contribution to gross domestic product formation, employment in the "Accommodation and Food Service" sector, and the level of wage income.

The research method applied is dynamic comparative analysis, which allows the identification of evolutionary trends and interdependencies between inbound and domestic tourism. In addition, structural and correlation analysis methods were used to assess the impact of tourism on the main macroeconomic and social indicators, as well as graphical and tabular methods to illustrate the dynamics of the analyzed phenomena.

For the processing of statistical data and the creation of graphical representations, the Microsoft Excel software was used, facilitating the interpretation of temporal developments. The qualitative analysis was complemented by the study of national and international strategic documents on tourism development, particularly the National Tourism Development Strategy 2030 and the UNWTO reports on Moldova's tourism performance.

By combining these methods, the research provides a solid foundation for interpreting the results and formulating conclusions regarding the impact of domestic and inbound tourism on the sustainable development and image promotion of the Republic of Moldova.

3. Results

The analysis of statistical data and qualitative information obtained through the research highlights the positive evolution of inbound and domestic tourism in the Republic of Moldova during the period 2015–2024. The research results confirm that these two components of the tourism market act synergistically, generating significant economic, social, ecological, and image-related effects. The constant growth of visitor flows, the consolidation of accommodation capacity, and the modernization of tourism infrastructure demonstrate the positive development of the sector and the increasingly deep integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European tourism circuit.

The advantages of inbound tourism are directly reflected in the upward trend of international arrivals (Figure 3), confirming the positive impact of investments in the modernization of the tourism sector and strategic promotion processes. The significant increase in the number of foreign visitors and the diversification of their countries of origin demonstrate the effectiveness of the measures implemented to stimulate tourist mobility and strengthen the international visibility of the Republic of Moldova.

Analyzing Figure 3, a general upward trend can be observed in the number of foreign tourists visiting the country, with some fluctuations caused by external factors. Between 2015 and 2019, the flow of visitors remained relatively stable, fluctuating between 15000 and 20000 persons per year, followed by a sharp decline in 2020 (6950 persons) caused by the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Starting from 2021, a gradual and steady recovery of inbound tourism is noticeable – from 24006 persons in 2021 to 43597 in 2023, reaching a significant peak in 2024, with

67631 foreign tourists, the highest number recorded during the analyzed period. These increases confirm the strengthening of Moldova's position as an emerging tourism destination in the region.

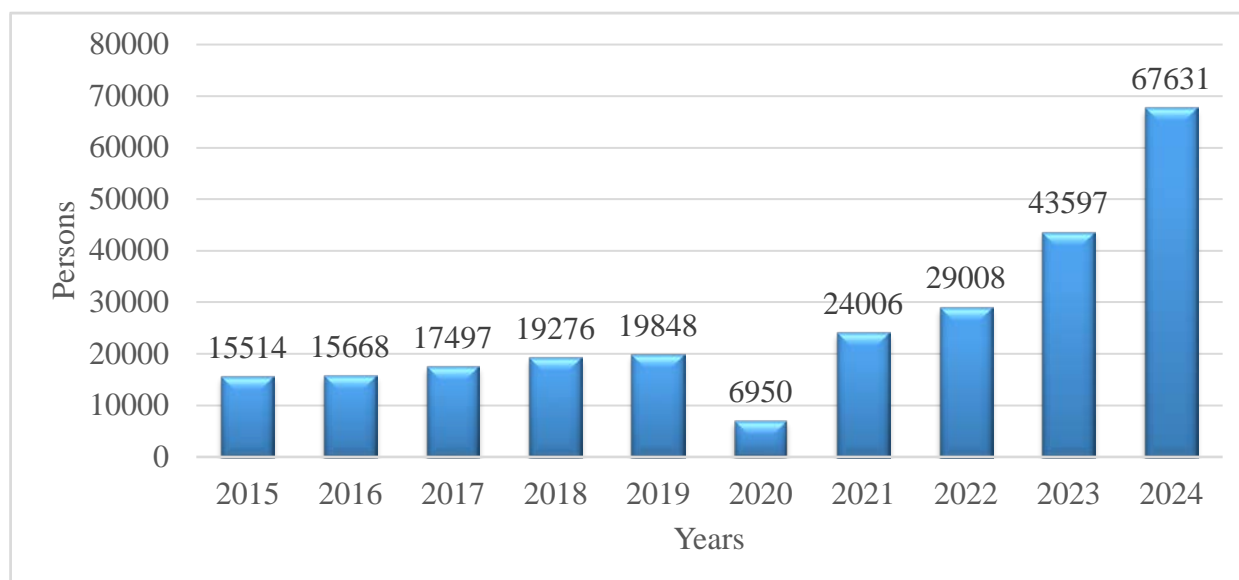


Figure 3. Dynamics of inbound tourism in the Republic of Moldova during 2015–2025, persons.

Source: elaborated by the authors based on data from the National Bureau of Statistics [12].

In 2024, the number of foreign citizens visiting the Republic of Moldova through travel agencies increased by 55.1% compared to 2023. The majority of visitors (92.0%) were excursionists (one-day visitors) who traveled for leisure, recreation, and entertainment purposes. The largest shares of visitors came from Romania (67.2% of all foreign citizens visiting the country) and Italy (13.5%). In 2024, the number of tourist-days increased by 24.8% compared to 2023. The average length of stay of foreign tourists also increased, reaching 4.0 days compared to 3.8 days in 2023.

To obtain an overall view of the complementary role of domestic and inbound tourism in the development of the national tourism industry, Figure 4 presents a comparative analysis of the dynamics of the two segments during the period 2015–2025. This comparison highlights the interdependence between domestic and international flows, showing how domestic tourism ensures the stability of the sector during times of crisis, while inbound tourism contributes to enhancing the visibility and competitiveness of the Republic of Moldova in the global tourism market.

It is observed that in the post-pandemic years, both segments experienced significant growth: the number of domestic tourists and excursionists increased from 42848 persons in 2021 to over 123000 in 2022, maintaining a high level thereafter, while the number of foreign visitors grew almost tenfold compared to 2020, reaching 67631 in 2024.

This parallel evolution confirms that domestic tourism acts as a catalyst for inbound tourism by strengthening infrastructure, diversifying the tourism offer, and promoting local destinations. At the same time, the growth of inbound tourism reflects the country's internationalization efforts and the promotion of Moldova's image abroad, as well as the improvement of accessibility and the quality of tourism services.

Therefore, the dynamics illustrated in the Figure demonstrate the interdependence between domestic and international tourism, emphasizing that the harmonious development

of both segments contributes to enhancing the competitiveness of the national tourism sector and to the integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European tourism circuit.

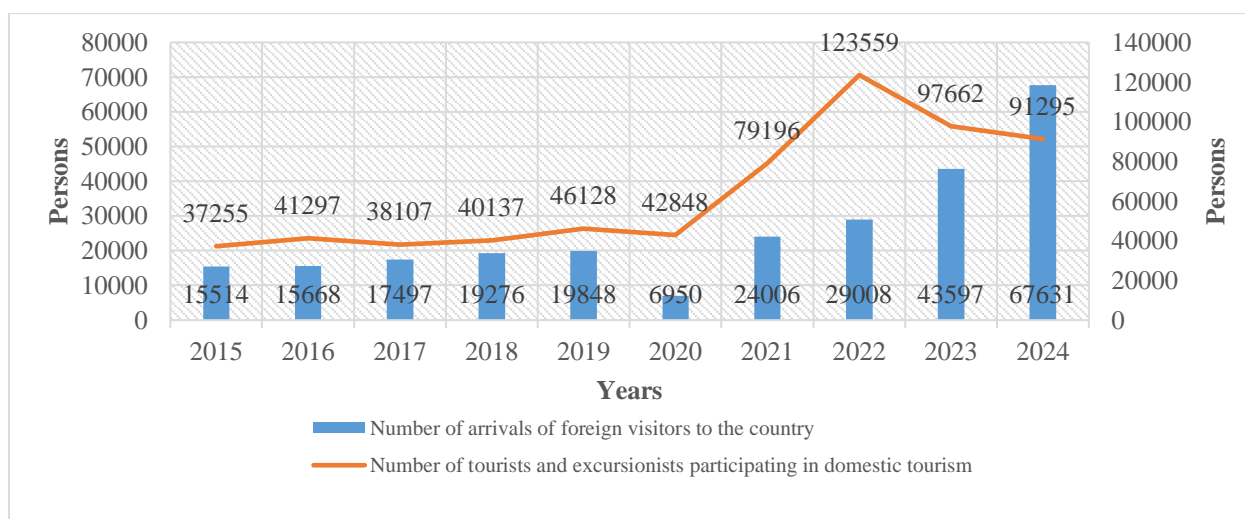


Figure 4. Comparative dynamics of inbound and domestic tourism in the Republic of Moldova during 2015–2024.

Source: elaborated by the authors based on data from the National Bureau of Statistics [12].

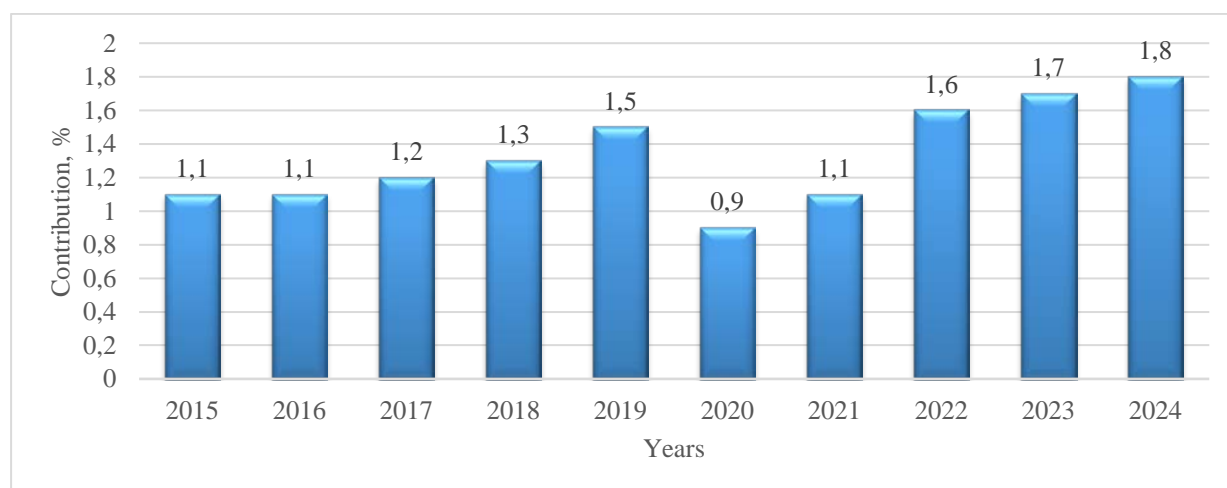


Figure 5. Contribution of the accommodation and food service sector to Gross Domestic Product formation in the Republic of Moldova during 2015–2024.

Source: elaborated by the authors based on data from the National Bureau of Statistics [13].

The progress of domestic and inbound tourism is not limited to sectoral benefits but also has a significant macroeconomic impact, contributing to the growth of the Gross Domestic Product and to the sustainable development of the Republic of Moldova. This synchronized growth of domestic and international tourist flows is directly reflected in Figure 5, which illustrates how the expansion of tourism-related activities has generated an increasingly important contribution of the accommodation and food service sector to Gross Domestic Product formation.

The contribution of inbound and domestic tourism to Gross Domestic Product formation in the Republic of Moldova during 2015–2024 reflects the evolution of the tourism sector's share in the national economy and reveals a general upward trend in its importance.

During the 2015–2019 period, tourism's contribution to Gross Domestic Product gradually increased from 1.1% to 1.5%, driven by the intensification of travel agency

activities, the rise in the number of foreign visitors, and the diversification of domestic tourism services. In 2020, under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the sector experienced a sharp decline to 0.9%, caused by travel restrictions and the global decrease in tourism demand. After 2021, Moldovan tourism entered a phase of rapid recovery, supported by economic recovery policies, the promotion of domestic tourism, and the attraction of foreign visitors through digital marketing programs and international events. As a result, its contribution to Gross Domestic Product increased steadily, reaching 1.6% in 2022, 1.7% in 2023, and 1.8% in 2024 – the highest level of the analyzed period.

This positive dynamic confirms that inbound and domestic tourism are becoming an increasingly important pillar of the national economy, generating multiple multiplier effects such as stimulating investment, creating jobs (Table 1), enhancing the country's image, and generating fiscal revenues. From this perspective, the tourism industry is considered an important driver of economic growth, showing a steady pace of development both in prosperous regions and in developing areas. At the same time, there is a reciprocal relationship between tourism and the economy, as high levels of household income and investments in tourism infrastructure can further stimulate the growth of this sector [14].

Table 1

Evolution of the number of employees and average monthly wages in the accommodation and food service sector

Indicator	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of employees engaged in accommodation and food service activities, persons.	15832	16183	16560	17379	18343	14948	18015	16932	19918	22728
Number of employees engaged in hotels and other accommodation facilities, persons.	2025	2123	1837	1911	2060	1595	1502	1828	2233	2396
Number of employees engaged in restaurants and other food service activities, persons.	13808	14060	14723	15467	16284	13354	16513	15104	17685	20332
Average monthly wage in accommodation and food service activities, MDL.	3043.7	3331.3	3668.0	4248.5	4973	4920.2	5249.9	6320.5	7424.2	8907.2
Average monthly wage of employees in hotels and other accommodation facilities, MDL.	4164.6	4672.8	4861.8	5507.3	6053.6	6005.2	6782.6	8196.0	9 779,7	11224.1
Average monthly wage of employees in restaurants and other food service activities, MDL.	2846.8	3073.0	3471.3	4052,5	4807.9	4777.8	5107.0	6061.0	7096.8	8598.5

Source: elaborated by the authors based on data from the National Bureau of Statistics [15].

The analysis of the data in Table 1 highlights a steady upward trend in both employment and remuneration within this sector, particularly in the most recent years of the analyzed period. The total number of employees increased from 15832 persons in 2015 to 22728 persons in 2024, indicating an expansion of activities in the tourism and hospitality

industry, driven by the development of both domestic and inbound tourism. The visible growth after 2021 confirms the post-pandemic recovery of the sector and its consolidation as an important source of employment and social inclusion.

At the same time, the average monthly wages increased significantly: in accommodation activities, from 4164.6 MDL in 2015 to 11224.1 MDL in 2024, and in food service activities, from 2846.8 MDL to 8598.5 MDL. This evolution reflects the growing demand for qualified labor, the professionalization of tourism services, and the improvement of living standards in tourist regions.

Therefore, the data confirm that the development of inbound and domestic tourism has had a positive social impact, contributing to job creation and retention, including for young people and women, as well as to the increase of incomes and well-being among employees in the sector.

Overall, tourism is consolidating its role as a source of sustainable socio-economic development, offering direct benefits to local communities and supporting social cohesion by diversifying employment opportunities and increasing household incomes. Strengthening this sector thus represents a strategic direction for sustainable development, capable of enhancing competitiveness and diversifying the economy of the Republic of Moldova.

The simultaneous development of inbound and domestic tourism in the Republic of Moldova contributes not only to Gross Domestic Product growth and employment expansion but also to strengthening the country's image as an emerging tourism destination in the region. The data presented in the previous figures—regarding the dynamics of foreign visitor arrivals, the evolution of domestic tourism, and the tourism sector's contribution to Gross Domestic Product—allow for the construction of a coherent picture of this impact.

The increase in domestic tourist flows plays an essential role in shaping a culture of hospitality and in the internal validation of tourist destinations. Residents traveling within the country become ambassadors of the national image through personal recommendations, online activity, and participation in local events. Domestic tourism thus serves to test and refine tourism products before their intensive promotion on international markets.

Inbound tourism amplifies this effect by providing international exposure to the image of the Republic of Moldova. As the number of foreign visitors increases, so do reviews, photographs, and impressions shared on digital platforms, strengthening the country's tourism brand visibility. Participation in wine festivals, cultural and gastronomic events, and heritage-themed tours creates memorable experiences that translate into positive perceptions of Moldova as an authentic and hospitable destination. This fact is also confirmed by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), according to which the Republic of Moldova ranked among the Top 10 European destinations with the best tourism performance in the first half of 2025, registering a 62% increase in international arrivals compared to 2019 [16].

Furthermore, the increase in revenues and investments in the tourism sector enables the modernization of accommodation, food service, and leisure infrastructure, contributing to the improvement of quality standards and the promotion of sustainable tourism.

4. Discussion

The research results confirm the hypothesis that domestic and inbound tourism act as two complementary pillars of sustainable development and of strengthening the image of the Republic of Moldova in the European context. The simultaneous growth of both segments after the pandemic period demonstrates a solid recovery and a maturation of the national

tourism market. Compared with previous studies [7,9,10], here is clear evidence of a correlation between the intensification of tourism flows and the expansion of tourism's contribution to Gross Domestic Product formation, employment, and the stimulation of related economic activities such as food services, transport, and cultural industries.

In comparative terms, the results recorded in the Republic of Moldova follow the trends observed in other emerging economies, where domestic tourism has become a crisis-mitigation instrument [2]. At the same time, the expansion of inbound tourism indicates a deeper integration into the international tourism circuit, confirming the statements of the [16] regarding the increasing competitiveness and visibility of the Republic of Moldova among the top European destinations.

The interpretation of the results in the context of previous studies highlights a clear synergy between the economic, social, image-related, and ecological dimensions of tourism. From an economic perspective, the multiplier effects of inbound tourism are confirmed by the significant increase in salaries and employment in the hospitality sector. From a social perspective, domestic tourism contributes to fostering a culture of hospitality and to strengthening regional cohesion by encouraging the participation of local communities. From an image-building perspective, the interaction between domestic and foreign tourists transforms authentic local experiences into international image capital, contributing to the repositioning of the Republic of Moldova as an authentic, safe, and sustainable destination.

However, the study also identifies certain limitations. The lack of an extensive database on domestic tourist mobility, the fragmentation of statistical information at the regional level, and the insufficient availability of service quality indicators may reduce the accuracy of estimates and hinder dynamic analysis. Moreover, external factors – such as regional geopolitical instability and climate change – can significantly influence tourist flows, requiring constant monitoring.

Future research directions should include the analysis of the impact of digitalization and the green transition on tourist behavior, the integration of sustainability performance indicators (assessing how entities manage their environmental impact) into the evaluation of sectoral performance, and the development of an econometric forecasting model for domestic and inbound tourist flows. Strengthening interdisciplinary research and institutional cooperation between academia, the public sector, and private operators would allow for a more comprehensive approach to understanding the role of tourism in sustainable development and in the international promotion of the Republic of Moldova's image.

5. Conclusions

The analysis of quantitative indicators and qualitative effects confirms that domestic and inbound tourism exert a direct, complex, and lasting impact on promoting the image of the Republic of Moldova both domestically and internationally. Domestic tourism stands out as a strategic component of sustainable development, contributing to the consolidation of national identity, the valorization of cultural and natural heritage, and the strengthening of local communities' capacity to provide competitive tourism services. Through the direct involvement of the population in tourism activities, it stimulates entrepreneurial spirit, develops local infrastructure, and promotes social cohesion, reducing economic disparities between regions and reinforcing the sense of belonging to the national space.

At the same time, inbound tourism transforms local experiences and values into international image capital, positioning the Republic of Moldova as an authentic, safe, and

sustainable destination. The steady increase in the flow of foreign visitors reflects the effectiveness of external promotion policies and the creation of a competitive tourism environment, which generates significant economic benefits through the attraction of investments, foreign currency resources, and cross-border partnerships. Thus, the Republic of Moldova asserts its visibility on the map of contemporary European tourism, gradually integrating into the network of internationally recognized destinations.

Moreover, the growth of tourism's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product, along with the increase in employment and income in the accommodation and food service sector, demonstrates the effectiveness of public policies and investments focused on infrastructure, digitalization, sustainability, and human resource professionalization. These developments highlight the maturation of the national tourism market and the transition from a quantitative to a qualitative and sustainable model of development.

In conclusion, tourism is becoming a strategic driver of economic and social development, a key instrument for strengthening the positive image of the Republic of Moldova, and a platform for asserting the country's cultural, natural, and identity values. The strategic and sustainable development of domestic and inbound tourism must remain a national priority, as it contributes not only to economic growth but also to enhancing the international reputation of the Republic of Moldova as a hospitable, responsible, and competitive destination within the European space.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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jes@meridian.utm.md