Environmental features of interest for tourism in Romanian rural destinations

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Abstract: Rural tourism is an emerging sector in Romania, benefitting from an increasing consideration from all the tourism actors - tourists, tourism investors and authorities. However, not all rural destinations observe the same success in terms of tourist influx. Among the major factors influencing the tourism influx are those related to the existing infrastructure, tourism products and services available and their quality. Nonetheless, the climate and environmental features of the destination may also play an important role, as they contribute to build the destination image. The link between climate, environment and tourism is well acknowledged, yet little attention has been given to the identification of the natural environmental features of most interest for tourists when choosing a certain rural destination. We address this issue by using an online survey disseminated in Romania during January-February 2023. The results indicate that the relief and the presence of natural vegetation play an important role in tourists decision regarding the selection of a rural destination for their vacations. Furthermore, the human-made environment (e.g., buildings, monuments) is also of interest for a part of the tourists. The study indicates possible options toward exploiting more efficiently the destination assets in building its image as well as toward the development of a climate product relevant for tourists and rural destinations.