



## **IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE ON TOURIST DESTINATIONS. A CASE STUDY IN ROMANIA**

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### **Biographical Notes**

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### **Abstract**

Globalization may increase development opportunities for tourist profiled destinations but is also a source of economic vulnerabilities if they lack adaptive capacity to context changes. One of those is the climate, a global issue that may negatively impact these localities, which can face the path of simple survival or, worse, decline, as natural resources often play a key role in recreational and tourism-related activities. Romania has many localities with tourist traditions now facing direct competition from other tourist destinations or companies from abroad in an EU-free people movement context, struggling for both tourists and the skilled labour force. This paper aims to identify some of

the comparative advantages and adaptive capacities on the local level that may contribute to sustainable development, despite adverse climate changes reality, based on a study case, Predeal, a tourist destination that profiles itself mainly, as a winter sports resort even that climate reality is no longer that favourable.

**Keywords:** climate change, economic vulnerability, globalization, adaptability, local development strategy

**JEL Classification:** L83, O18, Q26, Q54

## 1. Introduction

The scientific concept of vulnerability defined by the global change literature is multidimensional and provides a useful framework for analysing the consequences of these changes on human societies. One of its facets is economic vulnerability, which has various definitions and interpretations (Brauch et al., 2011). Most simply, it can be associated with a disturbance that affects any economic activity because of exposure to factors that produce shocks. The risk of a country/region/locality being affected by shocks depends on the size and likelihood of shock, the exposure to shocks, and the ability of the economy to respond to shocks.

Although climate change has been happening for a long time, its acceleration, which has become visible to everyone, is critical and can currently be perceived as a shock that has not been sufficiently aware by the large population. To these was added the shock of the pandemic, which generated major fluctuations in tourist activity. The tourism sector is very vulnerable to climate change, but at the same time, it is also a generator of greenhouse gases (GHG), which causes global warming. Alarm signals have been raised for a long time globally, and the systems that offer tourist services are trying to adapt. Two decades ago, international organizations drew attention to the impact of climate change on tourism (World Tourism Organization and UNEP, 2008), and then the question arose of the need to adapt tourism to these changes (Barrios et al., 2014). In this context, considering the objectives established by the European Green Deal, the European Commission has formulated legislative initiatives addressed to both public and private sector tourism organizations to place the tourism industry in the green transition (European Commission. Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs., 2022). The call for commitment to reduce carbon emissions (One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme, 2021) comes to reinforce the need for international collaboration to ensure the resilience of tourism. Their actions are aligned with 5 pathways defined in the Declaration: *measure, decarbonize, regenerate, collaborate, and finance*. This paper aims to identify some adaptive possibilities and opportunities for ongoing local/regional economic activities in the present challenging and climate-changing global context. It focuses on the consequences of global warming on mountain areas with a ski tourism profile in the NUTS2 region Centru of Romania. The case study based on the example of the city of Predeal, included in Brasov County, highlights the need to adapt economic activities, especially tourism, to the new context.

## **2. Literature review**

The regional impact of climate change in the field of European tourism is a distinct concern, considering that Europe stands as the most visited region in the world and accounts for 51% of all international arrivals (582 million tourists) and 41% of tourism receipts (Matei et al., 2023). Some studies support decision-makers who can take systematic measures to adapt to the new climate conditions so that economic activity can continue, but on other bases (European Commission, DG Climate Action, 2020). Due to the increasing importance of tourism for local and regional economies and its unique spatial structure, economic development should also be pointed out on the local/regional level (Goranczewski and Puciato, 2011).

A range of studies have explored adaptation strategies for mountain tourist destinations in the context of climate change. Bartels et al. (2007) emphasize the importance of installing weather-independent alternative products and infrastructure, implementing technical improvements, and offering year-round activities. Jopp et al. (2010) and Bonzanigo et al. (2016) further develop this idea, with Jopp proposing a framework for regional destination adaptation and Bonzanigo applying a participatory decision support process to analyse adaptation strategies in the Dolomites. Bonzanigo et al. (2016) and Campos Rodrigues et al. (2018) highlight the need for participatory decision-making processes and the potential socio-economic and environmental implications of adaptation measures, such as the production of artificial snow and the diversification of recreation activities. Zhang (2014) suggests broadening sources of income and reducing expenditure as effective strategies. Hoy (2011) and Pröbstl-Haider (2020) discuss the need for diversifying tourist options and the potential impacts of climate change on outdoor activities, respectively. Bausch (2019) provides a case study of a ski resort in the Bavarian Alps, which transformed into an all-season destination through a climate-change adaptation strategy. Amelung et al. (2007) underscores the importance of risk assessment and the need for both limitation and adaptation. Joye (2018) highlights the role of legal constraints and the potential socio-economic and environmental implications of adaptation measures in mountain areas. Cocolas et al. (2016) delve into the behavioural adaptation of winter alpine tourists, highlighting the role of tourist motivations and leisure substitutability in response to climate change impacts. These studies underscore the urgency of climate change adaptation in the tourism industry and the potential for successful transformation.

### 3. Method

The main data sources of the paper are INS (National Institute of Statistics), DJS (County Statistics Department), ANM (National Meteorological Administration), Predeal Town Hall's official website<sup>1</sup>.

The research method consists of a descriptive statistical analysis of the available data and a predominantly qualitative analysis based on the SWOT model. SWOT: S – Strengths, W – Weaknesses, O – Opportunities and T – Threats. It is commonly presented as a 2 by 2 table or matrix to emphasize a holistic view of those four categories. According to Watkins and Leigh (2009), the strengths and weaknesses are addressed as internal enhancers and respective inhibitors, whereas the opportunities and threats are considered external enhancers and respective inhibitors.

**Figure 1.** A conventional SWOT table or matrix

Internal	STRENGTHS a. b. c.	WEAKNESS a. b. c.
	OPPORTUNITIES a. b. c.	THREATS a. b. c.
External	Enhancer	Inhibitor

**Source:** Watkins and Leigh, 2009

Considering this comprehensive approach, identification of internal and external enhancers and inhibitors is important for several reasons, considering the aim of this paper: a general or holistic understanding of the destination's current position and potential, enhancing its competitiveness, identification of strategic priorities, of challenges, and risks, capitalizing on opportunities and planning of future sustainable development strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.primaria-predeal.ro/>

## 4. Results and discussion

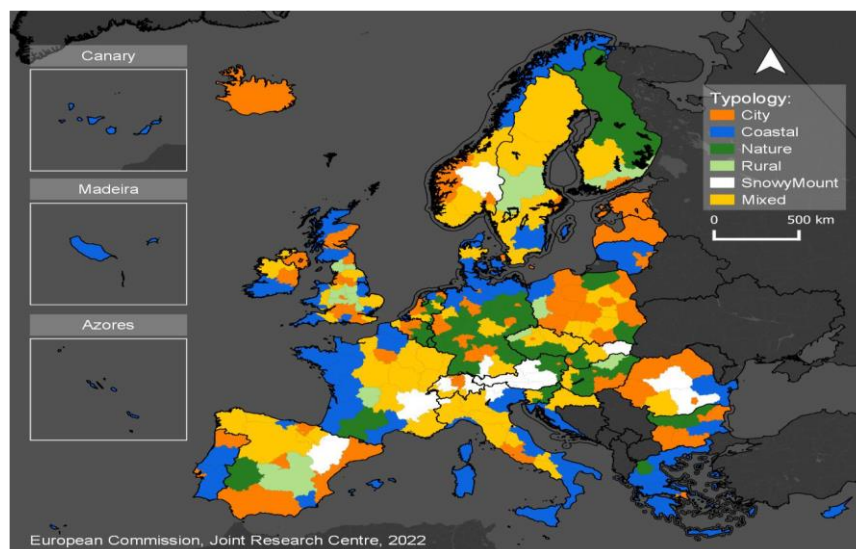
### 4.1. Implications of climate change in Brasov County in Romania

Romania has a significant area of natural mountain environment with tourism potential. For this reason, this work selected an area where the impact of climate change can be observed at the regional and local levels. To illustrate this situation, we have chosen the case of mountain areas that benefit from snow and natural conditions for winter sports.

According to Eurostat, “Snowy mountains” contain mountain areas with a significant share of snow cover surface. This was achieved by selecting cells above 800 m where snow cover was predominant for at least 60 consecutive days. Figure 2 displays that an important European surface is considered a “Snowy mountains” type. In recent years, in all the white areas mentioned on the map, the skiing conditions have become less favourable, implying additional investments. According to recent research, without snowmaking, 53% and 98% of the 2,234 ski resorts studied in 28 European countries are projected to be at very high risk for snow supply under global warming of 2 °C and 4 °C, respectively (François et al., 2023).

Brasov County is in an area of snowy mountains and is part of the NUTS 2 region *Centru*. Ski tourism is a substantial component of tourist activity. According to Eurostat data, it can be noticed that Romania does not count on the map of winter sports in Europe from the perspective of the importance of ski resorts.

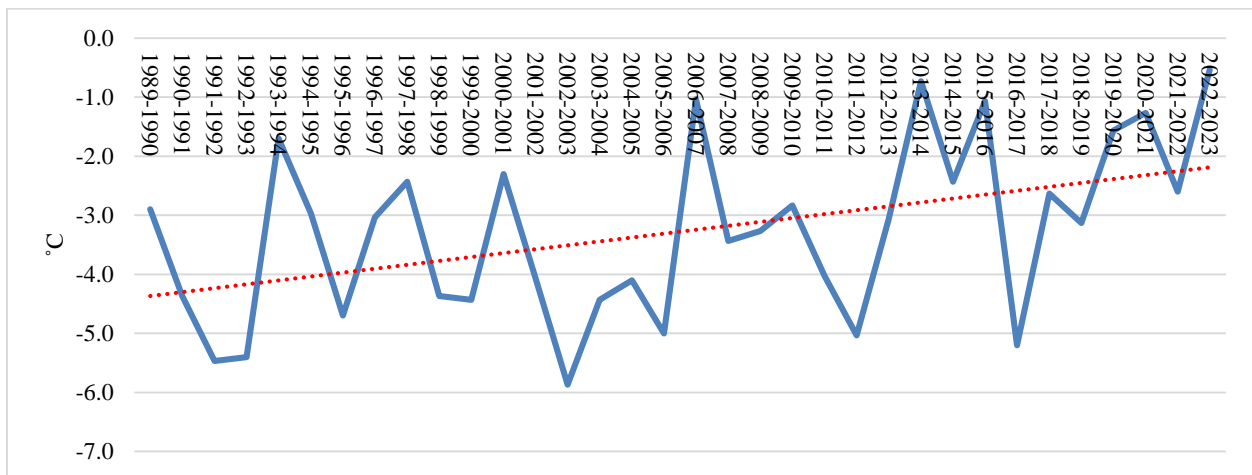
**Figure 2.** European regions typology NUTS2



**Source:** Matei et al., 2023

In Romania, the ski season is generally relatively short. The impact of global warming is also felt to a certain extent in Predeal, 1091 m altitude, considering the trend of temperature increase in the last three decades (Figure 3).

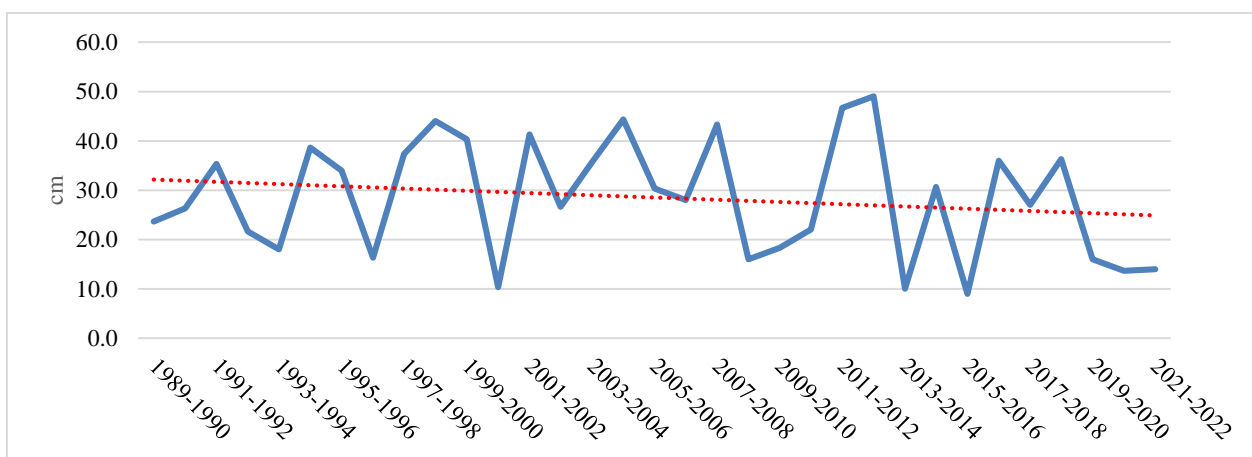
**Figure 3.** Average temperature (°C) in Predeal, December- February, 1989-2023



Source: A.N.M. – National Meteorological Agency

Correlated with rising temperatures, there is a certain tendency for the snow layer to shrink. Regarding 2013 – 2022, it can be noticed that the average number of days with a snow layer has decreased, being significantly under the same average of past decades. The latest years have been much warmer for the referenced period 1900 – 2022, culminating with 2015 and 2019, 2020, and 2022. Comparing the interval 1961 – 2000 with 2013 – 2022, the average number of days with snow per year has reduced from 72.8 to 46 in Brasov and from 137 to 115.9 in Predeal.

**Figure 4.** Average thickness of the snow layer (cm) in Predeal, 1989 – 2022



Source: A.N.M. – National Meteorological Agency

In general, in Romania, the winter tourist season is between December and February. In November and in the spring months, the snow layer in the resorts is maintained for much fewer days compared to the previous period. For example, the average in Predeal, in November, was 12 days in 1961-2000, and lately, it has been reduced to 6.5 days. At the same time, in April, there were, on average, 10 days with snow in Predeal, and in recent years, there were, on average, less than 7 days.

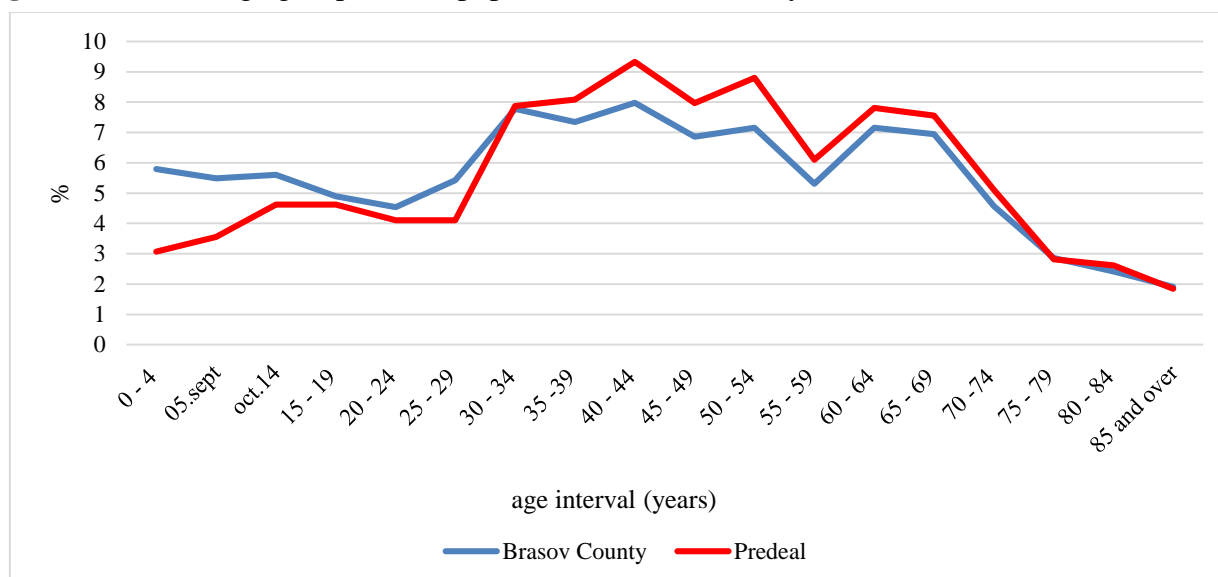
## 4.2. The current profile of the city of Predeal

Predeal is the smallest city in Brasov County, with a declining population, from 5319 people in 2014 to 4589 people in 2023, according to INS data. Population decline in Romania is a general phenomenon, and most localities face this problem. However,

while the population of the city of Predeal decreased by 13.7%, the resident population of Brasov County remained the same, even increasing by 0.48% in the same interval.

In 2020, Predeal's population was older than that of Brasov County (Figure 5). However, Predeal's decline and more pronounced aging compared to the county in which it is located show that the city is comparatively less attractive. The population's tendency to leave the locality, especially by emigrating abroad, is correlated with insufficient local economic development regarding its expectations.

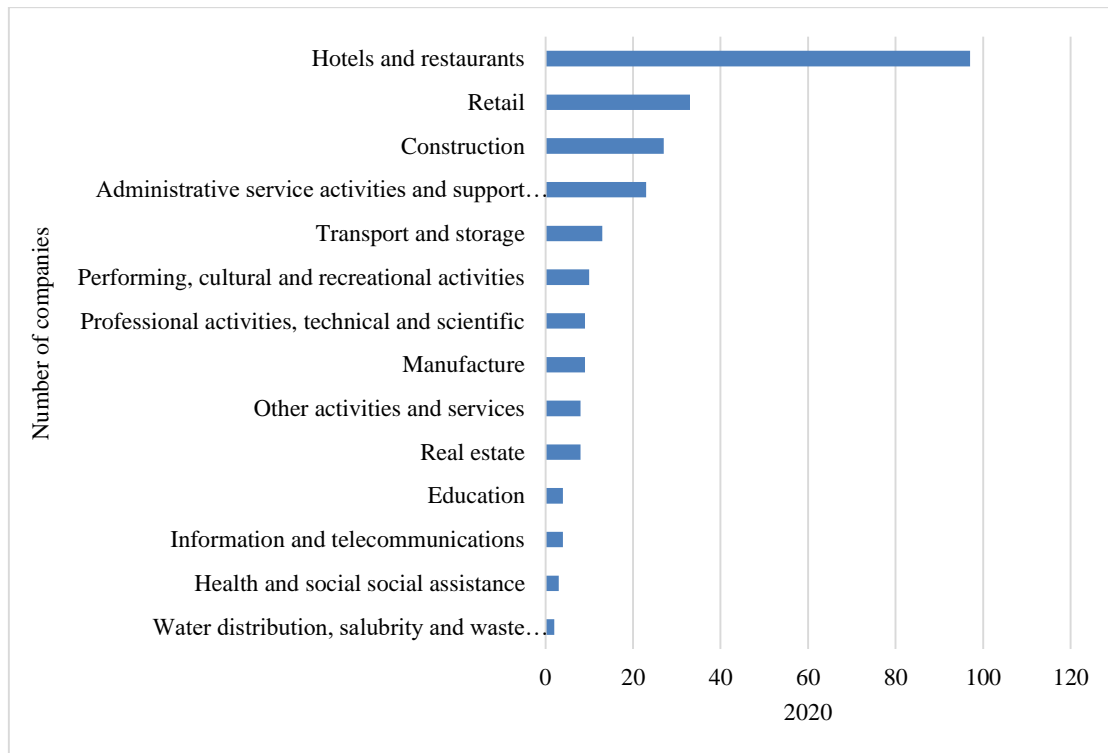
**Figure 5.** Share of age group in total population, Brasov County and Predeal, 2020



Source: DJS – County Statistics Department

In Predeal, the most representative activity in 2020 (and in all previous periods) is tourism, followed at a great distance by trade, construction, and services (Figure 6). Predeal is a mountain resort town. The number of tourists who arrived was about 16-17% of total arrivals in Brasov County.

**Figure 6.** Predeal - Total number of active companies by type of activity (NACE rev. 2), 2020

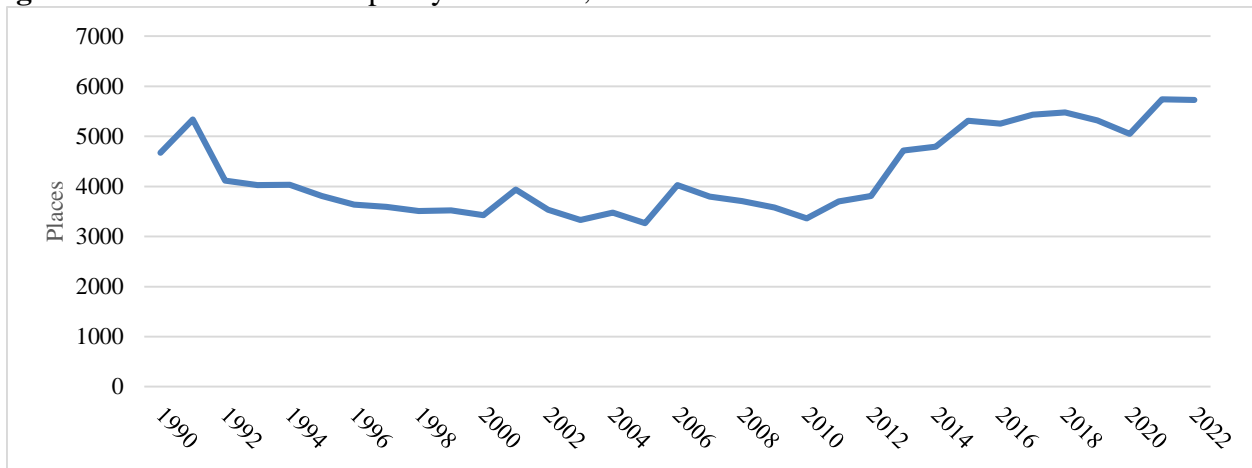


Source: DJS – County Statistics Department

In 2020 the business environment was populated by a significant number of companies or other forms of legal organization (authorized persons, individual enterprises) whose economic activity is extremely small or non-existent. Out of an average number of approximately 593 entities registered at the Trade Registry and having an active status (during the analysed period), only approximately 40% (on average) registered economic activity. The number of tourist guesthouses increased rapidly, from 4 units in 2001 to 80 units in 2018, then falling to 70 in 2020 and 62 in 2022. The number of hotels increased, from 13 in 1990 to a maximum number of 35 in 2018 and then reduced to 32 in 2022. Other types of accommodation units are added to this (tourist villas, chalets, student camps). The tourist accommodation capacity in Predeal had an increasing trend, more accentuated after the 2008-2010 economic crisis (Figure 7).



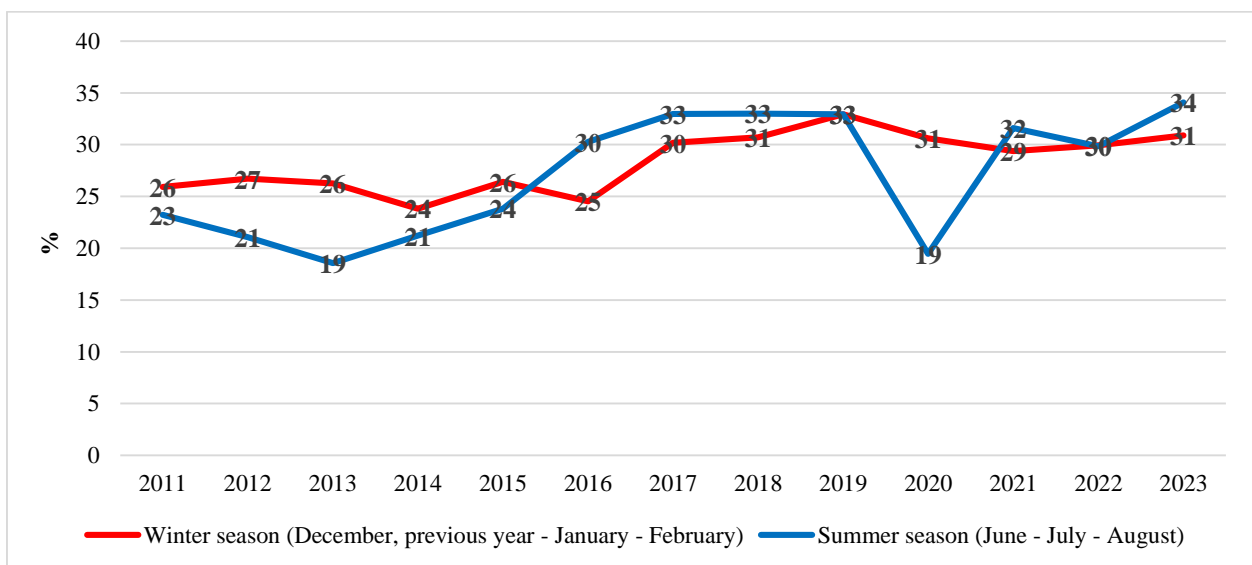
**Figure 7.** Accommodation capacity in Predeal, 1990 - 2022



Source: INS – National Institute of Statistics

The net utilization index of the tourist accommodation capacity in operation, calculated by reporting the number of overnight stays to the capacity of tourist accommodation in operation, indicates a low level of occupancy, strongly marked by the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, it is observed that starting with the year 2015, except for 2020, the index was more favourable in the summer than in the winter, unlike the previous periods. In Predeal, the 12-month net utilization index of accommodation capacity is, on average, 26% in 2022, compared to the average index of 30.1 % in all tourist areas in Romania (INS data). In Predeal, the country level of the index was reached, in recent years, only in the peak winter season, while in the summer season, this indicator is only slightly higher (Figure 8).

**Figure 8.** Index of net utilization of accommodation capacity in Predeal, 2011-2023



Source: INS – National Institute of Statistics, own calculations

Regarding foreign tourists, the highest number of foreign tourists in Predeal was in 2018, with 23,896 people, with a total weight of 10.86%, like the weight of 9.89% of foreign tourists in the mountain area of Romania. In 2019, the total number of foreign tourists dropped to 13,237, while the share of foreign tourists was only 5.6%, well below the mountain area average of 8.5% in Romania. The pandemic has drastically interrupted the flow of foreign tourists, so data are relevant only starting with 2022.

### **4.3. SWOT Analysis of local tourism**

In market research or strategic management, the SWOT analysis goal is to provide an objective view of the internal and external environment of an organization and involves the identification of internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats through a range of data and information empirically collected and independently verifiable (Watkins and Leigh, 2009). STRENGTHS or internal positive factors represents the most important resources and other elements that may improve competitive position (Goranczewski and Puciato, 2011). WEAKNESSES or internal negative factors existing during analysis are barriers to development (Nazarko et al., 2017). OPPORTUNITIES refers to external, uncontrollable factors, and an effective strategy must consider the advantages that the organization or analyzed entity may take from these favorable circumstances (Chermack and Kasshanna, 2007). THREATS are also related to the external environment, factors that may negatively affect the analysed entity. Some risks or barriers impede development or goal achievement (Goranczewski and Puciato, 2011).

The enhancer/inhibitors approach was used to underline each identified factor's contribution to the destination's performance and to develop a recommendation section. Future research must be conducted to assess the degree of each identified factor's capacity to enhance or inhibit Predeal's performance as a tourist destination.

The following SWOT Analysis is based on data from INS (National Institute of Statistics), DJS (County Statistics Department), ANM (National Meteorological Administration), Predeal Town Hall's official website<sup>2</sup>.

#### **STRENGTHS**

- ✓ The most representative local economic activity, by turnover and number of employees, is related to tourism (accommodation, catering, and leisure services).

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.primaria-predeal.ro/>

- ✓ Legal certification as a tourist destination of national interest (according to HG 1122/2002<sup>3</sup>).
- ✓ Abundance of natural and climate factors favour tourist traffic, outdoor activities, and sports practices.
- ✓ A business environment characterized by a relatively high business density, above the regional average (about 75 companies/ 1000 inhabitants, in 2020, for example).
- ✓ Significant accommodation capacity registered an increasing trend over time, most of it represented by hotels and guest houses. Some resulted from modernization and expansion, others from new investments (an average of 18% of the total accommodation capacity of Brasov County).
- ✓ The presence of various sports-related and leisure infrastructure like ski slopes, ski and chairlifts, snow cannons (available for three ski slopes), a skate rink, pools, tennis courts, a stadium, and two gyms.
- ✓ Local authority ongoing investment program for general urban development based on two Development strategies extended on a period starting 2009 till 2025 (like improving accessibility and rehabilitation of Clăbucet – Cioplea area, for example) or destined to support tourist infrastructure (like ground multilevel parking facilities on Clăbucet ski slopes area).
- ✓ Presence of a Tourist Information and Promotion Centre that also administrates an official Facebook page and a website<sup>4</sup>.
- ✓ The presence of some cultural, historical, and local traditional assets.
- ✓ The presence of business and occupational associations, some of them with a significant activity on both national and international levels (National Association of Ski Instructors<sup>5</sup>, National Centre for Training Ski instructors<sup>6</sup>, Romanian School of Ski<sup>7</sup>).
- ✓ A developed and in progress urban infrastructure.

## WEAKNESSES

- ✓ Population decline, mostly from the potential active group (aged between 16 and 64), representing a serious challenge for social and business development.
- ✓ A business environment that distinguishes itself by being populated by small and medium-sized enterprises, many of them with insignificant economical outputs or inactive status.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocumentAfis/39240>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.predeal.ro/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://snowpro.ro/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cnfm.ro/despre-noi/>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/schiromania/?locale=ro\\_RO](https://www.facebook.com/schiromania/?locale=ro_RO)

- ✓ An undiversified local economic activity, based mostly on tourism, highly seasonal, and related activities, and commerce, that may affect job variety and attractiveness for residents.
- ✓ A diminishing total number of tourist arrivals since 2018, mostly in the segment of foreign visitors, a situation partially explained by the COVID-19 sanitary crisis.
- ✓ Lack of new (both public and private) investments in leisure or recreational areas or half-done, abandoned ones. A ski area with a total length of about 7.4 km, unchanged since 2001<sup>8</sup>, supported by a single operator for chair lifts and only two ski lifts, or the SPA Centre, a public initiative investment with a finalization deadline severely exceeded (unfinished, in conservation, at the date of this article).
- ✓ Reduced investment capacity of the local authority due to budgetary constraints (total deficit of 4.315 mil. RON, a relatively high dependency on central budget subsidies, around 45% of total local public revenue, for 2023<sup>9</sup> and consolidated public debt service of 28.909 mil. RON<sup>10</sup>, for the same reference year).

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ Geographical location along Prahova Valley, a highly important and circulated route that links some of Romania`s most important urban centres, Bucharest, Ploiești, and Brasov.
- ✓ Proximity location to other important tourist destinations such as Sinaia and Busteni, as well as Poiana Brasov and Râșnov.
- ✓ Proximity to the Brasov airport, which recently came into operation.
- ✓ Supportive governmental legislative measures for the hospitality industry like O.G. 8/2009.
- ✓ Collaborative, support, and networking possibilities from proximity to some important academic centres like Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies (including academies' local Training centre) or Transylvania University Brasov.
- ✓ Collaborative, urban, and developmental good practices exchanges based on the European policy of cohesion and support for urban or regional networking, like the Confederation of Towns and Municipalities of Europe<sup>11</sup>, for example (Romania is one of the association member states).
- ✓ Destination visibility and promotion possibilities based on participation in national and European tourism trade fairs.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://predeal.ro/?locale=ro> and <https://www.i-tour.ro/harti-turistice/partii-de-schi/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.primaria-predeal.ro/situatii-financiare/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.primaria-predeal.ro/hcl-248-05-09-2023/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://smalltowns.eu/>

- ✓ National and European financing opportunities for sustainable urban development, such as the European Regional Development Fund (2012 – 2027).
- ✓ Initiate, involvement, or participation in cultural, artistic, sportive, or other leisure local, national, or international events.

## THREATS

- ✓ Climate change or global warming, concretized in the shortening of winter seasons, lack of snow, and warmer temperatures inappropriate for snow cannon use.
- ✓ Changes in tourist's behaviour and preferences. There are many economic, social, cultural, and behavioural variables to consider regarding destination selection by potential tourists. Shifts in those determinants may negatively affect local businesses.
- ✓ Different tourist dynamics of neighbouring destinations, in particular Sinaia and Bușteni.
- ✓ Globalization, economic openness, and EU integration increase competition among tourist destinations. Local incongruencies in the market promotion and tourist infrastructure may transform a potential opportunity into a threat based on a lack of attractiveness or lingering quasi-anonymity.
- ✓ Low investments in modernization and development can lead to the declassification of accommodation units.
- ✓ Lack of interest from major investors in tourism, which would include Predeal in the international circuit.
- ✓ An undersized transport infrastructure and lack of alternatives to national road DN1, one of the most congested and highly circulated roads in Romania. The lack of a highway in the Prahova valley diverts the traditional tourists of Predeal coming from Bucharest and its surroundings to other resorts.
- ✓ Economic crisis, recessions.
- ✓ Environmental crisis caused by unsustainable activities like wild forest and fauna exploitation or bad management, pollution, natural disasters, and soil erosion.
- ✓ Sanitary crisis and other unpredictable events.

Considering the comprehensive SWOT analysis conducted on Predeal, several key insights emerge. Predeal's strengths, including its significant tourism-related economic activity, legal certification, and abundant natural resources, provide a strong foundation for development initiatives. Moreover, the presence of diverse sports and leisure infrastructure, cultural assets, and a developed business environment further contribute to its potential growth.

However, it's imperative to address the identified weaknesses and threats to ensure sustainable development. Population decline, primarily among the active demographic, coupled with a reliance

on seasonal tourism and limited investment in leisure infrastructure, poses significant challenges. Additionally, local authorities' budgetary constraints and reduced investment capacity necessitate strategic planning to overcome financial limitations.

It can enhance its competitive edge by capitalizing on opportunities such as Predeal's strategic geographical location, proximity to key tourist destinations, and supportive legislative measures. Collaborative efforts with academic institutions and participation in regional and European networks offer avenues for knowledge exchange and funding opportunities. Moreover, leveraging national and European financing programs for sustainable urban development can facilitate infrastructure improvements and enhance destination visibility.

Adaptive strategies focused on diversification, market promotion, and infrastructure modernization are imperative to mitigate potential threats like climate change, shifting tourist preferences, and economic competition. Prioritizing environmental sustainability, investing in alternative transportation infrastructure, and reducing seasonality effects are essential for long-term resilience.

Fostering a balanced approach that capitalizes on strengths, addresses weaknesses, leverages opportunities, and mitigates threats is essential for Predeal's sustainable development as a prominent tourist destination. By implementing targeted initiatives informed by this SWOT analysis, Predeal can position itself for resilient growth in the evolving tourism landscape.

#### 4.4. Local development strategy in Predeal

For above mentioned period there were elaborated two documents, into an EU and National Operational Program for Development of Administrative Capacity (PODCA)<sup>12</sup>. The first one (S<sub>1</sub>) refers to a time between 2009 – 2020<sup>13</sup> and the second one (S<sub>2</sub>) refers to a time between 2015 – 2025.

Both documents embedded the same vision of a multi-faceted urban development (tourist, social, economic, and cultural) based on tourist supply diversification and an increasing attractiveness for domestic and international tourists and investors, underlying three main developmental dimensions: as a tourist destination, as an urban centre and as a business pole.

Speaking of the ways of concretizing this vision, both documents rely on identical four pillars or strategic objectives:

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<sup>12</sup> [https://www.fonduri-structurale.ro/Document\\_Files/Stiri/00005826/5yc14\\_lista%20beneciari%20PODCA%201oct2009.pdf](https://www.fonduri-structurale.ro/Document_Files/Stiri/00005826/5yc14_lista%20beneciari%20PODCA%201oct2009.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <https://dokumen.tips/documents/strategia-de-dezvoltare-a-orasului-predeal-2009-2020-reactualizat-2.html>

1. Increasing tourism attractiveness by ski domain extension.
2. Local economic development through diversification of tourist services.
3. Increasing life quality for residents by encouraging public investments in urban infrastructure and public services.
4. Development of local authority administration capacity and increasing involvement of stakeholders in decision-making processes.

Both strategies were developed based on several steps, explicitly depicted, like a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic urban profile, statistical data, stakeholders' consultation, group of local administration experts, and use of a strategic management tool, SWOT analysis. There are several references in both documents about the process of substantiating the strategies from the perspective of stakeholders' participatory process, briefly referring to surveying local business owners, several associations, and NGOs (both un-nominated), and a consultative process among residents. Results or outcomes of this consulting process are not displayed expressly. In the first strategy, there is a reference to a local business owners' survey results about the main challenges and obstacles they confront in their activity.

The first strategy contains an explicit substantiating process based on a sketch of three scenarios, a pessimistic one, a realistic one, and an optimistic one. Fundamentals of the strategy rely on taking into consideration the realistic scenario.

Listing the elements of all three scenarios, now, over three years since the strategy was outdated, it seems that the pessimistic scenario is more appropriate to the fact's reality. Specifically, some of the scenario predictions are now realities, like destination increase vulnerability due to, to a certain degree, dependency on tourism activities (Herman et al., 2021), demographical decline and increased process of population aging, local authority investment capacity erosion, consequence of public revenue losses and bad management of ongoing investments portfolio.

As can be noticed, two pillars in both strategies refer to strategic interventions, specific objectives, and investment plan proposals regarding tourism activities. S<sub>1</sub> explicitly expresses that a specific goal included in pillar two is developing public and private investments that may contribute to reducing the effects of seasonality and allow the destination to become "one for all four seasons". Considering that 2020 was the time horizon for the first strategy, already outdated, it seems that this goal is mainly unachieved and there are serious concerns about the fact that this goal misses from the second strategy, even though it represents a valid strategy for fighting climate change effects. Another specific goal presented in the first strategy, on the same pillar refers to "stopping youngsters' migration" due to the lack of job attractiveness and opportunities. Surprisingly, this goal is no longer

expressed in S<sub>2</sub>, even though statistical data displays that demographic decline continues and one of the most representative age groups, from this point of view, is the active and young population.

The first pillar in both strategies refers to public and private investments that may contribute to ski domain extension as a main contributor to increasing destination attractiveness. There are references to the modernization of existing ski infrastructure, improving accessibility to ski slope areas, extending cable transportation capacity, and better first aid services for skiers and mountaineers. Considering that the time horizon for S<sub>2</sub> is 2025, there are also serious concerns about the local administration's capacity to fulfil these aims.

The second pillar of S<sub>2</sub> refers to some of the specific objectives that may contribute to the diversification of the local tourism supply and to increasing domestic and international exposure, reputation, and attractiveness, by public and private investments in leisure or recreational facilities, participation in tourism exhibitions and fairs, sportive, entertainment or cultural events organization and a better communication capacity and collaboration with local business environment. It also expressed an objective regarding defining and sketching a destination brand for Predeal to promote it on domestic and international markets. So far there is no information (available for authors) about such an attempt.

Both strategies start by defining the local profile based on several dimensions, such as geographical location, natural resources, socio-demographic features, and economic, cultural, and historical aspects.

Even though there is no “*expressis verbis*” profile statement, Predeal is commonly regarded as a winter sports tourist destination. There are some reasons for such a large acceptance. One is historical and related to the deep link and roots between Predeal and winter sports history, especially skiing in Romania. Another argument comes from the strategies that ranked ski domain extension as the first of strategic objectives and symbolically displayed on the front cover of a downhill skier.

## **5. Conclusions and recommendations**

The SWOT analysis leads to the conclusion that the context of globalization works rather as an inhibitor of local development in Predeal, especially regarding winter sports. Globalization implies specific flows and opportunities: direct foreign investments, foreign tourists, systematic integration in the international information flow, participation in international tourism fairs, adoption of local development models that have yielded results in other countries, etc. These should bring benefits to tourism in a locality with this profile, but they are present in Predeal only to a small extent. At the same time, globalization has led to changes in the preferences of Romanian tourism consumers. It enhanced competition with tourist resorts from abroad and with ski resorts from Romania that have



been modernized with the help of foreign investments, which generated a significant loss of qualified workforce through emigration abroad, etc. Added to all this are the unwanted effects of global warming. These challenging effects of globalization prevail over the benefits in Predeal.

Based on the above evidence, reasons, demonstration, and analysis some recommendations can be useful for local policymakers and administration in their activity.

Short time horizon recommendations:

- Identification of the most suitable sources for funding ongoing public investments so they can be finished, further exploited, and contribute to local budget revenues and tourism attractiveness.
- Increasing efforts to improve the communication and collaboration capacity of local administration. This may largely contribute to a better understanding of residents, business owners, and visitors' needs, perspectives, and aims and offers local authority initiatives more acceptance and support.
- Implementing digital technologies on a larger scale. Digitalization may contribute to a more performant administration, better communication, increased efficiency, spare resources, and increased visibility.
- Initiate and contribute to events (artistic, sportive, cultural) that can attract more tourists and reduce the effects of seasonality.
- Consolidate a formal collaborative framework with academic and research institutions, organizations, and specialists in tourism, marketing, branding creation and promotion, and urban and landscape design.
- Consolidate a formal collaborative framework with other European tourist destinations and administrations.

Longer time horizon recommendations:

- Implementing the concept of *destination management* as a systematic effort of local authorities to contribute to sustainable community development, starting from understanding that the traditional development model is no longer suitable or appropriate for sustaining tourist destinations in a globalized world (Ammirato and Felicetti, 2014).
- Implementing a multidisciplinary and participatory methodology for *assessing local economy vulnerability to climate changes* as a source of knowledge transmission, identification of adaptation strategies, decision-making process base, and reducing uncertainties.
- Increase efforts for accountability and commencement of the complex process of *local brand definition*, based on the identification of unique destination features and through a dynamic process from both demand and supply sides (Konecnik and Gartner, 2007). In this sense, the

resort could be promoted as being suitable for families with children and digital nomads looking for a location with a special natural environment and specific urban facilities. Regarding brand development based on suitable-for-family tourist destinations, this requires a better understanding of the complex process of purchase decisions and choices of holiday destinations and social dynamics nowadays. It is to be considered an opportunity that may conduct a valuable future strategy of adaptation. The cooler summer mountain climate can be appealing for families coming from higher temperatures and crowded urban areas.

- The process of identifying adaptive alternatives or diversifications of tourism offers must be participative and consider different stakeholders. An all-year operation strategy is considered a climate change adaptation strategy suitable or acceptable for all stakeholders but is also the most difficult and complex to implement.
- Creation of a tourism *cluster* in Brasov County.
- Starting a new process of developmental strategy identification and implementation for the future ten-year horizon, starting from a new, more participatory approach and considering some of the critics addressed to the mechanical, linear model of SWOT analysis, introducing a much more correlative and dynamic one.

In conclusion, the research highlights the complex interplay between local development strategies and the challenges posed by globalization, climate change, and shifting tourist preferences in Predeal, Romania. While the SWOT analysis provides valuable insights into the destination's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, it also underscores the need for adaptive, multidisciplinary approaches to sustainable development. Recommendations outlined for short and longer time horizons emphasize the importance of strategic funding, enhanced communication and collaboration, digitalization, event initiatives, and consolidating partnerships with academic and European counterparts. Furthermore, the call for destination management, climate vulnerability assessments, brand development, participatory diversification of tourist offerings, tourism clustering, and dynamic strategic planning signifies a forward-looking agenda to foster resilience and innovation in Predeal's tourism landscape. By embracing these recommendations, local policymakers and stakeholders can chart a course toward a dynamic, inclusive, and sustainable future for Predeal as a premier tourist destination.

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