



## OVERTOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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**Abstract:** This document examines the phenomenon of overtourism within the global tourism landscape and proposes sustainable, data-driven solutions. The introduction outlines the rapid growth of international tourism and the resulting pressures on popular destinations. A global analysis follows, identifying overtourism hotspots through quantitative indicators and assessing their economic and social consequences. The integration of diverse datasets offers insights into the systemic nature of overtourism and the need for informed policy responses. Evidence-based approaches to sustainable tourism are then explored. These include policy interventions aimed at managing tourist flows, preserving local communities, and maintaining environmental balance. The effectiveness of these strategies is evaluated over time, with key lessons drawn from global best practices. The study also considers Moldova's current tourism profile, emphasizing the importance of diversifying tourism products to reduce future risks of overtourism. Strategic observations highlight Moldova's potential for sustainable development, provided that proactive measures are adopted. In conclusion, the paper presents a set of strategic recommendations, detailing specific initiatives to promote responsible tourism. Each recommendation is aligned with long-term sustainability goals and addresses both national and local priorities. Overall, this research contributes to the development of resilient tourism models in the face of growing global challenges.

**Keywords:** Overtourism, sustainable tourism, policy interventions, tourism development, data-driven analysis.

### 1. INTRODUCTION: THE GLOBAL TOURISM LANDSCAPE

The global tourism industry has shown remarkable resilience in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, exhibiting signs of recovery by returning to pre-pandemic levels by the second quarter of 2024. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the sector contributed a staggering \$9.5 trillion to the global economy in 2024, accounting for approximately 10.4% of total world GDP. This resurgence highlights the growing importance of tourism as an economic driver, particularly for countries with economies heavily reliant on tourism revenues.

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While the global tourism sector has demonstrated signs of recovery in the post-pandemic period, this resurgence has not been without significant challenges. Many popular destinations are now contending with the adverse effects of overtourism—a phenomenon characterized by visitor volumes exceeding a destination’s capacity to manage tourism in a sustainable manner (Gössling et al., 2020). It’s develop as a urban centers and heritage sites frequently experience overcrowding, which diminishes the quality of the tourist experience and adversely affects the daily lives of local residents. Also, the substantial increase in tourist numbers places excessive pressure on local infrastructure, including transportation systems, water resources, and waste management facilities, often resulting in the deterioration of essential public services. One of that important part is the growth of tourism demand, particularly in housing markets, tends to increase the cost of living, leading to the displacement of residents and the erosion of social cohesion. Natural sites are particularly vulnerable to environmental degradation caused by overuse, pollution, and habitat disruption, which threatens biodiversity and the long-term viability of these attractions (Peeters et al., 2018).

Prominent cities such as Venice, Barcelona, and Dubrovnik exemplify the complex dynamics and detrimental outcomes associated with overtourism. In contrast, emerging destinations, including the Republic of Moldova, are currently in a strategic position to design tourism policies that preemptively address these concerns. Moldova, with its distinctive cultural heritage and underexploited tourism potential, holds the opportunity to pursue a development trajectory grounded in sustainability.

This study undertakes a comprehensive examination of overtourism at a global scale, presenting both the underlying causes and the remedial strategies implemented in various international contexts. It then transitions to an in-depth analysis of Moldova’s tourism sector, assessing its current structure and identifying sustainable avenues for growth. By integrating empirical evidence and best practices from international case studies, the report formulates policy recommendations tailored to Moldova’s specific context. The overarching objective is to propose a strategic framework for tourism development that ensures long-term socio-economic and environmental benefits for both host communities and visitors (Bran et al., 1998).

## **2. GLOBAL OVERTOURISM: A DATA-DRIVEN ANALYSIS**

### **2.1. Quantitative Assessment of Overtourism Hotspots**

Overtourism has emerged as a defining challenge for destinations across the globe. With the rapid rebound of international travel, many cities and regions have seen visitor numbers soar past their sustainable thresholds. This section delves into the quantitative assessments of overtourism, presenting key metrics in tables and visual data representations that highlight current hotspots. In doing so, we examine not only the physical and infrastructural strains but also the broader economic and social consequences that are reshaping communities worldwide.

A defining metric in understanding overtourism is the visitor-to-resident ratio. This ratio provides insight into how many tourists a destination hosts relative to its local population—a critical measure that can forecast infrastructure stress and community strain. Notably, cities such as Venice, Barcelona, Dubrovnik, and Kyoto display ratios that far exceed what may be considered sustainable (Milano et al., 2019). The table below encapsulates some of the key data points for overtourism hotspots in 2024.

Table 1. Key Metrics for Global Overtourism Hotspots (UNWTO Global Tourism Dashboard, 2024)

Destination	Annual Visitors (M)	Resident Population	Visitor-to-Resident Ratio	Primary Pressure Points
Venice, Italy	25.3	261,905	97:1	Canal congestion, resident displacement
Barcelona, Spain	18.6	1.6M	12:1	Housing affordability crisis, infrastructure strain
Dubrovnik, Croatia	4.9	41,562	118:1	Overcrowding, degradation of historic sites
Kyoto, Japan	57.1	1.4M	41:1	Temple overcrowding, cultural dilution
Reykjavik, Iceland	2.3	140,000	16:1	Pressure on geothermal resources, environmental sensitivity

The visitor-to-resident ratios in certain historic and densely populated cities clearly indicate that tourism activity is outstripping local capacity. For instance, Dubrovnik's ratio of 118:1 symbolizes a situation where for every resident, there are 118 tourists, leading to pressures on local infrastructure and a noticeable strain on community life.

To further illustrate the dynamics of overtourism, consider the case of Venice and Barcelona. A graphical analysis over the period 2019–2024 demonstrates a divergence between the continuously rising number of visitors and the relatively fixed carrying capacities of these destinations. In this visualization (Figure 1), the blue line represents visitor numbers, while the red line indicates the carrying capacity threshold.

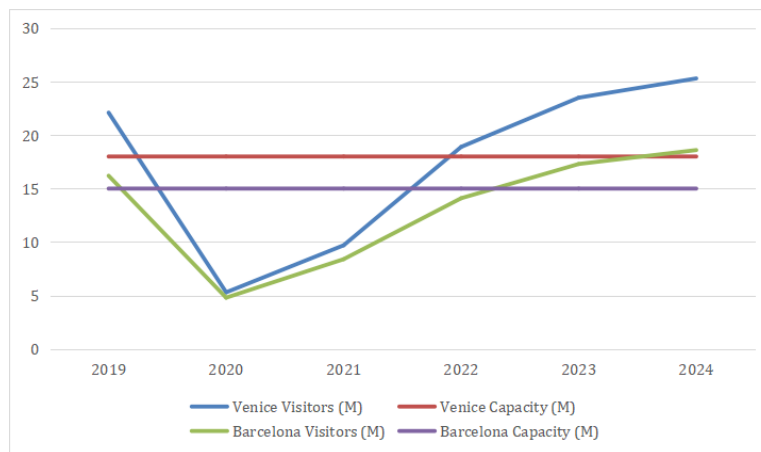


Figure 1. Visitor Growth vs. Carrying Capacity (Euromonitor International, 2024)

The graph starkly shows that by 2022, visitor arrivals at these destinations began to breach sustainable limits. This divergence has accelerated as destinations continued to welcome more tourists without proportionate expansions in local infrastructure, leading to the challenges detailed below.

## 2.2. Economic and Social Consequences of Overtourism

The implications of overtourism extend far beyond mere overcrowding. Economically and socially, affected communities bear significant costs that are not immediately visible from raw visitor statistics alone.

Overtourism imposes hidden economic burdens that can undermine local economies despite the apparent influx of tourism-related revenue. Many destinations find that the costs of managing increased tourist numbers—such as the need for enhanced public services,

transportation upgrades, and infrastructure repairs—offset the economic gains. For example, a comprehensive analysis reveals significant fiscal challenges in cities facing overtourism:

*Table 2. Economic Impacts of Overtourism on Select Destinations (OECD Tourism Economics Report, 2024)*

Destination	Annual Cost (€M)	Primary Impact	Secondary Effects
Venice, Italy	200	Flood damage and canal maintenance	Increased insurance premiums, reduced urban livability
Barcelona, Spain	150	Rising property and rent costs	Resident displacement, loss of local business diversity
Amsterdam, Netherlands	85	Rapid infrastructure wear and tear	Redistribution of tax burdens and reduced quality of public services

The table above reveals that overtourism creates a net negative economic impact for affected communities, where the ensuing costs for maintenance and public service enhancements significantly erode the revenue benefits of high visitor numbers. Such economic stress is compounded by the rising cost of living, thereby widening wealth gaps and sparking community tensions.

As visitor numbers surge, the residents’ quality of life comes under threat. Overcrowded streets, long waiting times for public services, and increased noise and pollution are just a few of the issues that have directly influenced public sentiment. Surveys indicate that approval ratings among residents in overtourism hotspots have plummeted as the negative impacts on daily life become more tangible. Understanding and quantifying these shifts in public sentiment is important for devising effective policy interventions.

*Table 3. Resident Sentiment Analysis (IPSOS Global Tourism Surve, 2023-2024)*

City	2023 Resident Approval (%)	2024 Resident Approval (%)	Visitor Ratio (2024)
Venice, Italy	42	38	97:1
Barcelona, Spain	54	48	12:1
Kyoto, Japan	58	52	41:1
Reykjavik, Iceland	67	61	16:1
Dubrovnik, Croatia	39	32	118:1

This analysis vividly illustrates that higher visitor-to-resident ratios are generally accompanied by declining resident approval ratings. For instance, Dubrovnik’s severe ratio of 118:1 is associated with a sharp decline in approval, reflecting escalating frustration among locals. Such discord not only erodes the social fabric but can also precipitate policy shifts that might hinder long-term tourism development if not managed appropriately.

Addressing overtourism requires policy innovation with evidence-based interventions. Multiple strategies have been implemented around the globe to mitigate the negative impacts, and a comparison of their effectiveness offers valuable insights.

Policies such as time slot admissions have shown promising results in maintaining the quality of visitor experience while ensuring that cultural heritage sites are not overwhelmed. The data suggests that combining immediate crowd-control measures with long-term sustainability investments can yield the most favorable outcomes, thereby not only restoring resident approval but also safeguarding the attractions that define these destinations.

Table 4. Sustainable Tourism Policy Matrix (WTTC, 2024)

Strategy	Implementation Details	Success Rate (%)	Key Benefits	Limitations
Tourist Taxes	Fee of approximately €5 per visitor in Venice	78	Generates revenue for urban management	Can be regressive and unpopular among tourists
Visitor Caps	Annual limitations as in Machu Picchu	85	Effective site preservation	Potential reduction in overall tourism revenue
Time Slot Admissions	Managed entry schedules, as implemented at Alhambra	92	Enhances visitor experience and protects cultural sites	Requires complex logistical management
Digital Dispersion Strategies	Use of smart data and apps to direct tourists to lesser-known areas	63	Redistributes crowd pressure across a region	Dependent on the availability and reliability of technology

A longitudinal review of policy interventions underscores the relative merits of each strategy. Graph 2 illustrates the progression of policy effectiveness over a five-year period. In this graph, the different lines represent various interventions, with the time slot admissions strategy leading to the fastest and most sustained improvement in visitor management outcomes.

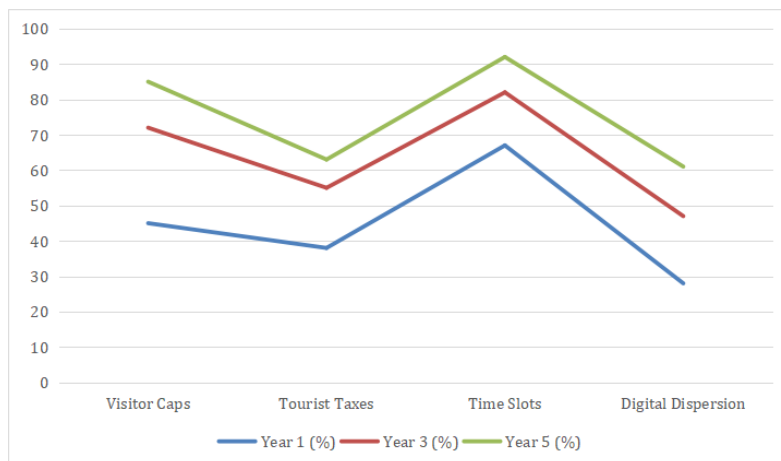


Figure 2. Policy Effectiveness Over Time (World Bank Tourism Development, 2024)

### 2.3. Integration of Data and Its Implications

The synthesis of these quantitative metrics provides a window into the multifaceted nature of overtourism. Beyond the raw numbers, two key insights emerge:

**Exceeding Physical Capacity:** Historic cities and unique cultural sites that are entrenched in legacy urban frameworks often lack the physical space required to expand infrastructure in line with growing visitor numbers (Koens et al., 2018).

This mismatch is a critical driver of the negative externalities associated with overtourism.

**Eroding Resident Sentiment:** As the burden of increased tourism becomes unsustainable, local residents begin to perceive significant quality-of-life impacts. The strong correlation between visitor-to-resident ratios and declining sentiment ratings highlights the imperative for policymakers to adopt measures that balance economic benefits with community well-being.

A higher visitor-to-resident ratio is not merely a statistic—it essentially quantifies the strain on every facet of urban life. When one community member is intermittently overwhelmed by a high volume of visitors, the consequences can include:

Overburdened public transportation systems and healthcare services can become less efficient, directly affecting both tourists and residents.

Constant influxes of external influences may jeopardize the traditional character of communities by shifting the focus towards tourist-centric economies.

As local residents witness the tangible impacts of overcrowding, tensions may rise, leading to demands for stringent regulatory measures or even outright resistance against tourism expansion.

The economic repercussions of overtourism extend well beyond immediate tourism revenues. Hidden costs such as increased maintenance, infrastructural overhauls, and corrective measures for environmental degradation can lead to a net loss for local governments. Infrastructure, such as historical buildings and transportation networks, incur accelerated wear and tear under heavy tourist traffic. In places like Venice, insurance premiums have surged to cope with the heightened risk of flood damage exacerbated by dense visitor flows (Seraphin et al., 2018). Higher living costs, driven in part by tourism-fueled demand, often lead to resident displacement, creating pockets of inequality even in otherwise vibrant communities.

#### **2.4. Data-Driven Insights for Sustainable Policies.**

The global data and analyses presented here provide critical lessons for destinations struggling with overtourism. While heritage sites and major cities wrestle with established challenges, these insights are particularly instructive for emerging markets. They demonstrate that policy interventions need to be multi-pronged—designed to control and redirect tourist flows in the short term while investing in long-term infrastructural and community resilience.

Implementing effective measures—ranging from visitor caps and timed admissions to digital strategies aimed at redistributing tourist activity—can serve as a blueprint for sustainable development. In particular, these measures highlight the importance of addressing both the visible economic indicators and the more nuanced social impacts, such as resident sentiment, that ultimately determine the success of tourism policies.

Data-driven approaches, leveraging comprehensive metrics such as visitor-to-resident ratios, resident approval ratings, and economic cost evaluations, provide a clear mandate for policymakers. While the challenges of overtourism are daunting, they also offer an opportunity to reshape tourism development frameworks to be more equitable, sustainable, and resilient in the face of fluctuating global travel trends.

By closely monitoring these metrics and adjusting policies in real time, destinations can mitigate the adverse effects of overtourism. Furthermore, the integration of cutting-edge digital tools to manage tourist flows and collect real-time data serves as an important reminder that technology can be a powerful ally in achieving sustainable tourism.

Source references for the quantitative assessments and visual data include authoritative organizations such as the UNWTO, OECD, IPSOS, Euromonitor International, and the World Bank. These data points underscore the urgent need for harmonized, globally informed policies that not only accommodate tourism growth but, more importantly, safeguard the interests of local communities and preserve the cultural and environmental assets upon which they rely.

### 3. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM SOLUTIONS: EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES

#### 3.1. Evidence-Based Policy Interventions

In addressing the pressing challenges of overtourism, a variety of policy interventions have emerged, illustrating a spectrum of approaches grounded in sustainability. This section provides an overview of effective strategies, encapsulated in a comprehensive policy matrix, while evaluating their efficacy through empirical data and studies.

The following table summarizes key strategies designed to mitigate overtourism and their respective outcomes:

Table 5. Sustainable Tourism Policy Matrix (WTTC, 2024)

Strategy	Implementation Details	Success Rate (%)	Key Benefits	Limitations
Tourist Tax	Fees imposed, e.g., €5 per tourist in Venice	78	Generates revenue for local infrastructure	May discourage some tourists
Visitor Caps	Set limits on annual visitors, e.g., Machu Picchu	85	Protects cultural heritage and environment	Potential revenue declines
Time Slot Admissions	Schedule visits, e.g., Alhambra	92	Improves visitor experience and site authenticity	Complex logistics for ticketing
Digital Dispersal	Apps to direct tourists to lesser-known areas	63	Reduces congestion in hotspots	Reliance on technology

#### 3.2. Evaluating Efficacy and Results

The success of these initiatives can be quantified by examining their impacts over time. Each strategy brings unique benefits coupled with specific limitations, which must be carefully considered in the context of the local environment. Implemented in destinations like Venice, this approach has proven effective in funding conservation efforts and urban infrastructure improvements. However, it risks alienating potential visitors who may feel priced out. Machu Picchu and Zion National Park serve as examples where capping visitor numbers has preserved ecological integrity and cultural identity. Yet, the resultant decrease in tourism revenue can challenge local economies. Alhambra's timed entry system demonstrates a high success rate in managing crowd flow and enhancing the visitor experience. Nonetheless, the complexity of scheduling can deter spontaneous visits and require robust management systems. Utilized in Iceland, this method effectively redistributes tourist traffic. However, reliance on tech solutions necessitates equitable access to digital resources and can lead to uneven tourist experiences.

#### 3.3. Policy Effectiveness Over Time

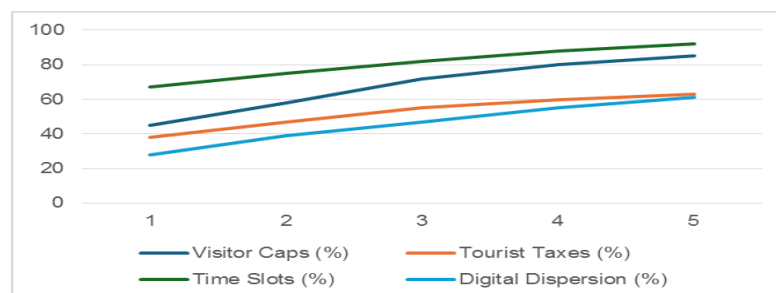


Figure 3. A longitudinal analysis of policy effectiveness accentuates the advantages of structured interventions (World Bank Tourism Development, 2024)

This visualization captures the trajectory of success rates for various strategies over a five-year span. Time slot admissions consistently lead the pack in effectiveness, establishing a robust model for both immediate management and long-term visitor satisfaction, while digital dispersal trails, emphasizing the need for continuous data collection and analysis.

### 3.4. Lessons Learned

The interplay between policy implementation and overtourism dynamics underscores the critical need for adaptive and multifaceted strategies. Each successful approach illuminates the importance of balancing tourist influx with the needs of local communities—the goal being to foster sustainable growth without compromising the cultural and environmental heritage that makes these destinations unique.

Furthermore, the data reinforces a foundational tenet: proactive, evidence-based policies that incorporate real-time metrics and community feedback mechanisms can effectively curb the detrimental impacts of overtourism. As emerging tourist markets like Moldova seek to establish themselves sustainably within the global tourism landscape, these insights serve as invaluable guidelines in crafting a resilient strategy that prioritizes both economic development and community well-being.

## 4. MOLDOVA'S TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

### 4.1. Current Tourism Profile

Moldova stands at a pivotal juncture within the global tourism landscape, characterized by both challenges and opportunities for growth. With an exciting blend of cultural heritage and natural beauty, Moldova is preparing to develop its tourism sector while learning from the overtourism challenges faced by more established destinations.

Recent data illustrates the trajectory of Moldova's tourism sector, highlighting key indicators for arrivals and revenue generation. The following table captures crucial statistics from 2019 to 2025, showing both current performance and projected growth.

*Table 6. Moldova Tourism Indicators 2019-2025 (Moldova National Bureau of Statistics, 2024)*

Year	Arrivals	Avg Stay (nights)	Key Markets	Revenue (€M)
2019	168,000	2.8	RO, UA	280
2023	142,000	3.1	EU, IL	310
2024*	158,000	3.3	EU, US	350
2025*	175,000	3.5	EU, AS	400

The data underscores a moderate recovery since 2020, with a steady increase in arrivals and revenue anticipated through 2025. Notably, the average length of stay is also on the rise, suggesting an increasing interest in immersive experiences among visitors.

### 4.2. Importance of Product Diversification

Despite its current focus on wine tourism—accounting for 61% of visitors—Moldova faces a pressing imperative for product diversification. The following pie chart illustrates the composition of tourism segments currently attracting visitors:

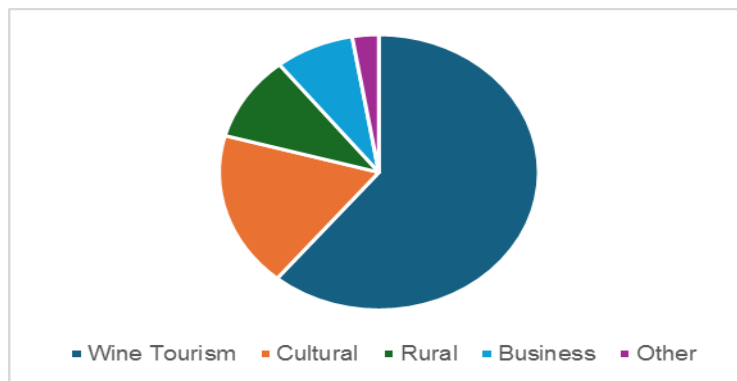


Figure 4. Distribution of Current Tourism Segments by Visitor Interest (Moldova Ministry of Economy, 2024)

While wine tours serve as a strong pillar of attraction, solely relying on a single segment poses risks. A lack of diversity could easily alienate potential tourists and lead to fluctuations driven by seasonal or economic factors. Expanding offerings to include cultural heritage, eco-tourism, and adventure tourism can provide a more balanced revenue stream and enhance destination appeal.

### 4.3. Strategic Observations

In order to capitalize on its tourism potential in a sustainable manner, the Republic of Moldova must adopt a strategic approach that incorporates lessons derived from global experiences with overtourism and the corresponding mitigation measures.

The early adoption of sustainability frameworks is essential to prevent the negative externalities observed in over-visited destinations. Measures such as regulating tourist numbers at environmentally or culturally sensitive sites, implementing robust environmental safeguards, and promoting tourism in alignment with ecological and social carrying capacities are imperative for long-term viability.

The active involvement of local populations in tourism planning and governance processes is fundamental. Mechanisms that facilitate community input and ensure equitable distribution of tourism-related economic gains not only enhance social cohesion but also cultivate local support for sustainable development initiatives.

Digital innovation offers significant potential for enhancing tourism management and service delivery. The deployment of tools such as mobile applications for real-time visitor guidance, as well as digital platforms that connect tourists with authentic local experiences, can contribute to dispersing tourist flows and reducing pressure on high-traffic areas, thereby supporting a more balanced and responsible tourism model. Moldova's unique positioning within the Eastern European tourism milieu offers an excellent opportunity to carve a niche as a sustainable travel destination. By promoting diverse tourism products and integrating best practices from around the world, Moldova can enhance its global standing, ultimately benefiting both local communities and visitors without succumbing to the challenges of overtourism that have affected many other destinations.

## 5. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1. Proposed Initiatives

Moldova is poised for significant growth in its tourism sector, yet it faces the critical need for a strategic approach to avoid the pitfalls of overtourism experienced by other global destinations. To create a sustainable and resilient tourism framework, the following action plan outlines initiatives, timelines, budgets, and expected outcomes, focusing on both immediate needs and long-term sustainability.

*Table 7. Moldova Tourism Action Plan (EU Tourism Development Funds, 2024)*

Initiative	Timeline	Budget (€M)	Expected Outcome
Heritage Site Caps	2024-2025	2.5	Reduce overcrowding by 30% at key sites
Rural Tourism Development	2024-2026	8.0	Create approximately 1,200 new jobs
Digital Visitor System	2025	3.7	Improve visitor traffic flow by 40%
Eco-Tourism Initiatives	2024-2026	4.5	Enhance natural conservation efforts while boosting tourist engagement
Community Engagement Programs	2024-2025	1.0	Foster local involvement and ensure equitable benefits from tourism

### 5.2. Initiative Descriptions

To ensure the sustainable growth of Moldova’s tourism sector and to prevent the adverse effects associated with overtourism, a set of strategic interventions is proposed. A regulated cap on the number of visitors permitted at key cultural and historical landmarks is essential to mitigate excessive foot traffic. Such a system would contribute to the long-term preservation of site integrity, while simultaneously improving the overall visitor experience by minimizing congestion and ensuring safer, more meaningful interactions with heritage environments.

Targeted investment in rural tourism infrastructure presents an opportunity to diversify Moldova’s tourism portfolio and stimulate economic activity in underdeveloped regions. This may include the creation of new attractions, enhancement of local accommodations, and the modernization of transport and public utilities to support sustainable rural tourism practices.

The adoption of a centralized digital platform for real-time visitor tracking and traffic regulation can significantly enhance the management of tourist flows. By facilitating the spatial redistribution of visitors across multiple sites and regions, this system would reduce pressure on high-traffic areas and encourage exploration of lesser-known destinations.

The development of eco-tourism initiatives, including low-impact tours, biodiversity conservation programs, and environmental awareness campaigns, can support both environmental protection and economic development. Emphasizing ecological sustainability will reinforce Moldova’s commitment to safeguarding its natural heritage while fostering long-term tourism resilience. Establishing participatory mechanisms that integrate local communities into tourism planning and decision-making processes is essential for ensuring inclusive development. Such engagement promotes local ownership, aligns tourism growth with resident interests, and enhances the sector’s responsiveness to socio-cultural dynamics.

### 5.3. Importance of Recommendations

These recommendations are vital as they articulate a dual focus on immediate economic benefits, such as job creation and tourist satisfaction, while ensuring that Moldova's cultural and natural resources are preserved for future generations. Romania's approach to sustainable tourism demonstrates how early adoption of best practices can lead to resilient growth, safeguarding both local interests and tourist experiences.

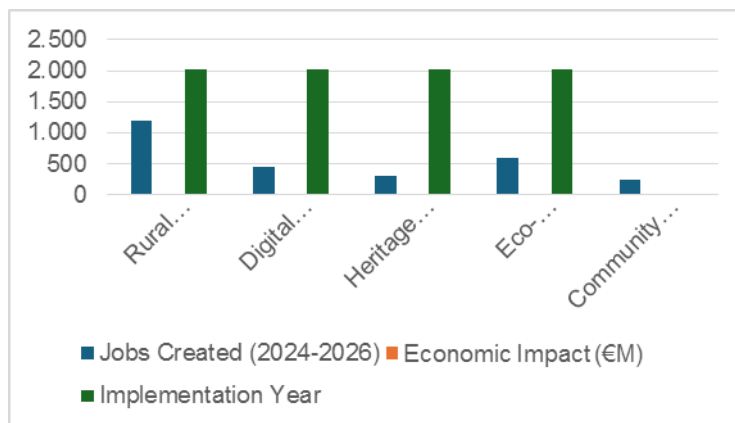


Figure 5. Projected Job Creation and Economic Impact from Initiatives 2024-2026 (Moldova Ministry of Economy, 2024)

This graph illustrates the potential job creation across various initiatives outlined in the action plan. With rural tourism development leading in job contributions, it becomes apparent that diversifying Moldova's tourism offerings is crucial for economic sustainability.

Integrating these strategies into Moldova's tourism framework not only leverages its existing strengths—such as wine and cultural tourism—but positions the nation as a leading example in sustainable travel within the regional market. In executing this action plan, Moldova can navigate the delicate balance between embracing tourism growth and ensuring a sustainable, thriving future for its cultural heritage and local communities.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The global tourism industry is at a critical juncture, balancing economic gains with increasing concerns over overtourism. In 2024, tourism contributed \$9.5 trillion to the global economy, yet the associated pressures on infrastructure, communities, and ecosystems have become unsustainable. This study explores three systemic challenges—urban infrastructure degradation, resident displacement, and environmental harm—while identifying Moldova's potential to position itself as a model for sustainable tourism by leveraging its untapped cultural and ecological assets.

### I. Global Challenges and Policy Responses

Cities like Venice and Dubrovnik suffer from excessive tourist volumes, leading to accelerated decay of historic structures. Sustainable visitor caps, rotational access models, and UNESCO-backed capacity agreements, supported by tourism levies, offer viable mitigation strategies. Also, tourism-driven housing demand has displaced local populations in cities such as Barcelona and Amsterdam. Solutions include community tourism trusts, reinvestment of tourism tax revenues into affordable housing, and resident-priority zoning policies. Natural sites face increasing ecological stress, as seen in Iceland and Bali. Adaptive measures such as carbon-

linked entrance fees, conservation-based visitor programs, and eco-passport systems could ensure environmental stewardship.

## II. Moldova's Strategic Opportunity

With 61% of arrivals focused on wine tourism, Moldova's sector remains vulnerable to market volatility. Developing thematic circuits—such as Soviet heritage trails—and promoting eco-tourism in regions like Cahul and Vulcănești can broaden its appeal. Tables represent's that, 88% of rural areas lack basic tourist infrastructure. Investment in EU-funded village hubs, digital platforms for SMEs, and the transformation of Soviet-era sanatoriums into digital nomad spaces can enhance accessibility and competitiveness.

## III. A National Framework for Action

- Short-Term (2024–2025):
  - Introduce daily visitor limits and preservation fees at key sites (e.g., Orheiul Vechi)
  - Freeze new short-term rentals in urban centers and allocate housing for tourism workers
- Medium-Term (2026–2030):
  - Adopt a “Bhutan-Plus” model requiring minimum tourist expenditure, with community reinvestment
  - Deploy AI systems for visitor flow optimization and incentive-based off-peak travel
- Long-Term (2031+):
  - Establish Moldova as a host of the annual Overtourism Summit
  - Become the first carbon-positive tourism destination in Europe

Without timely intervention, Moldova risks cultural dilution, economic instability, and environmental decline. A proposed “Tourism Sustainability Compact”—enshrining sustainability as a constitutional right and mandating a fixed GDP allocation for regenerative tourism—offers a transformative path forward. Moldova has the opportunity not merely to follow global best practices, but to lead.

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