TOURISM IN THE NORTH EAST REGION OF ROMANIA. THE CASE OF SUCEAVA COUNTY

Cătălin Ioan Nechifor[1]

Abstract.

The analysis of tourism in Romania is a very good instrument to explore various economic and social evolutions, including regional development and GDP. From the total of 8 NUTS 2 regions in Romania, the South-East region is by far the most important in terms of tourism. In the last years, the Center region is getting more an more tourists. Within the North-East region, well-known for its natural and cultural-historical attractions, Suceava County becomes one of the most atractive areas in Romania. The evolution of accommodation share in the NE region is following the economic developments in Romania: between 1990 and 2001 the decline is evident, while in the following period,2002-2007, a stagnation occurs, followed recently, especially after 2010, by a quasi-exponential trend, in short run. Between 2006 and 2015, in the NE region both Romanian tourist arrivals and foreign tourist arrivals increased. Romanian tourist arrivals dynamic is greater, increasing their arrivals in 2015 compared to 2006 by 41%, while foreign tourist arrivals in the same period increased by only 20%. From the six counties of the region, Suceava has held and holds the largest share of tourist arrivals in the area, namely 24.1% of Romanian tourist arrivals in 1990, continuously growing up to 32.2% in 2015.

Keywords: regional development, toursim activitites, North East Region

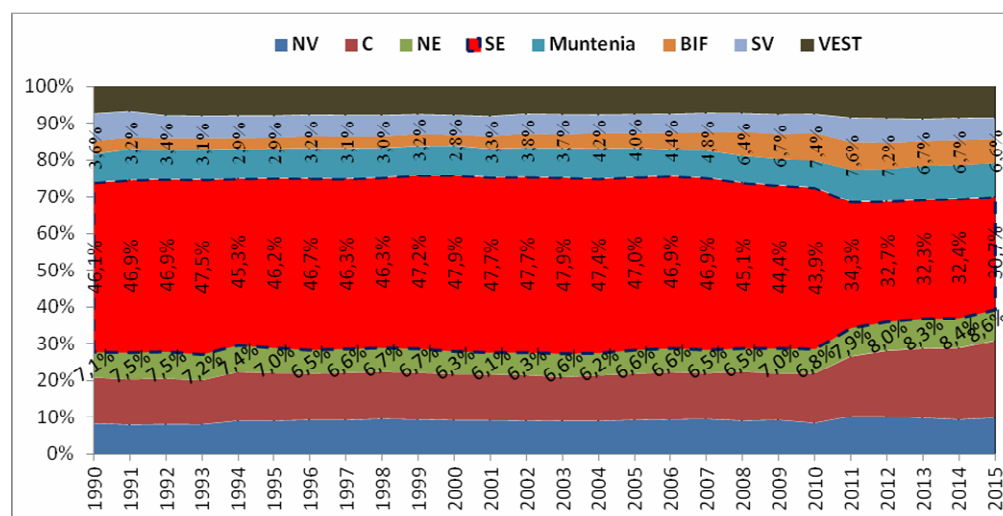**JEL Classification**: Z3

1. Introduction

Our research has focused on the analysis of tourism development in the North-East region, with an emphasis in Suceava county, so as to identify a series of sustainable development pathways in Bucovina area.

With this aim in view, the statistical indicators offered by the National Institute of Statistics – the Tempo Online database have been analysed, followed by applying a regression function in order to study the influence of tourist arrivals on GDP in the North-East region.

2. The analysis of key statistical indicators

The analysis of the tourism in the North-East region and, within it, of the county of Suceava begins with the examination of the distribution of accommodation by region (Figure 1).

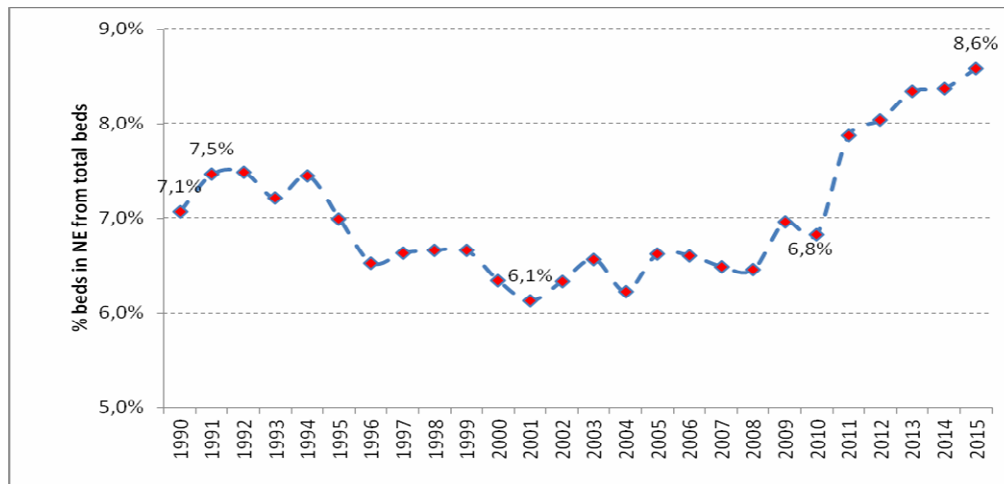### Figure 1. Development regions' share in tourism accommodation

Source: INS – TEMPO Online

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Figure 1 shows the dominance of the South-East region. Number of beds in the SE region in 1990 represents nearly half (46.1%) of the total number of beds at the country level. Dynamically, by developing more tourist areas in Romania, the region is decreasing the total contribution to the number of beds so that only reaches a share of 30.7% in 2015. A significant contribution to beds accommodation is observable in the Center region. The Center region in 1990 owned only 12.5% of the total accommodation beds; in 2015 the share held by this rises to 21%, indicating an increase of 10 percentage points.
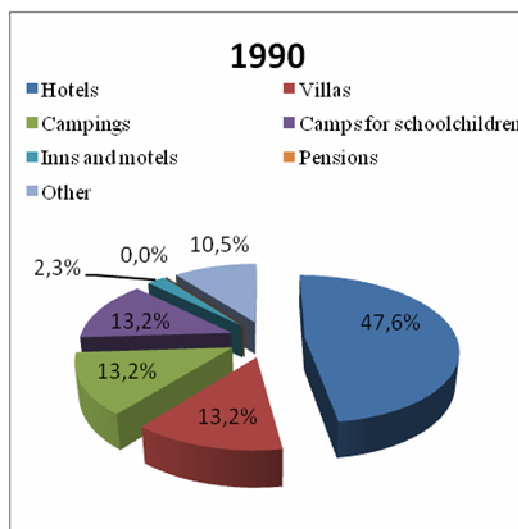
Figure 2. The dynamic of share of accommodations in the NE region
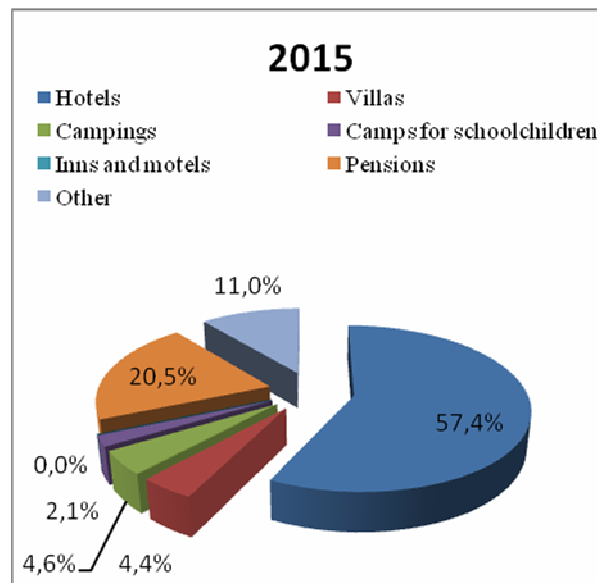

Source: INS – TEMPO Online

The evolution of accommodation's share in the NE region is following the economic developments in Romania. Between 1990 and 2001 the decline is evident. In the following period, 2002-2007, the evolution is unclear and oscillating, starting with a period of stagnation, followed recently, especially after 2010, by a quasi-exponentially trend, in short run. Although the graphic evolution shows major oscillations, it should be noted that these oscillations were located in a small margin size, margin under 1.5 percentage points.

Figure 3. The structure of accommodation capacity in 1990 and 2015 by type of accommodation structure at national level
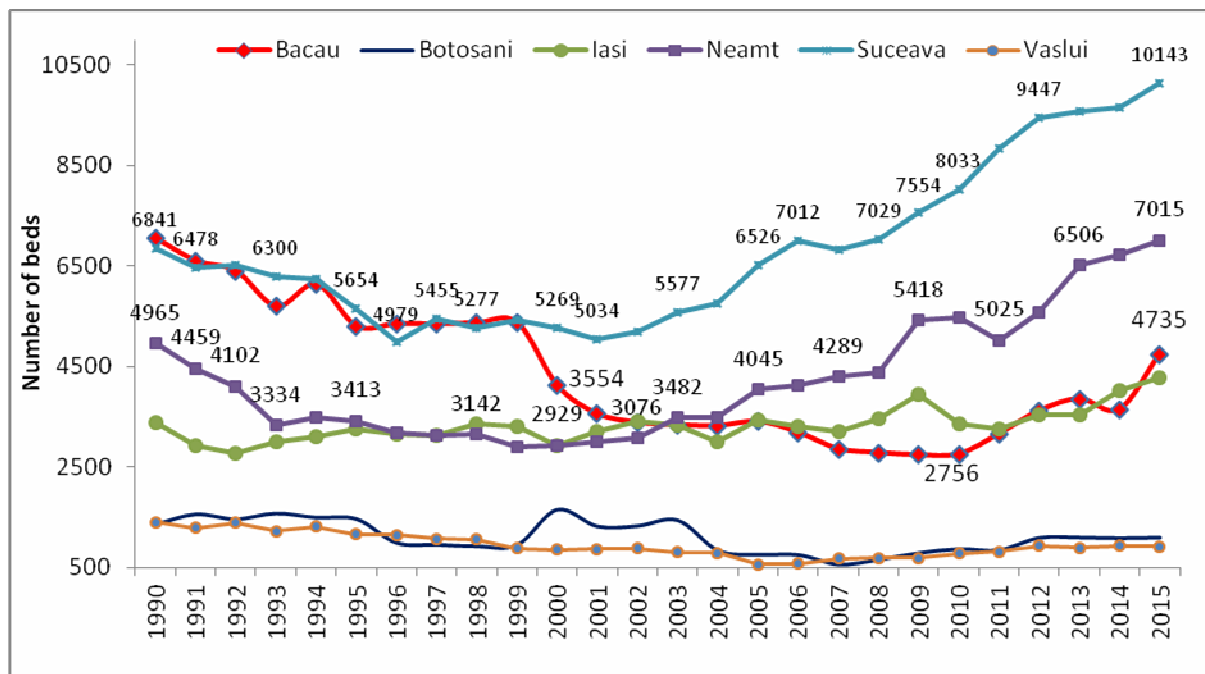
Source: INS – TEMPO Online

The hotels are the most important accommodation structure both in 1990 and 2015, market share in terms of accommodation places in 1990 representing 47.6% and 57.4% in 2015.
In the 25 years of analysis and evolution it is observed that a new concept in tourism was introduced, namely Romanian pension. In 2015, 20% of the national accommodation are available in pensions.
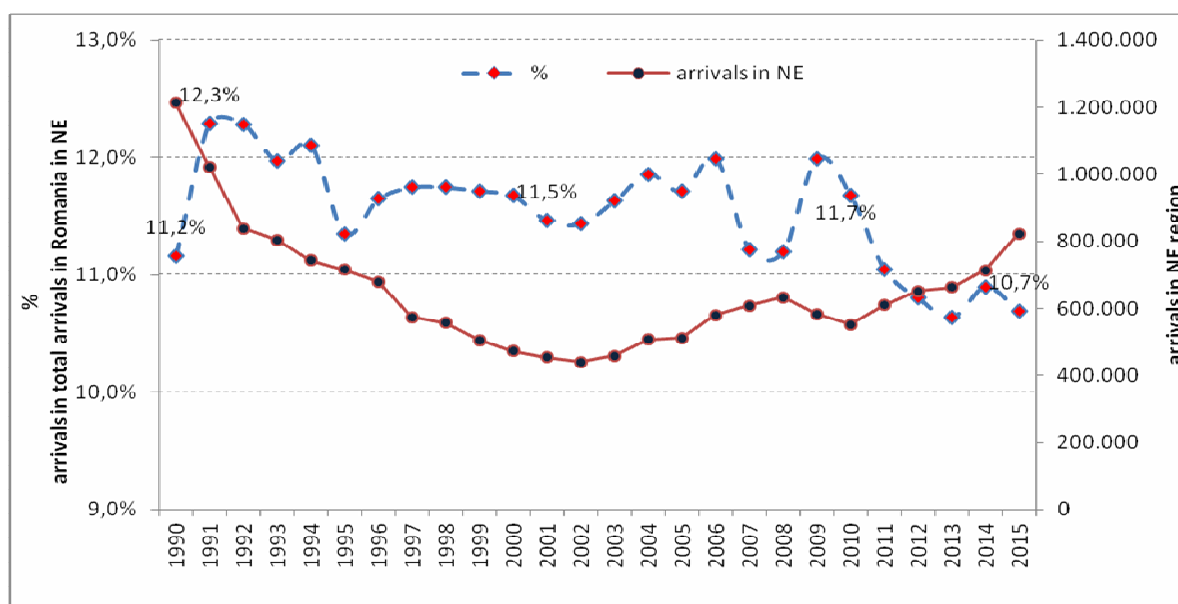
Figure 4. The dynamics of accommodation in the counties of the North-East region during 1990-2015

Source: INS – TEMPO Online

In the two counties less advantaged by the relief, Botosani and Vaslui, number of beds remained almost constant at low levels in the period under review. In Suceava County, the county with the highest potential-tourism dynamic, the dynamic is getting strong especially after 2005.
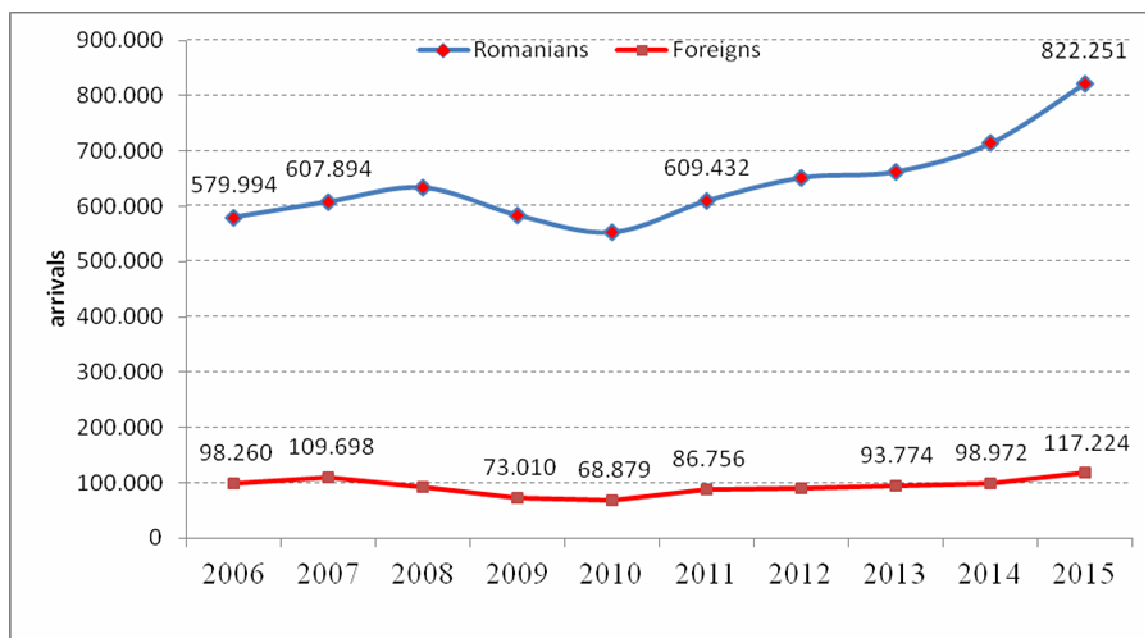
Figure 5. The dynamics of arrivals of Romanian tourists in NE region

The total number of arrivals in the NE region has fared parabolic. Thus, in the first years after 1990 the number of tourists dropped sharply from 1.2 million in 1990 to less than 500000 in 2001-2002. Since 2002, the number of Romanian tourists who visited the NE region began to increase reaching a value of 800000 tourists in 2015.
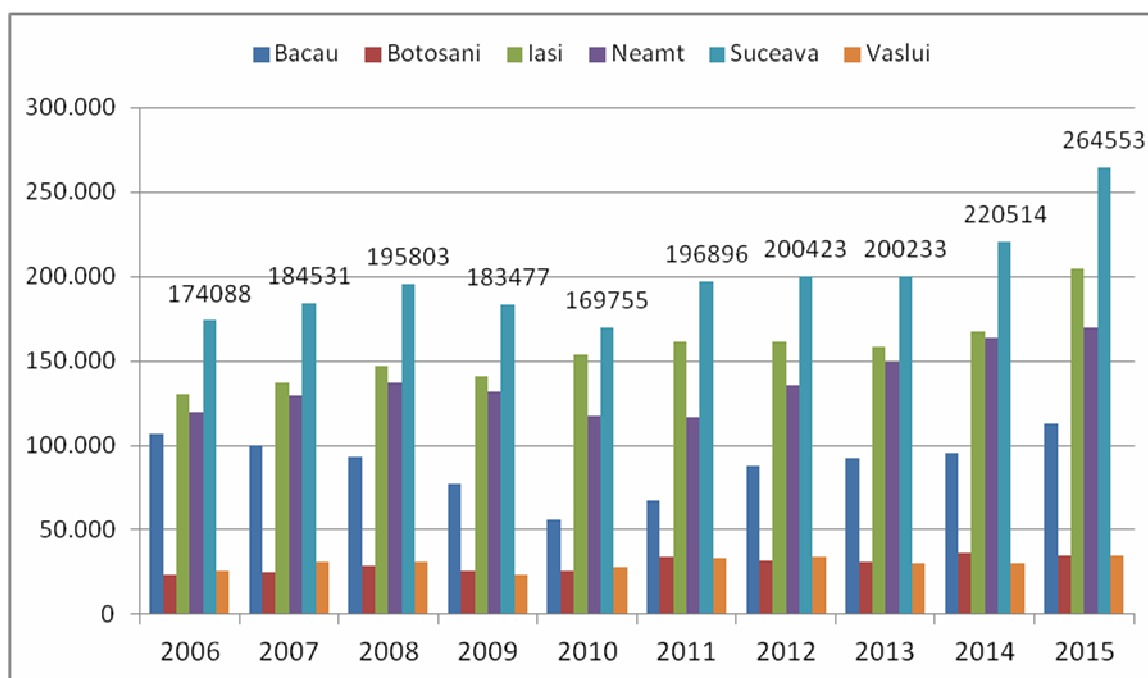
Figure 6. The dynamics of Romanian and foreign tourist arrivals in 2006-2015

In the analyzed period, 2006-2015, in the NE region both Romanian tourist arrivals and foreign tourist arrivals had increased. Romanian tourist arrivals dynamic is greater, increasing their arrivals in 2015 compared to 2006 by 41%, while foreign tourist arrivals in the same period increased by only 20%.
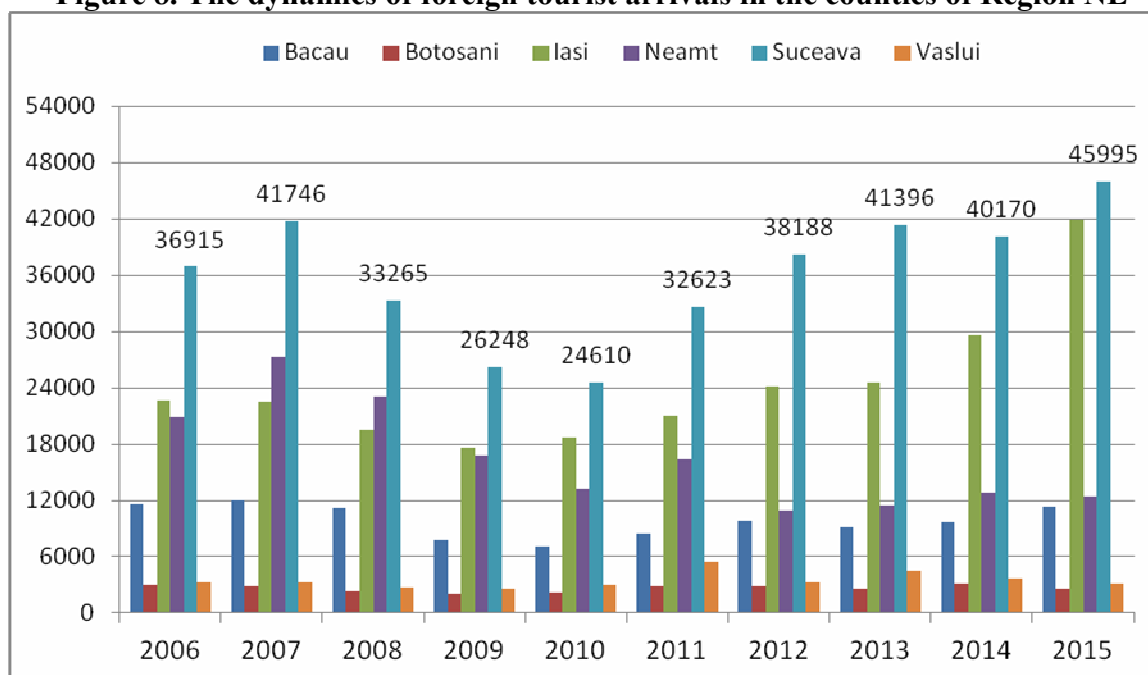
Figure 7. The dynamics of the number of arrivals of Romanian tourists in the counties of Region NE

As expected, Suceava attracts the largest number of tourists. Romanian tourist arrivals in the period 2006-2015 increased from 174000 to 250000. Lower values of tourist arrivals are seen in Botosani and Vaslui counties. Arrivals in these less attractive counties represent less than a quarter of arrivals recorded in Suceava County.

Figure 8. The dynamics of foreign tourist arrivals in the counties of Region NE
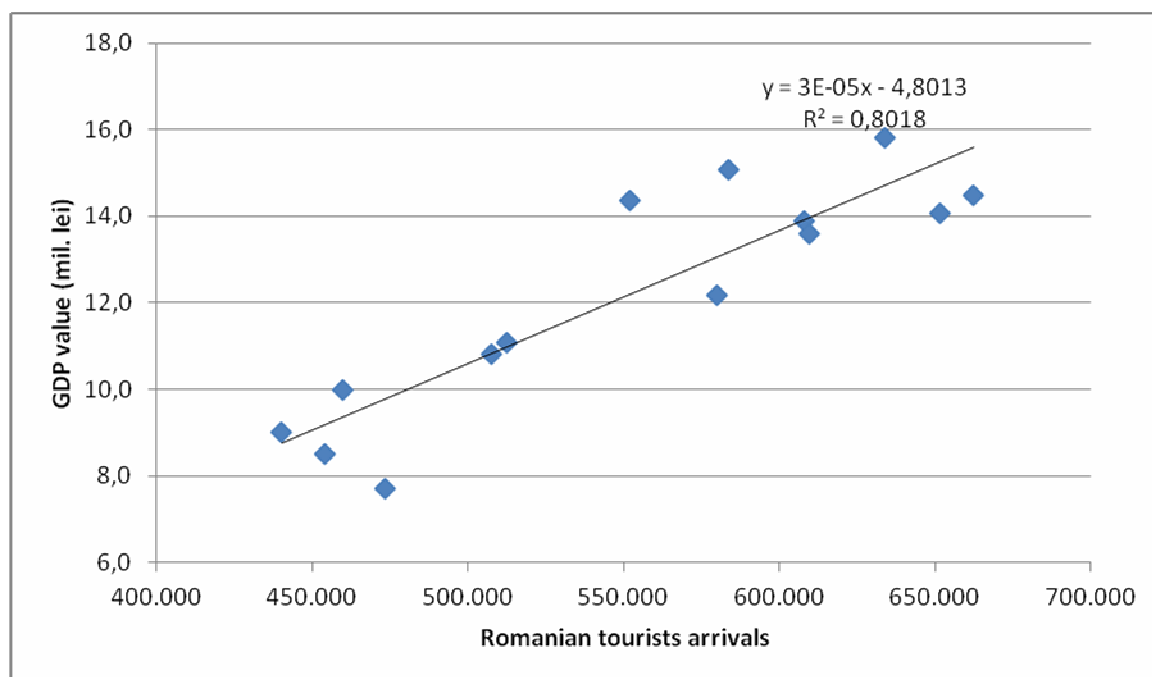
The dynamics of tourist arrivals is oscillating and is strongly influenced by the economic crisis of 2008-2010. The combination is evident in arrivals in Suceava County (most foreign tourist arrivals during the analyzed period).

3. An analysis of the influence of tourist arrivals on regional GDP in the period 2000-2013

We conducted a regression analysis between Romanian tourist arrivals and their influence on GDP dynamics in the NE region.

Figure 9. The relationship between tourists arrivals - GDP value in the NE region

Source: author's calculations based on INS – TEMPO Online

The result variable y is the amount of GDP million, constant prices of 1990.
The variable factor x is the number of arrivals of Romanian tourists in NE region and it is other factors not included in the model.
Analyzing the plot in Figure 9 we can specify a linear econometric model between the two variables.
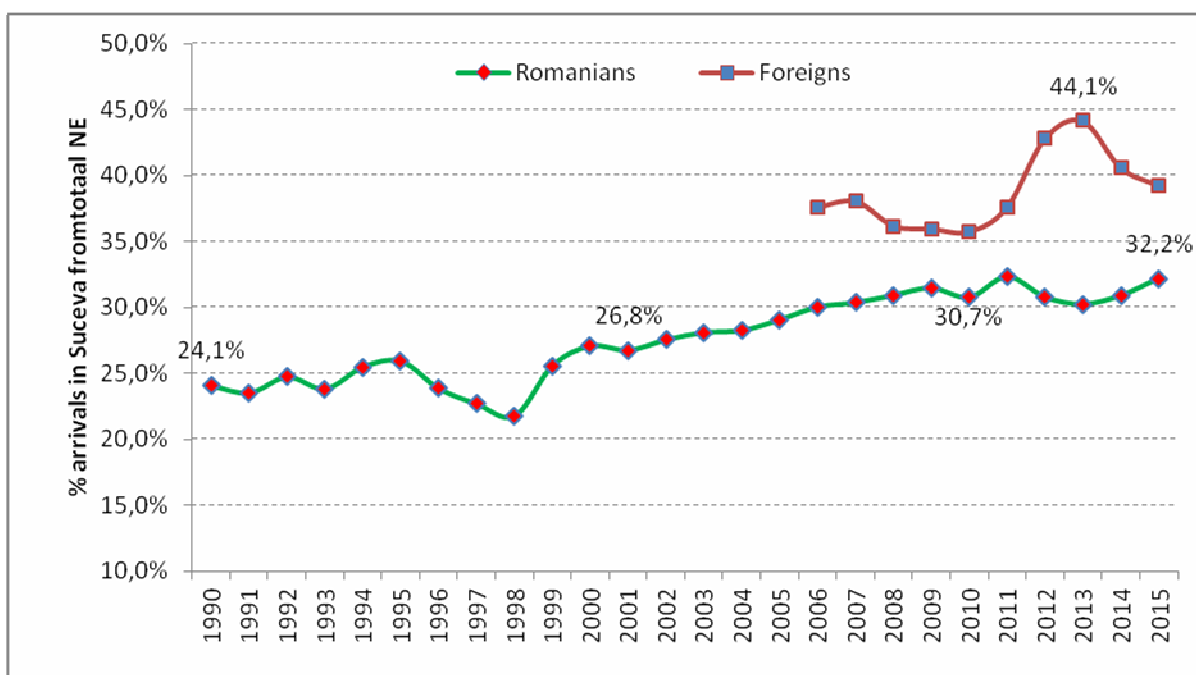Thus, we formalize the above as $y = a + bx + e$
Making its assessment in EXCEL (Appendix 1) yielded a statistically significant relationship at a threshold of 5%. Therefore the contribution of Romanian tourist arrivals in NE region on real GDP growth is statistically significant.
For an increase in the number of arrivals by 50000, regional GDP increased by 1.5 million. A considerable contribution (20%) belongs to other factors.

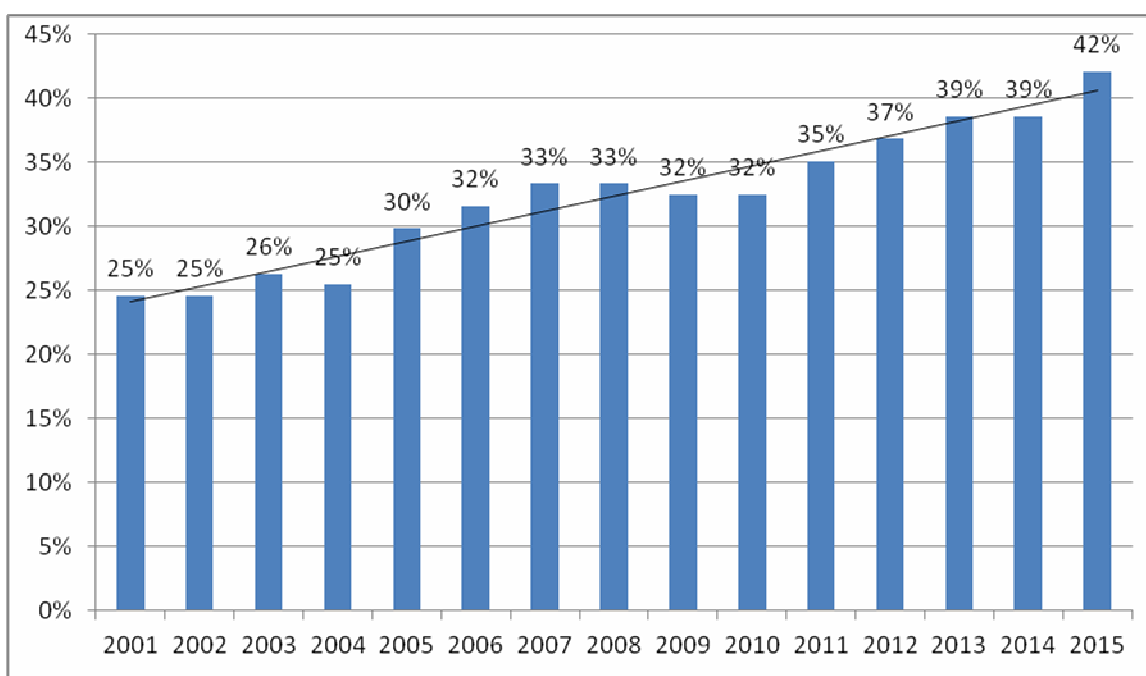### 4. Suceava – the most important county in terms of tourism

Out of the six counties of the region, Suceava has held and holds the largest share of tourist arrivals in the area. Thus Suceava attracted in 1990 24.1% of Romanian tourist arrivals, this share continuously growing and reaching 32.2% in 2015. The situation was similar for attracting foreign tourists, in 2013 almost half of them being in Suceava arrivals.

Figure 10. The dynamics of tourist arrivals in Suceava share of total arrivals in NE region for domestic and foreign tourists.

Figure 11. The dynamics of the share number of Suceava's localities that received tourists[1]

[1]The share is calculated considering the total number of localities in Suceava reported by the national Institute of Statistics (n=114)

The number of localities that provided services for Romanian and foreign tourists has increased continuously so that, if in 2001 only a quarter of the municipalities / cities Suceava provided services to tourists, in 2015 their share is almost half.

The concentration of tourist arrivals is particularly high. In 2001 86.4% of arrivals were received by the three main municipality of the county: Suceava, Campulung and Vatra Dornei.
Among the communes that has tourist arrivals in 2001, the most relevant were: Scheia, Sucevita, Vama and Fintina Mare and, together bringing in about 9000 arrivals in 2001, or 5.9% of total arrivals in the county.

In 2015 the situation is completely changed, while having been a diversification for receiving tourists. Thus, in 2015 the three municipalities owned only 48% of total tourist arrivals in the county. Important increases or new-arrivals were recorded by the following localities: Radauti, which brought in 2015 4.6% of arrivals, Cacica (Salt Mine modernization), Dorna-Arini, Manastirea Humorului, Scheia and Sucevita. Noteworthy is that Scheia, Manastirea Humorului and Sucevita brought in 2015 around 13% of total arrivals.

5. Conclusions

The accommodation capacity in the NE region reflects to a great extent the overall evolution of the Romanian economy. Suceava county has a privileged position, attracting the highest number of tourists within the NE region. This is determined, firstly, by the competitive advantages generated by the "Bucovina" tourist product.

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*** http://www.turism-suceava.ro/

SUMMARY OUTPUT

Regression Statistics

Multiple R	0.90
R Square	0.80
Adjusted R Square	0.79
Standard Error	1.23
Observations	14

ANOVA

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	73.2585	73.2585	48.5439	0.0000
Residual	12	18.1094	1.5091		
Total	13	91.3680			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Intercept	-4.801	2.460	-1.952	0.075	-10.161	0.558
Arrivals	0.000031	0.000004	6.967	0.000	0.000021	0.000040