

THE ANALYSIS OF AGROTOURIST ACTIVITY IN BUKOVINA

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Abstract. *For Romania agrotourism is a form of tourism that enjoys of the greatest potential, its development being a tool of sustainable development, both economically but also socially and culturally for Romanian rural area. Favorable relief conditions that are available, the beauty of landscapes, clean air, water, mountain areas, traditions and customs kept alive, and in the present, the specific of Moldavian gastronomy and not least the well-known hospitality of the locals, make from Bucovina one of the Romania's main tourist areas. Even if the inhabitants of these places understand the need of capitalization of existing tourist resources in this area and they crossed to the development of accommodation infrastructure by converting their homes in agrotourist guesthouses by building new accommodation structures, however, the tourist potential of this land is not yet intense exploited. The main problems encountered are related to the quality and standards of provided tourist services, involving of the hosts in agrotourism activities, lack of collaboration between local authorities and guesthouses operators, but the infrastructure and funding sources remain major issues - national issues.*

Key words: *agrotourism, agrotourist guesthouses, sustainable development, traditions and customs kept*

INTRODUCTION.

Bucovina Province is located in the north part of Romania, in north of Moldova tourist area, on the right part of the river Suceava. The richness of the landscape, the material and spiritual culture of the Romanian people, well preserved by the inhabitants of these places, make from the Bucovina land one of the most attractive and frequented tourist areas of the country.

The name of Bucovina province - "Beech country" is held since the year 1775, when it was part of the Austro-Habsburg Empire, taking part from its composition until 1918. Today, Bucovina corresponds almost entirely to Suceava County, comprising only the south part of historic Bucovina, the north part, remaining in the composition of Ukraine.

Bucovina, includes pages of history, traditions and ancient customs, traditional crafts specific tot the area and medieval constructions with a rich historical cargo. Bucovina area is gifted with many churches and monasteries, famous for interior and exterior paintings, unique buildings in the world, most of them dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, from the reign period of Stefan cel Mare and Petru Rares.

RESULTS AND DICUSSIONS

Bucovina tourist region is one of the best defined tourist regions, with a varied and complex potential and with sufficient capacities in order to ensure a permanent tourist activities.

Rural tourism and agrotourism indicates great development possibilities, in Bucovina province, because rural areas have, beside a picturesque natural landscape, unpolluted and with multiple versions of recreation also a valuable cultural and historical potential.

In the rural area of North-East Region there are many churches, monasteries (Varatec, Putna, Voronet Agapia, Moldova, Sucevita, etc.), museums, memorial houses, mansions, inns and princely courts. Many of these cultural places are unique in the world through their beauty.

Rural areas are preservers of the customs, traditions, crafts and ancient customs, where talent and attraction to beautiful materialize it into real works of art - ceramics, hand-woven carpets, furrier, fabrics, folk instruments, masks.

Suceava County plays an important role in tourism activity, and not only of the North East region.

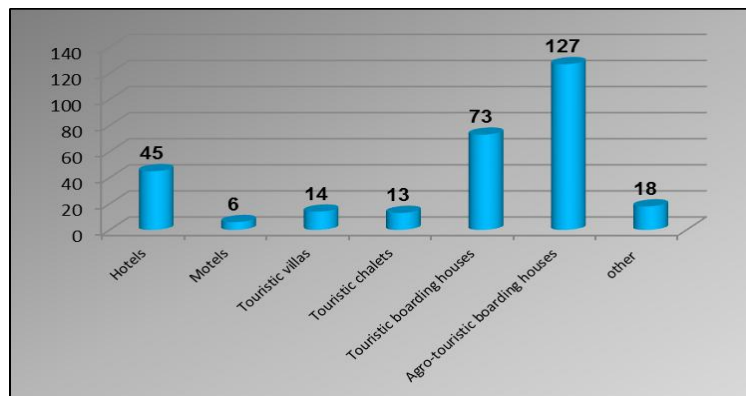


Figure 1. Establishments of tourist reception with accommodation functions, Suceava County, 2014

So, it can be draw the following conclusions:

- To the level of the year 2014, 39.73% from the total of existing accommodation units from the North East Region were concentrated on the level of Suceava County;
- In the 1990-2014 period, at the County level is was seen an increase with 369.84% of the structures of tourists reception, higher than the average media of region of 214.35%;
- From those 296 accommodation units registered at the County level, 42.9% are agrotourist guesthouses (127 rural locations), **figure 1** .;
- The distribution of agrotourist guesthouses, **figure 2**, by the component counties of the region, indicates the fact that most of them, 44.1% are on Suceava County's territory.

After the year 2000, a part of Romanian and foreign tourists, who visit Bucovina, orient themselves through urban pensions, guesthouses or agrotourist guesthouses. This trend is emerging, in fact, at the whole country's level. The explanation has connection to many advantages offered by of this new concept of recreation and refreshment in optimal conditions, away from noise pollution and stress of the civilized world.

As we pointed out above, the most important are the Bucovina natural and rustic lifestyle, witch offers exceptional circumstances for the potential tourist.

Agrotourist guesthouses is the most appropriate form of Bucovina hospitality industry, even if, often, in the "guest house" system from here, we still meet some rudimentary forms.

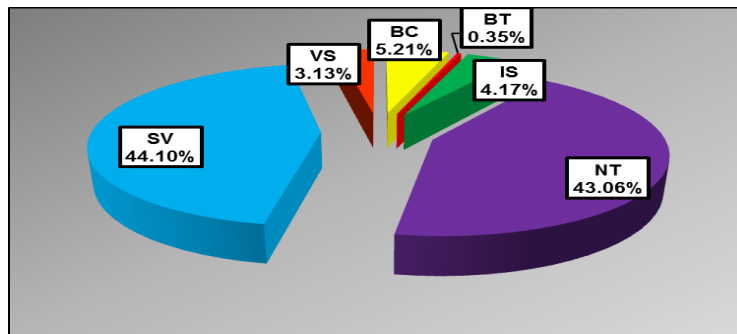


Figure 2. The distribution of agrotourist guesthouse by counties of the North-Eastern Region

The importance of tourist pensions has increased as more and more tourists were oriented through accommodation units specific to smaller "hospitality industry", with cheaper prices and located in more rural areas or outlying to cities.

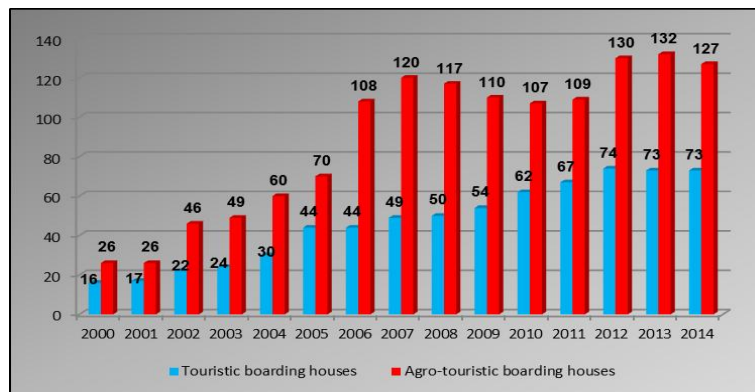


Figure 3. The evolution of the number guesthouses and agrotourist guesthouses, in Bucovina, 2000-2014

If we refer to the period 2000-2014, we can see that the number of Suceava guesthouses has increased progressively with a slight inflection period specific to the years 2008-2011 and the year 2014. In the analysed period the number of agrotourist guesthouse has increased of almost five times (4.88 times).

It can be seen in the period 2000-2014 an increase of the number of guesthouses and agrotourist guesthouses, which shows the development of entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. The spectacular increase of the number of agrotourist guesthouses is extremely important, tourism activities from rural area are an economic alternative for rural residents, contributing to economic growth.

In terms of numbers, it can be seen the dominance of agrotourist guesthouses, very popular by foreign tourists, but in terms of accommodations capacity, urban pensions shall provide a near double number of accommodation places. It can be observing the dynamics of

the large number of guesthouses, but somewhat balanced in relation to the available accommodation places.

Agrotourism from this area comes as an development alternative of the everyday life of the residents. Accustom to the think that they forgotten by the world, look that this activity has managed to change the mentality of people and also the monotony of the village.

Rural tourism and agrotourism held a predominant share in economic activity of Bucovina.

Regarding the distribution of agrotourist guesthouses on the territory of Bucovina we observed a higher concentration of them around areas Vatra Dornei (Dorna Arini – 11, Saru Dornei – 5, Dorna Cadrenilor - 5) Campulung Moldovenesc (Pojorata – 9, Sadova – 7, Vama - 18), Putna – 6, Gura Humorului (Humor Monastery - 11) and in general in the localities near monasteries (Sucevita - 18).

Across the region, the existing accommodation capacity indicates an increase with 11.72%. At the counties level the increases are different (Iasi - 37.04%, Neamt - 51.02% and Suceava - 48.96%), and there are counties where there are registered decreases of this indicator: Bacau County - 44.81%, Botosani - 17.75% and Vaslui - 27.97%.

Increasing the accommodation structures, such as hotels, guesthouses and agrotourist households is reflected in the increasing of the suitable accommodation capacity of these units. Existing accommodation capacity in tourist pensions has increased at the region level, more than 10 times (10.21 times) and in the same proportion in the case of agrotourist households. At Suceava County level, the existing accommodation capacity in tourist pensions has increased by 6.75 times, 10 times in the case of agrotourist households.

The analysis of the accommodation capacity in operation indicator, for agrotourist households, indicates the fact that, in the year 2014, the value of this indicator registered at the level of Neamt County (576.502 places-days) is higher than that recorded in the Suceava County (533.607 places-days), even if, the existing accommodation capacity is higher in Suceava County (1755 seats) compared with the one of the Neamt County (1639 seats). This situation shows a longer period of utilization of agrotourist guesthouses, during a calendaristic year, at the Neamt County level. The using degree of accommodation capacity is highlighted by *the index of capacity utilization in operation*. In the 2000-2014 period, there have been produced significant changes, regarding this indicator, at regional level, **figure 4**.

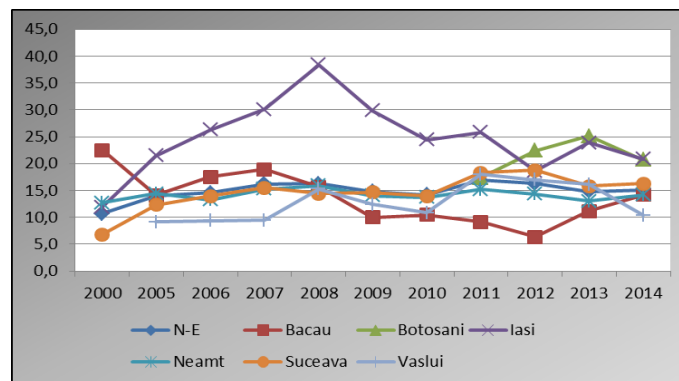


Figure 4. The evolution of the index of capacity utilization in agrotourist households, North East Region, 2000-2014

In the 2000-2014 period, the net use index of accommodation capacity, for agrotourist households, increased, at the region level with 41.1%, remaining above the national average, 31.9%. At regional level, the only County that records decreases of this indicator is the Bacau County, the index value decreasing with 36.8%. In the other five Counties, are not registered increases, but in different proportions: Botosani - 19.6%, Iasi - 77.8%, Neamt - 11.2%, Suceava - 138.2% and Vaslui - 13.2%

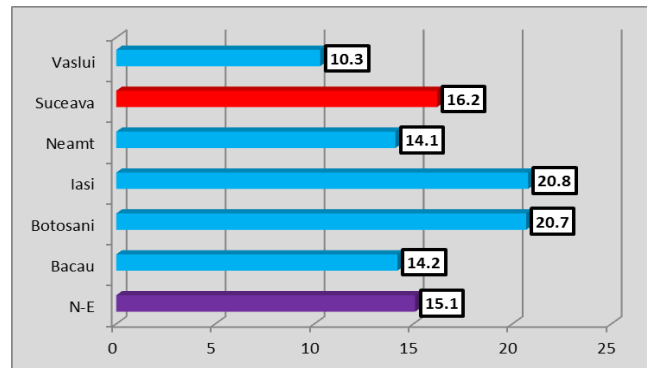


Figure 5. The net use index of accommodation capacity, in agrotourist households, North East Region, 2014

Regarding the index of capacity utilization, in the agrotourist households, in the year 2014, at the counties level, we can see a variation on this indicator. The highest degree of accommodation capacity utilization in operation is registered in Iasi County - 20.8%, exceeding the regional average, 15.1% and lowest in Vaslui County - 10.3%. In Suceava County, the value of this indicator was 16.2%, higher than regional average.

Across the region, in the 2000-2014 period are recorded increases of the overnight stays in agrotourist households. The upward trend is maintained in all counties of the North-East Region. It also noted the increasing number of overnight stays of foreign tourists, who have visited the region.

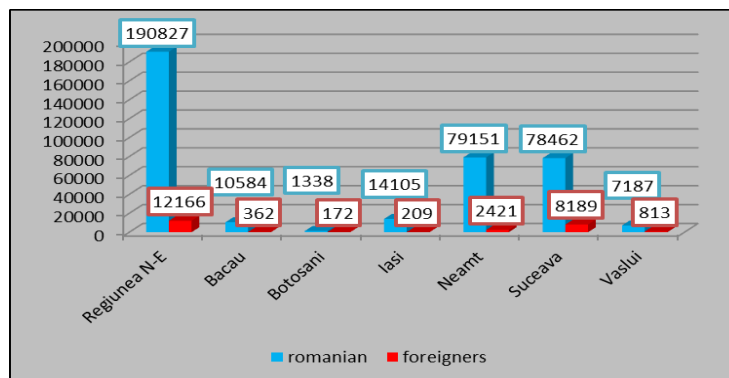


Figure 6. The situation of overnight stays, from agrotourist households, by category of tourists, North East Region, 2014

Neamt and Suceava Counties recorded 82.59% from the total number of overnight stays realised at the North-East Region's level, in the year 2014. Suceava County, concentrates 41.11% from overnight stays number for Romanian tourists and 67.31% from the overnight stays of foreign tourists.

Average length of stay shows the average duration of stay (days) of tourists in accommodation bases and reflects the possibility of the offer to retains the tourist in a certain area, region etc.

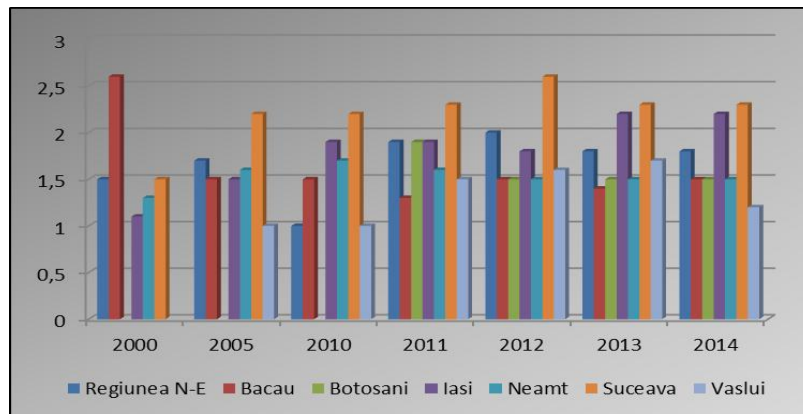


Figure 7. Average length of stay, 2000-2014

Regarding the evolution of this indicator, during the 2000-2014 period, at regional level, there is an increase of length of stay from 1.5 days/tourist in 2000, to 1.8 days/tourist, in the year 2014, in the years 2010 and 2011, being recorded higher values (1.9 days/tourist or 2.0 days/tourist). At the counties level, there is different situations, in some cases being registered declines (Bacau - from 2.6 days/tourist 1.5 days/tourists and Botosani, from 1.9 days/tourists to 1.5 days/tourist), while in other increases: Iasi from 1.1 days/tourist to 2.2 days/tourist, Neamt from 1.3 days/tourist to 1.5 days/tourist, Suceava from 1.5 days/tourist to 2.3 days/tourist and Vaslui from 1.0 days/tourist to 1.7 days/tourist.

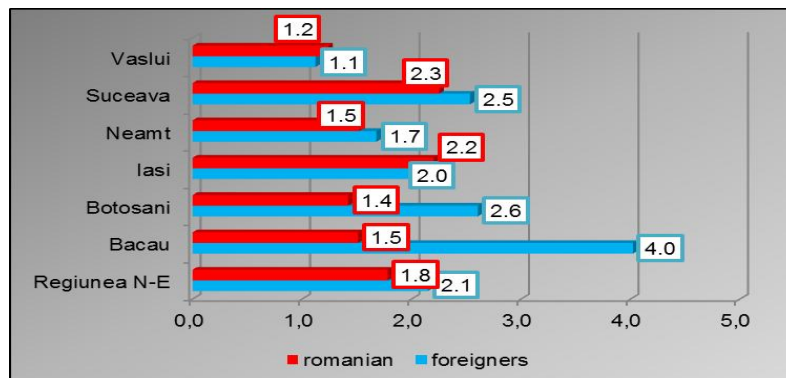


Figure 8. Average length of stay, by categories of tourists, 2014

In the year 2014, the average length of stay in the North East Region is 1.8 days/tourist, value lower to national average, 2.5 days/tourist. The analysis of this indicator, at component Counties level of North-East region, it shows that they are Counties in witch the average length of stay is above the regional average: Iasi - 2.2 days/tourist and Suceava 2.3 days/tourist, in other Counties the value being below the regional average.

The analysis of this indicator, by categories of tourists, indicate a higher value, in the case of foreign tourists. So, at regional level was recorded value of 2.1 days-tourist, for foreign tourists and 1.8 days/tourist for Romanian tourists. In Bacau County, in the year 2014, was recorded the highest value of the average length of stay, for foreign tourists, 4 days/tourist, followed by Botosani County - 2.6 days/tourist and Suceava 2.5 days/tourist.

The analysis of the indicator, at the level of Romanian tourists, indicate the highest value in the County of Suceava, 2.5 days/tourist, value that exceed the regional average, 1.8 days/tourist.

The seasonality of tourism demand and consumption represents the dominant feature of tourism activity having important implications in the activity of services providers from this field. One of the peculiarities of tourist market is the concentration in time of the demand and tourist consumption.

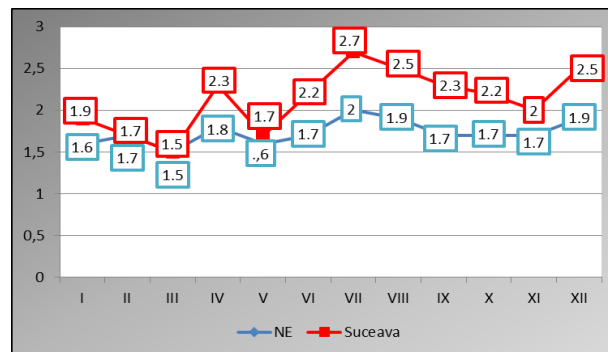


Figure 9. Average length of stay, in agrotourist households, for Romanian tourists, by months, 2014

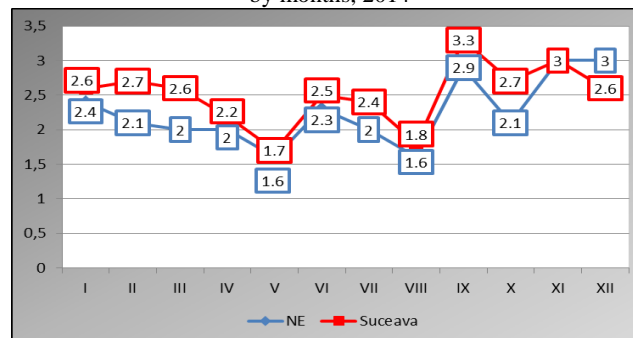


Figura 10. Average length of stay, in agrotourist households for foreign tourists, by months, 2014

The analysis of tourist activity, at the North East Region's level, in the year 2014, by months, **figures 9 and 10**, indicates a concentration of the tourism activity, for foreign tourists in the summer period (June, July and August) and for Romanian tourists in summer period (May, June, July, August) and winter (December). February is the month that records the lowest level of tourism activity, in this region.

At the level of Suceava County, the months of May, July, August, September and December indicates a strong tourist activity of Romanians in Bucovina area, this being determined by the packages organized on the occasion of legal national holidays, of rest leaves and the winter holidays. Foreign tourists visit the provinces of Bucovina especially in June, July and August.

CONCLUSIONS

Even if the modernization of accommodation capacities, passed into private propriety was achieved in over 90%, highlighting of the areas with tourism potential, and of the treatment bases through a adequate promotional activity suitable and tourist services were at a low level, fact which has determined the existence both of a lower average length of stay to other regions and use index of accommodation capacity reduced.

Artistic and traditional folk festivals throughout the year remind to the general public the living spirit, authentic of Moldovan lands, through folk songs and dances, ancient customs - festivals plastic art, folklore, customs and habits. Folk art, religion and Christian customs unspoiled, the possibility to be in the middle of specific events to these place (festivals, fairs, festivals, etc.), even physical labor therapy are equally attraction points.

Through its cultural, historical, ethnographic and natural and socioeconomic values the Moldovan village can become a tourism product of great originality and brand for tourism from North East Region.

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