

THE TOURISTIC ACTIVITY OF THE NORTH-EAST REGION IN THE PERIOD 1990-2007

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Abstract

The following analysis has started from our location from a geographical point of view in the North-East Region. In the first part I have made a brief presentation of the tourism potential, after which I have analyzed the main statistic indicators for the period 1990-2007. Many results have been presented through suggestive statistical diagrams, leaving the possibility for the readers to draw other conclusions than the ones found in the text. The analysis was detailed for all the counties that have registered tourists in 2007. At the end it was applied the study of touristy activity concentration with the help of the Onicescu concentration indicators, and have been drawn the main conclusions.

Key words: accommodation establishments, arrivals, Onicescu concentration.

JEL classification: C10, C18

1. INTRODUCTION

If the touristy activity would be valued at its real potential throughout investments in accommodation establishments with a high level of comfort, investments in training the workforce from the field of tourist services, investments in the infrastructure of the roads and of the means of access towards the main tourist attractions, it could lead to a considerable development of the economy of the North-East Region.

2. TOURISTY POTENTIAL

The North-East Region holds an important tourist potential that expects to be valued. Thus, throughout its beautiful natural view offered by the mountain area of Ceahlău and Rarău, by the tourist routes from Cheile Bicazului, Izvorul Muntelui, by the thermal waters from Slănic Moldova or Băltătești, the treatment area from Salina Târgu-Ocna, Lacul Roșu, throughout the flora and fauna that provide special mountainous views, especially in the counties of Suceava, Neamț and Bacău, which have a great potential waiting to be exploited.

On the other hand, the anthropogenic tourism potential comes to complement the area's natural beauty, with the monasteries from Bukovina and from the county of Neamț, with churches like Trei Ierarhi from Iași, with the medieval fortresses since Ștefan cel Mare age, with cultural and artistic creations of Eminescu, Enescu, Sadoveanu, Alecsandri or Creangă.

In fact, in the records of UNESCO, the Northern Moldova (Bukovina) area is considered to be a special interest tour through its numerous monasteries founded in the XV-XVI century: Voroneț, Humor, Moldovița, Sucevița, the Arbore Church, or the ones from the XVII or XVIII century: Agapia,

Neamț, Văratec, Secu, Sihla, Sihăstria. These are only a part of the touristy attractions of this region.

It is true that most touristy wealth is provided by the counties Suceava and Neamț, and to a lesser extent of Bacău and Iași, where tourist attractions are concentrated either in the resort Slănic Moldova or in municipal county courthouse, such as Iași, which is considered to be the historical capital of Moldova.

The other two counties from this region have not only a very low degree of economic development, but also a low touristy potential as compared to the existing one from the rest of the region. For this reason, the touristy activity in this region is uneven developed.

3. NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS AND THE ACCOMMODATION CAPACITY

According to the statistical methodology, a structure of the tourist reception with functions of tourist accommodation is considered to be any construction or planning that provides a permanent or seasonal accommodation and other services for tourists. There are not included in the research the structures of tourist reception with functions of accommodation with a capacity of accommodation less than 5 places.

In the tourist accommodation establishments, by 1993 there have been included the existing establishments by the end of that year, and beginning with 1994, the existing establishments by 31st of July of each year, only the units which activity was interrupted for a longer period of time, in order to achieve some major repairs or for significant changes in the capacity of accommodation and/or in the category of employment.

The existent tourist capacity accommodation stands for the number of places of accommodation of

tourist use, entered in the last act of acceptance, approval, classification of the establishment of tourist accommodation, excluding additional beds which could be settled if necessary.

The evolution of the number of places in the period 1990-2008 has been decreasing until 2004 (Figure 1), after which it met a slight increase, and in the last four years it maintains relatively constant in the region.

The evolution by counties is different, the largest decrease compared to 1990 was registered in Bacău (-60.5%), due to Slănic Moldova resort, where a great part of the accommodation establishments have been in conservation, or have been removed.

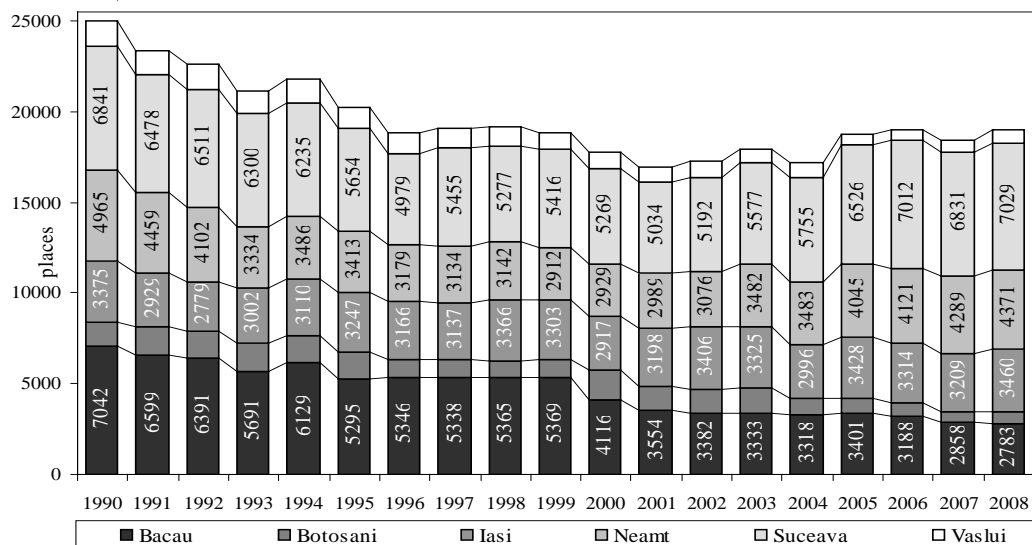


Figure 1 – The evolution of the accommodation capacity by counties

Source: National Institute of Statistics

From the total accommodation establishments, most of them are hotels, which stand for 47.2% in 2008 (Figure 2).

Above the average is situated Bacău county (67.3%), Vaslui (60.8%), Botoșani (53.7%) and Iași (53.6%).

With a smaller percentage of places of accommodation in hotels are the counties that are more developed in terms of tourism, Suceava (39.6%) and Neamț (38.5%), which have a great percentage of accommodation establishments such as rural tourist hostels (22.4% in Neamț and 24.7% in Suceava) and urban ones (13.9% in Suceava).

In the Figure 3 it can be observed the great increase in the share of total hotel capacity in the counties of Bacău, Vaslui, Iași and Botoșani, and also the decrease recorded in Suceava. As far as the evolution of the number of tourists above 18 is concerned, in 2007, their number stands for 46 % of the existent on in 1990. The decrease at a half of the Romanian tourists in this period occurred because of the high prices in relation to the offered conditions, a part of them preferring to go on other much more attractive in terms of money local or foreign holiday destinations. In the last years, a part of the Romanian tourists preferred for their holidays foreign

A significant decrease was recorded also in Botoșani county (-52%), followed by Vaslui (-50.8%) and Neamț (-12%). Increases have been registered in Suceava (+2.7%) and Iași (+2.5%).

Due to these evolutions, the share of the accommodation capacity in total in the region has changed in favor of the following counties: Suceava (37%), Neamț (23%) and Iași (18.2%); but not in favor of Bacău (14.7%).

The other two counties, insignificant as a tourist attraction point, hold shares below 4% from the total region.

destinations that were not accessible for many of them until 1990, and much more attractive in terms of price, or better said as a ratio between price and quality.

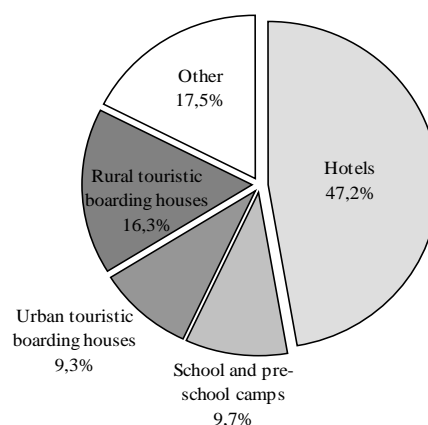


Figure 2 – The structure of the accommodation capacity in the North East Region by types, in 2008

Source: National Institute of Statistics

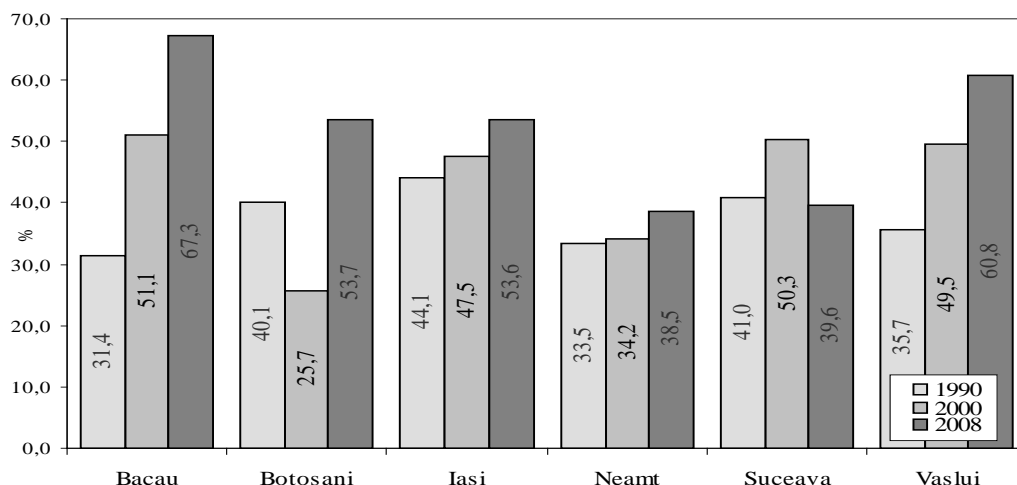


Figure 3 – The evolution of the weight of the capacity of hotel accommodation in total (%)

Source: National Institute of Statistics

Thus, the number of Romanian tourists that arrived in the region has decreased at a half, and the number of foreign tourists has decreased with 78%.

The number of nights spent has also decreased to 46.2% for the Romanian tourists from the one that was in 1990 and to 34.3% for the foreign tourists.

The weight of the foreign tourists that are accommodated in the region from the total of tourists, from a maximum of 26.5% reached in 1991, has decreased to a minimum of 11.1% in 1999, followed by a slight increase in order to reach in 2007 at 15.3% (Figure 4).

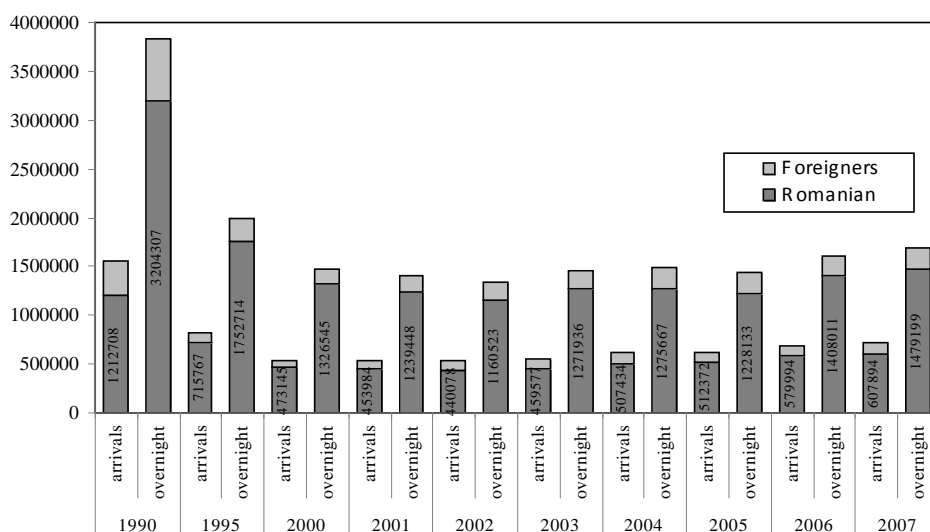


Figure 4 – The accommodated tourists and the nights spent by the tourists in the North-East Region

Source: National Institute of Statistics

The same aspects for the night spent, where at a weight of foreigners of maximum 16.2% in 1990, it goes for a minimum of 6.9% in 1991, so as in 2000 to maintain between 12-14%.

At the end of the analyzed period, the weight of the foreigners by total nights spent was of 12.6%.

The structure of the accommodated tourists has changed over time, but not in favor of the foreign ones (Figure 5).

In 2007, the counties that had a great weight of foreign tourists were: Suceava (18.4%), Neamț (17.4%), Iași (14.1%), followed by Bacău (10.7%).

For all the counties it was observed a decrease in the weight of foreign tourists in total compared to 1990, but if compared to 2000, the weight increases in Suceava, Neamț and Iași.

The same aspects could be observed in terms of nights spent, in 2007 the weight for foreigners was of 12.6% in the region (Figure 6).

Weights above the average of the region had the following counties: Suceava (23.8%), Iași (13.6%), Botoșani (13.5%) and Neamț (13.4%). Bacău had a weight of only 8.9% of the total nights spent.

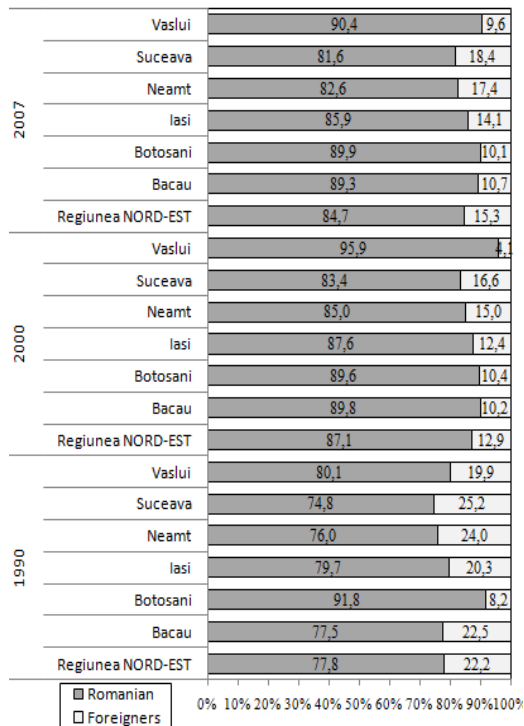


Figure 5 - The structure by types of accommodated tourists

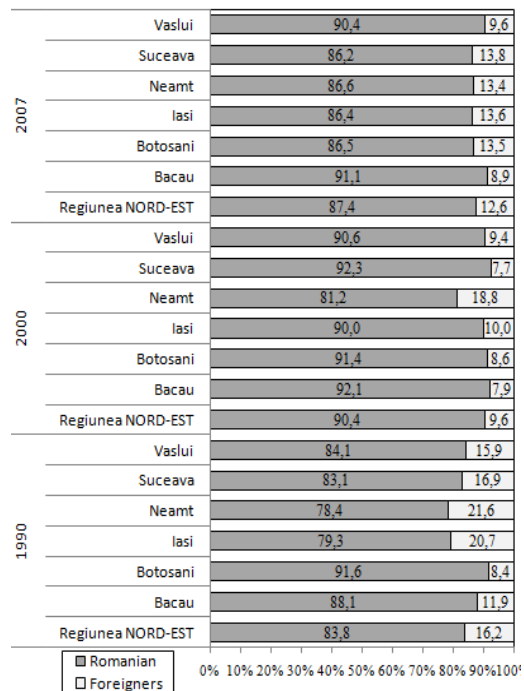


Figure 6 - The structure of the nights spent by types of Tourists

Of all the 102 settlements of the North-East Region where foreign tourists have been recorded, most of them are found in Suceava (38), Neamț (23), Iași and Bacău (15 each), only 7 in Vaslui and 4 in Botoșani.

By the number of tourists, on the first places are situated the following settlements: Iași (144.7 thousands), Suceava (76.4 thousands), Piatra Neamț

(56 thousands), Vatra Dornei (46.1 thousands), Bacău (45.8 thousands), Slănic Moldova (30.1 thousands). At the opposite side, with a number of 8 tourists accommodated we find Pipirig.

The uneven distribution of tourists by settlements can be very well observed in the box plot diagram of the 102 settlements (Figure 7). The same discrepancies are in terms of nights spent by settlements. The most nights spent were registered in: Iași, Vatra Dornei, Suceava, Slănic Moldova, Bălțătești resort, Piatra Neamț, Bacău and Târgu-Ocna.

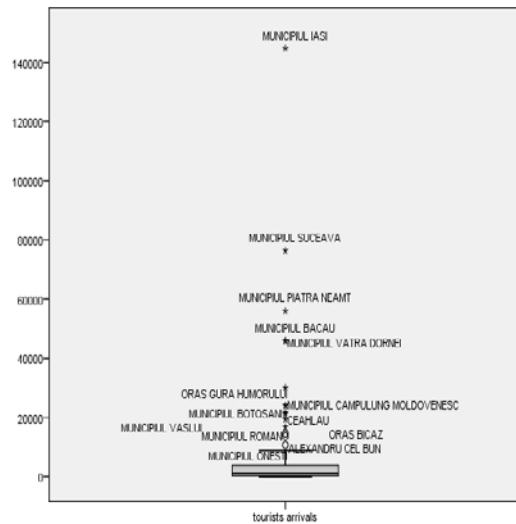


Figure 7 – The box plot diagram of the structure of the number of tourists by settlements from the North-East Region

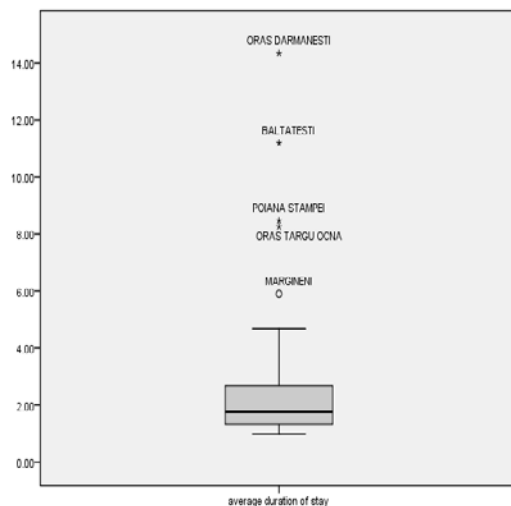


Figure 8 – Box plot diagram of the structure of the average overnight stay by settlements from the North-East Region

Source: National Institute of Statistics

The average overnight stay was of 2.4 days/tourist in the region. The highest average overnight stays were observed in the following settlements: Dărmănești (14.3 days), Bălțătești (11.2

days), Poiana Stampei (8.5 days), Târgu-Ocna (8.3 days), Mărgineni (5.9 days) and Vatra Dornei (4.7 days) (Figure 8).

4. THE ANALYSIS OF THE CONCENTRATION OF THE TOURIST ACTIVITY IN THE REGION

Furthermore, I applied different methods of statistical analysis of the concentration of the phenomenon, in order to see to which extent the number of tourists and of the spent nights concentrates on the 102 settlements from the region.

Using the specific graph “Gini’s square” (Figure 9) it can be observed a relatively concentrated tourist activity on some settlements of the region, in terms of tourists and nights spent.

Given the fact that the concentration indexes vary between [0-100%], the upper limit meaning a maximum degree of concentration of the phenomenon (monopoly situation), and in this case, the Gini concentration index is calculated through the method of the triangles(1) and has the value 35.9% for arrivals and 35.4% for nights spent.

The phenomenon of concentration is obvious, even though not in such high degree.

$$I_{Gini} = \sum_{i=1}^n (p_i q_{i+1} - p_{i+1} q_i) \rightarrow (1)$$

Where p_i stands for the relative weight of the number of settlements, and q_i for the relative weight of the number of tourists (and nights spent).

From the auxiliary calculations done in order to compute the Gini index, it results that 12% of the settlements from the region (12 as a total number), accounts for 45.8% of the total tourists, and 45.5% from the total of nights spent accounts for 10.8% of the total settlements (11 as a total number).

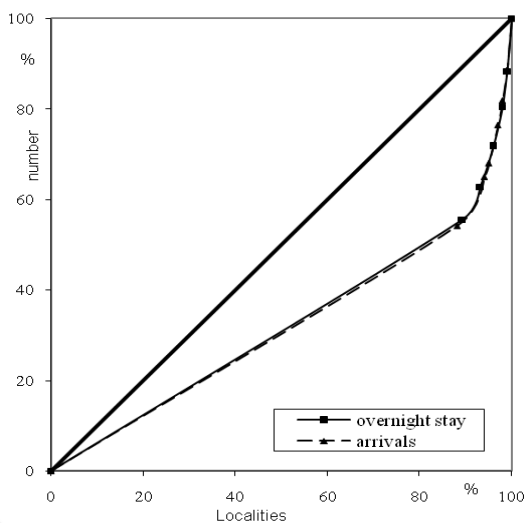


Figure 9 – The concentration curve of the tourists and nights spent by settlements of the NE Region

Applying the Onicescu method (2) (the corrected formula of calculating, noted with E) in

order to analyze the evolution in time of the degree of concentration of the tourists and of the nights spent in the two categories: Romanians and foreigners (Figure 10), it resulted that in 1999 it existed the highest level of concentration, reaching indexes of 0.6 and 0.7.

$$E = \frac{\sum g_i^2 - \frac{1}{N}}{1 - \frac{1}{N}} \rightarrow (2)$$

Where g_i^2 stands for the cumulate weight of the number of tourists (or nights spent) from the total of the region, from the two categories (Romanian and foreigners), and N stands for the number of groups.

If the touristy activity has a very low degree of concentration on the counties, in the case of the concentration on the two categories of tourists (Romanian and foreigners), the degree of concentration varies between 0.46 in 1990 and 0.70 in 1999 for the nights spent and between 0.31 and 0.60 for the tourists; the minimum and the maximum number is for the same years (Figure 10).

The concentration is lower in the case of the arrival of tourists than in the case of the nights spent, because the Romanian tourists have an average overnight stay higher than the foreigners do.

At the beginning of the analyzed period (1990), the concentration indexes of the two categories of tourists are lower, because the weight of foreign tourists is higher as a total.

For example, in 1990, the foreign tourists had a weight of 22.2% in total, while in 1999 these held only 11.1%. The same aspect occurs in the case of the nights spent, where the weight of the foreigners is smaller, 16.2% in 1990, 8.2% 1999 and 12.6% in 2007.

Computed by counties, the same indexes show a different degree of concentration (Figure 11). It results the same high level of concentration in the years 1999-2000, but a much higher degree for the smaller counties, without tradition in tourism, such as Vaslui, Botoșani and even Bacău.

If at the beginning of the period the weight of the total foreign tourists was 22.2%, higher in Bacău (25.6%), Suceava (25.2%), Neamț (24%) and Iași (20.3%), starting with 2000, Bacău and Iași have been losing from this point of view.

In the last year of the analyzed period, the weight of the total arrival of foreign tourists was 15.3% in the region, higher in Suceava (18.4%) and Neamț (17.4%), and lower in: Iași (14.1%), Bacău (10.7%), Botoșani (10.1%) and Vaslui (9.6%).

Considering the fact the average at the level of our country in the last year was 22.2%, weight of foreign tourists, we reach the hypothesis from where we started this study, that the tourist potential of the region and mostly of some counties, even though it is considerable, it is not used at its true value.

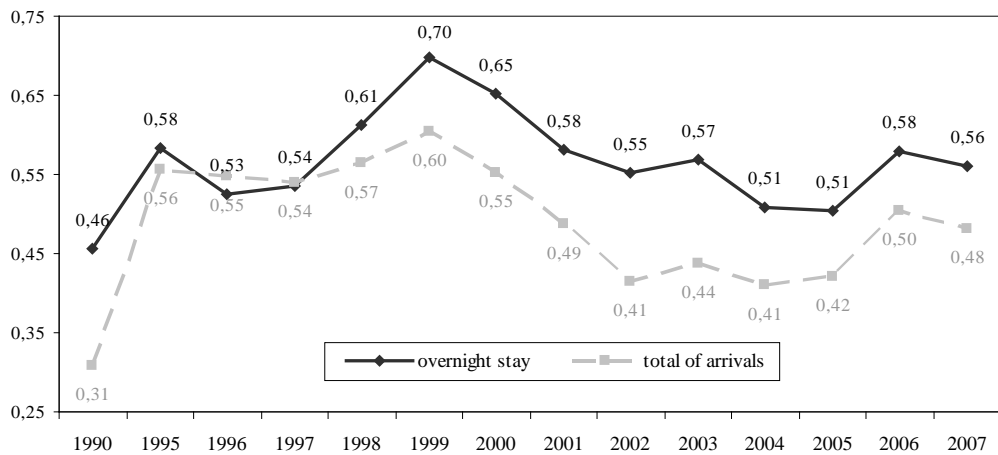


Figure 10 – The evolution of the Onicescu concentration indexes in the NE Region by categories of tourists (Romanian/foreigners)

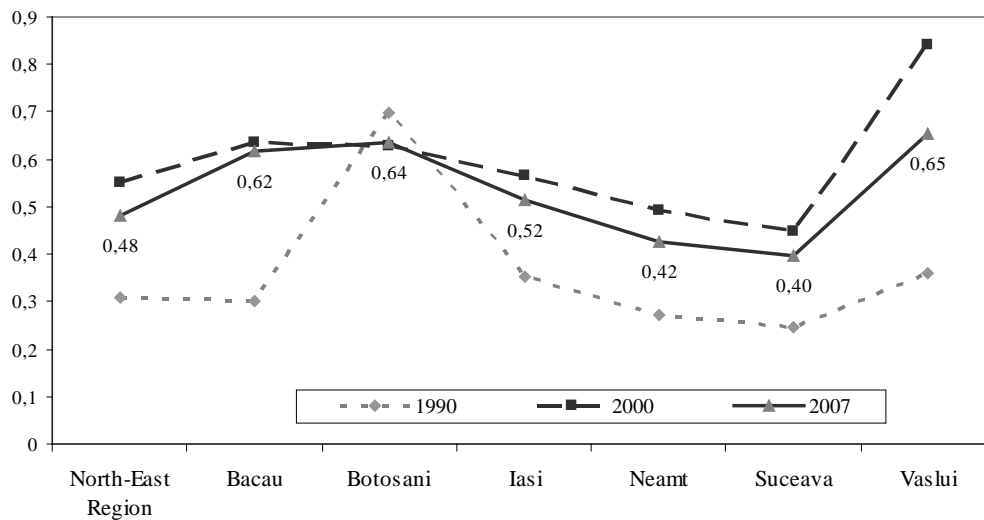


Figure 11 – The evolution of the Onicescu concentration indexes for the accommodated tourists by categories of tourists (Romanian/foreigners), by counties

5. CONCLUSIONS

From this study, it can be definitely observed that the touristry activity from the region is not developed at the level that it should be, according to its natural resources.

The statistic data lead to the conclusion of a decrease in this activity, concerning the accommodation capacity and the number of tourists or the nights spent.

From 1991 the data show decreases until 2001, when they keep constant, or record slight increases. If Suceava maintains relatively constant its activity measured through the number of tourists and the nights spent, Neamț has recorded in the last 5 years a more significant dynamics.

The activity has diminished lately for the foreign tourists, drawing again the conclusion that for performance tourism you need investments in infrastructure and workforce.

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