

INTERNAL TOURISM MOVEMENT AND THE MAIN ROMANIAN TOURIST DESTINATIONS (THE PERIOD 1990 - 2008)

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Abstract: The Romanian political space at the turn of 2nd and 3rd millenniums experienced systemic-structural mutations marked by deep political regime changes, by the replacement of the Socialist „planned” economy with the market economy and especially by diversifying the area of population mobility within Romania. This study, through analysis of the quantitative and qualitative elements outlines the state of Romanian tourism by the tourism movement. There are considered the main tourist streams consisting of Romanian and foreign tourists registered in the establishments with tourists' accommodation functions in the period 1990-2008, by the structure, direction and volume to the main Romanian tourist destinations. Political, psychological, technical and economic thresholds are relevant in this study for the domestic and international tourism in post-Communist period.

Key words: Romania, tourism, tourist flows, domestic tourism, tourist destination

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INTRODUCTION

In terms of tourism potential the political-territorial Romanian system can be appreciated that it is constituted of many complex elements, varied, with unique, inedit and spectacular attributes. The shape of the tourist flows, the direction and structure are determined by the quality of tourism offer proposed. From this point of view, Romania is among the countries that have a remarkable potential, not enough capitalized, with a living rural world, anchored in many places in an archaic way of life, traditionalist and whose priceless value is expected to be considered and adequately capitalized. If in the modernized world of the Western and Central Europe, the rural and urban differences are

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insignificant, the Romanian rural tourism for example features original actors and structures, real and invaluable. This study considers the tourist flows of Romanian and foreign tourists officially registered in the establishments of tourists' accommodation functions, who have been accommodated for at least one night. Tourist flows are measurable and contribute substantially to define the real tourist function of the economy for a territorial political (sub)system.

THE CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAME

The survey is based on the information and data from field trips and from official statistical sources. By using verified tools in the literature (Wall, 1993; Williams, 1998; Hall, 2000; Ianoș, 2000; Cocean, 2005; Veal, 2006; Ilieș et al., 2008) we analyze the optimal management parameters and the quantitative and qualitative characteristics generated by the volume and the dynamics of the domestic and international tourist flows. Using specific statistical methods, analytical and mapping tools we will obtain answers to so called „triple” questions where?, why? and how? (Ilieș et al., 2012) in order to identify the factors that determined the amount and sense of mobility and its effects on the Romanian tourism system. There are analyzed the quantitative and qualitative parameters that structure and size the internal tourist flows by the number of Romanian and foreign tourists and the major tourist destination areas.

The proposed approach logic is based on flexibility - a key concept in territorial planning (Cunha, 1998; Gunn and Var, 2002; Cîndea et al., 2003; Cocean, 2005; Ilieș, 2007; Ciangă and Dezsi, 2007, p. 26; Muntele and Iatu, 2007), while in the territorial and political systems the typology of planning is based on the systemic plan (Williams, 1998; p. 127 - 129; Martinez, 1994; Ianoș, 2000; Cocean, 2005) where the change of an element disrupts the entire system, requiring as fundamental method decoding the structure and understanding its operation (Ianoș, 2000). Thus, the interdependence of the four key elements: space and time as an ongoing basis, activities and communication as tools for action and dissemination, generate guidelines in elaboration of territorial development models system of turistification (Cazelais et al., 2000), that has the ability of being implemented at different scales, aimed at different hierarchical levels of intervention from local, regional, to international ones (Dinu, 2002; Williams, 2006; Lew et al., 2008).

DIAGNOSTIC ANALYSIS AND RESULTS. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE SPECIFIC TOURIST FLOWS AND PARAMETERS

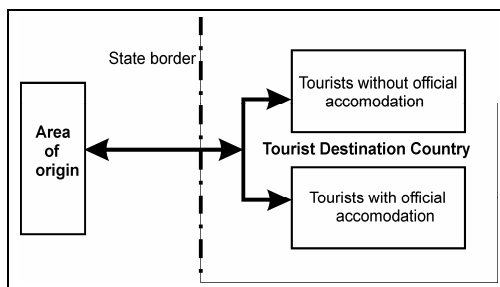


Figure 1. Tourist flow according with official registration at tourist destination areas

Evaluation of the quantitative and qualitative components of a territorial-political system is modeled at local and regional levels by the tourist flows by the inter-dependencies relations between them and by the natural and anthropogenic determinants.

The particular configuration of the tourist flows is based on (Ilieș et al., 2012): the absolute and relative geographical position, the morphological characteristics of the relief, accessibility, the communication system, the specific

quantitative, qualitative and structural of the human resource, the economic development level, socio-economic and political conditions etc. In terms of structure, the Romanian tourist flows includes two categories (figures 1 and 3): those who use the official accommodation infrastructure and those who are not registered in such structures, using accommodation from friends, relatives or acquaintances.

These situations generate for example differences between the flow of foreign tourists who are registered with the entry in Romania and those who use specific accommodation infrastructure. In

terms of economic efficiency for the hospitality and tourism industry, an important role for the domestic and international tourists it is played by those who use at least for one night the accommodation infrastructure. Also, an important role in determining the size, orientation and structure of tourist flows it is played by the quality and diversity of the tourist offer.

The tourist flow considering the number of arrivals in tourist accommodation

This chapter considers the tourist flow registered in the accommodation units that can generate a greater economic efficiency. There are analyzed the quantitative and qualitative parameters that structure and size the internal tourist flows by the number of Romanian and foreign tourists. In the Romanian political space in the last 20 years there have been significant changes quantitatively and structurally determined on the one hand, by the accommodation diversification from 6 types in 1985 to currently 13 types, plus the increase of the degree of comfort. Twenty years after the fall of Socialism, the Romanian tourism has values still below those recorded in the last years of that period. Thus, in the interval 1985 - 1989, considered the last „five of the Socialist planned economy” it was registered a slow increase in the number of registered tourist accommodation from 11.959 million to 12.971 million people (Romanian tourism peak year). The following period has decreased continuously (figure 2) reaching a minimum of less than 5 million tourists in the range 2000 to 2002 (4.847 million people in 2002, figure 2). This occurred on the background of gradually introducing the visa system and of reducing the enthusiasm and curiosity of foreigners especially for the ex-socialist Romanian space. The NATO and EU accession perspective, the increase in trust and confidence in the Romanian tourist areas correlated with the economic growth have stimulated the quantitative and qualitative reorganization and resizing of the tourist flows determined by the recording numbers in the establishments of tourist accommodation. Thus, since 2003 the number of tourists registered an upward trend, but not as expected. In 2008, their number reached only 7.125 million people, a value to just over half of the year 1990 (12.297 million). The domestic tourist flow determined on the base of entries and records in the establishments of tourists' accommodation consists of two categories by *the area of origin*: Romanian and foreigners (figure 2), which generates an internal and international flow.

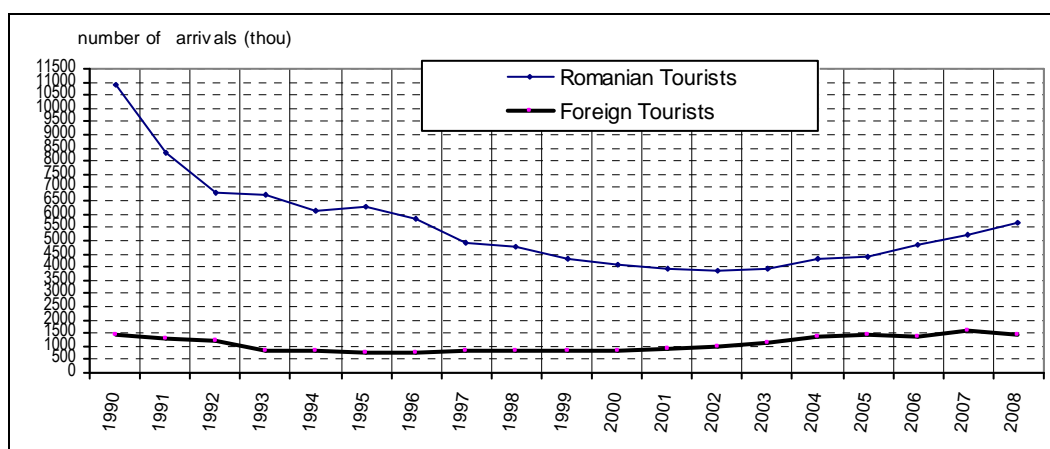


Figure 2. Romania. The tourist flow considering the number of arrivals (Romanians and foreigners) in tourist accommodation in period 1990 - 2008
(Data sources: Romanian National Institute of Statistics, 2010; www.insee.ro)

In this idea, the size of international tourist flow consisting of foreign tourists registered in accommodation (with high economic efficiency for the Romanian tourism through the use of specific services) had a fluctuating trend in the period 1990 - 2000 when the lowest values were recorded, of under 0.8 million in 1995, 1996 (the minimum of 0.762 million) and 1999. The

biggest decrease was recorded between 1990 - 1995, with a reduction of almost half from 1.4 million to 0.76 million. This decrease is not an effect of reducing of the number of tourists, but to the informal accommodation (friends, relatives), or to their failure to be registered in the statistics of these structures. The situation was caused by laws vacuum and especially by the structural and asset changes at the level of accommodation. Since 2000, the number of registered foreign tourists gradually increased from 0.795 million in 1999, to over 1.5 million foreign tourists stays in 2007 (figure 2). Of the total tourist flow using accommodation, the foreign component had a certain stability in the period 1990 - 1996 with an average share of 12%, followed by a continuous upward trend with a maximum of 24.6% in 2005. After this date due to the increase in the total number of tourists, the foreign share has stabilized around 22.0% (figures 2 and 3). Increasing the number of foreign tourists is due to the amplification and diversification of tourism types from which the business tourism has grown significantly. An interesting aspect is in the interval 2000 - 2002, years with the lowest number of tourists registered in Romania, it was registered an increase in the share of foreigners from 17.6% to 20.6%.

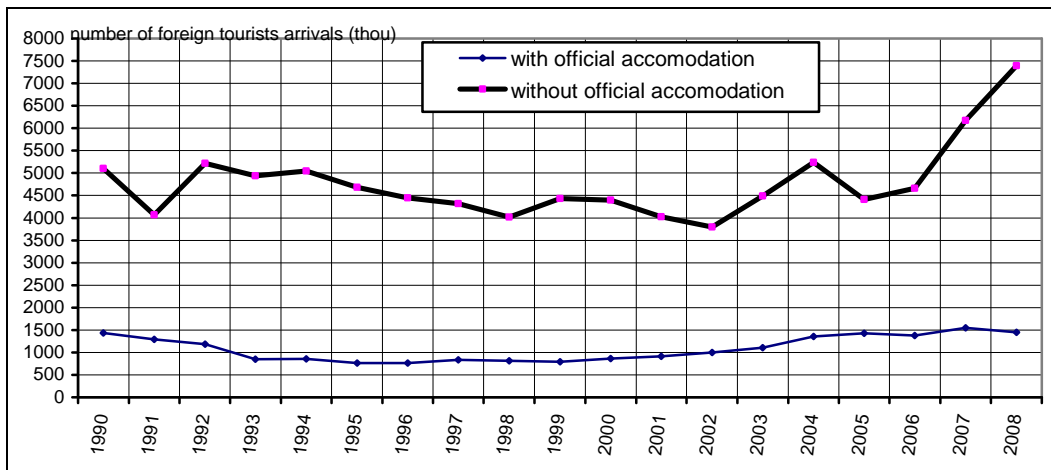


Figure 3. Romania. The tourist flow considering the number of arrivals of foreign tourists, with and without tourist accommodation in period 1990 - 2008
(Data sources: Romanian National Institute of Statistics, 2010; www.insee.ro)

The annual domestic tourist flows consisting of Romanian tourists for the period 1990 - 2008, considering the structural aspect and the number of tourists, register a similar trend to the foreign tourists one, but with an opposite trend in terms of share of Romanian tourists in the total volume of tourist flows recorded. The maximum value of 10.8 million tourists registered in 1990 was not reached in any year of the period under review, moreover, following an absolute minimum of 3,848 million tourists in 2002 their number increased continuously, to a value of only 5.659 million domestic tourists in 2008. Among the causes that have generated the first downward trend include: restriction of former Socialist wellfares (Cocean, 1995, p. 105), reducing the living standard and the leisure life by subsistence activities, the political instability and unfavorable international Romania's image, the rising prices of tourism services and lower population incomes, the large differences in price-quality ratio for services, the inadequate infrastructure of modern requirements in terms of quality and quantity etc. Also, since 1995 the share of Romanians in the total tourist flow decreased gradually from 89.2% in 1995 to 75.4% in 2005, following a slight growth to 79.4% in 2008 (figure 2).

The main tourist destinations of the analyzed tourist flows, according to official statistics recorded by the National Romanian Institute of Statistics are the tourist resorts, the seaside, the Danube Delta, the capital of Bucharest and the county capitals, other urban and rural settlements

etc (figure 4). For example, the 2008 tourist flow registered in Romania in accommodations consisted of 7.125 million tourists of which 1.466 million foreign tourists (20.5%). The most attractive tourist destinations have been the capital Bucharest and the county capitals which attracted 47.2% of the tourists stay (3.363 million), followed by the urban and rural settlements in Romania with only 15.4% (1.101 million), the mountain resorts 14.0% (0.998 million), the seaside 11.7% (0.833 million) and the spa resorts 10.2% (0,728 million), at the opposite being the Danube Delta with 1.34% (0.096 million).

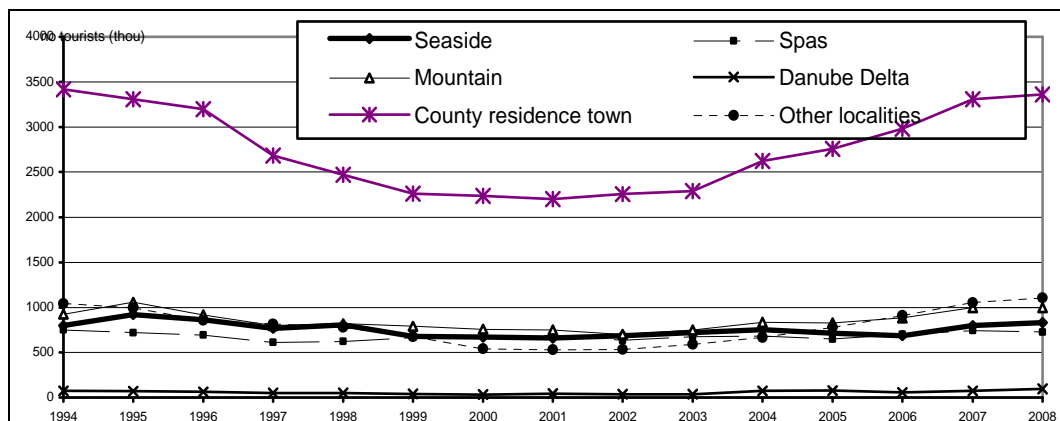


Figure 4. Romania. The main tourist destinations according with numers of arrivals in 1994-2008
(Data sources: Romanian National Institute of Statistics, 2010; www.insee.ro)

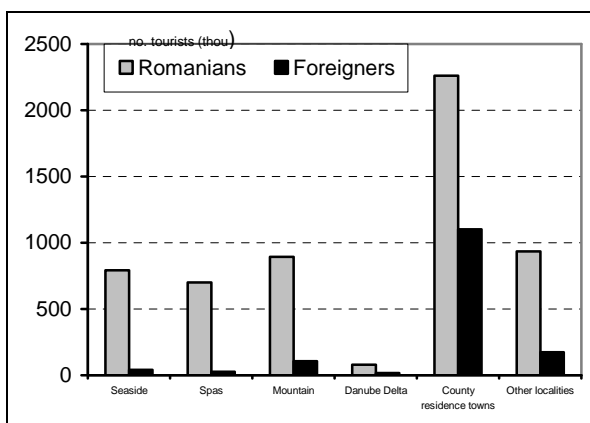


Figure 5. Romania. The main tourist destinations according with numbers of foreigners and Romanians arrivals in 2008
(Data sources: Romanian National Institute of Statistics, 2010; www.insee.ro)

After the origins, considering the areas of destination, the spa resorts have a share of 96.3%, the seaside 95.0%, followed by the mountain resorts with 89.5% reflect the dominance and the orientation of flows consisting of Romanian tourists, while the representative flows consisting of foreign tourists accounted for 32.7% in Bucharest and county capitals, 17.7% in the Danube Delta and 15.7% in other rural and urban areas. Comparatively, in 2002, when the internal tourism flow registered the lowest value of 4.847 million (of which 20.6% foreigners), the internal structure on destinations had the same order except other

urban and rural settlements with only 12,0% (comparative to 15% in 2008). Higher percentages than 2008 were recorded in 2003 at the seaside (14%), the spa tourism (13%), in the same time pointing out the stability of the mountain tourism (14%). In terms of numbers, all 2008 values are higher than those recorded in 2002 (figure 5).

The domestic tourist flow of 5.659 million Romanian tourists structured on domestic destinations shows the dominance with a share of 40% of the capital Bucharest and of the counties capitals, and a share only of 1.4% for the Danube Delta. The mountain resorts are preferred by

15.8% tourists, other settlements by 16.5%, the spa resorts by 12.4% and the seaside by 13.9%. In case of the internal flow of foreign tourists (figure 3 and 4) the situation reflects the main types of tourism, the Bucharest and county capitals attract 75.1% of the total, followed far from other localities with only 11.8%, the mountain resorts 7.1%, the seaside 2.9%, the spa resorts 1.8%, while the Danube Delta registers 1.16% of the foreigners stay in 2008 (figure 5).

Both the Romanian and foreign tourists preferred in the analyzed period the hotels in the average rate of 81%, with a maximum value of 84.6% recorded in 1993 and a minimum of 75.5% in 1990. The most consistent foreign tourists flow accommodated in hotels or motels was recorded in 2007, with a total of 1.404 million (20% of total) representing 90% of the total registered foreign tourists in that year.

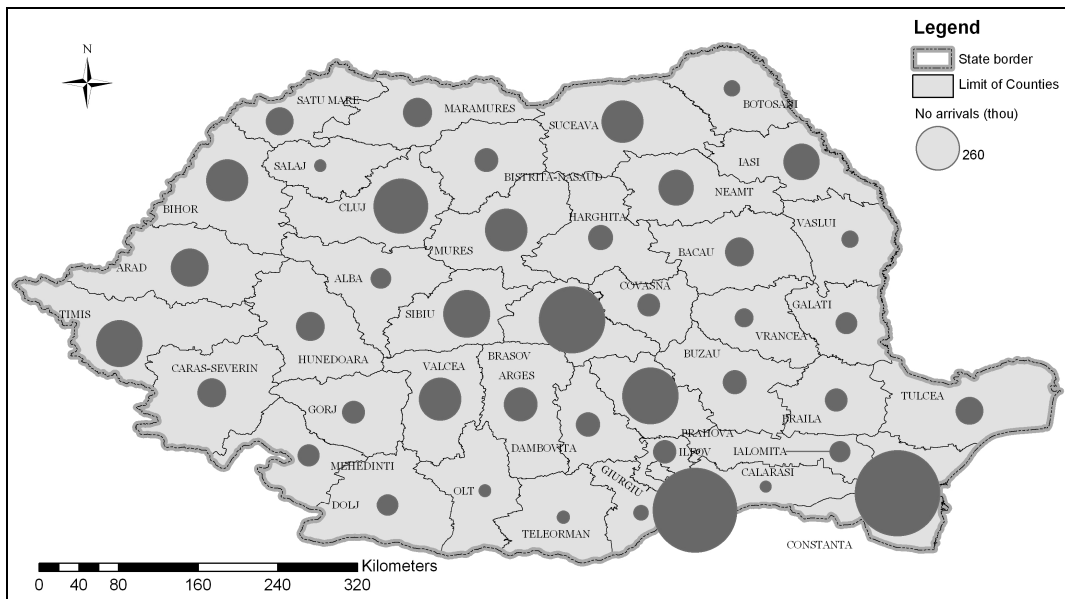


Figure 6. Romania. The counties destinations according with numbers of arrivals in 2008
(Data sources: Romanian National Institute of Statistics, 2010; www.insee.ro)

In terms of regional destinations, at the county level in 2008 at the 41 counties and capital Bucharest, the domestic tourist flow consisting of the total 7.125 million foreign and Romanian tourists was oriented mainly to (figure 6): Constanța 13.7% (0.978 million) in the seaside, the capital Bucharest with 13.4% (0.952 million) the main destination for the cultural and business tourism. On the following places there are the counties Brașov 8.2% (0.582 million) with the mountains areas and the famous resort Poiana Brașov, Prahova 5.9% (0.417 million) with the chain of climatic resorts in the Prahova Valley, Cluj 5.5% (0.392 million) the most important cultural and business center of Transylvania etc. With close values and above the national average of 2.4% (11 counties) there are the counties Sibiu 4.0%, Timiș 4.0%, Vâlcea 3.3%, Suceava 3.2%, Bihor 3.2%, Mureș 3.2%, Arad 2.6%, Iași 2.3% and Neamț 2.2%, Argeș 2.0% etc. The least attractive counties are: Sălaj 0.2%, Călărași 0.2% and Olt 0.2% each with 0.017 million tourists (figure 6).

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of tourist flows in Romania between 1990 - 2008 and consisting of Romanian and foreign tourists, officially recorded in the tourist accommodation structures, largely reflects the stage of development, dynamics, quality and volume of the existing tourist offer in Romania. The thresholds that marked the political and economic developments of the Romanian political-territorial system, overlapping the transition from Socialist to the market economy, the EU and

NATO accession, the increased area for the expression of freedom of people movement without visa regime etc, are extremely obvious in the statistical values recorded during this analyzed period of time. Also, diversifying the tourism types and the tourist accommodation structures led to the continuous restructuring of the tourist flows establishing tourist destination areas. Whether we are talking about well known tourist regions or about counties, we have noticed a continuous repositioning of their hierarchy generated by the number of registered foreign and Romanian tourists. The top positions were almost in all cases the „tourist” counties such as Brasov, Constanta or Prahova, or established tourist destinations such as the seaside resorts or the climatic and spa-climatic resorts. At the same time the proposed study may be useful in developing the regional strategies to increase the attractiveness of both the well known tourist regions and also of those having enough resources, but not promoted and developed to their potential.

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Submitted:
July 29, 2011

Revised:
September 21, 2011

Accepted and published online
November 30, 2011