

## THE TOURIST ACTIVITY'S IMPLICATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL COMMUNITIES FROM THE NORTH-EAST REGION

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**Abstract:** *The main purpose of this article is to bring to underline the importance that rural tourism has in the economic development of disadvantaged rural areas, especially in the rural areas of the North-East region. Integrated tourism in rural areas and localities represents an alternative to solve, at the same time, problems that concern, on the one hand, the village, and on the other hand, the city. Through rural tourism, it will be possible to solve the problems of land development policy, of the town-village balance, thus shaping a social change that offers the possibility for the city population to find their roots, cultural values, physical relaxation, lost peace and calm or forget it. It is known that this area has a high tourist potential, this being supported by the geographical position, the specific relief, the specific gastronomic products, the traditions and customs abundantly preserved by the inhabitants of the place.*

**Key words:** *rural tourism, local communities, North-East region, tourist potential*

### INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism is a complex economic activity, with a wide scope, which highlights, through its own mechanism, rural tourist circulation. The search for the rural environment for rest and recreation is a general trend in the world practice of tourism. Facing this trend, numerous tourism organizations, profitable or public, from various European countries have been concerned, for several years, with the organization and institutionalization of tourism in rural areas. [1,5,8,11]

The combination between sustainable development and facilities for tourist purposes are gaining more and more extent in the development of tourism, being also applied from an ecological point of view. The most used environment for combining them is rural area.

According to this definition, rural tourism is determined by the following aspects: the existence of rural settlements, the preservation of rural functionality, the preservation of a rural infrastructure, the preservation of the traditional way of life, the preservation of the specific cultural identity. [6,9,10,15]

All these essential elements have become the basic components of rural tourism, and the fundamental requirement is to preserve them as much as possible based on the new principles of sustainable development of tourism in general.

Moldova has become synonymous with Bucovina for some time. Having particularly varied geological conditions, relief, climate, vegetation and fauna, Moldova includes a large number of geological, floristic, faunal reserves and natural monuments, some of them of great scientific and touristic importance. [2,12,14]

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The analysis of this study is based on the statistical data provided by the National Institute of Statistics regarding the tourism situation, at the level of the North-East Region, in the period 2019-2022, calculating on the basis of these data, a series of indicators specific to tourism activity: the accommodation units number, accommodation capacity, accommodation capacity utilization index, tourists number, overnight stays of tourists and average length of stay.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

The North-East region, and Suceava County in particular, is one of the main tourist areas of Romania due to the favorable relief conditions it has, the beauty of the landscapes, the purity of the air, waters, mountainous areas, the traditions and popular customs preserved until our day, specifics of Moldavian gastronomy and last but not least the well-known hospitality of the locals. [2,11,15]

The North-East region of Romania borders with Bucovina, Transylvania, the Republic of Moldova, Dobrogea and Muntenia. The region includes the following counties: Bacau, Botosani, Iasi, Neamț, Suceava, Vaslui.



Figure 1. Nord-Est Region

Part of one of the most beautiful historical provinces, Moldova, the North-East region is an area where tradition, culture and history intertwine very harmoniously with the natural landscape, recognized for its special beauty and spirituality. [2,4]

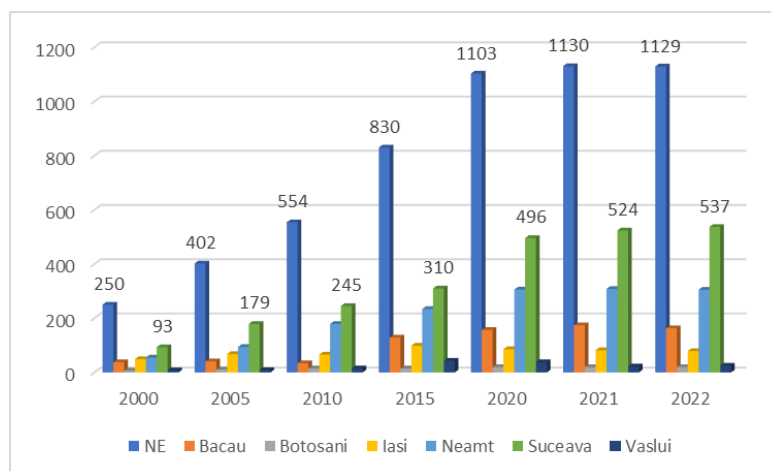
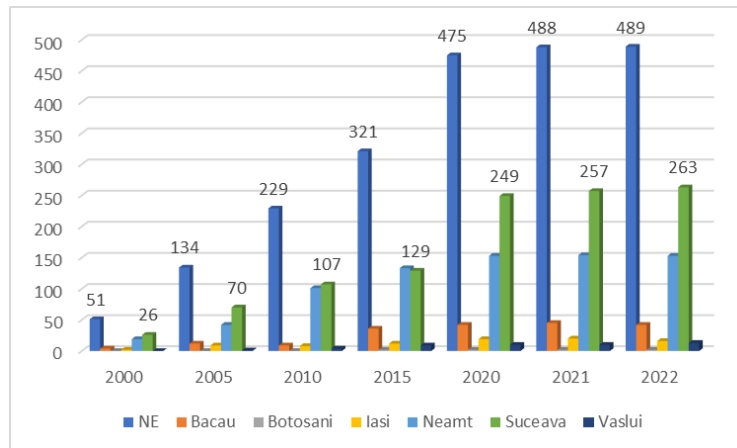


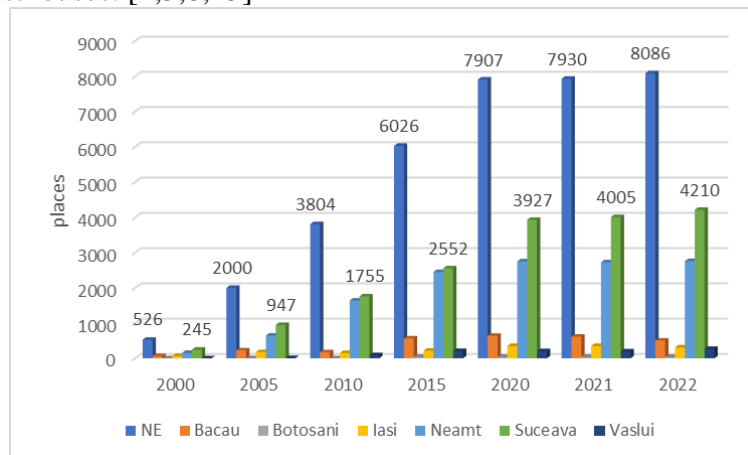
Figure 2. The evolution of accommodation units, North-East region [15]

The evolution of accommodation units from the North-East region of Romania is increasing between 2010-2019, having a small decline in 2020 caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, then it increased between 2020-2022 by up to 2.44%. Most tourist accommodation units are found in Suceava County, being the representative county of the region.



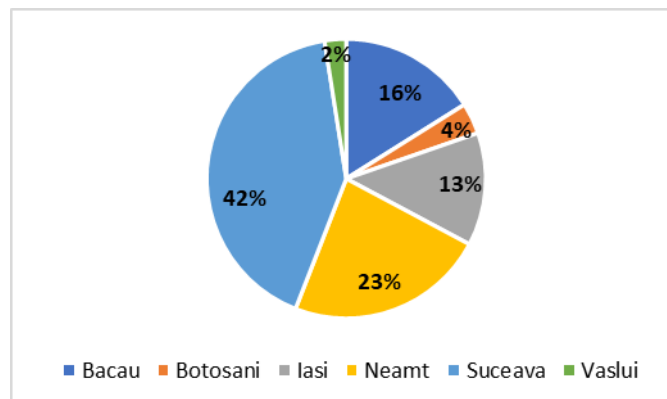
**Figure 3. The evolution of agritourism guesthouses number, North-East Region [15]**

The evolution of agritourism guesthouses number in the North-East Region between 2010-2022 is increasing by 113.54%. Suceava County has the largest number of agritourism guesthouses. [1,3,8,15]



**Figure 4. The existing tourist accommodation capacity, in accommodation units, North-East Region**

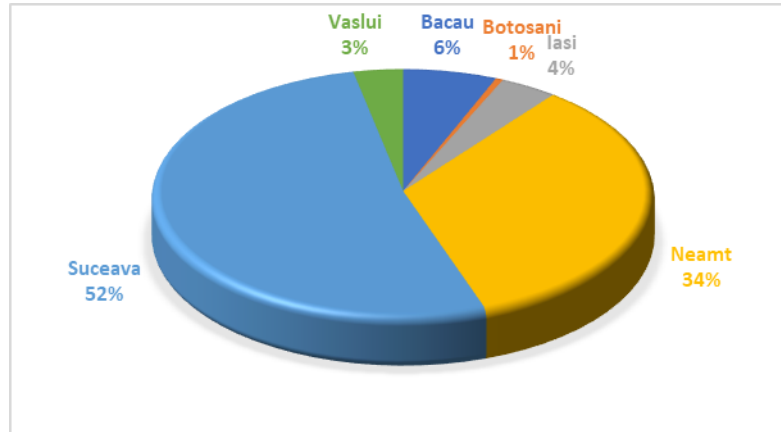
The existing tourist accommodation capacity in North-East Region of Romania between 2010-2022 is in continuous growth, reaching from 2756 places in 2010 to 5470 places in 2022.



**Figure 5. The structure of tourist accommodation capacity, by counties of the North-East region, 2022**

Figure 5 shows the tourist accommodation capacity in 2022 distributed by counties. Suceava County holds a percentage of 42%, followed by Neamt County with 23%, Bacau County with 16%, Iasi County with 13%, Botosani County with 4%, Vaslui County representing only 2% from the total tourist accommodation capacity. [1,2,8,15]

In the 2010-2020 period, at the regional level, there are significant increases in the existing accommodation capacity in agritourism guesthouses, on average, with a percentage of 139.88%.



**Figure 6. The structure of the existing tourist accommodation capacity in agritourist guesthouses in the North-East Region, 2022**

In 2022, Suceava County owning 52% from the total existing accommodation capacity.

The evolution of tourist accommodation capacity in operation both in total accommodation units and in agritourism guesthouses from the North-East region is increasing in the period 2010-2022, indicating a small decrease in 2020, following to grow during the period 2021-2022.

Along with the agritourism supply, the agritourism demand prints the size of the tourism activity. This indicator is analyzed both from the point of view of tourist arrivals, overnight stays and that of the average size of the stay. [1,8]

The arrivals of Romanian tourists as well as foreign tourists are increasing until 2019, then registering a decrease between 2020-2021. In 2022, Romanian tourist arrivals increased by 28.92% compared to 2021, and foreign tourist arrivals increased by 171.44% compared to 2021. [2,8,15]

In 2022, 91% of the people staying in the existing accommodation units in the North-East Region were Romanian tourists, the remaining 9% being foreign tourists. In Suceava County, in 2022, the share of arrivals is 92% Romanians and 8% foreigners.

According to the analyzed data, during the period under study, there are fluctuations in the arrivals of Romanian and foreign tourists in the agritourism guesthouses in the North-East region.

In 2022, there will be an increase in the arrivals of Romanian tourists in agritourism guesthouses, both at the level of the region and in Suceava County, they represent 98% of the total number of arrivals, the remaining 2% being represented by foreign tourists.

In the period 2010-2019 there is a significant increase in overnight stays by Romanian and foreign tourists, decreasing in 2020 due to the restrictions imposed by the Coronavirus Pandemic, followed by a slight increase, starting in 2021, when the restrictions were gentler and tourists could travel. [1,8,15]

The overnight stays of Romanian tourists in agritourism guesthouses in 2022 were in the percentage of 98% and of foreign tourists only 2%. Suceava County has a recorded in the category of overnight stays 97% Romanian tourists and 3% foreign tourists.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the North-East Region of Romania, rural tourism as well as agritourism has a large share, because tourism in this region has a major impact on the inhabitants. In this part of the country, everyday life has remained unchanged, people live as simply and beautifully as they did a few decades ago. Agritourism in this area offers tourists the opportunity to discover the beauty of the natural landscapes, the hospitality of the locals, the customs and traditions specific to the area, including the customs related to family events such as: birth, wedding, death, customs over the year kept with sanctity by the locals.

Agritourism in North-East area is characterized by the hospitality of the locals, due to which there is the possibility of hosting tourists in their households, offering accommodation with specific folklore elements.

Another characteristic of agritourism from North-Eastern area is the fact that the products made in the households of the locals are 100% natural, some of the products being unique, they are still made over wood fires, clay ovens, stoves. The recipes of the ancestors are still faithfully preserved. The area is known for its monasteries, natural landscapes, fauna and flora, hydrographic basin, historical and cultural monuments, but also for its unique architecture.

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