

# REGIONAL ASPECTS OF ROMANIAN TOURISM

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*Abstract: All tourism contains myths on its cultural side, but it was a very mistake turning it into myth as a whole, as sometimes in the popular view. We will retort below by a rational description of the Romanian tourism by facts and logic of. These bases on a permanent research activity since early 2000.*

*This paper's analysis and conclusions result from data offered by Romanian statistics<sup>2</sup>. See also Appendix for describing concepts related to our analysis on the Romanian tourism. The text below reveals two main aspects, as space permitting. First, there will be some permanence of tourism to talk about, and second there will be some aspects of the recent financial crisis and economic downturn related aspects at the same.*

## **1. Constant features of the Romanian tourism description**

This is a context in which a comprehensive picture of the Romanian tourism will be aimed, as a very retort of some myth around this story. There are some constants or dominant aspects characterizing this activity and they might be partly similar, partly different from other countries' cases, especially countries in the Romania's vicinity and some of them having their own tourism and specific of it. On the one hand, there can be asserted that tourism is as seasonal and nature dependent as the example of agriculture, briefly, it remains the same as overall for each year. On the other, the years 1989-1990

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<sup>2</sup> See data sources at the end of the text.

pretty changed the appearance of tourism for Romania. So, let us have this description inventory below.

### 1.1 Dominance of hotels

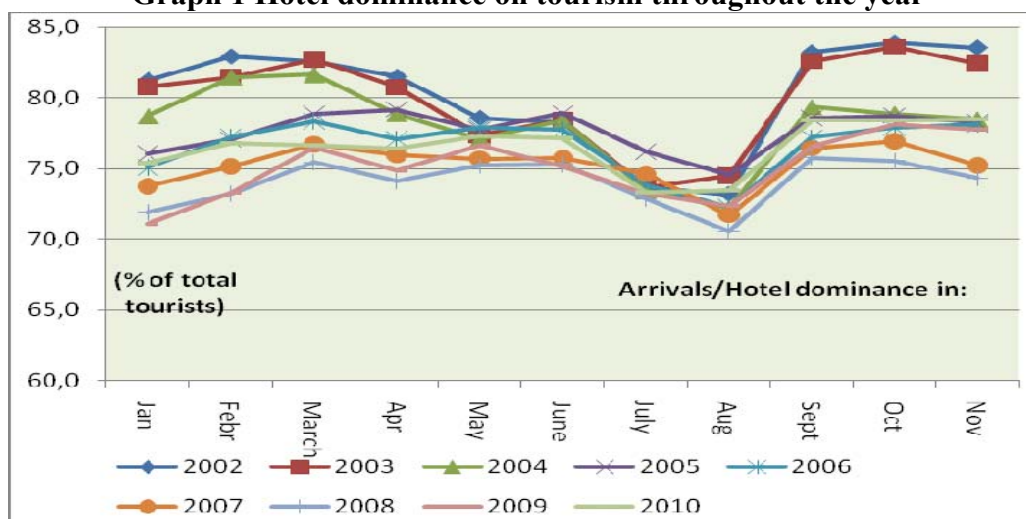
Despite an apparent multitude of tourist structures, tourism in Romania is far dominated by hotels (75-85%) and staying overnight (see Appendix) shows even higher numbers than the effective arrivals. This emphasizes, of course, that hotels both are numerous and largely spread on all areas. Despite this, another interesting aspect is the one indicating that the positive dynamic of this number as negative: the hotel dominance increases in all circumstances of the overall negative evolving of tourism in structures, see when getting out of season, when general negative growth of the sector and, finally, when crises, like in the latest years. On the contrary, the top season of the year brings the other structures in and tourist actions and programmes diversify (Graph 1).

Another aspect of the hotel dominance is the strong influence of the hotels’ activity on the whole tourism, let us mention just the length of tourist staying – staying overnight in hotels is likely to be just a little longer than the average of this on all structures – and net index of using accommodation places – as in a similar position.

### 1.2 Cities versus seaside, as for tourism areas

See Graph 2 for a throughout the year evolving in 2010 by tourism areas for a very interesting aspect of the Romanian tourism in its home structures<sup>1</sup>. The latter is dominated by cities, followed by seaside. But the essential difference does not quite consist in the cities’ dominance, but rather in the seasonality enforced by seaside on all areas. As for the rest of the areas, they are both more seasonal (as seaside) for the number of tourists and rather less seasonal, as percentage of the whole tourism in structures throughout the year (see 33-47% for the same 2010).

**Graph 1 Hotel dominance on tourism throughout the year**



### 1.3 Seasonality, as “permanence”

The same tourism in structures is seasonal overall, as for a common feature. Graph 3 expresses this evolving throughout the year since 2002 for arrivals. This is enough for here also concluding a summer season dominance on tourism in structures, and so underlying a very natural limit of tourism developing in our areas and dropping down all myths of a so “reach” and tourist multifunctional area. In reality, seaside reveals a huge influence on all activities whereas it is so short as total area (just a few

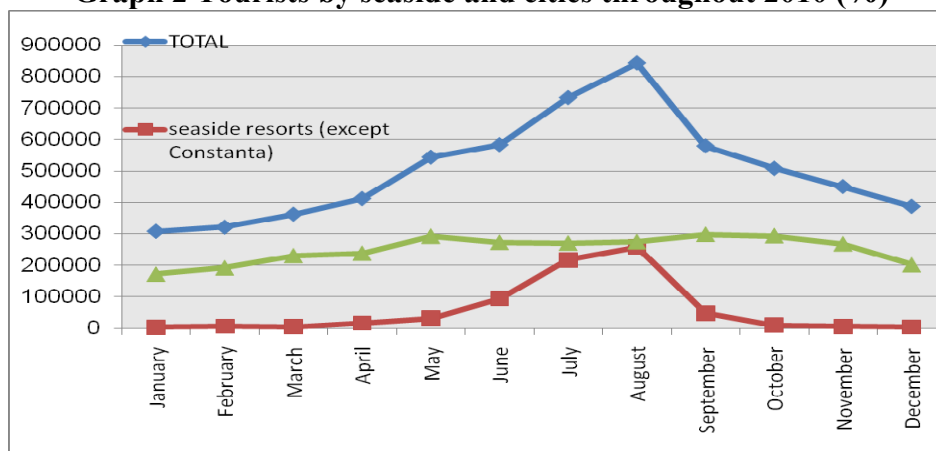
<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, once again, and equally 1.5 and 1.6 below for understanding that this is not the whole tourism for Romania.

tenths of kilometers along the Black Sea, plus, in reality less than a half of this length has beaches and tourist stations.

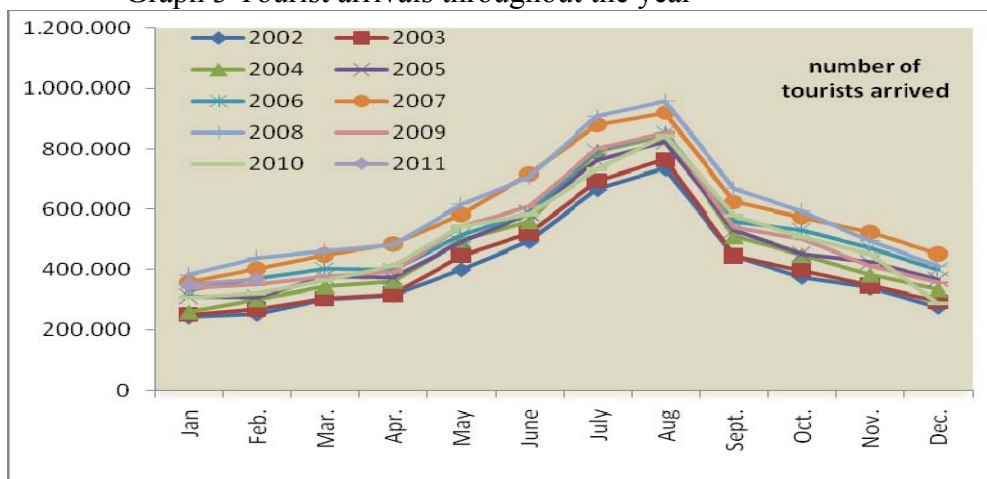
Moreover, seasonality means not only number of tourists in structures (arrivals), but equally staying – as 2.0-2.8 days-nights per individual in January and 2.9-4.6 as the same in July-August -- and using accommodation places – as 15-18% in January and 35-45% in August --, once again.

Seasonality means the permanence through which August (plus July) is the top season month and January the lowest tourism period of all years. As for December, it is far from a “top-winter” period, as for a popular idea: just some stations are active during the Christmas and year-end days; otherwise, November and March are likely to be richer for tourism than December. Finally, every month of the year keeps its distinct and constant characteristics and features every year.

**Graph 2 Tourists by seaside and cities throughout 2010 (%)**



**Graph 3 Tourist arrivals throughout the year**



### 1.4 Watering resorts, in statistics

Let us have another special case for tourism areas, as besides seaside and cities. Watering resorts had something between 6.1% (March) 10.6% (September) of the tourist flow throughout the last 2010. Plus, they cumulated a little less than 700,000 tourists each year before the 2008 downturn (Graph 4) and seem to decrease on this point since that year. Two specific characteristics identify watering resorts. The one is the longest staying overnight, as compared to all the other areas: see 9.4 days-nights per individual, as compared to the average of 3.1 in June 2010, the same for November for 9.2, as compared to the average of 2.6.

The other aspect is a different seasonality, meaning that the top season here moves to the last quarter of the year, when the highest number of tourists. Plus, this seasonality does not quite connect number of tourists and length of staying for watering resorts as for the rest of areas.

### **1.5 The story of the using accommodation places index**

The using accommodation places index qualifies for a demand-supply ratio for tourism in structures. Its variation for the interval under focus was something between 24.3% (2010) and 34.4% (2007, before downturn). Actually, there is not much negative difference between this and countries with tourism around, like Croatia or even Cyprus, despite that even the highest average ratio shows that one accommodation place for tourists stays empty two thirds of the year (Andrei 2008). Besides, the same index is supposed to keep differences among structures and areas.

But a more interesting point is that comparing this index to tourists flow as dynamics for finding the tourist home supply reaction to corresponding demand and, on the contrary, demand-supply difference trends for revealing this indirect way the specific investment behaviour (Graph 5). As in detail, increases of the index – instead of just growth of demand – might hide stagnation of investment and even worse. Even the high index for watering resorts indicates rather a bad repairs of these stations, instead of their well functioning.

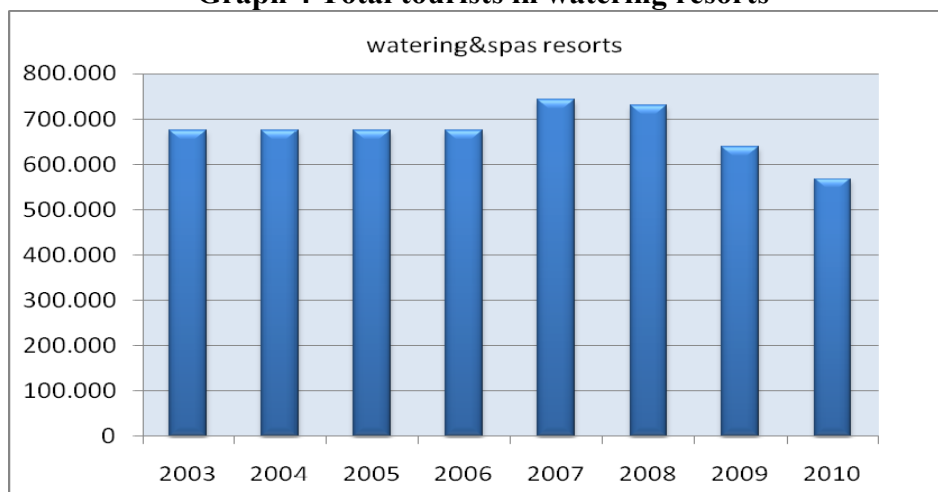
### **1.6 The foreign tourists in Romania**

The dominant feature of the foreigners’ inflow into Romania is the significant difference between the total of this inflow and the one (minority) directed to the home structures.

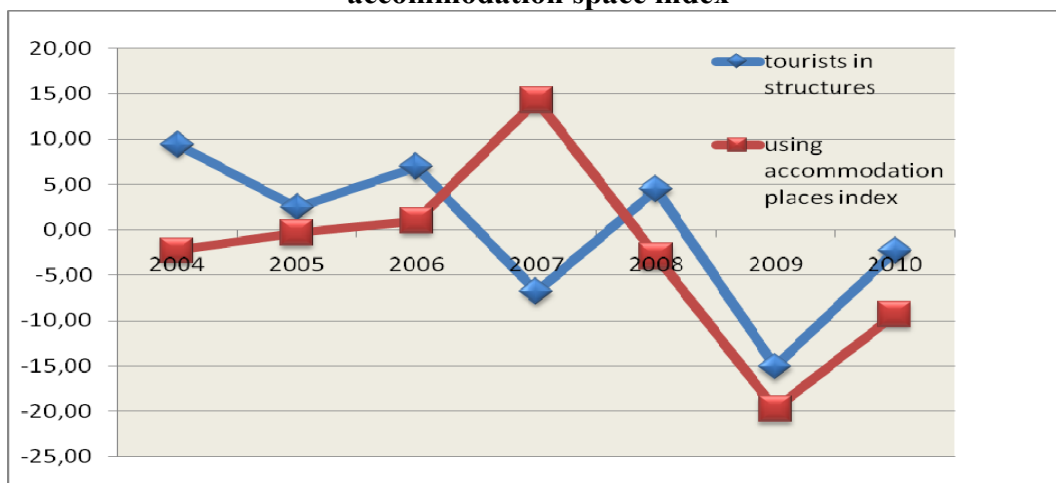
The year 2010 displays 7.4 million foreigners coming entering Romania (Graph 6), as concomitantly with only 4.7 million of total tourists in structures and just 1.3 million foreigners in the same structures. And this is just one of the two faces of the ratio between the flows over frontiers and the one into the structures.

The other aspect is that the ratio of foreign tourists in structures stays during the same 2010 between 18.8% (January) and 35.9% (September). Otherwise, seasonality of this foreign part of the inflow in structures is not different from the one of Romanian (local) tourists.

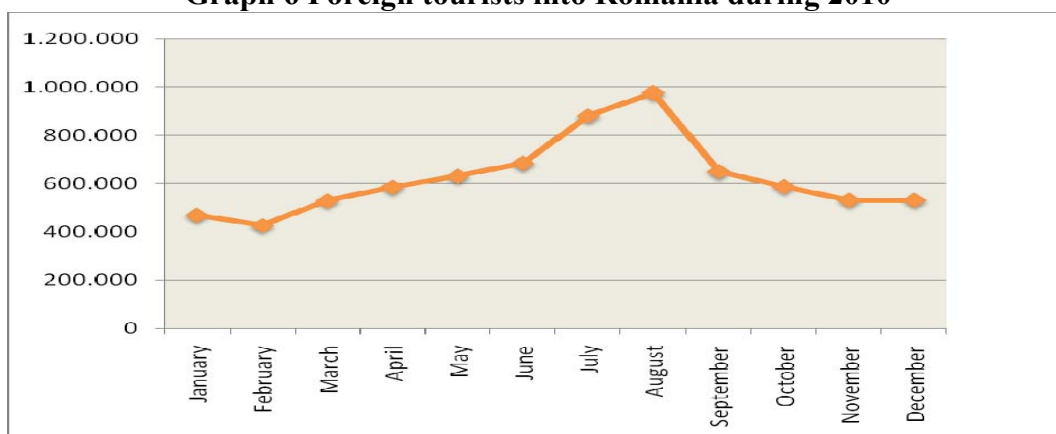
**Graph 4 Total tourists in watering resorts**



**Graph 5 Concomitant dynamics of number of tourists and average using accommodation space index**



**Graph 6 Foreign tourists into Romania during 2010**



As for the “not in structures” part of the foreigners’ inflow the aspect might break down into some components. The first is the fact that the foreigners traveling to Romania might not be “pure” foreigners, but Romanian people by origin and relatives. The second takes into account the two dominant nations visiting our country: Moldavians and Hungarians, for which the NSI data are not clear enough in detail. Finally, this majority part might identify not a “purely” tourist population. And the debate here might develop on.

### 1.7 Romanians traveling abroad

This is actually the item containing the highest number of tourists of all the other dimensions of our tourism – it is much higher than all inflows into structures and is followed on the second position by foreigners entering Romania (see 15.6 million in 2010 and the above 1.5). This is what makes the difference between Romanian tourists and tourists in Romania; an aspect which makes tourism in structures very back off to a modest position in a today Romania. This is part of the local tourist demand, as conceptually, so demonstrating an important tourist demand exceeding the corresponding home supply. In the same terms, this is always an import of tourism, whereas foreigners in Romania classifies as export of tourism. Here there results an external deficit of tourists, as identified to more than one Romanians traveling abroad for just one foreigner coming in.

In more practical terms, other aspects are here to be taken into account.

Previously than engendering the negative aspect of deficit, this qualifies as a normal symptom for a nation who missed the traveling abroad opportunity for quite long before 1990. Later on, the EU extension to its eastern boundaries here plays a complementary role. Thirdly, as similarly to the tourists’ inflow into Romania this corresponding outflow might be even more heterogeneous, meaning “not purely” tourist.

Fourthly, there is to be realized that the today world means freedom, democracy and openness in a higher proportion than any time in its past. Plus, tourism is dominated not only by the nature’s caprices, but equally by a strong and large (see extended areas and regions) competition.

### **3. Concluding remarks**

Romanian tourism, as all tourism, contains the cultural dimensions, see even mythologies, but a popular view of mythologies on tourism stays a real handicap. This industry deals with serious limits today. A natural one indicates the mono-season oriented demand. This is for summer and summer is especially for seaside and much less for mountains, Delta and other areas. Seaside means a so restrained geographical area in the south-east of the country; Delta is even much less than that. This is what makes cities represent a strong retort for seaside and for all seasonal tourism areas. This, plus openness reached and the high degree and large geographical competition in tourism make Romania lose a good slide of regional tourist demand and this reaches even the local corresponding demand.

When tourists flow stays low, the tourist supply stays overwhelming demand, so structures empty for more than two thirds of the year on average and when so, private investment in tourism gets at least confused. Solutions might arise from enough limited zones, like other localities and routes – see rural tourism, Moldavian monasteries etc. – or watering resorts, as theoretically. And given such a scale of facts, some claimed “incompetence” of the tourism management comes, in our view, as decreasing relevance.

### **Data sources and bibliography**

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