

Elisabeta ROȘU

*Institute of Agricultural Economics, Romanian Academy, Bucharest
betty_rosu@yahoo.com*

THE TOURISM POTENTIAL OF SUCEAVA COUNTY

ABSTRACT

The mountain landscape attractiveness together with the natural and anthropic favorable tourism potential of Suceava county, characterized by numerous natural reserves, many of them unique in the world, by the variety, density and value of religious and architecture monuments, to which the inhabitants' hospitality is added, are conditions for Suceava county to be an important tourism destination, both for the Romanian and foreign tourists.

In the present approach we attempted a short review of the natural and anthropic potential of Suceava county, followed by the analysis of the main indicators of tourism activity in the county in the period 2001–2014.

Key words: Suceava county, tourism potential, tourism activity indicators.

JEL Classification: R12, L83

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, tourism, both as economic and social activity, has significantly developed compared to other sectors of the economy. Tourists, either Romanian or foreigners prefer to travel as much as possible, to explore new places and to get closer to nature. The rustic and traditional locations have gained ground to the disadvantage of conventional tourism centers. Thus, tourists' choices in terms of accommodation structures have been changing. The large accommodation structures are losing ground, and their place is taken by the tourism boarding houses, as these are better integrated into the natural landscape of the area.

Suceava county is one of the most complex tourism areas in the country. The natural tourism potential characterized by special landscape areas, with diverse therapeutical factors together with the valuable anthropic potential, resulting from the history and culture of the people from this area provide great opportunities for the practice of a wide range of tourism forms.

2. STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

The tourism potential of an area consists of the natural and anthropic tourism potential. The complexity of the natural tourism and attractiveness of an area are closely related to the relief units, landscapes and climate (Niță, I., Niță, C., 2008, p.61).

The anthropic tourism potential of a tourism destination sums up people's achievements throughout the history, materialized into elements of culture, history, art and civilization, which are attracting tourist flows (Stănciulescu, G., Micu, C., 2009, p. 73).

The tourism potential of an area represents an essential condition for tourism development, while the essential requirement is that this potential is best put into value by the suppliers of tourism products and services.

3. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The analyzed information was collected through the documentary study of the works on the approached theme. The methodology comprised the statistical analysis of the primary data using the Excel software for quantitative data analysis. The statistical data on which the analysis was based were at Suceava county level, they covered the period 2001–2014 and had the following sources: i) NIS statistical data available online – www.TEMPO-online; ii) other online sources – www.prefecturasuceava.ro.

The first part of the paper contains a brief characterization of the county, focusing on the natural and anthropic potential; in the second part of the paper the main tourism activity indicators are analyzed: the tourism reception structure, the tourist accommodation capacity, arrivals and overnight stays of tourists, both per total county and by urban and rural areas. On the basis of these synthetic indicators the net utilization index of the tourist accommodation capacity in operation was calculated, according to the following formula:

$$I_n = (N / C_f) \times 100,$$

where: I_n is the net utilization index of the tourist accommodation capacity in operation; N is the number of overnight stays in a certain period; C_f is the tourist accommodation capacity in operation.

This index was calculated both at county level and by urban and rural areas.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. THE TOURISM POTENTIAL OF SUCEAVA COUNTY

General data. Suceava county is located in the north-eastern part of Romania, with a total area of 8553.2 km², being the second in size in the country, which explains the geological, landscape and natural resources diversity.

From the administrative point of view, Suceava county comprises 5 municipalities (Suceava – county residence, Fălticeni, Rădăuți, Câmpulung Moldovenesc and Vatra Dornei), 11 towns, 98 communes and 379 villages.

By relief units, the area of Suceava county is divided into: mountains (53%), plateau (30%) and river meadow (17%). The mountain area is the prevailing relief unit consisting of massive and complex groups of mountain ridges separated by deep valleys or depression areas.

The hydrographic network of the county sums up over 3,000 km and all the water courses are tributary to the Siret river, due to the relief configuration.

The population of Suceava county totalled 613,030 persons in the year 2015, down compared to previous years, while the share of inhabitants in the rural area was under continuous growth, reaching 59% in 2015 (Table 1).

Table 1

The total population, by residence areas, in Suceava county

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total population:	633,658	632,210	631,410	631,030
– urban	261,651	260,215	259,012	258,233
– rural	372,007	371,995	372,398	372,797

Source: www.TEMPO-online

The natural tourism potential. The territory of Suceava county is partially overlapping the Eastern Carpathians and the Suceava Plateau. The mountains are represented by: Suhard Mountains – partially the Călimani mountains, Bucovinei ridges (Mestecăniș, Feredău and Obcina Mare), Bistrița Mountains (Rarău, Giupalău, Bârnaru and Budacu) and Stânișoarei Mountains (only Sutra).

The depression system is characterized either by a smooth relief or by hilly relief units (Dornelor Depression), or by fields of meadows and terraces along the valleys (the depression corridors Câmpulung Moldovenesc – Gura Humorului, Moldovița and Găinești depression).

The plateau area and the Sub-Carpathian hills are represented by Suceava Plateau and the Neamtului Sub-Carpathians.

There are 29 **natural protected areas of national interest**¹ in the county, with a total area of 16,199.2 ha, out of which:

- 6 botanical reserves, with a total area of 396.5 ha;
- 11 forestry reserves, with an area of 3,351.8 ha;
- 6 geological reserves, with a total area of 257. ha;
- 2 paleontological reserves, with a total area of 1.1 ha;
- 2 mixed reserves, with a total area of 1,287 ha;
- 1 scientific reserve, with an area of 6 ha;
- 1 National Park – Călimani National Park with a total area of 24,041 ha, out of which 10,700 ha on the territory of Suceava county.

In 2014, from the category of natural protected areas² of community interest, there were 6 special birds and fauna protection areas (SBFA) with a total area of 96,415.4 ha and 23 sites of community importance (SCI) with a total area of 221,916 ha.

There is also a **natural protected area of international interest** on the territory of the county – Tinovul Mare Poiana Stampei. This is the largest turf nature reserve in Romania, with an area of 681 ha, localized on the territory of the commune Poiana Stampei, in Suceava county, which was declared natural monument in the year 1955.

In the year 2007, Tinovul Mare Poiana Stampei Reserve was declared site of community importance, gaining European recognition as part of Natura 2000 Network. The international recognition was obtained together with the accession to the *Ramsar Convention on Wetlands* (Ramsar, 1971) in the year 2011, by declaring the reserve as *Wetland of International Importance*.

The anthropic tourism potential. The main tourism attractions in Suceava county are distributed both in the urban (Box 1) and in the rural areas (Box 2), being historical, cultural, architecture monuments, etc.

The cultural-historical and ethnic-folklore patrimony of the county has a great tourism value and attractiveness: historical objectives (Fortress Şcheia, Royal

¹ The natural protected areas of national interest were declared by Law no. 5 from 2000 on the approval of the National Landscaping Plan – Section III - protected areas, by Government's Decision no. 2151 of 2004 on the establishment of natural area regime for new zones and Government's Decision no. 1143/2007 on the establishment of new protected areas.

² The natural protected areas of community interest are part of the European Ecological Network Natura 2000, created for the conservation of the natural heritage of the European Union, based on two directives: "*Habitats*" Directive (no. 92/43 of 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora) and "*Birds*" Directive (no. 79/409 of 1979 on the conservation of wild birds).

The "*Birds*" Directive was implemented by Government's Decision no. 971 of October 5, 2011 for the modification and completion of G.D. no. 1.284/2007 on declaring the special avifaunistic protection areas as integrating part of the European Ecological Network Natura 2000 in Romania.

The "*Habitats*" Directive was implemented by Order of the Minister of Environment and Forests no. 2387/2011 for the modifying and completing M.M.D Order no. 1.964/2007 on the establishment of natural protected area regime of the sites of community importance, as part of the European Ecological Network Natura 2000 in Romania.

Fortress of Suceava and Fortress Zamca), civil constructions (the Royal Court and the Royal Inn in Suceava), monasteries (Voronet, Humor) as well as many museums and memorial houses.

Box 1

Main tourism attractions in the urban area, Suceava county

The History Museum – Suceava Municipality
 The Natural Science Museum – Suceava Municipality
 Stephan the Great's Fortress – Suceava Municipality
 Zamca Monastery– Suceava Municipality
 Saint John Monastery– Suceava Municipality
 Royal Inn – Suceava Municipality
 Wood Art Museum – Câmpulung Moldovenesc Municipality
 Bucovina Ethnographic and Folk Techniques – Rădăuți Municipality
 Voronet Monastery – Gura Humorului Town
 Humor Monastery – Gura Humorului Town

Source: Prefect's Institution, Strategy for tourism development and promotion in Suceava county, 2005.

Box 2

Main touristic attractions in the rural area, Suceava county

Sucevița Monastery – Sucevița Commune
 Putna Monastery – Putna Commune
 Moldovița Monastery – Moldovița Commune
 Dragomirna Monastery – Mitocul Dragomirnei Commune
 Slătioara Monastery – Râșca Commune
 The Black Ceramics Center from Marginea – Marginea Commune
 Daniil Sihastru's Hermitage – Putna Commune
 Ciprian Porumbescu Memorial House – Ciprian Porumbescu Commune
 Cacica Saline – Cacica Commune

Source: Prefect's Institution, Strategy for tourism development and promotion in Suceava county, 2005.

The monasteries in the rural areas, the numerous churches and Daniil Sihastru's Hermitage represent important attraction points for tourists.

The rural areas are preservers of customs, traditions, crafts and old customs and habits – ceramics, hand woven carpets, fur dressing, cloths, folk instruments, folk masks, etc. Suceava county is well-known for its ethnographic museums (Suceava, Rădăuți, Gura Humorului, Câmpulung Moldovenesc, Solca, Vatra Dornei, Vama, Marginea), as well as for the important creation centers or individual workshops of the folk artists who are well-known for their crafts (Vatra Moldoviței, Ciocănești, Brodina, Poiana Stampei – egg painting; Marginea, Rădăuți – ceramics; Humorului, Rădăuți, Arbore monasteries – cloths; Suceava, Rădăuți, Vatra Dornei,

Molid, Fundu Moldovei – icon painting; Marginea, Gura Humorului – knittings; Bilca, Vama, Fundu Moldovei – leather works, fur dressing; Solca – carpentry-sculpture workshops).

The artistic events and the traditional folk festivals organized throughout the entire year are attracting the Romanian and foreign artists.

4.2. MAIN TOURISM ACTIVITY INDICATORS IN SUCEAVA COUNTY

Putting into value the tourism potential is expressed by the following indicators: tourism reception structures, current tourist accommodation capacity and accommodation capacity in operation, arrivals and overnight stays of tourists. On the basis of two synthetic indicators, i.e. the tourist accommodation capacity in operation and the number of overnight stays of tourists, we can calculate the index of net tourism capacity utilization.

In the period 2001–2014, the structure of tourist reception in the county increased three times, from 96 in the year 2001 to 296 in the year 2014 (Table 2).

Table 2

Tourist reception structures per total Suceava county and by areas

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
	– number –													
Total:	96	119	122	143	179	220	236	233	235	245	271	296	295	296
– urban	60	63	63	74	96	99	103	104	111	121	135	139	135	140
– rural	36	56	59	69	83	121	133	129	124	124	136	157	160	156

Source: www.TEMPO-online

The most spectacular increase in number of tourism reception structures was found in the rural area, where their number was 4.3 times higher in 2014 compared to 2001, while in the urban area the number of tourism reception structures was 2.3 times higher in the same period. The increase in the number of the tourism reception structures implicitly led to the increase of the number of accommodation places. Thus, the tourism capacity increased 1.9 times in the period 2001–2014. For the investigated period, the present tourism capacity in the rural area increased 6.6 times, while in the urban area it increased 1.3 times (Table 3).

Table 3

The present tourism capacity in the county Suceava and by areas

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
	– places –													
Total:	5034	5192	5577	5755	6526	7012	6831	7029	7554	8033	8835	9447	9585	9650
– urban	4510	4371	4621	4662	5128	5003	4627	4763	5206	5721	5960	6156	6106	6166
– rural	524	821	956	1093	1398	2009	2204	2266	2348	2312	2875	3291	3479	3484

Source: www.TEMPO-online

The tourist accommodation capacity in operation, representing the number of accommodation places at tourists' disposal in the tourist accommodation units followed an ascending trend per total county and at urban level, except for the year 2002. The tourist accommodation capacity in operation in the rural area increased 5 times in the whole investigated period (Table 4).

Table 4

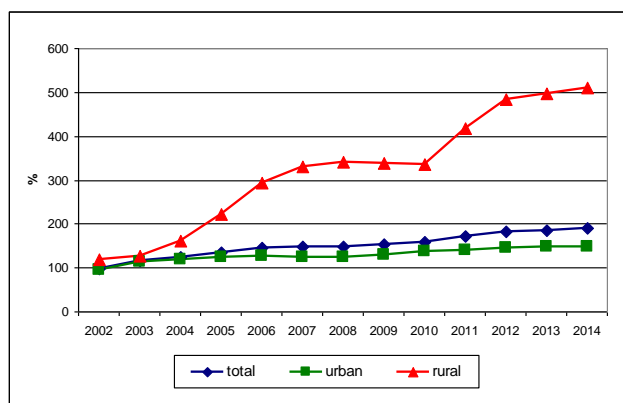
The tourist accommodation capacity in operation in Suceava county and by areas

	– thousand places–days–													
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total:	1421	1400	1641	1761	1932	2057	2087	2102	2176	2264	2440	2594	2643	2686
–urban	1264	1212	1441	1507	1585	1598	1569	1566	1644	1738	1786	1834	1864	1887
–rural	157	188	200	254	347	459	518	536	532	526	654	760	779	799

Source: www.TEMPO-online

In the year 2002, the tourist accommodation capacity in operation in Suceava county accounted for only 98.5% of that existing in the year 2001, but starting with the year 2003 it increased by 15.5% up to 89% in the year 2014.

An increasing trend was noticed in the tourist accommodation capacity in operation at urban level, except for the year 2002 when it accounted for 95.9% of that existing in 2001; after that, an increase followed, by 14% in the year 2003 up to 49.3% in the year 2014.



Source: own calculations based on www.TEMPO-online data

Figure 1. Evolution of the tourist accommodation capacity in operation, per total county and by areas 2001=100.

As regards the tourist accommodation capacity in operation in the rural area, a spectacular increase was noticed, from 19.6% in the year 2002 to 409.5% in 2014.

Except for the years 2009 and 2010, the number of tourists' arrivals in the county followed an ascending trend, increasing 1.7 times in the investigated period.

The tourists' arrivals in the urban area increased 1.4 times, while the arrivals of tourists in the rural area were 4.8 times higher for the same period.

The number of tourists' overnight stays in the tourism reception structures in Suceava county had an oscillating evolution in the investigated period (Table 5).

However, compared to the reference year 2001, the number of overnight stays in Suceava county increased 1.2 times. The highest increase, i.e. 7 times, was found in the number of tourists' overnight stays in the tourism reception structures from the rural area.

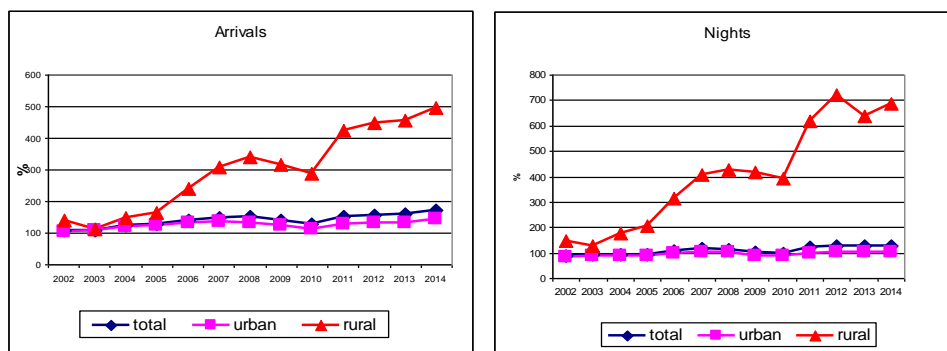
Table 5

Number of tourists' arrivals and overnight stays in Suceava county and by areas

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
– thousand –														
Arrivals														
Total:	151	162	162	187	192	211	226	229	210	194	230	239	242	261
Urban	138	144	148	168	171	181	187	187	169	158	176	182	184	198
Rural	13	18	14	19	21	30	39	42	41	36	54	57	58	63
Overnight stays														
Total:	461	407	423	432	435	500	535	530	479	460	556	586	577	583
Urban	442	379	398	397	395	439	456	448	398	384	435	445	453	450
Rural	19	28	25	35	40	61	79	82	81	76	121	141	124	133

Source: www.TEMPO-online

The number of tourists' arrivals followed an increasing trend in Suceava county, except for the years 2009 and 2010. In the whole investigated period, the number of tourists' arrivals in the urban area was higher than in the reference year, by 4.3% in the year 2002 up to 42.6% in the year 2014. The number of tourists' arrivals in the rural area increased by a fast rate, up by 40.4% in the year 2002, with a peak in the year 2014, when it was by 395.1% higher than in the year 2001. We can say that the rural area became a preferred destination for the tourists visiting Suceava county in the period 2001–2014.



Source: own calculations based on www.TEMPO-online data

Figure 2. The share of tourist circulation in Suceava county, by urban and rural areas.

The number of overnight stays in Suceava county was under the level of the year 2001 both in the period 2001–2005 and in 2010, while in the remaining investigated period it was above the reference year, by maximum 27.1% higher in the year 2012. The number of tourists' overnight stays in the urban area was under the level of the year 2001 in the period 2002–2006 and 2009–2011, while in the remaining period it slightly exceeded its level in the reference year.

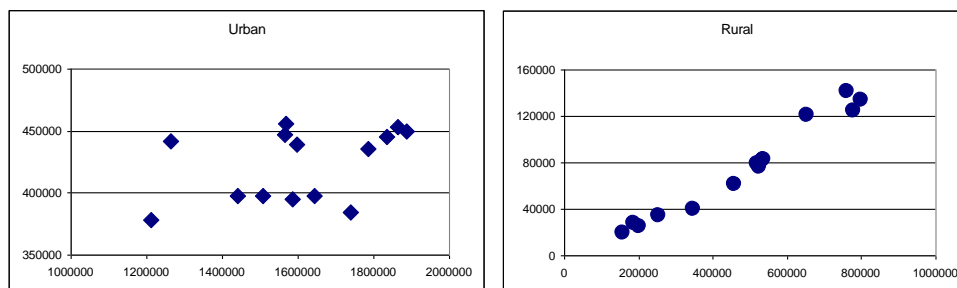
In the whole investigated period, the number of overnight stays in the rural area of Suceava county continuously increased as against the year 2001, up by 585.9% in the year 2014 than in the reference year. We can say that the rural area became a preferred destination for the people who chose Suceava county as their tourism destination in the period 2001–2014.

Taking into consideration the spectacular increase of tourist circulation, we can also say that the rural area became a preferred destination of tourists.

Correlating the two indicators, i.e. the tourist accommodation capacity in operation and the number of overnight stays, we can conclude:

- At urban level, there is a direct positive correlation, that is the increase of the number of accommodation places-days has implicitly led to the increase of the overnight stays;

- At rural level, there is a perfect direct positive correlation, which represents an extremely close relationship between the increase in number of accommodation places-days and the increase of overnight stays.

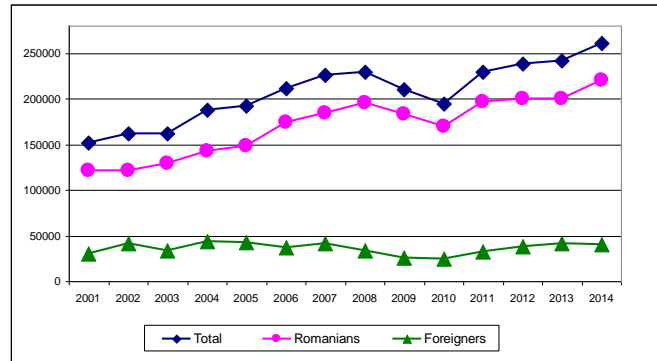


Source: www.TEMPO-online

Figure 3. The correlation between the tourism capacity in function and the number of overnight stays in the urban and rural areas in Suceava county in the period 2001–2014.

In the investigated period, the total number of tourists who visited the county Suceava continuously increased, except for the years 2009 and 2010, when the economic crisis effects were felt beginning with the year 2008. The total number of tourists increased from 150,000 in the year 2001 to over 260,000 in the year 2014.

In the total number of tourists, the Romanian tourists prevailed, while the foreign tourists accounted for over 20% in the period 2002–2005, while in the remaining years their share was under this threshold.



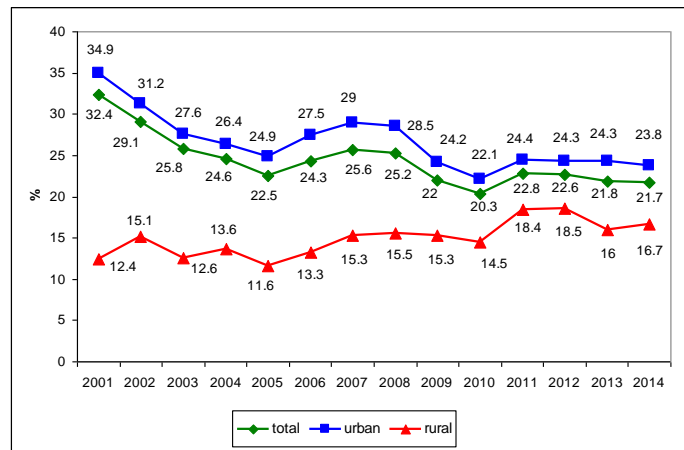
Source: www.TEMPO-online

Figure 4. Types of tourists who visited Suceava county.

The net utilization index of the tourism capacity in operation in the period 2001–2014 had an oscillating evolution, both at Suceava county level and by urban and rural areas.

At Suceava county level, the net utilization index of the tourism capacity in operation had the highest value, i.e. 32.4% in the year 2001, to reach 21.7% in the year 2014.

In the tourism reception structures from the urban area, the net utilization index of the tourism capacity in operation had the highest value, i.e. 34.9% in the year 2001, to reach only 23.8% in the year 2014.



Source: own calculations based on www.TEMPO-online data

Figure 5. The net utilization index of the tourism capacity in operation, per total county and by areas, in the period 2001–2014.

In the rural area, the net utilization index of the tourism capacity was 12.4% in the year 2001, to reach a maximum level of 18.5% in the year 2012.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Following the analysis of the main tourism activity indicators in the period 2001–2014 in Suceava county and by urban and rural areas, we can draw the following conclusions:

- The number of tourism reception structures had an ascending evolution, the highest increase being noticed in the rural area, where their number was 4.3 times higher in the year 2014 as against 2001;

- The number of accommodation places increased in the investigated period, the highest increase being noticed in the rural area, i.e. 6.6 times;

- The number of accommodation places put at tourists' disposal by the tourism accommodation units in the rural area had the highest increase, which was 5 times higher in the year 2014 as against 2001;

- The number of tourists' arrivals and the number of overnight stays in the tourist accommodation structures also experienced the highest increase in the rural area;

- The number of tourists who visited county Suceava was under continuous increase, most tourists being Romanians;

- The net utilization index of the tourism capacity in operation experienced fluctuations, both per total county and by the two investigated areas; even though this was much higher per total county and in the urban area, its value was higher only in the rural area in the year 2014 compared to the year 2001.

In the period 2001–2014, the tourism activity grew in Suceava county, mainly in the rural area. The increase in number of the tourism reception structures and of accommodation places put at tourists' disposal led to the increase of the number of tourists who chose Suceava county as tourism destination, mainly the rural area of the county.

The evolutions of the tourism activity results show that there was a positive tendency as regards putting into value the tourism potential of the county, mainly its rural part.

A better promotion of this destination in the future could lead to a better putting into value of the natural and anthropic tourism potential, which is so rich and diverse in this part of Romania.

REFERENCES

1. Niță, I., Niță, C., (2008), *Piața turistică a României. Realități. Mecanisme. Tendințe*, Editura Economică, București.
2. Stanciu, P., (2007), *Studiul pensiunilor turistice din județul Suceava*, Revista de turism, nr. 4.
3. Stănculescu, G., Micu, C., (2009), *Economie și gestiune în turism. Probleme, proiecte și studii de caz*, Editura C.H. Beck, București.
4. *** Instituția prefectului – județul Suceava, *Strategia de dezvoltare și promovare a turismului în județul Suceava*, 2005.
5. *** www.TEMPO-online.