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**UNIVERSITY OF KRAGUJEVAC**  
**FACULTY OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT**  
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## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INTERNATIONAL TOURISM FLOWS TO ROMANIA IN THE PERIOD 1993-2016

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### **Abstract**

*Tourism has an important role for the economic sustainability of a country, so there is an increased interest in research on the determinants of tourism development. Analysis of the foreign travel flows is a spatial research tool that has in view to explain for tourism stakeholders the impact of tourism growth on publicly provided infrastructure and also to help decision factors to know where they can make investments. Romanian tourism presents a valuable development potential with deep economic, political, social and cultural implications. The main objective of the paper is to build a framework of foreign travel flows that visited Romania between 1993 and 2016 - a country with great tourism potential and to provide decision-makers with possible solutions for the transformation of tourism into a stimulating factor for the other economic branches related to it. The main data source is National Institute of Statistics (NIS, 2018), Arrivals of foreign visitors in Romania by continents and origin countries (NIS\_T, 2018). This paper is organized as follows: Section 1 describes some related studies in the field of tourism. Section 2 presents the data analysis, results and discusses various aspects of the foreign travel flows in detail. This paper ends with conclusions and presented directions for future research in Section 3.*

**Key Words:** *foreigner tourist flow, regression models, visitor exports*

**JEL classification:** *C10, C12, L83, Z30, Z31, Z32*

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## Introduction

Economic literature, empirical studies with differences and peculiarities of each country represent an essential intellectual capital in understanding the development of sustainable tourism and a vital working tool in the process of alignment with international standards on the quality of tourism services. Identification and estimate of relevant determinants of tourism attractiveness of destinations have significant implications for decision-makers, economic operators and policy authorities.

The tourists' arrivals flows are examined by Khadaroo & Seetanah (2008) who based their analysis on a panel data from 28 countries over the period 1990-2000 and the results obtained confirm that a significant determinant of the tourism attractiveness of destinations is transport infrastructure.

Malaj & Kapiki (2016) are of *the same opinion when* investigated the determinants of tourism flows of Greece and concluded that investments in transport infrastructure next to the incomes and EU membership of the origin countries, the political stability and the security affect international tourism flows to Greece.

Maintaining a relatively stable exchange rate presents an important role on international tourism flows, it was demonstrated by Glauco De Vita on a panel of 27 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and non OECD countries for the period 1980–2011.

Munoz & Amaral (2000) consider the determinants of international tourism flows such as: price of alternative destinations, disposable leisure time, income distribution, age structure and educational level of the population.

Another empirical study which was realized by Uysal & Crompton (1984) on international tourist flows to Turkey based on multiple regression demonstrated that income, price and exchange rate are significant determinants of tourism inflows into a destination.

For Romania, Surugiu & Leitao & Surugiu (2015) demonstrated that GDP per capita, bilateral trade, population, prices are the main determinants of tourism flows to Romania. Their analysis was for the period 1997-2008.

The flows of foreign tourists who visit a country constitute an important source of income which, in countries with a high-performance tourism industry management and adequate infrastructure, can have positive implications for the economic and social development of local and regional communities in those countries.

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO 2016), in 2015 the top five tourist destinations were France (84.5 million arrivals), USA (77.5 million arrivals), Spain (68.5 million arrivals), China (56.9 million arrivals) and Italy (50.7 million arrivals). From the point of view of international tourism expenditure, the top five countries were China (261 US\$ billion), USA (122 US\$ billion), Germany (81US\$ billion), UK (64 US\$ billion) and France (41 US\$ billion).

According to The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index 2017, Overall Rank, Romania is ranked 68th out of 136 countries, decreases 2 places compared to the previous year (2015). In the same time, one of its direct competitors, Bulgaria, was with 24 more positions higher than Romania, on the 45th place. In 2016, Bulgaria increases 4 places compared to the previous year.

In contrast with the important role of the tourism on the level of economic and social development, some authors highlight that impact of tourism on economic development is different and presents limitations as a tool for the improvement of the socioeconomic conditions of the population in poor countries. (Pulido-Fernández, & Cárdenas-García & Sánchez-Rivero, 2014).

However, tourism, under the conditions of an efficient management, can have a significant impact on the level of living and development of the whole society by contributing to the formation of the Gross Domestic Product. This finding is in line with that of Ohlan (2017) for India or Belloumi (2010) for Tunisia.

Zaharia & Bălăcescu (2017) consider that the way of attracting foreign tourists flows depends not only on the natural and anthropogenic heritage, but also on the policies adopted especially by developing countries, and their efficiency are factors that accelerate or slow the transition processes.

In order to promote Romania as a tourist destination, particular attention should be paid to increasing the quality of services and products offered,

training of the existing staff and cultivating a mentality that looks at tourists etymological meaning of the word hospitality (Scorte, 2011).

A concept which makes a heated debate in society today is about sustainable development. There are a lot of contradictory studies on the progress, implications, and practicality of sustainable tourism. Pulido-Fernández, Andrades-Caldito & Sánchez-Rivero (2014) argue that progress in tourism sustainability does not affect a country's main economic tourism indicators in the short term, and does not constrain profitability and competitiveness. Unfortunately, Romania with a total contribution of 5.2% of tourism to GDP was in 2016 on 163 rank out of 185 states (WTTC 2017), ahead of Bulgaria (12.8%), Hungary (10.5% ), Czech Republic (7.8%) and Slovakia (6.2%). The total contribution of tourism to job creation also places Romania on unfavourable positions. Thus, in 2016, with 6.2% of the employees in the tourism industry, Romania ranks 136th out of 185 states, while Hungary occupies 82nd place (10.3%) and Bulgaria, with a tourism potential relatively similar to that of Romania, occupies the 69th place with a share of 11.3%, by 0.3 percentage points above the European Union average (11.6%). Also, foreign tourist flows are an important source of income. Their expenditures in Romania consist of exports of tourist services (visitor exports), which contribute to the increase of foreign exchange earnings. Unfortunately, from this point of view, Romania is also close to the ranking queue (WTTC 2017). Thus, while in Bulgaria visitor exports represented 12.0% (3.9 US \$ billion) of total exports, Hungary was 6.4% (US \$ 7.4 billion), in Romania it was only 2.8% (2.2 US \$ billion).

The main reason for the stay of non-resident tourists in Romania during the last two years of the analyzed period was represented by business, participation in congresses, conferences, courses, fairs and exhibitions (57.6% of the total number of non-resident tourists in 2016, increasing 1.7% over the previous year). The main data source was the National Institute of Statistics Database (NIS, 2018), Arrivals of foreign visitors in Romania by continents and origin countries (NIS\_T, 2018). Data series processing was performed using SPSS (Labăr, 2008).

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section II contains an analysis of arrivals flows of foreign visitors to Romania on continents. In Section III we focus on the arrivals flows of foreign visitors to Romania on the European continent. The last Section is dedicated to the conclusions.

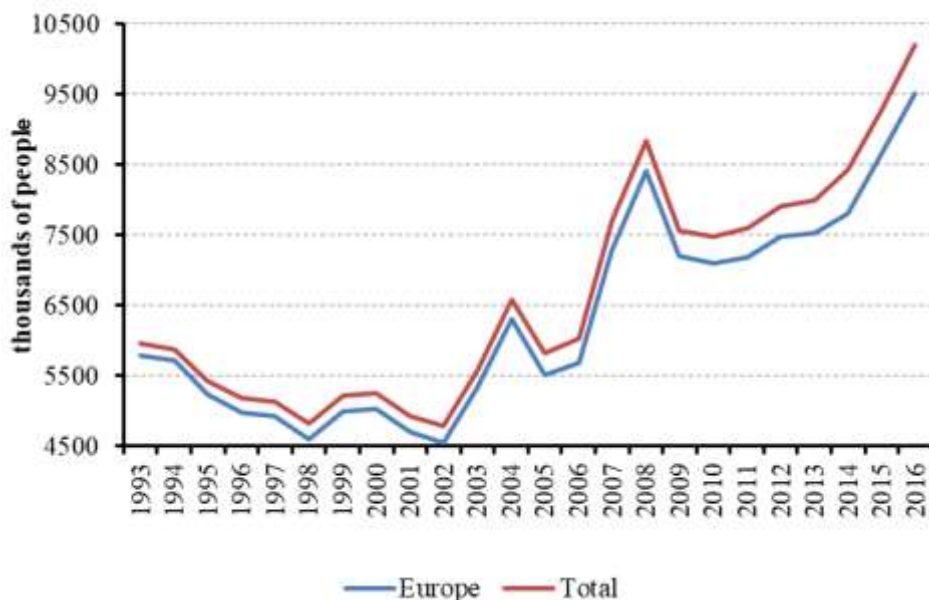
## Arrivals flow of foreign visitors to Romania on continents

In the period 1993-2016, the evolution of the foreign tourists who visited Romania presents an upward trend. Thus, compared to the beginning of the analyzed period when it was registered a number of 5963.8 thousands of foreign tourists who visited Romania, at the end of the analyzed period it was registered a number of 10201.0 thousands of people, which means an increase of almost 2 times (171%). (Figure 1)

The studied period recorded fluctuations with main decreases in 2005 and 2009. In 2005, on the one hand, the spread of (highly pathogenic) H5N1 in birds and its official recognition in Romania, and, on the other hand, massive floods had a negative impact on the flow of foreign tourists in Romania when there was a decrease compared to last year by 11.6%.

The decline of the flow of foreign tourists in Romania registered in 2009, when there was a decrease compared to last year by 14.5%, is due of the international financial crisis from the end of 2007.

Figure 1: *Evolution of the number of foreign tourists who visited Romania between 1993 and 2016*



Source: *author's own elaboration based on <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/index.jsp?page=tempo3&lang=en&ind=TUR107C>*

Table 1: *Characteristics of the trends of the foreign tourists who visited Romania during the period 1993-2016 on the continents of origin*

Continent	Sig. F	R Square	Annual increase	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Europe	2.75E-07	0.706	171.456	2.75E-07	122.584	220.327
Asia	4.17E-08	0.752	9.821	4.17E-08	7.327	12.314
North America	3.74E-13	0.913	8.908	3.74E-13	7.693	10.124
Africa	4.34E-08	0.751	0.894	4.34E-08	0.667	1.123

Source: *author's own computation using SPSS*

In synthesis, as shown in Table 1, for all of the four continents analyzed, developments in foreign tourists' flows were upward. The average absolute increase of tourists in Europe who visited Romania between 1993 and 2016 for Confidence level 95% ranges between 122,584 thousand and 220,327 thousand, with the most likely value being 171,456 thousand foreign tourists.

Second and third places are Asia and North America with relatively similar yearly average increases. The intensity of the flow of tourists from Asia who visited Romania increased on average by 9,821 thousand tourists (the confidence interval being 7.327-12.314 thousand tourists).

At the same time, the intensity of tourists' flow in North America grew by an average of 8,908 thousand tourists annually, the confidence interval being between 7,693 thousand and 10,124 thousand annual tourists.

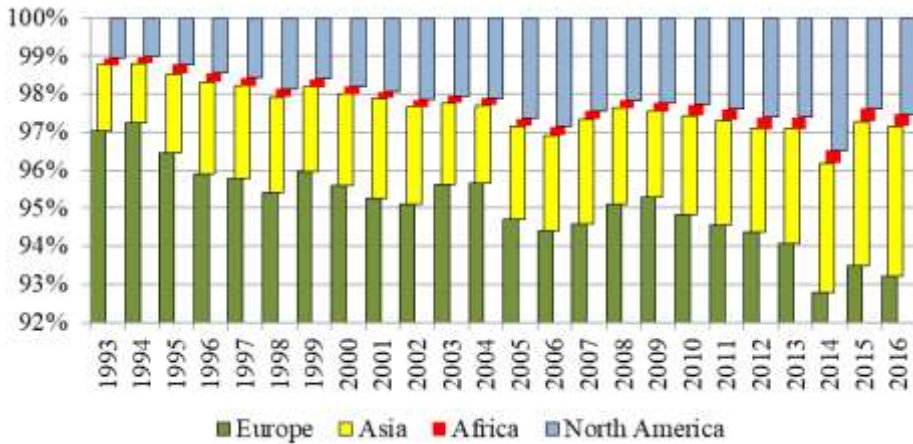
Regarding the flow of tourists from Africa, it remained at very low, although it increased slightly (0.894 thousand tourists annually) reached in 2016 about 32 000 tourists (0.31% of all tourists from the four continents who visited Romania in 2016).

Although the average annual growth rate ranks the flow of European tourists visiting Romania, the annual average rates and the average annual growth rates of foreign tourists' flows from other continents have significantly outpaced Europe.

Thus, while the average annual growth rate of the flow of European tourists visiting Romania in the analyzed period was 1.1833%, the flows of tourists from the other continents increased at a rate of 6.314% for

tourists in North America, 6.061% for Asian tourists, and 4.728% for tourists in Africa.

Figure 2: *Evolutions in the shares of foreign tourists who visited Romania between 1993 and 2016 coming from Europe, Asia, Africa and North America*



Source: *author's own elaboration based on <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/index.jsp?page=tempo3&lang=en&ind=TUR107C>*

These evolutions have led to changes in flow structures of foreign tourists arriving in Romania between 1993-2016 (Figure 2). In 1993, from 5.963 million foreign tourists who visited Romania, coming from Europe, Asia, Africa and North America, 97.01% were Europeans, 1.74% were Asian, 1.06% in North America and 0.19% in Africa. In 2005, North American tourists' share of total foreign tourists grew 2.49 times, reaching 2.64%, and Asian tourists grew 1.4 times, reaching 2.44%. Consequently, the share of European tourists fell to 94.72%.

At the end of the analyzed period in 2016, of the total of 10,201 foreign tourists visiting Romania, coming from the four continents included in the analysis, the share of tourists in Asia was 3.94% (the highest value in the whole period), the percentage of tourists in North America was 2.54% (the highest share of 2.86% was recorded in 2006), while the share of tourists in Africa remained at a very low level (0.31%). Under these conditions, the share of foreign tourists who visited Romania coming from European countries was 93.21%.

## Arrivals flow of foreign visitors to Romania in the European continent

Taking into account the events and transformations that took place in Europe between 1993 and 2016, the European states included in the analysis were structured in three groups.

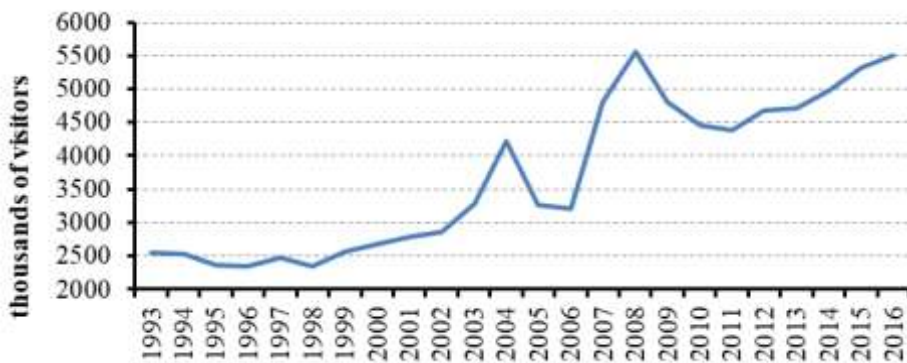
The first group of 26 member states includes the current composition of the European Union less Romania, which is destination of tourist flows, and Croatia for which the data were not available until after 2013.

The second group consists of Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Macedonia. Although the series of data are incomplete during certain periods, given the importance of these states in relation to Romania, they were included in the analysis of the flows of tourists who visited Romania between 1993 and 2016.

The third group of countries included Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus.

The evolution of the total number of tourists from the 26 countries forming the first group is shown in Figure 3 and you can see this group presents an upward trend, with fluctuations. The highest growth was registered after 2007, when Romania joined the European Union. The tourist flow for the first group increased in 2016 compared to 1993 by 2.15 times (from 2556.3 to 5497.0 thousand of tourists)

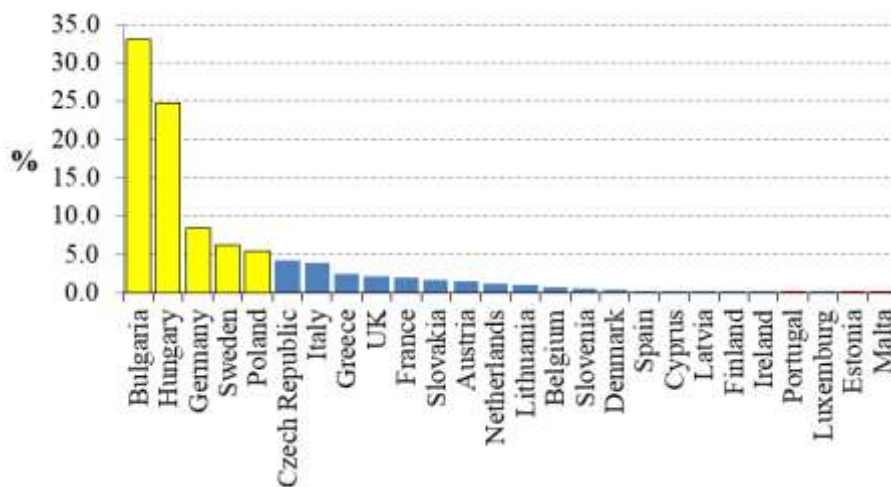
Figure 3: Evolution of the total number of tourists from the group of 26 countries that visited Romania between 1993 and 2016



Source: author's own elaboration based on <http://statistici.inse.ro/shop/index.jsp?page=tempo3&lang=en&ind=TUR107C>

From the point of view of the hierarchy by the number of tourists arriving in Romania, out of 26 states, in 1993 (Figure 4), the first five places, totalling 77.8% of the total number of foreign tourists who visited Romania, were Bulgaria 845.3 thousand of tourists (33.1%), Hungary with 631.0 thousand tourists (24.7%), Germany with 214.3 thousand tourists (8.4%), Sweden with 158.4 thousand tourists (6.2%) and Poland with 138.7 thousand tourists (5.4%). On the opposite side, with shares below 0.1% in the total number of tourists was Portugal, Luxembourg, Estonia and Malta.

Figure 4: *The share by country of the total number of tourists from the group of 26 countries that visited Romania in 1993*



Source: *author's own elaboration*

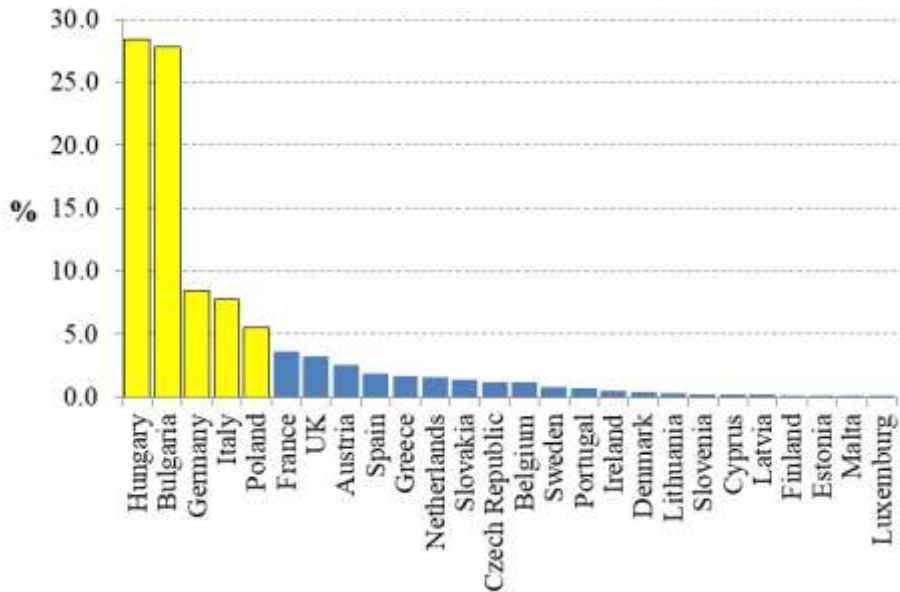
Although the hierarchies changed, in 2016 the share of tourists in the first five states (Figure 5) remained at about the same level (77.9% in 2016 compared to 77.8% in 1993).

The first two places are reversed in 2016, Hungary being the first with 1562.0 thousand tourists (28.42%), followed by Bulgaria with 1527.0 thousand tourists (27.78%).

In the next places were Germany with 466 thousand tourists (8.48%), followed by Italy, which ranked the seven in 1993, coming fourth in 2016 with 425 000 tourists (7.73%) and fifth place remains Poland with 425 000 tourists (5.49%). At the opposite end, with the proportion of total

visitors in the 26 states below 0.1% in 2016, Malta and Luxembourg were.

Figure 5: Share by country of the total number of tourists from the group of 26 states that visited Romania in 2016



Source: *author's own elaboration*

In states, tourists' flows have evolved differently. The main features of their evolution are presented in Table 2.

The average annual growth rate of flows of foreign tourists from the 26 analyzed countries that visited Romania between 1993 and 2016 fluctuated between 17, 12% (Portugal) and – 5, 61% (Sweden).

For the period 1993-2016, the first place in the top of flows of foreign tourists from the 26 analyzed countries that visited Romania

is occupied by Hungary who visited Romania between 1993 and 2016 recorded ascending evolution, with a relative change of 1.042 times and an average annual growth rate of 4.02%. The next two ranges are occupied by Bulgaria with a relative change of 1.026 times and an average annual growth rate of 2.60% and Germany with a relative change of 1.034 times and an average annual growth rate of 3.43%.

At the opposite pole are the tourists from Luxembourg, who although they recorded during the analyzed period a relative change of 1,037 times and an average annual growth rate of 3.73% are in the last place in the group of those 26 analyzed countries that visited Romania. The highest growth rate was recorded at the flows of foreign tourists from Portugal with a relative change of 1.171 times and an average annual growth rate of 17.12%, for the analyzed period. Next are tourist from Malta with a relative change of 1.155 times and an average annual growth rate of 15.50%. Unfavourable developments have been recorded for tourists from countries such as: Sweden (-5.61%), Czech Republic (-2.05%) and Lithuania (-1.33%).

Table 2: *Absolute and relative annual average annual flows of foreign tourists from the 26 analyzed countries that visited Romania between 1993 and 2016*

Country	Av.In (ths.)	Av.Ix (%)	Av.Rh (%)	Country	Av.In (ths.)	Av.Ix (%)	Av.Rh (%)
Hungary	40.48	104.02	4.02	Belgium	2.03	105.65	5.65
Bulgaria	29.64	102.60	2.60	Sweden	-5.06	94.39	-5.61
Germany	10.94	103.43	3.43	Portugal	1.61	117.12	17.12
Italy	14.17	106.54	6.54	Ireland	1.04	111.83	11.83
Poland	7.10	103.44	3.44	Denmark	0.51	103.94	3.94
France	6.51	106.11	6.11	Lithuania	-0.30	98.67	-1.33
UK	5.51	105.43	5.43	Slovenia	0.06	100.41	0.41
Austria	4.48	105.79	5.79	Cyprus	0.37	105.53	5.53
Spain	4.26	114.13	14.13	Latvia	0.34	105.69	5.69
Greece	1.28	101.72	1.72	Finland	0.30	106.61	6.61
Netherlands	2.59	104.92	4.92	Estonia	0.22	108.98	8.98
Slovakia	1.37	102.40	2.40	Malta	0.13	115.50	15.50
Czech Rep.	-1.78	97.95	-2.05	Luxemburg	0.05	103.73	3.73

Av.In – Average increase (thousands of visitors), Av.Ix – Average index (%), Av.Rh – Average rhythm (%).

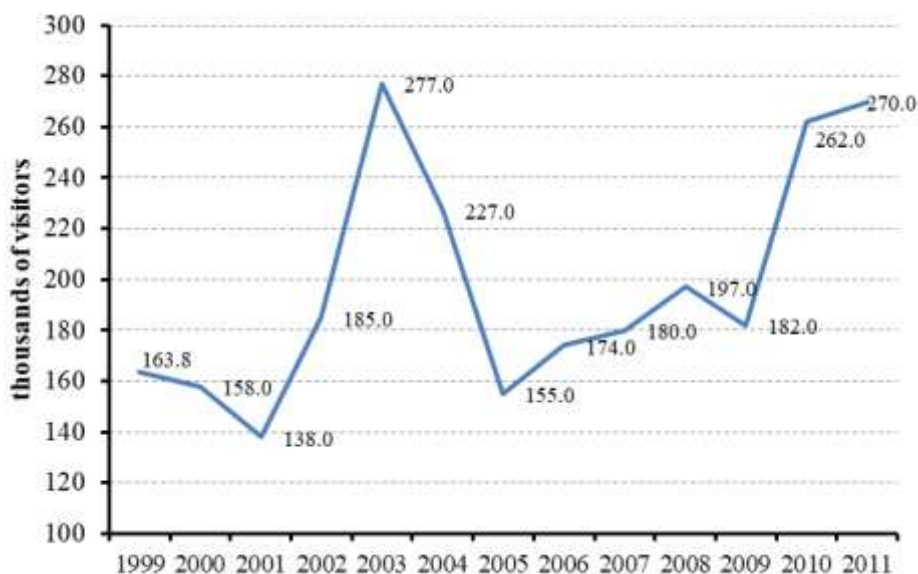
Source: *author's own computation using SPSS*

In the case of the European countries of the second group, due to the dramatic events that led to the dismantling of the former Yugoslavia, and in particular the wars that took place between 1991 and 1995, concluded by the Dayton Agreement of 14 December 1995, in 1998, the flow of tourists from the former Yugoslavia, with the exception of Slovenia, decreased dramatically.

Thus, from a total of 1053.9 thousand tourists who visited Romania in 1993, in 1998 their number decreased to 120.5 thousand (a reduction of 88.57%).

After 1998, the flow of tourists that started to grow, its evolution between 1999 and 2011 being shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: *Evolution of the flow of tourists from the countries of the former Yugoslavia except for Slovenia who visited Romania between 1999 and 2011*



Source: *author's own elaboration*

In the period 1999-2011, the flow of tourists from the countries of the former Yugoslavia except Slovenia who visited Romania recorded increases from 163.8 thousands of visitors in 1999 at 270,0 thousands of visitors in 2011, a relative change of 1.042 times and an average annual growth rate of 8.85%.

The smallest value of flow of tourists from the countries of the former Yugoslavia except Slovenia who visited Romania was recorded in 2001 (138.0 thousands of visitors). The 2001 year was for countries of the former Yugoslavia full with many political, social, and economic measures to reform the Yugoslav state and society after the Milosevic era.

In the period 1999-2011, the highest value of flow of tourists from the countries of the former Yugoslavia except Slovenia who visited Romania was recorded in 2003 (277.0 thousands of visitors). Compared to the previous year, it was recorded a increase by 1.5 times. Unfortunately, the next 2 years have been characterized by declines in the number of tourists coming from Yugoslavia and 2006-2011 there was an increasing trend which continued in the period 2012-2016 (Figure 7)

Figure 7: Evolution of the flow of tourists from Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia who visited Romania in 2012-2016



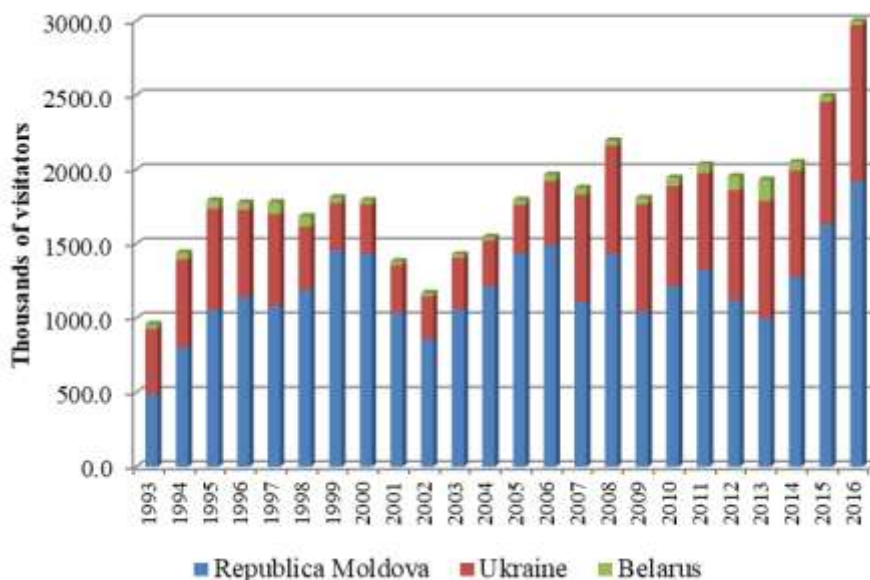
Source: author's own elaboration based on <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/index.jsp?page=tempo3&lang=en&ind=TUR107C>

In 2016, the total number of tourists from Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia who visited Romania increased by 152.34 percent compared with 2012 up to 489 thousands of visitors. Most tourists were from Serbia (87.32% from the total of tourists in 2016).

Romania is an attractive tourist destination for Moldovan citizens, as a result of two powerful motivations: geographical distance and common language. In the period 1993-2016 (Figure 8), there was an increase in the flow of tourists from the Republic of Moldova, which was quite stable (from 485.4 thousand visitors in 1993 at 1918 thousand visitors in 2016).

However, during this period there were two decreases recorded in 2002 (the number of tourists in the Republic of Moldova decreased by 82.97% compared to the previous year, reaching 857.0 thousand visitors) and 2013, (tourists from the Republic of Moldova decreased by 88.84% compared to the previous year, reaching 857.0 thousand visitors).

Figure 8: *Evolution of the flow of tourists from Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus who visited Romania in 1993-2016*



Source: *author's own elaboration based on <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/index.jsp?page=tempo3&lang=en&ind=TUR107C>*

A grow up trend was recorded by the flow of tourists from Ukraine who visited Romania. Compared to 1993, the number of tourists increased by 2.4 times in 2016. A low interest of the citizens of Ukraine towards Romania as a tourist destination occurred between 1999 and 2005. Regarding flow of tourists from Belarus, it is quite fluctuating. Thus, the number of tourists from Belarus oscillate from 31.2 thousands of tourists, in year 1993, up to 143.0 thousands of tourists, in year 2013, reaching 54.0 thousands of tourists in 2016.

## Conclusions

The tourism industry plays an important role in the development of society due to its economic potential and employment and its social

implications (due to the increase in the standard of living, increasing the level of preparation and general culture population, etc.). Thus, the development of national and international tourism has become a national priority for many countries.

The current study presented, succinctly, some major benchmarks about evolution registered by the flows of foreign tourists visiting Romania between 1993 and 2016.

The first part of the analyzed period coincided with the first years of the transition of the Romanian economy, when there was a delayed and flawed privatization in all sectors, including tourism, legislative and fiscal instability, and late reforms in all sectors. A real revival of tourism is felt after the year 2000, due to the modernization of the tourist infrastructure and the diversification of the tourist offer. The overall analysis of the foreign travel flows that have visited Romania between 1993 and 2016 shows that most tourists are from Europe, second and third places are Asia and North America with relatively similar yearly average increases.

The highest growth was registered after 2007, when Romania joined the European Union. The tourist flow for the first group increased in 2016 compared to 1993 by 2.15 times (from 2556.3 to 5497.0 thousand of tourists). Taking into account the events and transformations that took place in Europe between 1993 and 2016, the European states included in the analysis were structured in three groups. The first group of 26 member states includes current composition of the European Union less Romania and Croatia. The second group consists of Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Macedonia. The third group of countries included Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus.

For the period 1993 -2016, the first place in the top of flows of foreign tourists from the 26 analyzed countries that visited Romania is occupied by Hungary and the next two ranges are occupied by Bulgaria and Germany. In the case of the European countries of the second group, due to the conflicts within Yugoslavia, the flows of foreign tourists have recorded oscillating evolution.

Regarding the third group of countries, Romania is an attractive tourist destination for Moldovan citizens. In the period 1993-2016, there was an increase in the flow of tourists from the Republic of Moldova, which was

quite stable (from 485.4 thousand visitors in 1993 at 1918 thousand visitors in 2016).

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