

## ASSESSMENT OF NATURAL AND ANTHROPIC POTENTIAL OF THE RURAL TOURISM IN DOBRUDGEA

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### *Abstract*

*The objective of this paper is to highlight the tourism potential in Dobrugea's rural area. The study starts from the premise that the specific resources of Dobrugea's rural area are not fully and appropriately put into value. The research methods used are the inventory-type analysis of the usable resources in the rural tourism and the cause-effect explanation of the investigated phenomenon. The analysis of the agro-tourism potential of Dobrugea's rural area is based on data and information obtained by bibliographic documentation. The investigation of relations that exist between the environmental and social factors, at local level, makes it possible to define the necessary mechanisms for the sustainable development of tourism activities that should contribute to the increase of the number of jobs and of alternative incomes, as well as to the increase of rural space attractiveness.*

**Key words:** Dobrugea, natural and anthropic potential, rural development, rural tourism

### INTRODUCTION

It is obvious that tourism is an activity that dates back from old times, but in recent years it "is the most dynamic branch of the world economy with a deep impact on the development of other economic branches". [7] The global tourism industry is growing, yet at a different rate, for a certain period of time, generating economic growth in the countries in which it has developed. [9]

In many countries, tourism is one of the three leading industries of the country, developing at quite a fast rate and it is of a great social and economic importance. Tourism has a huge impact on key the sectors of the economy such as transport and communications, trade, constructions, agriculture, consumption of goods and many others, acting as a catalyst for the social and economic development. Experts predict that the 21st century will be the century of the tourism. As promising forms of tourism, we can list the rural, environmental and cultural tourism. [2]

Three objectives are essential for the sustainable tourism development: control of tourist traffic; layout of appropriate tourist settlements in various areas that are tourist

destinations; diversification of tourism products by introducing new environment-friendly forms of tourism. [3]

For Romania, tourism remains the economic sector that has a most valuable potential for development but, unfortunately, still untapped enough, always remaining a source of attraction for investors as well as foreign tourists. A huge advantage of Romania is also represented by the natural and cultural potential of great diversity and harmoniously distributed in the territory, which also allows the practice of all forms of tourism. [9]

The rural tourism is organized and takes place in close relation with the basic occupations of rural people – agriculture, animal husbandry, crafts and other specific activities, the tourism activity being secondary to agriculture. Most rural localities have a complex tourism potential and the differences between these stem from the main attractive elements. The isolated settlements have a strictly tourism function and put into value the natural potential in their proximity.

In this paper we want to illustrate that tourism is not only a vacation for the soul, but also an excellent opportunity to develop the rural area of Dobrugea.

The rural tourism potential, by association

with the other resources, can contribute to the concrete actions of implementing the proposed strategic objectives for shaping the community future as integrating part of the rural development policy of Dobruđea's space.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The objective of this paper is to highlight the tourism potential and the tourism market development in Dobruđea's rural area. The motivation for selecting this area is that for most of us Dobruđea means the Black Sea shore with its resorts or the Danube Delta with its priceless biodiversity. But between the Danube and the Black Sea there is also a territory that represents a true reason for a travel in space, time and spirituality, where nature, history, creed and traditions are intermingled, forming a unique picture.

The methodological approach includes the identification of the "territorial tourism capital" of the rural settlements from Dobruđea located outside the influence zone of the Black Sea shore. The research methods used are the inventory-type analysis of the usable resources in the rural tourism and the cause – effect explanation of the investigated phenomenon. The analysis of the tourism potential of Dobruđea's rural area is based on data and information obtained by bibliographic documentation and field visits.

Dobruđea's tourism patrimony is evaluated according to the normative acts, which regulate tourism organization, coordination, promotion and development (field of strategic importance and priority branch of the national economy of Romania), as well as the management of tourism resources in conformity with the principles of equity, competitiveness, sustainability and sustainable development. *Dobruđea's tourism is put into value and developed on the basis of and within the annual/multiannual programs for the development of tourism destinations and products*, elaborated by the Authority of the Public Local and Central Administration in charge of tourism and approved by Government's Decision. The tourism patrimony elements are inscribed in

the *General Register of Tourism Patrimony*, owned and administered by the Authority of the Public Central Administration in charge of tourism. *The list of natural and anthropic resources is inscribed in the National Cultural Patrimony of Romania* and is maintained and periodically updated by the Ministry of Culture, Cults and National Patrimony in Romania. [10]

The natural framework and the way of "living in the countryside" are closest to the traditional image that could be preserved in the Western Europe. The patrimony of the Dobruđea's rural tourism can be approached from the specialists' point of view: geographers and economists, researchers or analysts of the tourism phenomenon, who include the following in the patrimony concept: *the (natural and anthropic) tourism potential, the tourism's technical-material basis* (tourism endowments and tourist reception structures with accommodation functions), *the tourism services and the general technical infrastructure*.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Dobruđea is a Romanian historical region located between the Danube and the Black Sea, consisting of two counties: Tulcea and Constanța (Figure 1).



Fig. 1. Dobruđea's position on Romania's historical provinces map

Dobruđea covers an area of 15,570 km<sup>2</sup> divided between the two counties: Constanța and Tulcea, with slightly different shares of the province total area (45.41% and 54.58%

respectively), as it results from Table 1.

Table 1. Administrative-territorial characteristics of the Dobrudgea province

Territorial unit	Area km <sup>2</sup>	Population inhabitants	Density Inhab./km <sup>2</sup>
Tulcea	8,499	244,103	28.72
Constanța	7,071	724,276	102.43
Dobrudgea	15,570	968,379	62.20

Source: Regional economic and social benchmarks: Territorial statistics, NIS, 2013

The network of human settlements has distinct characteristics in the two counties, due to natural particularities (Table 2).

Table 2. Number of administrative-territorial units of the Dobrudgea province

Territorial unit	Municipalities	Towns	Communes	Villages
Tulcea	1	4	46	133
Constanța	3	9	58	189
Dobrudgea	4	13	104	322

Source: Regional economic and social benchmarks: Territorial statistics, NIS, 2013

Thus, in the county Tulcea, 40.54% of its area (i.e. 3446 km<sup>2</sup>) is occupied by the newest relief unit, represented by the Danube Delta and the lagoon complex Razim-Sinoe [11], with limited dwelling possibilities; in the county Constanta, the size of the rural area is marked by the presence of Constanta municipality and by the entire network of urban localities on the southern Black Sea shore.

Another important characteristic is represented by the harmonious blending of the old and new, of tradition and modernity. This complementarity makes Dobrudgea more attractive to tourists and gives them the possibility to know and understand the history and tradition of the places they are visiting.

In Dobrudgea, **the natural tourism resource** is determined by:

- The *Romanian Black Sea Coast*, with its specific tourism potential and with its towns and resorts, representing one of the most important tourism and balneo-climatic zones in the country;
- The *Danube Delta and the lagoon complex Razim-Sinoe*, the “water domain”, with a prevailing piscicultural economy and tourism economy to a certain extent;
- The *Măcin Mountains National Park*,

situated in the North-West of the county Tulcea, evidence of the hercynian orogenesis which took place in the second half of the Paleozoic era, when they exceeded 3,000 m altitude; now they have maximum 467 m (the peak Greci – Țuțuiatul) and they are quite fascinating through their unique geomorphology and bio-geography;

- *Dobrudgea's Plateau* (divided into 3 big units: The Northern Dobrudgean Plateau, The Central Dobrudgean Plateau, the Southern Dobrudgean Plateau); this, although having significant resources of construction materials and not only, has a preponderantly agricultural economy. [1]

**The Romanian Black Sea shore** comprises two sectors, namely:

- A sector consisting of fragile seashore areas, with the largest natural beach in the country (between Sulina and Sf. Gheorghe) and with the largest lakes from the country (area of the former bay Halmyris): lake Razim (415 km<sup>2</sup>), lakes Sinoie (171 km<sup>2</sup>), Golovița (118 km<sup>2</sup>) and Zmeica (55 km<sup>2</sup>);

- Another sector, which begins south of Cape Midia, comprises seashore areas, bays, capes and beaches, sometimes protected by stone dykes built up to diminish the sea abrasion.

From the morphological point of view, the second sector can be delimited into two subsectors:

- The former between Cape Midia and Constanța with a transition area from the low coastline with accumulation of sediments from the Danube to the high coastline with Sarmatian chalkstone cliffs and

- The latter between Constanța and Vama Veche, a high seashore with cliff (up to 40 m high), shaped into limestone and loess, fragmented into bays and promontories.

The wetland of the river and sea zone of Dobrudgea is one of Romania's most important tourism destinations, comprising 3 types of areas:

- Low areas (the Danube river plain and the Danube Delta),

- Lagoons (the Razim-Sinoie complex) and

- The coastline (south Dobrudgea seashore).

In Dobrudgea, **the Danube** course is about 409 km long, lying from the western part of the locality Ostrov to Sulina. The high banks

that neighbor the Dobrugea Plateau (in the west and north) have steep slopes that are 70-100 m high, sculptured into hard rock formations (green crystalline schists, granite, limestone), which are most often buried into recently formed sediments. [4]

The **Danube Delta and the lagoon complex Razim-Sinoie** is the largest wetland area from Europe, with an original landscape of great tourism attraction and scientific importance.

Given the importance of this unique space, since 1991 the Romanian government started a comprehensive program to inventory the flora and fauna of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve.

The **Danube Delta** integrates: resources of reed (cane) for cellulose and paper manufacturing industries; areas for hunting and fishing; recreation places for tourists; areas of scientific interest. The conservation of the natural conditions and historical and cultural monuments is in line with the basic concerns of our state: "It is necessary to take rigorous measures to control the industrial hazards, to prevent water and air pollution, to protect the forests, rivers, mountains and lakes considered monuments of nature". According to the European Committee, the Danube Delta maintains its natural biotope and thus it has an exceptional significance taking into account the bird populations and the morphological and climate factors that have made from it an important reserve with many rare plant and animal species. These features have made the delta be considered absolutely unique compared to any first rank tourist area in our country. [8]

The morphological aspects of **continental Dobrugea** define a contrasting environment, characterized by a rigid relief with different geological structures adapted to the continental climate, with strong dryness.

**The old Hercinic Mountains**, forming the highest area of Dobrugea, provide a landscape with angular mountain ridges with ruiniform aspect and pyramid-like peaks, mainly in the sectors where the forest vegetation is absent.

**South Dobrugea** is characterized by even flat areas connecting the valleys deepened into limestone and loess deposits, where

sometimes they form miniature canyons.

The hydrographical components with landscaping, therapeutic and recreational value are represented by the sea water, maritime limans, temporary rivers, the Danube – Black Sea Canal.

A few littoral lakes (Taşaul, Siutghiol, Tăbăcărie, Techirghiol, Tatlageac, Mangalia) feature a landscape with steep banks sculpted into limestone, bays and promontories, being fed by permanent or temporary rivers and groundwaters, in certain cases being endowed with sapropelic muds used in thalassotherapy. The bioclimate of Dobrugea's wetland is characterized by comfortable cool temperatures influenced by the aquatic areas and it has two subtypes:

- The seashore subtype with therapeutic qualities in the period May-September;
- The river plain type.

The contrast between the areas with rich vegetation from the floodable areas or the compact forest massifs from north-east and rare floristic associations from the coastal areas and the steppe inside the plateau features a high attractiveness of natural resources.

In the plateau part, there is a great number of flower species (over 50% of Romania's flora), steppe and forest steppe species, deciduous and deciduous-resinous xerothermal forests, deciduous and deciduous-resinous mesophilous forests.

The bird populations from the Danube Delta, the lagoon spaces and the coastal areas of the Black Sea are represented by 325 species.

The ichthyological fauna (about 130 species) has an economic and tourism interest, with fish classes differentiated by the aquatic environment (fresh, brackish, saline).

Dobrugea has 85 protected areas, including integral protection areas from the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve and the Măcin Mountains National Park: 1 national park, 53 natural reserves, 19 scientific reserves, 12 natural monuments. The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve accounts for 31.6% of the total surface of protected areas from Romania.

**The anthropic resource** of the Dobrugean tourism patrimony is enriched with the multitude of *the monuments and*

*archaeological sites*, of the ensembles and *architecture reservations*, of the *memorial monuments* and ensembles, of the technical and art monuments, of the museums and other elements of folk and popular art disposed within the urban and rural space.

Thus, analysing the Dobrudgean rural space we will find that this is the keeper and conservator of an inestimable thesaurus of art and architecture, with historical vestiges and monuments, as well as of a veritable ethno-folklore patrimony of unique value and purity. The tourism patrimony reunites the material and spiritual culture of the past and present, which makes out of Dobrudgea a genuine *museum in open air*, with many monuments, archaeological sites and architectural assemblies that are included in the protected areas. [6]

The *archaeological relics* of ancient times can be known by visiting the remains of human settlements established by the *pre-historical, Geto-Dacian, Greek and Roman civilizations* or the indoor or open-air museum collections. Among these, the remains of the ancient towns Histria, Tomis and Callatis have a particular importance, completed by the discoveries from Halmyris, Arrubium, Dinogetia, Beroe, Aegyssus, Noviodunum, Tropaeum Traiani, Capidava, Carsium.

The main historical objectives from the *Byzantine period* are the mediaeval citadel Păcuil lui Soare (dating back from the 10th – 11th century), Citadel Heracleea from Enisala (13th century), rebuilt by the Genovese, the rupestral complex from Basarabi (10th century).

The *religious tourism* objectives include worship places and cemeteries belonging to several religions and represent attractiveness elements by the significance of feasts (titular saints), age of settlements and architectural style, location.

New worship places were added to the old monasteries Cocoș (1833), Celic Dere (1835), Saon (1846), Techirghiol (1928) and Dervent (1936), namely (the Cave of Saint Apostle Andrew, Cave of Saint Ioan Casian, Halmyris-Saints Epictet and Astion, Monastery Saint Helen by the sea) with important religious significances.

In the southern part of Dobrudgea, where *Turkish and Tartar communities* are living, there is a large number of mosques and Muslim places of worship. [6]

The numerous *ethnic communities* created an original material and spiritual culture where we can notice the traditional houses from reed and earth from the Danube Delta. The archaeology museums (Adamclisi, Istria), art museums (Limanu, Topalu), ethnographic museums (Enisala), scientific and technical museums and the memorial houses (Panaghia-Babadag and Panait Cerna, in Tulcea county) are of great importance for cultural tourism. The hydrotech constructions (bridges, lighthouses, the Danube – Black Sea Canal and Sulina) stand out in the landscape of the areas where they are located.

*Two areas for the rural tourism practice* can be delimited in Dobrudgea:

- A compact area located in the wet regions of the river plain, delta, lagoon complex and seashore, with prevailing piscicultural specificity, which is used for the practice of mass summer tourism, balneary, recreational, sport, business, cruise and itinerary tourism;
- A hilly and plateau area with prevailing fruit-viticultural, apicultural and agro-pastoral specificity, which use the rural tourism potential for the gastronomic, ethnographic, historical, religious and scientific tourism practice.

Tourism developments are found in the perimeter of resorts, of the urban or rural localities or on isolated basis, depending on the potential resources that require their existence.

The rural settlements with tourism potential in Dobrudgea cover the largest part of Dobrudgea (72%).

In the case of Tulcea county, 83% of the territory is represented by natural areas of high scientific and landscape value (the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, Măcin National Park, the Danube river plain) and the cultural-historical heritage (the relics alongside the Danube, Niculițel, Adamclisi, Enisala, Baia centers).

Constanța county, by the balneary and cultural potential from the southern part of the Romanian coastline and the historical, cultural

and religious resources from Oltina Plateau, account for 59% of the remarkable tourism potential.

Currently, owing to the favorable natural conditions, the tourism sector can develop in the rural area of Constanta and Tulcea counties and the farms can benefit from this potential, if the inhabitants of these areas get involved in tourism activities.

All these cannot be achieved in the absence of the involvement of the state, through the intervention of local authorities to implement a system of county development, creating the foundations for rural tourism development in Dobrudgea. This assistance should be primarily manifested through infrastructure planning, mainly through a tax and credit system that makes it easier to implement the necessary actions.

## CONCLUSIONS

Dobrudgea is a historical region delimited by the Danube and the Black Sea. As a multifunctional space, Dobrudgea is endowed with an extremely various and diversified tourism potential, characterized by:

- A favorable climate throughout the year;
- Relief units that are harmoniously blended throughout the territory;
- Potentially rich fauna and flora;
- Historical and architectural heritage appreciated worldwide.

Investigating Dobrudgea's rural area, we shall find out that:

- It is the depository and preserver of an inestimable thesaurus of architecture and art with historical monuments and relics, as well as of a high value ethno-folkloric heritage;
- It has great rural tourism potential areas, yet insufficiently explored.

In this context, the rural tourism, as alternative to the seasonal seashore tourism, does not depend to the same extent on the seasonality that characterizes the classical tourism from Dobrudgea and can contribute to the socio-economic development of the rural area.

The rural people, the small entrepreneurs and the representatives of local councils from the rural localities with tourism objectives are

interested in their utilization for tourism purposes and are willing to revive old customs and habits, which can attract tourists: wedding customs, local people's evening reunions with recreational purpose, vine and wine festival.

If the small entrepreneurs attended free of charge courses in local traditions that were offered to them, they would find sufficient resources, funding programs and maybe sponsors who should invest more for their village to enter the rural tourism circuit.

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