

## ASSESSMENT OF THE TOURISTIC DEMAND IN THE DANUBE DELTA BY PROFILE AND MOTIVATION OF TOURISTS

Anca PAVEL-NEDEA, Ion DONA

University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Bucharest, 59 Marasti, District 1, 11464, Bucharest, Romania, Phone/Fax: 00 40 744 6474 10; Email: ancanedea29@yahoo.com, ion\_dona@yahoo.com

*Corresponding author:* ion\_dona@yahoo.com

### *Abstract*

*The main purpose of this paper was to evaluate the tourist perceptions regarding the tourism development in Danube Delta and to understand the typology of tourists which travel in this area. In this context, it was carried out a questionnaire survey in 2017 on 169 tourists. The main results of our survey revealed a general positive attitude towards the touristic offers from Danube Delta Region in terms of accessibility, hospitality and touristic accommodation. It was observed a dissatisfaction regarding: promotion and image; the lack of local shops (foods and souvenirs); transport quality; recreational activities.*

*Key words:* sustainable tourism, tourists' typology, motivation

### INTRODUCTION

Danube Delta received in the last years a special attention due to the elaboration of the 'Danube Delta Integrated Development Strategy (2030)' by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration (MRDPA) and World Bank. The goal of the strategy was to transform this region in an 'integrated tourism destination with a rich portfolio of sustainable - nature and culture - based tourism products and services, along with relevant marketing activities' [8].

The challenges in the implementation of the strategy are much more complicated. We have to take in consideration the confusion in the present days in defining and understanding sustainable tourism. Since the '90s, numerous authors (Duffy[4], Banerjee[1], Saarinen[11]) were drawing attention on the need to define a better concept of this term. However, a number of works remained focused in offering solutions rather than clarifying the concept. We emphasize the papers of Eagles *et al.* [5] (about the characteristics of nature-based tourism and proposed management and planning tools), Buckley [2] (the relation between the usage of resources in tourism and natural conditions), Hiwasaki [6] (the promotion of community-centered tourism to assure a sustainable

management of protected areas) etc[12]. In the last decade, many papers were concentrated on the connections of the tourism with other economic sectors [7] or on the necessity to extend the sustainable development measure to community level [13].

Like we may observe, the development of a sustainable tourism in Danube Delta needs a deeper understanding of local needs, beyond the proposed strategic measures - like brand management, tourism infrastructure development or local economies integration. Yes, we can support the development of tourism in biosphere reserves or protected areas, but how do we make it "sustainable"? According with Rotman [10], the Danube Delta is very complex, integrating areas with resources for cellulose and paper manufacturing industries, areas for hunting and fishing, areas for tourism and areas of scientific interest. Also, even the Danube Delta was affected in the last years by the economic crisis [3] there is an obvious increasing flow of tourists [9].

As a result, the objective of this research is to understand the typology of tourists which traveled into Danube Delta with the declaimed purpose to respond to the following questions: What are the elements of the tourist activities to be pursued in the future "integrated tourist

destinations"? Does the tourist of Danube Delta have the ability to turn into an ecological tourist? Do the present accommodations have the ability to adapt to the requirements imposed by the sustainability and to meet the needs of the tourists in the same time?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Our survey was taking in account the following steps: online questionnaires - transmitted and received by social media (30 questionnaires); a survey on the participants to The Romanian Tourism Fair of Romania 2017 (139 persons). The questionnaire had 24 questions regarding: the attitude towards tourism in general; the travel in Danube Delta; the attitude towards the tourism from Danube Delta (pollution, potential, accessibility, quality, safety, prices, etc.); the satisfaction degree.

Regarding the methodology, we emphasis the following remark: we selected local from Danube Delta (with a minimum stay of 5 years); the selection was random, based on their will to respond; the survey interval was 9-12 February 2017; we applied descriptive and non-parametric methods with IBM SPSS Statistics.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The carried-out survey had 169 respondents, from which 58.6% male and 41.4% female. The main characteristics of our respondents are: 42% are from Bucharest (the capital of Romania); 55.6% are between 25-40 years old; 56.2% have a university degree; 62.7% are employees; 54.1% are indirect or indirect related with touristic field; 62% have monthly income under 3000 RON per family (around 665 euro); 23.1% visited Sulina, 22.5% Sf. Gheorghe, 11.2% Crişan, 8.9% Tulcea and 34.3% other villages from Danube Delta.

### *Frequency of the trip*

The majority of the tourists visited the Danube Delta for the first time (53.3%). Men were visiting more often (55.6%) while the analyses by age revealed that 51.6% from the people over 40 traveled in Danube Delta more than

one time. Crişan village and the villages inside the region were preferred destinations.

### *Decision to travel*

The decision to travel was made with 1-3 month before by 39.4% from the tourists and in one month period by 35.5%. The tourists which plan the travel with over 3 months before have the following characteristics: 29.6% are from other villages than Bucharest; 25.3% are men; 27.4% are over 40 years old and 37.9% have less than RON 2,000 income. This type of people follows the touristic offers to catch discounts.

We also observed that are some categories of tourists with an unforeseeable behavior: 42.3% from the tourists from Bucharest; 37.4% from men; 46.2% from the persons with fewer than 25 years old and 40.6% from the persons with over RON 4,000. These persons prefer the "last minute" type of touristic offer.

Another important aspect was that some villages (like Sulina and Sf. Gheorghe) were preferred by the tourists who make the reservation with 1-3 month before the travel, Crişan village by the tourists which decide with over 3 months before travel and for other category the travel is planned with maximum 1 month before.

### *Reservation pattern mode*

29.6% form the tourists make the reservation based on their knowledge about the place, 29.0% based on recommendations and 26.6% based on on-line information. Only 11.2% used the services of a travel agency (12.1% from men, 15.4% from the people with under 25 years old, and 14.7% from the tourists with income between RON 3,000-4,000).

The reservations were made by telephone (30.8%), internet (24.9%) and travel agencies booking sites (23.7%). Around 20% from the tourists didn't make any reservation. By categories, we counted the followings: 27% from men make the reservation by phone and 22% through agencies; the women and the persons with over 40 years old use more the phone and the internet for reservations; the on-line reservations are used especially for Sulina and Crişan villages and 40% from the reservations in Tulcea were made through travel agencies.

### ***Tourism travel' typology***

From tourists, 39.6% travel with friends, 29% with the family members and 29% with family and friends. 40% from the inhabitants of other villages than Bucharest, the majority of men, the persons with over 40 years old and the persons with an income of RON 2,000-3,000 RON per family prefer to travel with friends. The travel with family is preferred by around 30% from tourists from Bucharest, women and persons under 25 years old. However, the majority of tourists travel in groups, not individually.

### ***Accommodation preferences***

Tourists prefer touristic boarding houses (40.8%), hotels (20.1%) and touristic villas (cottages, bungalows, etc). Camping and private homes were preferred only by 21% from respondents. Hotels were preferred by around 25-30% of people with age between 25-40 years old and persons with RON 2,000-3,000 per family. Touristic boarding houses were preferred by 61.5% from the persons with under 25 years old, 41.9% from the people with over 40 years old and the persons with an income between RON 3,000-4,000 per family. Our analyses revealed that the Danube Delta is preferred for average stays between 4 and 6 nights (44% of tourists) and 3 nights (28.4% of tourists). 51.5% of women, 50% of the persons with over 25 years old and 74% of people with an income between RON 3,000-4,000 per family prefer the average stays of 4-6 night. The stays over 6 nights are preferred by 22% of men and 19% of the persons with RON 2,000-3,000 per family. For the stays with 4-6 nights are preferred Sulina and Sf. Gheorghe.

### ***Motivation and type of tourists***

According with their motivation in choosing the Danube Delta as touristic destination, the tourists can be classified in the following categories:

- (i)tourists focused on sport tourism (20.1%) - they associate rest and relaxation with fishing activities – a good niche to promote tourism products focused on fishing activities;
- (ii)tourists focused on rest and relaxation (9.5%) - they associate rest and relaxation in the area with health and outdoor movement – the right message will be pedestrian or cycling touristic products;

(iii)tourists focused on local cultural aspects (14.2%) - they associate the local landscape with gastronomy and specific habits - cultural tourism products can be promoted (from visiting the local cultural objectives to the introduction of the specific local food preparation);

(iv)tourists focused on local biodiversity and cultural aspects (34.3%) - they come for the local natural landscape, considering the landscape as an ideal location for rest, relaxation and gastronomy – we may offer them local packages which combine walks in nature with visits to places of natural interest and locally grown-ups / restaurants (tourists who prefer the Danube Delta as a whole but do not prefer sports activities);

(v)tourists focused on local biodiversity, sporting activities and cultural aspects (20.7%) - they come to the area for scenery, boat trips and local gastronomy - packages based on the image of the Danube Delta, canal rides with boats (or other types of transport - e.g. canoeing) (tourists who prefer the Danube Delta as a whole but also want sports).

We can observe that the last two categories are predominant, accounting for about 55% of the respondents. Category 1 of tourism is preferred by 34.4% of people with over RON 4,000 per family and we found them especially in Crişan (about 42.1% of tourists). Category 2 of tourists is the least. About 18.6% of women and about 24.1% of low-income people appreciate the cultural aspect of the area falling into Category 3. Category 4 of tourism focused on biodiversity (without sports aspect) and is preferred by about 30%, with higher values for people over 40 (about 42%) and people with RON 2,000-3,000 per family (about 41%). Category 5 of tourism focused on the image of the area, including the sport aspect, is preferred by about 25% of men, 32% of people with RON 3,000-4,000 per family and we find it in 26% practiced in Crişan and Tulcea.

### ***Satisfaction***

Regarding the evaluation of tourist services in the Danube Delta, tourists appreciate the accommodation (77%), the staff (74%) and the local gastronomy (75%). Only about 68% of tourists were satisfied with water transport services, while about 22% remained neutral in

appreciation. Only 44% of the tourists were satisfied with the offer of sports activities (41% being neutral), while 57% were satisfied with the offer of recreational activities.

### Perception

The overall perception of tourists was positive, over 80% agreeing that the stay was important, that they had new experiences, that the stay "deserved all the money" and that they were satisfied with the choice of the Danube Delta as a tourist destination. From total of respondents, about 82% said they would like to return to this tourist destination. If we analyze by category, we note that there is a higher desire to return to the area of: men, persons under 40 years old, employed persons and persons with over RON 2,000. Depending on the visited places, a higher percentage is observed in Crișan, Tulcea and other localities in the heart of the Danube Delta.

## CONCLUSIONS

Regarding the opinion of tourists about the Danube Delta tourism, most of them believe that: The Delta villages are easily accessible from Tulcea, including for the elderly; guides are needed to move within the Danube Delta; the Danube Delta is unpolluted, safe and hospitable, but there are deficiencies in image and promotion and a lack of food and craft shops; the level of taxes, accommodation prices and the prices of goods and services are reasonable. Also, as regards the satisfaction of tourists, I noticed that most were satisfied with the accommodation location, staff behavior, local gastronomy and water transport services (a lower percentage of transport), but only about 44% of tourists were satisfied with the offer of sports activities and about 57% of the offer of recreational activities.

So, regarding the Danube Delta's appreciation as a tourist destination, the most important aspects are: *safety and hospitality, nature and public cleanliness, existence of outlets (shops)*. The destination doesn't meet the tourist expectations regarding the access to information, the possibility of cultural activities, accessibility in the area and price levels. The general perception of tourists on the

stay was mainly positive, over 80% agreeing that they are satisfied with the choice of the Danube Delta as a tourist destination and about 82% said they would like to return to this tourist destination.

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