
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES FOR RURAL TOURISM IN DOBROGEA

Daniela-Mirela PLEȘOIANU

Ovidius University, 1, University Avenue, Campus, Building B, Constanta, Romania, Email: plesoianudaniela@hotmail.com

Corresponding author: plesoianudaniela@hotmail.com

Abstract

Rural tourism has a number of advantages and is characterized by diversity in time and space, and has recently become an essential element of rural development policy. Its practice allows for visible and clearly measurable results, and they contribute to the economic development of the area. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the importance of rural tourism in Dobrogea, tourism that has major implications in the local and national economy, by: generating economic benefits for local communities, organizations and authorities dealing with natural areas, with a view to preserving them; providing new jobs and additional sources of income for local communities; raising awareness - both by locals and tourists - of the preservation of natural and cultural assets. Dobrogea rural areas have a very valuable tourism potential, being valued by imposing development strategies, such as: developing and modernizing tourist infrastructure, preserving and protecting natural areas, existing historical and religious potential, developing and modernizing all bases touristic; development and modernization of accommodation services, making the most of the anthropic tourism; increasing the quality of the services provided and the qualification of the staff involved in tourism activities; attracting tourists through an extensive program of advertising and carrying out projects that highlight the elements of the cultural, historical and typical rural heritage.

Key words: rural, resources, patrimony, tourist route, Dobrogea

INTRODUCTION

Dobrogea is an area of contrasts, a humid but drought-free region, a place with a history of more than two thousand years, and at the same time the youngest land in Europe and a territory inhabited by people belonging to several ethnicities [2].

The tourist areas of Dobrogea (the Danube Delta and the Razim-Sinoe Complex, the southern shore, the Danube Delta and the Dobrogean Plateau) are valued by a diverse material base, with specific facilities, favorable for both mass tourism and alternative tourism (balneary tourism, leisure, adventure and leisure tourism, cultural tourism, professional tourism, ecotourism and rural tourism) [4].

The main reasons for the development of rural tourism are: social (agricultural crisis, youth unemployment), cultural (poor use of traditional buildings, disappearance of crafts, loss of traditions); of an economic nature (very small incomes from agriculture, difficulties in marketing agricultural products); and the factors that stimulate the development of rural tourism are: increasing the time for recreation;

increasing interest in maintaining health; the authenticity and naturalness of life in the country; peace and comfort.

The purpose of the paper was the analysis of rural tourism in Dobrogea region as a basis for the future development strategy.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To conduct this work it was carried out a review of literature where various authors treated topics such as urban tourism, cultural tourism, heritage and tourism potential natural and human, infrastructure general and specific tourism sector, movement and tourism demand. Both qualitative and quantitative research aspects were treated in several areas of tourism.

In case of qualitative aspects, there were applied the following research methods: the method of documenting, consulting the existing literature in the field and official documents, and the observation method.

In case of the quantitative aspects, there were used the following research methods: analysis method and data processing, graphic and

cartographic method, the method of observation and interpretation.

The data used were provided by the following institutions:Constanța County Council, Tulcea County Council, National Institute of Statistics, Tulcea and Constanța.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The great variety of the Dobrogean landscape represented by the Danube Delta, the Casian Cave, Peștera Liliecilor (The Bats Cave), Cheile Dobrogei, the Măcin Mountains, the Agigea Seaside Dunes - the natural dunes of the Danube, the Harsova Canaralele, the Alah Bair Hill, Chituc Grind; (Topolog, Chichirgeaua, Carasu), streams (Casimcea, Topolog, Cross, Weddings), lakes (Buceag, Oltina, Baci, Tașaul, Corbu, Siutghiol-Mamaia, Agigea, Tăbăcărie, Techirghiol), the limans, the Danube and the Black Sea; steppe vegetation and fertile soils, soil and subsoil resources, complete a picture that is fully conducive to tourism [4].

From an anthropic cultural point of view, Dobrogea is one of the most interesting areas because of the Romanian traditions, but also the Turkish, Tatar or Lipoven ones. Beyond a varied culinary offer, tourists also could find special wines [1].

In the 1960, rural tourism existed on the Black Sea coast in the villages, such as Costinesti, Mamaia-Sat, Agigea, May 2, and the Danube Delta (St. George and Murighiol) [3].

Table 1. Population of Constanta County on January 1st, 2016

Total	Urban	Rural
769.768	536,279	233,489

Source: National Institute of Statistics

There is a continuous increase in the population, especially in the urban environment, which has grown under the influence of the economic and cultural development of Constanta County. The reorganization of the port of Constanța, as well as its connection with the interior of the country and with the outside world, also helped.

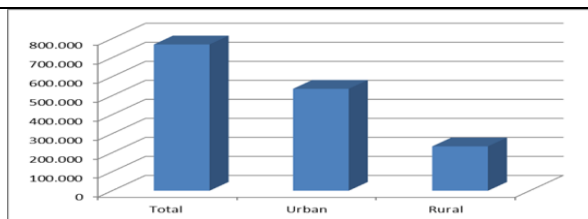


Fig. 1. Population in Constanta County on January 1st, 2016

Source: Own determination.

The most significant increase is the coastal zone, including Constanta, Năvodari, Eforie, Techirghiol, Mangalia cities and resorts, as a result of the development and modernization of the seaside and the intensification of Constanța port activity.

Table 2. Population of Tulcea County on January 1st, 2016

Total	Urban	Rural
244,249	120,859	123,300

Source: National Institute of Statistics

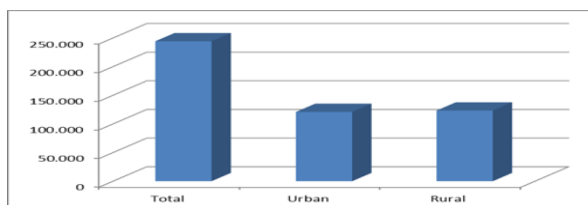


Fig. 2. Population in Tulcea County on January 1st, 2016

In Tulcea County, although the number of inhabitants in the city has greatly increased, the report is favorable to the rural population [1]. Concerning Tulcea County, the slower pace of its development and the low numerical growth of its population preserve a ratio of domination of the rural population to the urban one.

The development of rural tourism in Dobrudja is a strategic objective for local and regional policy because the communes and villages in this area have: unique natural landscapes in Europe and the world; great biodiversity preserved at the crossing of the Măcin Mountains (among the oldest in the world) with the newest portion of deltaic land; a historical and archaeological heritage of inestimable value (the oldest urban settlements in Romania); numerous churches and monasteries, true centers of Christianity spreading [5].

In the last years, on a wider scale, thematic rural tourism is practiced, which mentions the following types of tourism: in-kind tourism or ecological tourism; archaeological tourism or historical tourism; religious tourism; anthropic tourism; cultural tourism; curative tourism or balneary tourism; leisure tourism [8].

According to the data provided by National Institute of Statistics, there is an annual

increase in the number of tourists who choose to visit the Dobrogea area. Thus, as a result of the analyzes carried out compared to 2014, in 2015 there is an increase of more than 10% in the number of tourists and in 2016 there was an increase of the number of tourists by 12% higher than that recorded on during the year 2015 [7].

Table 3. Evolution of the number of tourists in the counties of Constanta and Tulcea in the period 2014-2016

	2014			2015			2016		
	Total	Romanian	Foreign	Total	Romanian	Foreign	Total	Romanian	Foreign
CT	883.947	832.988	50.959	1.021.475	961.723	59.752	1.163.023	1.102.123	60.900
TL	66.242	52.760	13.482	69.076	53.384	15.692	69.412	52.242	17.170
Total	950.189	885.748	64.441	1.090.551	1.015.107	75.444	1.232.435	1.154.365	78.070

Source: National Institute of Statistics



Fig. 3. Evolution of the number of tourists in Dobrogea region between 2014-2016

Source: Own determination.

The analysis of the data in Table 3 shows that in both counties the number of Romanian tourists is higher than that of foreign tourists. There is also a greater number of tourists in Constanta County, due to the seaside, the port by cruise ships, which bring a large number of tourists.

In order to increase the number of foreign tourists, there is the possibility to develop tourist programs with neighboring countries in Dobrudja. In this respect, the National Authority for Tourism has completed the ALECTOR project, a cross-border cooperation project between Romania and 6 countries, namely Turkey, Greece, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Moldova and Georgia.

ALECTOR is a project destined to capitalize the socio-economic potential of Dobrogea heritage resources and pursues the development of cross-border tourism products as well as to attract many tourists into the region mainly in the summer season. [9] The superior capitalization of the entire tourist patrimony provided by the rural areas of

Dobrogea would lead to a significant increase in the number of tourists, which would implicitly result in the economic growth of the respective areas.

The SWOT analysis of Dobrogea area has pointed out the following aspects regarding rural tourism:

Strengths of rural tourism: natural factors (climate, relief, vegetation, the great variety of mineral waters recommended in the complex spa treatment); the multitude of archaeological sites and ancient vestiges that deserve to be highlighted; the existence of numerous monasteries, the living proof of preserving Christianity over the years; the diversity of easily accessible and harmoniously distributed natural and man-made tourism resources; keeping the architecture of settlements, preserving traditional occupations, preserving the folk port, traditional customs and customs; the diversity of organic agro-food products, traditional cuisine with regional specialties; non-existent or very low pollution in most rural areas.

The weaknesses of rural tourism: the road network in rural areas is almost non-existent; degradation of the archaeological objectives, degradation of the environment due to the lack of a waste collection system; the rapid degradation of rural architectural patrimony by depopulation of rural communities; the lack of tourist information and signaling systems in rural areas, the lack of local information and tourist promotion centers; poor diversification

of tourism services; poor quality of tourism services; lack of minimal knowledge of tourism management in rural areas; lack of technical and financial support for rural tourism promotion [6].

Opportunities: preserving and promoting cultural values through artistic, literary, traditional sports activities of ethnic groups; the existence of a great potential in the development of projects for the valorization of the folk techniques in the field of crafts; the development of partnerships in the tourism industry, as a form of capitalizing on the cultural potential, the historical heritage; the possibility of attracting new partners in international projects for the promotion of cultural landscapes, the development of cultural, historical and ethnic potential as leverage in regional development, especially in economically disadvantaged areas.

Threats: lack of unitary strategies at regional and national level regarding the sustainable development of cultural landscapes or, at least, their preservation; lack of financial resources of national administrations; loss of interest in traditional occupations and crafts; international competition in the field of tourism.

Development strategies for rural tourism in Dobrogea

In view of the above, some strategies are needed for the development and exploitation of the rural tourism potential in the Dobrogea area, such as:

Developing transport routes by: building roads in areas where they do not exist; maintenance, upgrading and proper signaling of the existing road network; maximum use of "Mihail Kogalniceanu" International Airport; capitalizing on the natural tourism potential by: preserving and protecting the natural areas; construction and modernization of recreational facilities; construction, modernization and information of camping sites; arranging, maintenance and upgrading of parking areas; development and arrangement of holiday villages and tourist villages; location of tourist signs, proper marking of tourist routes; capitalizing on historical and religious potential by: preserving the existing historical and religious potential; diversifying and

organizing thematic touristic circuits; capitalizing on the anthropic potential by: preserving and preserving the architectural style specific to each area; preserving traditional crafts, capitalizing on local raw materials; the preservation of traditions and customs, the popular harbor; initiation and development of new tourism products and services, respecting local identity; valorisation of traditional local products (agricultural products, craft products); keeping traditional cuisine; the valorisation of the spa and recreation base by: maximizing the healing effect of the sea water, the highly mineralized sapropelic sludge, the springs from Mangalia (these springs contain mezothermal, sulphurous, bicarbonate, sodium, calcium); building new treatment bases and modernizing existing ones; keeping and upgrading existing beaches; setting up new beaches (eg Wedding Lake - here is therapeutic mud and a treatment base can be built); from a qualitative point of view, the services rendered are clearly superior; increasing the qualification of the staff involved in tourism; developing attractive thematic holiday packages; development and upgrading of related services (dispensaries, pharmacies, repair shops, etc.); the development of thematic programs and trekking (eg cycling, wagon, horseback riding, fishing, water sports, etc.); internal and international promotion of treatment bases, as well as recreational facilities (fairs, exhibitions, congresses) [11].

CONCLUSIONS

The existing anthropic resources are very numerous, varied and valuable in Dobrogea region. A part of them is represented by the oldest anthropogenic resources which lead to the development of cultural tourism, therefore to a higher valorization of the tourist potential in the Dobrogea rural areas.

Touristic routes have a very high tourism potential, but they should be much better exploited by thematic diversification that should cover the entire Dobrogea territory, especially the rural areas.

According to the data provided by National Institute of Statistics, there is an annual

increase in the number of tourists who visited the Dobrogea area. Thus, as a result of the analyzes carried out compared to 2014, in 2015 there is an increase of more than 10% in the number of tourists and in 2016 there was an increase of the number of tourists by 12% higher than that recorded on during the year 2015.

In 2014-2016, in both counties the number of Romanian tourists is higher than that of foreign tourists. There is also a greater number of tourists in Constanta County, due to the seaside, the port by cruise ships, which bring a large number of tourists.

The Dobrogea rural areas have a very valuable tourism potential, which can be valued by imposing development strategies such as: developing and modernizing the tourism infrastructure, preserving and protecting the natural areas, the existing historical and religious potential, developing and modernizing all tourist bases; development and modernization of accommodation services, making the most of the anthropic tourism; increasing the quality of the services provided and the qualification of the staff involved in tourism activities; attracting tourists through an extensive program of publicity and carrying out projects that highlight the elements of the cultural, historical and typical rural heritage.

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