

URBAN TOURISM - COMPONENT OF THE INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF TOWNS. CASE STUDY, CĂLĂRAȘI MUNICIPALITY, ROMANIA

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Abstract

In the context of the accentuation of the urbanization process, the towns become the main source of territorial development. At the same time, however, they face major challenges regarding sustainability, climate change, social cohesion, environment or mobility. In the perspective of 2030, Călărași municipality will be the economic center of interest of South-Muntenia region, through the superior capitalization of the existing resources: the geo-strategic positioning, the natural and anthropic patrimony and the human resource. Based on these considerations, we set out to highlight the tourist potential of Călărași municipality in order to identify the types of tourism that can be practiced in the town and its surroundings. The indicators of the tourist infrastructure, respectively, tourist accommodation units, accommodation capacity, analysis of the main tourist traffic - arrivals, overnight stays, average length of stay were structurally determined and analyzed for 2007-2019, after Romania accession to the European Union and before the health crisis Covid-19. The favourable geographical location of the municipality gives it various advantages as regards economy, tourism, and landscape. The proximity to the Danube River, which is a real development potential for leisure, fishing, business or scientific tourism, to which is added the cultural, ecumenical and hunting tourism. The attractiveness of this Danube town can be increased by better capitalizing on the elements of built and natural heritage that complement the urban landscape and neighbourhoods and which can lead to increase the stay of tourists, with economic and social implications.

Key words: development, municipality, anthropogenic resources, natural resources, urban tourism

INTRODUCTION

The Catalogue of the national economy sectors includes, along with other services and those of internal and international tourism, leisure, accommodation, transport and public catering, thus highlighting the existence of tourism as a distinct component in the tertiary sector, its activities characterizing through legalities not found in other component sectors of the tertiary sector [1]. The trends in the tourism sector are constantly changing and there is a need to create new criteria for the middle class tourist, which is much more difficult to satisfy through basic services [2]. The impact of tourism on the sectors of the economy of an area is divided in effects of multiplication and stimulation in terms of production, income and employment [2], [8]. Tourism is a sector that encourages private initiative and also prepares a labor force that

has a high degree of adaptability to change [7], [14] and [2].

The tourism sector represents over 5% of GDP, providing jobs in the European Union for 12 to 14 million persons [9] and [10].

The tourist product in its various forms is an economic activity of services designed to meet the needs of human society to spend their free time in a pleasant, comforting way and at the same time ensuring the desire to improve knowledge, etc.

The circumscription of tourism within economic concepts and categories helps to make it easier to understand the phenomena and processes that take place in this economic sector [17]. The fact that tourism is a tertiary activity and a need explains why, in times of economic crisis, tourism activity is more depressed than other economic activities [1]. At the international level, urban tourism began to develop gradually since the 80s,

today being a distinct form of tourism whose importance is constantly growing [11].

Thus, there were concerns about specific arrangements for different categories of visitors, and care to harmonize them with the requirements of the best functioning of the urban settlements. By adding tourism to the inventory of the local economic activities of an urban area, it can be considered a catalyst and a factor of urban revitalization for the consolidation of towns, especially as it is an important source of income formation and is responsible for creating thousands of jobs [6]. The tourism in urban area, compared to other forms of tourism, is much more complex and diversified, due to the large number of available resources. The presence of these resources in urban area, but especially their inclusion in various tourist programs and tours bring many benefits to the towns, which means supporting local economic activities and creating new jobs [5].

At the same time, there may be less desired effects, related to the increase in tourist flows, or the lack of concern for new investments in tourism.

In the urban area, most leisure tourism activities are related to the cultural, leisure and business sector. Cultural tourism focused on the cultural sector highlights the talent of artists (painters, sculptors - art exhibitions and galleries, clothes designers), national and regional gastronomy, through specific restaurants, etc.

The types of tourism in the urban area, as a whole, support the interpersonal contacts between the host population and visitors, support the exchange of information, ideas, cultural and tourist experiences. The elaboration of the socio-economic development strategies of the towns, of the general urbanism plans must take into account the support and the amplification of the tourist function [13].

The tourism industry must be in harmony and balance with other economic activities, in order to avoid contradictions [1].

In the conditions in which the urban area is able to support tourism, to offer new facilities for the companies in the field, they determine

a faster process of preservation, restoration or urban modernization [12], [5] and [6].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

As research methods, we used documenting, the analysis and data processing from a secondary analysis. These methods are based on the synthesis processes, induction and deduction, analogy and comparative analysis. Once the information was defined, known and interpreted, the next step was the detailed documenting of the interest field. In the analysis activity, the study of the documentation available for the field or for the analysed system is a starting point.

The documenting, the analysis and the data processing and the information obtained from the following sources: scientific papers in the field, national and international reports and studies on definitions and components of urban tourism, Tempo-online statistical database, papers in the literature, etc. The analysis of the demand and supply of tourism in Călărași municipality included two stages: structural and dynamic analysis of tourist infrastructure indicators - tourist accommodation units, accommodation capacity, analysis of the main tourist traffic - arrivals, overnight stays, average length of stay, capacity utilization index of tourist accommodation service. The existing (installed) tourist accommodation capacity represents the number of tourist accommodation places registered in the last act of reception, homologation or classification of the tourist reception structure with tourist accommodation functions.

These indicators were determined and analyzed for the period 2007-2019, after Romania accession to the European Union and before the period of Covid-19 health crisis.

The quantitative analysis in the studied field of the tourist products offer included a brief presentation of the natural and anthropogenic tourist potential at the level of Călărași county, and implicitly, a detailed quantification of the tourist potential that Călărași municipality possesses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The tourist potential of Calarasi county is given by the multitude of natural and anthropogenic tourist resources that it possesses. The riverside of the county on the Danube is one of its main strengths. The following **nature reservations** were identified and declared on the territory of Călărași county: Caiafele Forest (Fundeni commune), Ciornuleasa Forest (Mitreni commune), Fundeni Forest (Fundeni commune), Tămădău Forest (Tămădău commune), Vărăști Forest (Dorobanțu commune), special area of Avifauna Protection Iezerul Călărași (administrative belongs to Cuza Vodă commune and Călărași Municipality), Ostrovul Haralambie Nature Reservation (on the Danube river, km 400), Ostrovul Șoimul Nature Reservation (on the Danube river, km 350, near Dichiseni locality) Ciocănești Island nature Reservation (on the Danube river, km 395, Ciocănești commune) [3, 18].

Among the **archaeological reservations**, at the county level there are the historical monument from Cătălui (Căscioarele commune), the historical monument Mânăstirea (Mânăstirea commune), the historical monument “Frunzărești Monastery” (Fundeni commune), the Church of the former Negoști Monastery, Șoldanu commune, the church of the former monastery Plătărești (Fundeni commune), St. Andrew Church (Fundeni commune), Radu-Negru Monastery (Modelu commune). Last but not least, on the territory of the county there are the following archeological sites: Coslogeni Pond (Dichiseni commune), Sultana Malul Roșu (Mânăstirea commune), Căscioarele (Căscioarele commune), Gălățui village (Alexandru Odobescu commune), Păciul lui Soare (near Ostrov commune), Durostorum (the perimeter of the Roman settlement extends over an area between Bucharest-Constanta highway near km 131,400 and km 132,100, respectively the Danube River) [3, 18].

Călărași municipality is the residence and the largest municipality of Călărași county. Located in the south-eastern part of the

country and the southern part of the county, on the lower terrace of the Danube, at the contact with the Danube meadow, on the left bank of Borcea branch, the town is at a distance of 120 km from Bucharest, 144 km from Constanța and 25 km from Drajna (where there is an entrance on the Bucharest - Constanta Highway) [14].

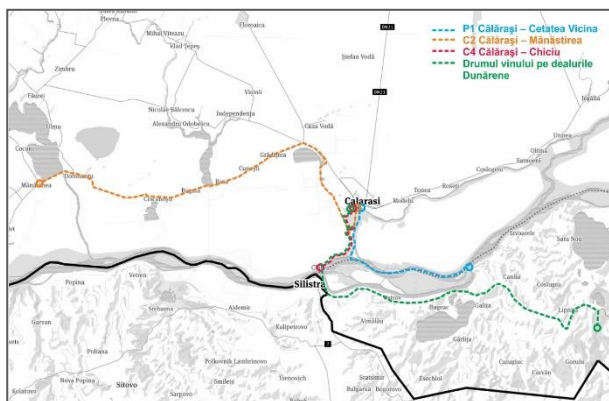
Regarding the tourist attractiveness, Călărași municipality leads the ranking both at county level and among the Danube towns and municipalities in South-Muntenia development region which are border crossing points [18].

The geographical location gives the municipality certain advantages from a tourist point of view, such as: its presence on the border with Bulgaria or its proximity to the Danube, which is both a defining element of the natural framework at national level and a connecting factor between the countries of the continent and the Black Sea basin.

Călărași municipality is a starting point for a series of tourist routes. First of all, the area around the town offers a rich hunting ground for hunting enthusiasts, and the branches of the Old Danube and Borcea offer numerous fishing places. On the other hand, Călărași municipality is also a starting point for five cycling routes (Map 1), combined with segments of water travel. These routes try to highlight the elements of anthropogenic and natural heritage in the immediate proximity such as: Natura 2000 sites (SCI/SPA Canarele Dunării, SPA Iezerul Călărași, SCI / SPA Oltenița-Mostiștea-Chiciu or SCI / SPA Ciocănești) or reservations such as Ostrovul Șoimului: P1 Călărași - Vicina Forstres (18 km long - water route); C2 Călărași - Mânăstirea (47 km long - cycling tourism); C4 Călărași - Chiciu - Dorobanțu (46 km long - cycling tourism) [3].

The two cycle tourist routes (C2 and C4) can be extended to Căscioarele and Oltenița settlements. The possibility of crossing the Danube allows the connection of Călărași to tourist routes in the direct proximity of Bulgaria such as “Wine Road on the Danube Hills”. Based on these cycling routes, an annual cycling competition “Călărășene Danube Race” was built. The two routes from

2015 capitalize the connection with Mihai Viteazu commune and the island formed by Borcea branch and the Danube.



Map 1. Cycle tourism routes that start from Călărași municipality [15].

Source: Processed using www.mapbox.com

These regional routes use Călărași municipality as a starting point, thus using its accommodation infrastructure. A better connection of the municipality with the objectives of tourist interest at regional level could thus help to extend the tourists stay period in the town.

In Călărași municipality, the approximately 30 tourist attractions are mostly concentrated in the central area of the town and on the bank of Borcea branch. There are also some local points of interest such as Dumbrava Park or “Tineretului” Sports Complex. Most of the objectives of tourist interest are either constructions included in the list of historical monuments (mainly in the central area) or leisure facilities. Among the objectives of cultural interest is the Municipal Museum, which represents not only the image of the town for tourists, but also an important community asset in the context in which its exhibits are largely donations from Călărași inhabitants.

Analyzing the type and spatial arrangement of tourist attractions, it can be concluded that inside Călărași municipality, two specific routes can be formed, one for **leisure on the bank of Borcea branch** and a **cultural** one represented by Bucharest Street, adding the **town center** as a major point of interest. In addition to the tourist routes inside the town, there are also those at county or regional

level. Moreover, there is a development potential for the following types of tourism: **Leisure tourism** - Encouraged by the concentration of specific activities on the banks of Borcea branch, but also by the presence in the town of arranged green spaces and sports facilities.

Cultural tourism - this could develop with the restoration and enhancement of monuments. Cultural facilities such as the Low Danube Museum, the Zoo (having the largest area in Romania) or “Barbu Știrbei” County Center for Culture and Administration will also contribute to the development of this type of tourism.

Business tourism - based on the role of municipality, public institutions of county interest, as well as on the favourable geographical position on the country border with Bulgaria, in the proximity of the Danube river;

Hunting and fishing tourism - the town is located only 110km from Constanța and 130km from Bucharest, and the areas known for fishermen and hunters are an attraction regardless of the season.

Scientific tourism - this typology requires the development of the tourist infrastructure of the natural parks, of the protected areas and of the other natural areas.

Sports tourism - is still at the beginning. Currently, Călărași municipality is a point of attraction for cycling due to the cycling routes and “Călărași Danube Race” competition. It is worth mentioning that the municipality also has a football team in the second league with good chances of promotion. The municipality also has CS Leaders Călărași baseball and CSM Călărași handball teams with remarkable results.

Regarding the tourist reception structures and their accommodation capacity, according to the National Institute of Statistics, [6, 8] Călărași municipality had in 2019 11 accommodation units (Table 1) - 4 hotels, 1 hostel, 3 motels, 2 bungalows and 1 tourist guesthouse, which summed 880 accommodation places (Table 2). These hotels ranging from 3 to 4 stars are distributed in the town center (Hotel Călărași), on Eroilor Street (Hestia Hotel) and on DN3 on the Borcea

branch (Albatros Tourist Complex) and on the Danube bank (Baden Hotel).

From the point of view of the evolution of the tourist reception structures, their number increased by 366.66% in the last 12 years, and their total accommodation capacity tripled (Tables 1 and 2). However, although the number of arrivals in tourist accommodation units increased by 25.86%, as seen in Table 3., the number of overnight stays decreased from 49,650 in 2007 to 28,669 in 2019 (Table 3), situation reflected in the number of overnight stays (Table 4).

Note the migration to accommodation in hostels and bungalows which increased in number of arrivals and overnight stays during the analyzed period Average length of stay, as seen in Table 5, decreased from 3.82 days to only 1.76 days. This aspect indicates that Călărași municipality is a short-term tourist destination.

Figures 1 and 2 show that, at county level, the tourist reception structures in Călărași municipality represent 53% of the total accommodation units in the county, offering an accommodation capacity of 75.6% of the total [16]. The accommodation offer covers most types of accommodation units.

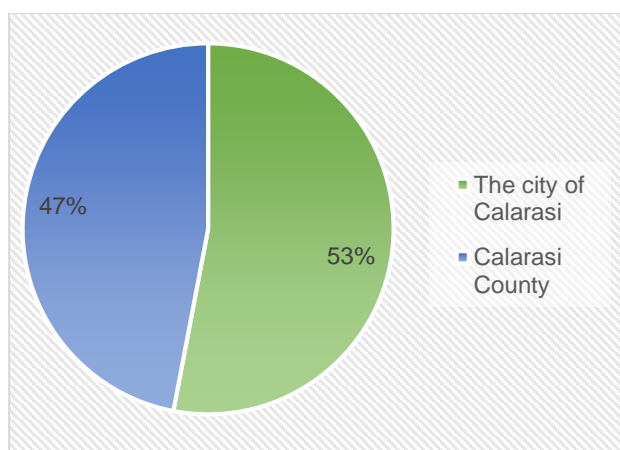


Fig. 1. Tourist reception structures in 2019
 Source: Data processing - County Department of Statistics, 2021 [4].

Regarding the function of Călărași municipality as a port crossing point, it is in direct connection with Silistra town in Bulgaria, in partnership with which, in 2007, it implemented the project “Cross-border Tourism on the Lower Danube”, which had as

main results signing a bilateral agreement and an extended partnership in the tourism sector, elaboration of a common strategy in the tourism sector, a common tourist guide for the cross-border area Călărași - Silistra, bilingual leaflets, installation of tourist signs indicating the main tourist attractions in the cross-border area [3].

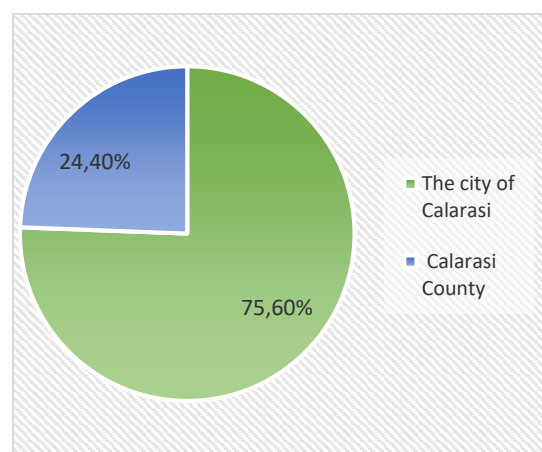


Fig. 2. Capacity of tourist accommodation in 2019
 Source: Data processing - County Department of Statistics, 2021 [4].

Among the Danube towns in South Muntenia Region, Călărași municipality is the only one where there are bungalow accommodation units, but it does not have accommodation on river and sea vessels such as Giurgiu or camps for pupils and pre-school children such as Zimnicea [18].

The large number of heritage objectives owned by the local administration allows a better protection and capitalization of historical monuments and the concentration of historical monuments with special architectural qualities in the railway station area and the central area contribute to better capitalization and diversification of tourism activities by promoting traditions and of cultural values in Călărași municipality.

The large number of heritage buildings owned by the public administration, allows the diversification of economic activities in order to increase the inhabitants life quality, by modernizing public and leisure spaces.

The Danube, an element of international heritage, part of the natural environment, which crosses Călărași municipality, contributes to the capitalization and

promotion of monumental buildings through tourism.

Table 1. Number of tourist reception structures

Tourist reception structure	Year 2007	Year 2009	Year 2011	Year 2013	Year 2015	Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019	Evolution
Total	3	4	7	7	8	9	9	11	366.66%
Hotels	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	200%
Hostels			1	1	1	1	1	1	0%
Motels		1	2	2	2	3	3	3	300%
Bungalows			1	1	1	1	1	2	200%
Tourist guesthouses	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0%

Source: Data processing from statistical database TEMPO – Online, series 2007-2020 [16].

Table 2. Capacity of existing tourist accommodation (Places)

Tourist reception structures	Year 2007	Year 2009	Year 2011	Year 2013	Year 2015	Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019	Evolution
Total	291	373	473	481	604	686	730	880	302.40%
Hotels	283	283	283	283	406	406	406	540	190.81%
Hostels			40	40	40	40	84	84	210%
Motels		64	124	124	174	198	198	198	309.37%
Bungalows				8	8	16	16	32	400%
Tourist guesthouses	8	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	325%

Source: Data processing from statistical database TEMPO – Online, series 2007-2020 [16].

Table 3. Tourists arrivals in tourist reception structures (Number)

Tourist reception structures	Year 2007	Year 2009	Year 2011	Year 2013	Year 2015	Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019	Evolution
Total	12,977	14,743	10,171	9,657	11,699	12,029	13,127	16,333	25.86%
Hotels	12,912	12,792	7,971	7,464	9,119	8,662	9,298	12,886	-0.21%
Hostels			177	196	168	287	540	1,019	575.70%
Motels		1,913	1,881	1,796	2,066	2,713	2,993	2,062	7.79%
Bungalows				75	140	173	118	246	328%
Tourist guesthouses	65	138	142	126	206	194	178	120	84.62%

Source: Data processing from statistical database TEMPO – Online, series 2007-2020 [16].

Table 4. Overnight stays in tourist reception structures (Number)

Tourist reception structures	Year 2007	Year 2009	Year 2011	Year 2013	Year 2015	Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019	Evolution
Total	49,650	50,429	23,510	23,500	29,391	27,541	24,848	28,669	-42.26%
Hotels	49,367	30,899	14,153	12,847	14,226	15,102	18,050	20,342	-58.79%
Hostels	:	:	177	395	444	464	649	1,343	718.90%
Motels	:	19,530	9,161	9,990	14,455	11,133	5,628	6,484	-66.80%
Bungalows	:	:	:	268	266	387	305	234	631.25%
Tourist guesthouses	283	:	19	:	:	455	216	266	-6.01%

Source: Data processing from statistical database TEMPO – Online, series 2007-2020 [16].

Table 5. Average duration of stay – no of days

Tourist reception structures	Year 2007	Year 2009	Year 2011	Year 2013	Year 2015	Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019	Evolution
Total	3.83	3.42	2.31	2.43	2.51	2.29	1.89	1.76	-217.6%
Hotels	3.82	2.42	1.78	1.72	1.56	1.74	1.94	1.58	-241.77%
Hostels			1.00	2.01	2.64	1.61	1.20	1.32	-75.75%
Motels		10.21	4.87	5.56	6.99	4.10	1.88	3.14	-325.16%
Bungalows				3.57	1.90	2.24	2.58	0.95	-375.78%
Tourist guesthouses	4.35		0.13			2.35	1.21	2.22	-510.34%

Source: Data processing from statistical database TEMPO – Online, series 2007-2020 [16].

CONCLUSIONS

In the context of approaching tourism as a component of the Integrated Development Strategy of Călărași municipality, we note the favorable geographical location that gives it various advantages regarding economy, tourism, and landscape. The proximity to the Danube River, which is both a defining element of the national natural framework and a connecting factor between the countries of the continent and the Black Sea basin, is a real development potential for leisure, business or scientific tourism.

Moreover, the attractiveness of this Danube town can be increased by better capitalizing the elements of built and natural heritage that complete the urban landscape and the neighborhoods.

In order to increase the tourist attractiveness of Călărași, investments are needed in two key areas: the historic center and the leisure area along the Danube. Thus, it will be important to capitalize the elements of the natural area along Borcea branch by improving the transport infrastructure and completing it with new leisure facilities: park, beach, marina, etc. Based on investments in leisure and tourism infrastructure in Borcea branch area the adjacent island, these special natural resources can be used for leisure tourism, hunting and fishing and sports. At the level of the historical center, the emphasis must be placed on improving the quality of the public space and capitalizing the built heritage by rehabilitating some objectives with a special aesthetic architectural value, such as the prefecture building. In order to be able to extend the overnight period, Călărași

municipality must rely on the development of the tourist objectives in the region and the continuous promotion of the already established routes.

In order to develop Călărași municipality from tourism point of view, starting from the land ownership as well as from the common interest in this regard, the local public authorities-Călărași Town Hall and Călărași County Council initiated a partnership that will develop through bilateral involvement of resources required: land, qualified human resources, financial resources. Within this partnership, tourism and urban development projects will be initiated and promoted which will result in the economic, social and cultural development of the area, in environment friendly conditions and in the sense of achieving the objectives set by the strategic development documents.

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