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SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TOURISM ACTIVITIES IN DOBRUGDEA'S RURAL AREA

Elena SIMA¹

Abstract: *The sustainable rural development of the Dobrudgean rural area requires reaching a balance between the need to preserve the rural economic, ecological and cultural space and the tendency to modernize the rural economic activity and life. The pleading for the promotion of tourism activities in the Dobrudgean rural area starts from the need for rural economical diversification. In general, no rural development program can be conceived in the absence of an essential role played by agriculture. The rural economy is more developed and more dynamic if it has a more diverse structure, and if the share of non-agricultural economy is higher. In this context, the paper presents the tourism potential of the rural localities from Dobrudgea and the development of a viable network of private small and medium-sized enterprises in the tourism sector. The volume of information in this paper resulted from the investigation of relationships that exist between the environmental and social factors at local level, making it possible to define the necessary mechanisms for the sustainable development of tourism activities.*

Key words: *rural development; rural tourism; tourism activities; tourism infrastructure; Dobrudgea.*

JEL Classification: Q01, L83, R58.

INTRODUCTION

Located in South-Eastern Romania, between the Danube and the Black Sea, Dobrudgea's territory is a historical and geographical province, that exceeds Romania's present boundaries. From the administrative point of view, in Romania it covers an area of 15,570 km², divided between two counties: Constanta and Tulcea, included in the South-East development region of Romania; it has 17 urban settlements (4 municipalities and 13 towns), 104 communes and 322 villages with a population of 884,406 inhabitants on January 1, 2016 (4).

In Tulcea county, 40.54% of its area (i.e. 3446 km²) is covered by the newest relief unit, represented by the Danube Delta and the lagoon complex Razim-Sinoe, with limited dwelling possibilities (5). Constanta county is the most urbanized city in Romania, marked by the presence of 3 municipalities, 9 towns and by the entire network of tourist resorts on the Black Sea shore (6). Taking into consideration the historical, the physical-geographic, the territorial-administrative, and the infrastructure conditions, together with the tourism regionalization research studies in the National Territory Development Plan, Section VI Tourism (2004), the researchers identified a significant tourism potential for Dobrudgea, which covers 59% of the area of Constanța county and 83% of the Tulcea county. The Dobrudgean tourism is dominated by mass tourism, with great potential for summer tourism, balneary tourism, recreational and leisure tourism, sport and nautical tourism, scientific and business tourism, cultural and historical tourism, cruise tourism, eco-tourism, rural tourism and agro-tourism. The main tourist attractions in Dobrudgea are the Danube Delta and the Black Sea Coast. Dobrudgea's territory represents a true reason for a travel in space, time and spirituality, where nature, history, creed and traditions are intermingled into a unique picture (1).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The objective of this paper is to highlight the tourism potential of the rural localities from Dobrudgea and the development of a viable network of private small and medium-sized enterprises in the tourism sector. The methodology used is based on the quantitative data analysis regarding the main modalities to promote and stimulate tourism, supported by the rural development policy. The statistical data were completed by information from articles and studies published in specialty journals, as well as from reports and governmental and non-governmental documents.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The rural settlements with tourism potential in Dobrugea are located in two distinct areas:

- 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, where the rural tourism potential is used for the gastronomic, ethnographic, historical, religious and scientific tourism practice. (1)

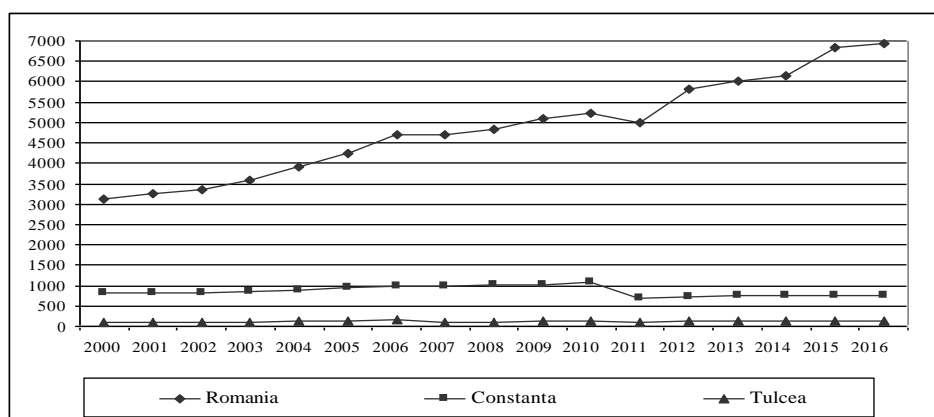
In most Dobrudgean villages with tourism potential, there are more than one reason for a trip, having in view one or more objectives (balneary, fishing, hunting, cultural, historical and religious, ethnographic and viticultural). Most rural localities have a complex tourism potential, and the differences among them result from the prevailing attractive elements. The isolated human settlements put into value the natural potential from the very next vicinity. (2)

Most tourism settings are found in the perimeter of Danube Delta, of the coast resorts and in the urban or rural localities located on the Black Sea Coast, as well as on isolated basis, depending on the potential resources claiming for their existence.

The improvement of the balance between the economic development of rural areas and the sustainable utilization of natural resources is an important objective of the National Rural Development Program (NRDP). The development of the rural space on non-agricultural basis strongly depends on a series of structural factors and on the regional context. Among the most important structural factors we can mention those regarding the transport infrastructure, the present public utilities at local level and the demographic dimension; in the category of regional factors, the following are of utmost importance: the development level of the area, the economic power of the urban centers in the region and the present economic networks. (8)

The clear and unequivocal infusion of the European Funds represents the most important source for tourism development and promotion in Dobrugea. Thus, in the period 2000-2016, at country level, the total number of tourist reception structures with accommodation functions increased from 3121 in the year 2000 to 6946 in the year 2016. In Dobrugea, the increase of the total number of the housing structures was more balanced (fig. 1).

Figure 1. Dynamics of total number of tourist reception structures with accommodation functions, in Romania, Tulcea and Constanța, in the period 2000-2016



Source: Tempo-online database, 2017

In the county Tulcea, in the statistical database there are 13 rural localities, providing for over 80% of the total number of present structures in the county (Table 1). Most localities are located in the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve. The best known rural localities are *Crișan* and *Maliuc* located along the arm Sulina, *Nușăru*, *Mahmudia* and *Murighiol* along the arm Sfântu

Gheorghe, as well as the localitaty *Jurilovca* located on the bank of Razim lake. For tourism purposes, the helio-marine potential of the sea beaches from Sulina, Sfântu Gheorghe and Gura Portiței is also put into value.

Table 1. Evolution of the number of tourist reception structures with tourist accomodation function in the rural localities of Tulcea county, in the period 2011-2016

Crt. no.	Localities	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
1	Baia	:	1	1	1	1	1
2	Bestepe	:	:	:	1	1	1
3	C.A. Rosetti	:	1	1	1	1	1
4	Chilia Veche	:	2	2	2	2	2
5	Crișan	3	4	2	4	4	2
6	Jurilovca	32	28	29	29	29	29
7	Mahmudia	2	2	2	2	3	3
8	Maliuc	6	6	4	5	4	4
9	Murighiol	11	25	24	24	24	24
10	Nufăru	2	2	3	3	3	3
11	Sfântu Gheorghe	10	10	10	10	10	10
12	Somova	30	31	31	31	31	31
13	Valea Nucarilor	:	:	:	2	5	5
Total rural structures		96	112	109	115	118	116
Total county structures		111	136	138	141	140	138

Source: Tempo-online database, 2017

The Danube Delta was and remains an important tourism objective of our country, both for Romanian tourists and for foreign tourists. That is why the accommodation offer is diversified, several types of tourist reception structures existing (Table 2)

Table 2. Evolution of the number of tourist reception structures with tourist accommodation function by types of structures and rural localities from Tulcea county, in the period 2011-2016

Types of tourist reception structures	Localities	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Hotels	Bestepe	:	:	:	1	1	1
	Crisan	2	2	1	2	2	1
	Mahmudia	2	1	1	1	2	2
	Maliuc	1	1	1	2	1	1
	Murighiol	3	4	4	4	4	4
	Somova	:	1	1	1	1	1
	Valea Nucarilor	:	:	:	:	2	2
Motels	Murighiol	1	:	:	:	:	:
Inns	Valea Nucarilor	:	:	:	1	1	1
Touristic villas	Jurilovca	29	26	26	26	26	26
	Murighiol	3	15	15	15	15	15
	Sfintu Gheorghe	9	9	9	9	9	9
	Somova	30	30	30	30	30	30
Touristic chalets	Jurilovca	1	1	1	1	1	1
Holiday villages	Nufaru	1	1	1	1	1	1
Campings	Sfintu Gheorghe	1	1	1	1	1	1
Tourist halting places	Maliuc	1	1	1	1	1	1
Tourist houselets	Jurilovca	1	:	1	1	1	1
Tourist boarding houses	Valea Nucarilor	:	:	:	1	1	1
Agro-tourist boarding houses	Baia	:	1	1	1	1	1
	C.A. Rosetti	:	1	1	1	1	1

	Chilia Veche	:	2	2	2	2	2
	Crisan	1	2	1	2	2	1
	Jurilovca	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Mahmudia	:	1	1	1	1	1
	Maliuc	3	3	1	1	1	1
	Murighiol	4	6	5	5	5	5
	Nufaru	1	1	2	2	2	2
Accommodation spaces on the river and sea vessels	Maliuc	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Valea Nucarilor	:	:	:	:	1	1

Source: Tempo-online database, 2017

The county Constanta has 8 rural localities in the statistical database, out of which 5 are located in the touristic seashore area, near the resorts that have the necessary infrastructure for housing and treatment, as well as multiple leisure possibilities.

The housing capacity and the tourism settings in the rural seashore area represent slightly over 20% of total capacities existing at county level (Table 3).

Table 3. Evolution of the number of tourist reception structures with tourist accommodation function in the rural localities from Constanța county, in the period 2011-2016

Nr. crt.	Localities	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
1	23 August	:	1	1	1	1	1
2	Agigea	:	1	1	:	1	1
3	Costinesti	131	157	154	146	154	154
4	Limanu	14	20	20	19	21	20
5	Mihail Kogalniceanu	2	2	2	2	2	2
6	Saligny	1	1	1	1	1	1
7	Seimeni	:	1	1	1	1	1
8	Tuzla	:	1	1	1	1	1
Total rural structures		148	184	181	171	182	181
Total county structures		679	738	745	746	755	761

Source: Tempo-online database, 2017

The greatest variety of the tourist reception structures is found in the commune Costinesti, with the villages Schitu and Costinești, as well as in the commune Limanu with the villages 2 Mai and Vama Veche (Table 4).

Table 4. Evolution of the number of tourist reception structures with tourist accommodation function by types of structures and rural localities in Constanța county, in the period 2011-2016

Types of tourist reception structures	Localities	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Hotels	23 August	:	1	1	1	1	1
	Costinești	14	16	14	13	17	18
	Limanu	3	4	4	3	4	5
	Mihail Kogălniceanu	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Seimeni	:	1	1	1	1	1
Hostels	Costinești	10	12	12	13	17	18
	Limanu	1	7	6	7	7	7
	Saligny	1	1	1	:	1	1
Motels	Saligny	:	:	:	1	:	:
Touristic villas	Agigea	:	1	1	:	1	1
	Costinești	33	37	36	31	34	32
	Limanu	:	4	4	4	5	3

	Tuzla	:	1	1	1	1	1
Touristic chalets	Limanu	5	:	1	:	:	:
Bungalows	Costinești	63	80	80	78	78	77
Campings	Limanu	1	1	1	1	1	1
Tourist halting places	Limanu	1	1	1	1	1	1
Tourist houselets	Costinești	5	7	7	6	3	3
Camps for pupils and kindergarten children	Limanu	1	1	1	1	1	1
Tourist boarding houses	Costinești	:	:	:	:	1	1
Agro-tourist boarding houses	Costinești	6	5	5	5	4	5
	Limanu	2	2	2	2	2	2

Source: Tempo-online database, 2017

In the last years, besides the summer and balneary tourism, the changes of behavioural type in tourists have reduced the importance of mass tourism organized in favour of other forms, like the transit tourism, week-end or professional, scientific, business, cultural and sport tourism, which have added a series of other tourism objectives on the list, such as: Măcinului Mountains, Tulcea Hills, Niculițel, Babadag and Casimcea plateaux, Central Dobrudgea Plateau with the hill Alah Bair, Hârșova cliffs, calcareous massif from Cheia near the village Cheia from the commune Târgușor, the reef from Topalu, the Dobrudgea Gorges geological reserve, as well as the South Dobrudgea Plateau with the Fetii, Fântânița-Murfatlar cliffs, the fossil points Aliman, Cernavoda, Seimenii Mari and Credința, the seashore dunes from Agigea, the botanical reserve Valu lui Traian, Hagieni, Esehioi, Dumbrăveni forests, Limanu cave, etc.

The human settlements neighbouring these tourism objectives are known from ancient times and represent continuity elements on the Dobrudgean territory. The representative rural settlements in this respect are Isaccea – Noviodunum, Măcin – Arrubium, Turcoaia – Troesmis, etc from the county Tulcea, as well as Adamclisi – Tropaeum Traiani citadel and monument, Istria – Histria from the county Constanta.

The development of the entrepreneurial initiatives in rural tourism take place in the context marked by the significant increase, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, of the accommodation units in the rural area in recent years, due to individual investors and financing through the pre-accession and post-accession governmental programs (SAPARD, NRDP 2007-2013 and NRDP 2014-2020). In the Dobrudgean rural area, the effort to develop and promote tourism is completed by the support from organizations, following ANTREC example, supporting the rural suppliers of tourism services to penetrate the market, helping the rural communities to appreciate the importance of tourism and understand which advantages they can get from tourism.

The SME analysis in the Dobrudgean rural area reveals the low capacity to respond to the need to supply new jobs for the population in the countryside. The small-scale business development is well-known as the most important source of jobs or obtaining incomes in the rural space, both for the already developed economies, and for the developing ones.

Starting from the special natural qualities of the rural area, Dobrugean's rural strategy should support the sustainable rural development as active economic growth factor, in order to alleviate rural poverty.

CONCLUSION

The old remnants of the different civilizations and cultures in Dobrudgean space outline the picture of a historical process, often violent and dramatic, in which different peoples and human races met, overlapped, intermingled or disappeared from the scene of history. This space between the Danube and the Black Sea was a bridge of ethnic, cultural and religious interferences and at the same time, a connection and a trade route between the peoples from the North and from the Mediterranean world in the South.

From the point of view of natural resources and of the anthropic tourism resources, Dobrugea is very well represented. The main tourist attractions are represented both by the natural reserves, the spas and balneary resorts, the hunting fund, as well as the religious, cultural-historical, ethnographic, folklore and gastronomy elements.

As regards the tourist reception structures with tourist accommodation function, Dobrugea's image is quite good, but in the future things could get better. The catering and treatment structures are better represented compared to the leisure and service supply structures, which are not sufficiently endowed from the technical and material point of view. These need massive modernizations and the introduction of new forms of leisure and recreation, as well as the expansion of the network of services.

Tourism is very closely linked to culture and civilization, an interdependence relation existing between these. By putting into value the natural, human and financial resources at its disposal, tourism generates economic and social effects leading to the economic efficiency increase in the rural area.

The manifestation of the tourism demand and its dynamics in Dobrugea are determined by a series of demographic, psychological, organizational factors, which play a decisive role in the different tourism segments. For a complex development of the Dobrudgian rural tourism, the potential clients should be better informed through mass-media and internet.

The unequivocal conclusion of the present paper is that sustainable rural development in Dobrugea was and still remains a very actual problem, that has not been fully solved up yet.

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