

RURAL TOURISM POTENTIAL IN DOBRUDGEA

ELENA SIMA¹

¹*Institute of Agricultural Economics, Bucharest, Romania, e-mail: elena.sima2008@yahoo.com*

Abstract: Dobrudgea is a region located in South-Eastern part of Romania from the Danube to the Black Sea; it is mostly a summer tourism destination; rural tourism is practiced only on a spontaneous and accidental basis under the form of tourism homestay. This paper analyzes the tourism potential from Dobrudgea's countryside that is not known by tourists. The location of many villages in areas of outstanding natural landscapes and the richness and variety of cultural heritage are issues related to an increased tourism potential that can be capitalized, with unique tourism products that cannot be seen, admired or offered by other regions, where ancient history left its traces under the form of Greek colonies ruins, by the local customs, traditions and cuisine.

Key words: Dobrudgea, tourism potential, rural tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an economic activity that generates growth and employment, while contributing to economic and social integration, particularly of rural and mountain areas, coastal regions and islands, outlying and outermost regions or those undergoing convergence. (EC COM, Brussels, 2010a)

Romania, just like many other European countries, perceives the opportunity to combine the challenges faced by rural areas with the implementation of objectives of the new tourism policy, in particular with the implementation of its two priorities, as specified in the European Commission communication, i.e.: “Stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector” and “Promote the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism”.

The tourism policy in rural areas should be consistent with the new Common Agricultural Policy, including its measures aimed at sustainable territorial development (interim targets: support for employment in rural areas; promotion of economic diversity of rural areas; promotion of structural diversity of agricultural systems) and sustainable management of natural resources. In order to support the development of tourism in the rural areas, the opportunities provided by the Cohesion Policy instruments should be applied. (EC COM, Brussels, 2010b)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

When talking about the concept of tourism potential, tourism professionals are using different terminologies and concepts, both in form and content. The tourism potential of a given space is defined as “all natural components, cultural-historical, socio-demographic, technical and economic, scientifically recognized, quantitatively, qualitatively, proven through practice and showing the possibilities for tourism and give specific functionality for tourism, to the extent that it provides natural tourism resources, whose recovery amid technical and tourist facilities in the context of protecting the environment, can cause a tourism activity, allowing its entry into the tourist circuit”. (Glavan, 2005; Negrea 2015)

Components of tourism potential, both natural and anthropogenic ones are considered by some experts as attractions and tourist resources. The two terms, their contents differ from each other. While “tourist attraction” is the affective component of the tourist potential, “tourist resource” refers more to the economic aspect of it. (Negrea, 2015)

In order to investigate the tourism potential of the rural localities from Dobrudgea located at farther distance from the Black Sea shore and the Danube Delta, we used and applied the following working methods: a selective bibliography, foreign and domestic

studies, data identification and collection, processing, analysis, observation and interpretation, field visits, meetings and discussions with local authorities and local people as well as with entrepreneurs in this field.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Dobrugea is a special and unique territory, where Europe's youngest land and the world's third highest biodiversity area, the Danube Delta, coexist with one of the oldest mountains of the continent – Macinului Montains.

This region can easily develop many types and forms of tourism, namely: summer tourism, business tourism, cultural-historical tourism, religious tourism, rural tourism.

Dobrugea's tourism routes are crossing the two counties – Constanta and Tulcea, from north to south and from east to west. A great variety of cultural-historical objectives are found in this area, under the background of a picturesque natural landscape.

Each rural locality constitute an entity with personal particularities and specific activities, which has to be identified and valued as efficiently as possible in terms of tourism potential. The thematic tourism in Dobrugea can develop tourism routes with particular topics, namely:

- The Macin Stories in the villages from Macin Mountains National Park (history and wildlife from this area);
- The circuits of Dobrugea's citadels (located on the Black Sea coastline and on the Danuba bank);
- The circuit of churches and monasteries (located throughout Dobrugea's territory);
- Wine Road (Dobrogea is well-known in Romania for its wines).

Vine growing has a long-lasting tradition in this area, as proved by many archaeological relics and ancient writings. In Dobrogea one can find favourable vine-farming conditions, with excellent soils and climate for this activity. Lots of sunshine and low rainfall together with limestone terraces are favourable conditions for making a good wine, one of the best wines in Europe. The wines from this region have won numerous golden medals on the occasion of international competitions.

The main vineyards in the region are *Murfatlar* (one of the most famous in Romania), *Sarica Niculitel*, *Istria* and *Babadag*. There are also many private small vine farmers in the southern and northern parts of Dobrugea. Both old native grapes and imported grapes are grown. The most important wine grapes cultivated in this region are: Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir, Chardonay, Merlot, Muscat Ottonel, Italian Riesling, Sauvignon, Feteasca Neagra, Feteasca Regala, Aligote, Babeasca Neagra.

Dobrugea was one of the most multicultural parts of Romania, at least by mid 20th century. In 1930, 44.2% of its population was Romanian, 22.8% was Bulgarian, 18.5% was Turks, 2.7% Tatars, 3.4% Germans and to a smaller extent Greeks. In those times, Dobrugea was one of the most multicultural spaces of the continent, with a rich diversity of languages, religions and customs (Boia, 2007)

Although nowadays the ethnic groups are less numerous, their presence and culture decisively contribute to the cultural charm of Dobrugea, to the folk and gastronomic traditions, etc.

Dobrugea's cuisine is mainly based on fish in the villages on the Black Sea shore and in the Danube Delta, while in the inland area the products resulting from livestock farming prevail (tripe soup, dishes based on ewe cheese, etc.). One of the cakes specific in this area, with Turkish influence, is the *Sarailie* cake, with walnuts or almonds dipped in syrup.

The Black Sea shore and the Danube Delta was a destination that was favoured by the foreign and Romanian tourists; it was developed to run on a legal basis since the inter-war period. In the first half of the '70s, the tourist accommodation capacity was

significantly enlarged. In the early '80s, the market was growing, the main tourist generating countries being Poland, Germany, Austria and Belgium. Since the early '90s, a sharp decline in foreign tourist arrivals followed, and this trend remained. The main cause is the lack of funds for investments in the development, rehabilitation and upgrading of tourism infrastructure as a result of slow and complicated process of privatization, the implementation of an inadequate income tax, the lack of facilities in bank loans, etc.

Dobrugea's tourism industry will face increasing competition from inside and outside the region. A number of factors contributes to this situation (financial and economic competition, the political, social and demographical change, technological innovation, etc.), including promotional activities of competing regions.

The practice and development of rural tourism in Dobrugea faces many shortcomings, out of which:

- the population is not educated for this activity (in terms of behavior, knowledge of foreign languages, management, organization),
- rural homes were not built for the purpose of eventual tourism activities,
- lack of adequate infrastructure (telecommunications, sewerage system, water and gas supply network, heating network),
- lack of funds and strategies to develop tourism.

For a successful rural tourism activity, it is necessary to eliminate these negative aspects and focus on the following priorities:

- the development of proper infrastructure,
- training and specialization of rural tourism service providers,
- participating in training and foreign language courses,
- creation of a material base for the rural tourism practice,
- publicity of guesthouses and agro-tourism farms,
- creating programs and funds for regional development projects,
- linkages with the national programs of local interest,
- promoting the Dobrugea's area alternative tourism potential through participation in the tourism fairs, advertising campaigns, preparation of brochures.

This cannot be achieved without the contribution of the state and local authorities to implement a local development system. This assistance must primarily target infrastructure planning, with the development of a tax and credit system facilitating the implementation of the action.

CONCLUSIONS

Due to the geographical and historical conditions, Dobrugea's territory benefits from a diversified tourism patrimony, with natural and anthropic resources distributed on the entire area of 15,570 km², across the two counties: Constanta and Tulcea.

The villages from Dobrugea have largely preserved the old customs, traditional clothing and even the old way of working the land. They can attract tourists through the traditional architecture of houses, fences and small picturesque streets and churches.

At the same time, the tourism patrimony of the Dobrudgian village represents an important development source at local level, while the manifestation of the cultural identity, of traditions and customs contributes to the increase of life quality in the rural areas, to the development of local brands and job creation.

The protection of the rural heritage is extremely important in relation to the rural tourism development, as a modality to promote the Romanian villages, with a positive effect on the attraction of tourists and with economic benefits for the local population.

REFERENCES

1. **BOIA, L.**, 2007, România țară de frontieră a Europei, Editura Humanitas, București;
2. **BORDÂNC, FLOAREA**, 2008, Analiza regională a spațiului rural dobrogean, Editura Universitară, București;
3. **CIANGĂ, N.**, 2005, Marketing turistic, Editura Uranus, București;
4. **GLĂVAN, V.**, 2005, Tourism geography, Foundation of Romania of Tomorrow Publishing House, Bucharest:52;
5. **IONAȘCU, V.**, 2011, Dobrogea. Studiu de geografia turismului, Editura Universitară, București;
6. **MATEOC-SÂRB, NICOLETA, OTIMAN, P., I.**, 2011, Considerații generale cu privire la dezvoltarea satelor și diversificarea economiei rurale românești, în revista Economie agrară și dezvoltare rurală, nr.1, Editura Academiei Române, București;
7. **NEGREA, F., D.**, 2015, The potential and challenges of sustainable tourism in Romania, Economy & Business, Vol. 9, Journal of International Scientific Publications: 329-336, www.scientific-publications.net;
8. **POPESCU, M., URDEA CORNELIA-MARIA**, 2012, Rolul turismului în dezvoltarea economiei spațiului rural dobrogean”, în volumul Economie agroalimentară și dezvoltare rurală în România, implicații ale Politicii Agricole Comune asupra securității alimentare, coord Otiman, P.I., Toderoiu, F., Sima, Elena, Editura Academiei Române, București;
9. ***-2010a, Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination - a new political framework for tourism in Europe, Communication from the European Commission, COM(2010) 352, Brussels 30.06.2010;
10. ***-2010b, The CAP towards 2020 - Meeting the food, natural resources and territorial challenges of the future, Communication from the European Commission, COM(2010) 672 final, Brussels,18.11.2010;
11. ***-<http://romaniatourism.com/dobrogea.html>.