Strategies for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Danube Delta

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Abstract: Tourism, as a social phenomenon, exists in close connection with the social environment, cultural environment and other forms of environment. On account of these connections, tourism should be developed carefully so as not to affect the local environment, but to ensure a quality improvement of life in the area, and, of course, to help developing the disadvantaged areas.

Tourism enhancement in Romania should be framed in what is called "sustainable tourism", which involves all forms of tourism development, management and marketing tourism that respects the natural integrity of the area.

An area with great tourism potential is the Danube Delta. The key factor in the tourism development is the uniqueness of the Danube Delta area, the fact that the connection with nature establishes without borders, the rural tourism is still dynamic, protected areas may be visited, and the specific gastronomy of the region may be developed.

However, in terms of tourism in the Danube Delta reservations, there is a number of restrictions, which are designed to protect the area of the future generations’ intrusions.

Key-Words: tourism development, strategies, suitable development.

1 Introduction

1.1. Overview of Danube Delta

The Danube Delta, unique monument of nature, is located at the intersection of parallel 45° north latitude and the meridian 25° East. The total surface of the Danube Delta is of 5250 square KM, out of which 4423 square KM belong to Romania, but the Danube Delta increases its surface little by little every year because of the alluvial deposits brought by the Danube.

On the basis of genetic and morpho-hydrographic characteristics, the Danube Delta is divided in two main subunits: the fluvial delta and the fluvial-marine delta situated to the west, respectively to the east of the initial beach ridge Jetea-Caraorman, Crasničal-Petrişor. The fluvio-marine delta includes the marine levees Jetea, Caraorman and Saraturile, perpendicularly oriented on the flow direction of the Danube’s arms.

There are three main sections of the Danube Delta: the section between Chilia and Sulina arms, the section between Sulina and Sfântul Gheorghe arms, and the section between Sfântul Gheorghe and Razim Lake, all with great tourism potential.

The Danube Delta Biosphere Reservation area covers 5,800 square KM, of which 3,510 square KM belong to the Romanian sector of the Danube Delta while 1,145 square KM is the Laguna complex Razim-Sinoe. The remaining surface is represented by maritime water areas, floodable areas etc.

1.2. The evaluation of the Danube Delta’s tourism resources

As the Danube Delta was declared protected area as “Biosphere Reserve”, the valorization of the
Danube Delta’s potential must take into account strategies of restructuring the tourism activity based on the principle of sustainable development and protection of biodiversity.

This new strategy related to the promotion of tourism in the Danube Delta refers to the organization, coordination, development and promotion of tourism in the Delta, but with strict observance of the existing infrastructure capacity, in light of protecting the ecosystem and the sustainability level of the ecological system of the Delta.

In respect of evaluating the Delta’s tourism resources, they comprise the relief of the delta, the hydrographic basin made up of lakes and channels, the richness of flora and fauna specific for the area, and least but not last, the anthropic resources, such as numerous vestiges, monuments and museums, attesting human presence since Antiquity.

2 Problem Formulation

The following three components are taken into consideration upon creating the new strategy to restructure the tourism in the Danube Delta:

The Danube Delta Biosphere Reservation must become a brand image of domestic and especially international tourism.

Ecological tourism, also known as ecotourism, must become the main economic activity of Tulcea County.

Rural tourism extended in the Delta area may represent a chance of economic re-launching for this area;

Redefining tourism in this Romanian area must start with the principle that the promotion of tourism product in the Danube Delta Biosphere Reservation cannot take place without complying with the legislation on the biodiversity protection, and as a consequence, ecotourism is imposed.

Several general rules must be observed when talking about sustainable development in this Romanian region. The first rule refers to the aspect that tourism in the Delta must be organized, individually or in groups, by tourism agencies, under the supervision of Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority.

One must admit that it is also necessary that the first tourism agencies that would organize tourism activities should possess the necessary infrastructure and knowledge on protecting the delta biodiversity.

Planning the tourism activities in the Delta must take into account scientific grounds, polls followed by data processing and evaluation of the results.

3 Problem Solution

3.1. Natural Resources of Danube Delta

The natural and cultural values of the Danube Delta are an outstanding potential for tourism. The Danube Delta is unique in the world and can attract a very large number of tourists.

One of the most important resources for tourism in the Danube Delta is its landscape. The Delta has nearly 400 lakes, numerous channles between lakes, reed and oak and ash forests. We must also mention the beaches in the littoral area, and sand dunes.

In the second place, another important resource for tourism is the remarkable and unique biodiversity of the Delta. A third of the overall species of plants living in Romania is found in the Danube Delta Reserve. Here we may notice the aquatic vegetation of aesthetic, scientific and ecologic value.

The terrestrial vegetation of the sand banks, especially Letea and Caraorman create a tropical aspect.

Romanian researchers have identified 3,400 species of animals in the Delta, but the largest fauna richness of the Delta is the birds that come here during migration to nest and raise their young. Out of the total 300 species encountered in the Delta, over 200 are species protected at a national and international level.

All these characteristics make the Danube Delta a real research lab and the perfect frame for a tourism with educational, informative, even scientific purpose.

3.2. Anthropic Resources in the Danube Delta

The towns located in the Danube Delta have ethnographic elements specific for the area and a large number of archeological sites that must be valorized through tourism.

Some of the anthropic resources in this area are the religious monuments, either paleo-christian, muslim or orthodox, or tombs of Tatar leaders.

We must notice, by all means, the ruins of Byzantine towers on the Bisericața Island or the fortification system from Mahmudia town.

Human establishments from the Danube Delta have special architectonics, the reed roofing predominates and white and blue were mostly used to paint the houses.

Special tourism attractions are the fishermen’s villages, also known as “Romaia’s Venice”. They have a specific Russian-lipovan architecture.

The most important museums are the Danube Delta Museum, the Oriental Art Exhibition organized in Babadag, Enisala Homestead Museum, and no to forget that The Museum of the writer Eugen Botez, known as Jean Bard, author of the novel “Europolis”, is located in Sulina.
4 Conclusion

Tulcea County is strongly tied to Romania’s history as this county is attested from the Neolithic period – the archaeological discoveries are solid proofs.

At the end of the 17th century the Greeks began to colonize the western shore of the Black Sea; numerous vestiges can testify nowadays the merging between the aboriginal Getae-Dacian tribes and the Greek colonists.

In 44 BC, the Dacian king Burebista unified Dobrogea with the Dacian tribe for a short period of time. The first century AD marked the beginning of the Roman Empire domination in Dobrogea, which was part of the Provinces of Moesia Inferior; this domination lasted for seven centuries.

The Slaves and Bulgarians invasion in 679 destroyed the Roman fortification, and the Balkan Peninsula remained under the domination of the Byzantine Empire, whose naval force protected the Danube’s mouth. During 12th – 14th centuries, the Genoese built/erected strong fortifications at Chitila, Enisala and Vișina. During the 14th century, in 1484, the Emperor Mircea cel Bătrân extended his domination over Dobrogea, and after the fall of Chilia, the region fell under Ottoman domination.

During the Russo-Turkish wars from the 18th century, Dobrogea became the main war battlefield, it was ravaged and devastated, and was known at the time as Tatars’ Road or the War Road.

In November 14th, 1878, the Romanian army marched into Dobrogea, and the region entered under the Romanian State government. In 1879, Tulcea County became administrative-territorial unit; its residence was Tulcea town, as it was the most populated town in Dobrogea at that time.

Tulcea County is located in the Southern East of Romania, and it is bordered at the North and East by the Black Sea.

The Danube River empties into the Black Sea and forms the Danube Delta, which was declared in 1990 a Biosphere Reserve under UNESCO.

The administrative residence of the county is Tulcea town, located on the River’s right board at mile 40. It has a population of 97,417 citizens and it is the most important trade center in the county.

Tulcea County has a continental-temperate climate. The nearness of the Russian continental area brings cold air coming from North-East to South-West, thus resulting a wind called “crivat” (icy wind); it created very cold winters, and sometimes freezes even the Danube and the Delta over a couple of months.

On the shore of Sulina arm the sea’s breeze brings hot and wet air, thus here are recorded the highest temperatures in the country during winter season.

Thanks to its geographical location, Tulcea County has almost all the landforms present on the Romanian territory. Two geographical groups meet here: the North Dobrogean Plateau (Podişul Dobrogei), the remaining of Hercieni Mountains (Romania’s most ancient mountains) and the Danube Delta which is still under formation; together with the Razem-Sinoe Lakes they occupy a total surface of 4,470 km².

The Danube River crosses the County and has 3 arms: Chilia, Sulina (maritime arm) and Sfântul Gheorghe.

The tourism routes lead to Măcîn, Garvă and Isaccea, and the region is famous for its picturesque landscapes. The most important routes are the ones in the Delta, kingdom of waters and floating islands, a real paradise for fishermen and hunters; the realm of birds and flora creates a unique landscape.

In this sanctuary of nature comprising lakes, floating small reed islands, reed “forests” and willow forests – the paradise of migratory birds come from all over Europe and other continents, there are over 300 species, out of which 176 nest in the Danube Delta, and 184 are protected under the Berne Convention.

One may get to Tulcea County by terrestrial, naval and air way, and the traffic on the county’s territory, especially in the Danube Delta, is done mainly by ship, both with passenger vessels and fast boats, motorboats or paddle boats.

There were 108 tourism accommodation facilities in 2009, with a total accommodation capacity of 3,418 places. Among them, 65 have a restaurant and similar food units.

In 2009, 74,075 arrived in Tulcea County, out of which 53,630 Romanians and 20,445 foreigners. A total number of 146,733 night spending was recorded, precisely 113,123 night spending of Romanian tourists, and 33,610 night spending of foreign tourists. The average duration of the stay in 2007 is of 1.98 days/ tourist; the index recorded for the domestic tourists is of 2.10, and for the external tourists is of 1.64. Other indexes expressing the tourism traffic within the county calculated for 2009 are: the index of net use of the accommodation places is of 25.68; the tourism density compared against the county’s surface is of 8.71 and against the population is of 0.29.

Several ethnies coexist in harmony in Tulcea County, each with its specific culture and traditions. Among them, the ones who best preserved their customs are the Greeks, the Russian-Lipovan and the Turkish-Tatars. They influenced along time the Romanian people living in this area, especially in matters of gastronomic culture. Romanians borrowed and learnt many food recipes and culinary secrets from these communities.
In Tulcea county fish is at home; this is the reason why only here one may taste true fishermen recipes as only the Tulcea inhabitants know to cook. People from other regions or outside this area do not know the traditional fishermen’s borsch made with water taken directly from the Danube or the filled pike, the boiled fish of grilled mackerel and this is precisely why tourists should come to Tulcea, that is in the Delta’s heart. Apart from all these challenges, the wonderful landscapes and serenity of nature, water surfaces and birds colonies, I’ve tried to bring a special touch to a stay in the Danube Delta, in order to bring some light to the culinary art fans over the traditional aspects that may be encountered here.

Tulcea County, an area which is still known and valued too little from the tourism point of view, comprises a resourceful natural and anthropic potential that waits to be discovered. The Danube Delta, a fauna and flora paradise, with unforgettable landscapes and ponds with fish are the premises for various types of tourism. At the same time, Măcinului Mountains, alpine mountains with rocky ridges and abrupt walls, with remarkable ecological value and numerous flora and fauna species may represent an attraction point to all visitors searching for exceptional landscapes. The large number of monasteries and religious institutions are welcoming believers all over the world, and the archeological sites, monuments and museums, as well as other interesting tourism attractions in the county offer a multitude of possibilities of spending free time.

References: