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POST-ACCESSION DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN DOBROGEA'S COUNTRYSIDE

ABSTRACT

By its geographical location, Dobrogea' rural area has a diversified tourism potential, provided by the contrasting natural environmental factors, from the oldest to the youngest relief units, natural protected areas, balneary resources and cultural, historical, religious sites, as well as by its multicultural local habits and traditions. The objective of the present paper is to make an analysis of tourism activity development, as alternative income source for the Dobrogean rural population in the period after Romania's accession to the EU. For an increased relevance of the analysis, the information was obtained from national statistics, from governmental and non-governmental sources, as well as from articles and studies published in specialized journals. The obtained results demonstrated that tourism activities in Dobrogea's rural area have experienced significant growth, contributing to the increase of rural population's incomes, to job creation and diminution of rural-urban disparities.

Key words: rural area, rural tourism, development programs, Dobrogea.

JEL Classification: Q01, R10, L83.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the objectives of the European Union's rural development policy supports *the development of complementary and alternative job-creating activities* to counter the depopulation of agricultural areas and strengthen the economic and social substance of rural areas. The principle underlying this objective is that of the multisectoral and integrated approach of the rural economy, in the sense of *diversifying activities*, creating additional sources of *income and employment*, and *preserving rural heritage*. To achieve this objective, a number of measures have been implemented to stimulate economic activities in rural areas and encourage local development initiatives, while providing the necessary funds for micro-enterprise projects and the strengthening of local action groups, which ultimately result in the diversification of economic activities in rural areas. (<http://ec.europa.eu/>)

Rural tourism is one of the economic activities that create jobs and income growth for the rural population through the use of local material and human resources, thereby reducing the difference in living and development standards

between rural and urban areas. This activity has also seen a financially sustained promotion and development in our country with the accession to the European Union (Nistoreanu, 2006).

In this paper is analyzed the evolution of the results recorded by the promotion and development of rural tourism activity in the Dobrogea area, in the pos-accession period (2007–2020). The studied area is mainly known for the summer and spa tourism developed on the Black Sea coast and in the Danube Delta.

2. STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

The development and promotion of tourism in rural areas is one of the rural development directions of the National Rural Development Plan (NDPR), established in close connection with Community priorities and according to the analysis of the socio-economic and environmental situation, obtained on the basis of the statistical data available. (<http://www.madr.ro>)

The financial support granted to Romania, after accession to the European Union (in 2007) for the tourism development in the Romanian countryside had in view investments in:

- the infrastructure of tourism reception and recreational activities (in which there are registered also actions regarding the construction, modernization, expansion and endowment of tourism reception structures and private investments in the tourism infrastructure for leisure, independent or dependent on the tourism reception structure);
- the small-scale infrastructure (such as office for tourism information, guide marks arrangements/touristic routes etc.);
- development and/or marketing of touristic services connected to the rural tourism (elaboration of promotional materials, information etc.) (<http://www.madr.ro>).

The *direct beneficiaries* of the financial support are the following:

- natural persons (with the commitment that by the date of signing the financial contract they will get the certification of authorized natural persons);
- farmers or members of certain agricultural enterprises who wish to diversify their basic farm activity by developing a non-agricultural activity in the rural area in the already existing enterprise that falls under the category of micro-enterprises and small-sized enterprises, except for the non-authorized natural persons;
- existing and newly established micro- and small-sized enterprises in the rural area;
- local communities, local public authorities, non-governmental organizations and professional associations (<http://www.madr.ro>).

The *indirect beneficiaries* are tourists staying overnight and visitors who love to combine the pleasure to live outdoors far from the civilization of the cities,

to enjoy learning about traditional occupations of the people from Dobrogean, tasting traditional food, meeting folk customs, but also having contact and taking part in agricultural works and playing with farm animals etc. (<http://www.madr.ro>).

Specific eligible costs of financial support are for:

- construction, extension and/or modernisation and equipping of buildings;
- the purchase and installation costs, including the leasing of new machinery, installations and equipment;
- intangible investments: acquisition or development of software and acquisition of patents, licenses, copyrights, trademarks;
- restoration, preservation and endowment of buildings/monuments of immovable cultural heritage of class B local interest;
- construction, extension and/or modernisation of access roads of Class B monastic settlements;
- restoration, preservation and/or endowment of Class B monastic settlements;
- modernization, renovation and/or endowment of cultural homes. (<http://www.madr.ro>)

The criterion for the selection of investments for infrastructure in agri-tourism tourist reception establishments for leisure projects is supported by the principle of stimulating tourism activities in the sense of prioritizing agrotourism activities carried out in areas with high tourist potential/ecotourism destinations/protected natural areas, which have been established in accordance with the national planning plan. The selection criteria for investments in the restoration and conservation of cultural heritage of local interest are based on the principle of tourism potential, in the sense of prioritising projects in rural localities with tourism development potential. (<http://www.madr.ro>)

The Romanian agrotourism potential is supported by the variety of natural and anthropogenic resources determined by proportionality, concentricity and exposure in the amphitheatre of the three major forms of relief (mountains, hills and plains), as well as by the preservation of cultural traditions (literary, musical, folk art, handicrafts, gastronomy, religious customs, etc.). (Glăvan, 2003).

Agritourism is a form of tourism arising from the need to find solutions to increase the incomes of rural households/agricultural farms by harnessing their potential. It refers both to the surplus of existing accommodation, specially prepared and arranged for the reception of guests, as well as to the goods and services offered for consumption to persons who come to the countryside for relaxation, rest and leisure (Glăvan, 2003).

Depending on the natural, cultural and folkloric environment of the region, the agritourism *services* offered can range from dining, accompanying and tourist services on certain routes or initiation into certain traditional crafts, to the possibility of practicing sports or assisting a number of traditional customs in the

locality or area (sinters, village hores, carols, church fairs, traditional fairs, folk shows, etc.) (Glăvan, 2003).

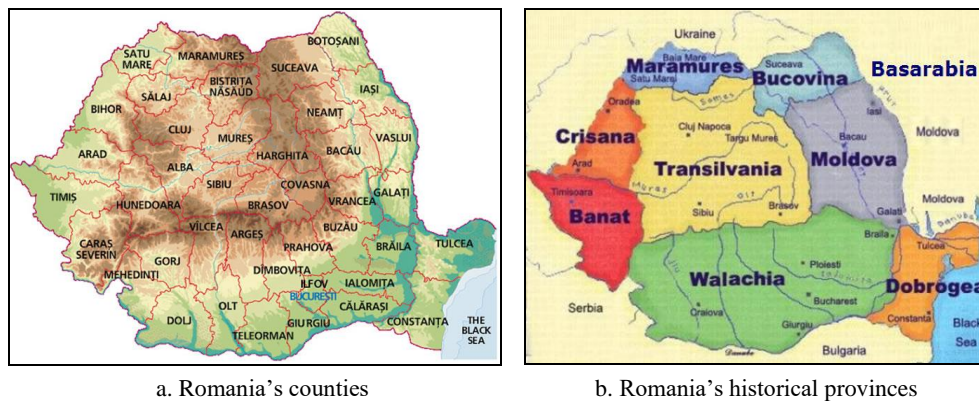
The European funds have ensured both the development of services related to rural tourism and the increase of living standards for those living in rural areas, through the development not only of the rural economy, but also of the whole rural area.

3. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The analysis of the development and promotion of rural tourism in the two counties located in the Dobrujan area has as sources of information: national statistics on tourism activity, scientific reference studies in the literature, as well as national development programs implemented in Romania. The research method used is the analysis-diagnosis of statistical data, available for the post-accession period, 2007–2021.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the south-eastern part of Romania, between the Danube and the Black Sea, there are two of the 41 territorial administrative units (counties) of Romania, Constanta and Tulcea (Figure 1a). This area of 15,570 km² divided into 17 urban settlements (4 municipalities and 13 cities) and 104 communes with 322 villages were, in the past, part of the historical province of Dobrogea (Figure 1b).



Source: <http://www.infotravelromania.ro/harta-romania.html>.

Figure 1. Dobruja's position on Romania's map.

In Tulcea County, cover 54.58% of the province total area (Table 1), but 3,446 km² (i.e. 40.54%) is occupied by the newest relief unit, represented by the

Danube Delta and the lagoon complex Razim-Sinoe, with limited dwelling possibilities. Also, on the territory of this county, in the North-West, is the Măcin Mountains, the evidence of the hercynian orogenesis which took place in the second half of the Paleozoic era, when they exceeded 3,000 m altitude; now they have maximum 467 m (the peak Greci-Țuțuiatul) and they are quite fascinating through their unique geo-morphology and bio-geography (Figure 2a).

Table 1

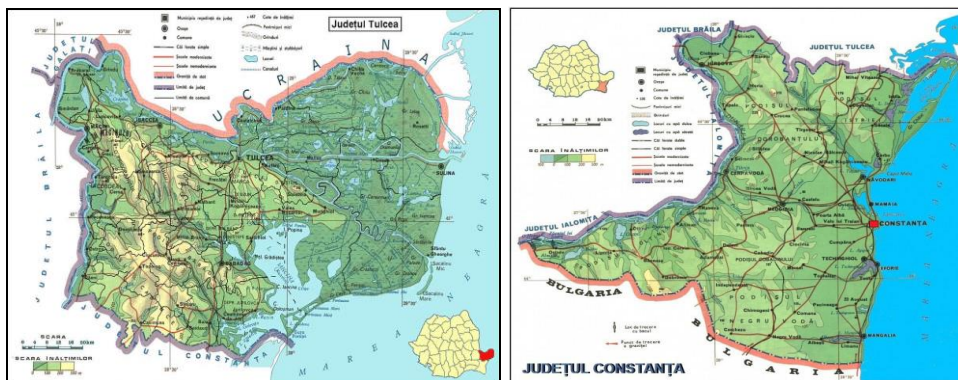
Administrative-territorial characteristics of the counties Constanța and Tulcea

Territorial unit	Area km ²	Population inhabitants	Density Inhab./km ²	Number of administrative-territorial units			
				Municipalities	Cities	Communes	Villages
Tulcea	8.499	234.336	27,57	1	4	46	133
Constanța	7.071	763.963	108,04	3	9	58	189
Dobrogea	15.570	998.299	64,12	4	13	104	322

Source: Tempo-online data base, 2021, <http://www.insse.ro/>

Constanta County, covering 45.41% of the province total area (Table 1), is characterized by even flat areas connecting the valleys deepened into limestone and loess deposits, where sometimes they form miniature canyons, and is the most urbanized county from Romania, marked by the presence of the:

- three municipalities (Constanța, Medgidia, Mangalia),
- eight cities (Cernavodă, Eforie, Hârșova, Murfatlar, Năvodari, Negru Vodă, Ovidiu, Techirghiol)
- and by the entire network of tourist resorts on the Black Sea shore (Năvodari, Mamaia, Constanța, Agigea, Eforie Nord and Sud, Costinești, Olimp, Neptun, Jupiter, Cap Aurora, Venus, Saturn, Mangalia, 2 Mai, Vama Vache) (Figure 2b).



a. Tulcea County

b. Constanța County

Sursa: <http://www.cjtulcea.ro/> and <http://www.cjc.ro/>.

Figure 2. Relief units of the counties Constanța and Tulcea.

The economy of the two Dobrudgean counties is marked by a developed agriculture, by a diversified industry and by a tourism sector with a seasonal tradition.

From the agriculture point of view, the soil and weather conditions are favorable: for cereal crops, leguminous, technical plants, fodder vegetables and plants, for the development of the livestock sector (sheep, goats, swine, poultry), for the viticulture development in the area of the localities Ostrov and Murfatlar in the Constanța county, Niculițel, Isaccea, Tulcea, Babadag and Dăeni in Tulcea county, for the practicing of river, lacustre, and sea fishing, to hunting and fishing for sports.

The industrial sector is marked by the existence of the construction and repairing of ships for sea and river transports, as well as by the chemical industry and wood processing industry, cellulose and paper, ores, fibre confectioning, construction materials, civil and industrial constructions, products of food industry etc.

The tourism sector is supported by the existence of some unique natural tourism resource as: the youngest European territory (The Danube Delta) and by the oldest European territory (Măcinului Mountains remaining of Hercynians). To them it is added a ‚necklace’ of 12 tourism stations of national interest (Năvodari, Mamaia, Eforie Nord, Eforie Sud, Techirghiol, Costinești, Neptun-Olimp, Jupiter, Cap Aurora, Venus, Saturn and Mangalia) built on the Romanian seashore, as well as many historical, archeological and religious vestiges, monuments, museums and memorial houses.

The tourism infrastructure in the Dobrogea’s countryside consists of a variety of tourism reception structures with accommodation and tourism service functions. Under current Romanian legislation, the main rural tourist reception structures that have capitalized on European financial sources through rural development programs were tourism and agro tourism boarding houses. But in Dobrogean rural localities tourists can also stay in other tourist reception structures, such as hotels, villas, huts, campsites, rural mini-hotels, guest houses or furnished rooms, etc. European financial sources carried out through other development programs of the Romanian tourism sector. (Sima, 2016)

The rural settlements with tourism potential in Dobruja 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. (Ionașcu & Ciangă, 2006)

At the end of the period analysed, tourism activities were reported statistically in Tulcea County at the level of 5 urban and 20 rural settlements and in Constanța County at the level of 9 urban and 15 rural localities (Table 2).

Table 2

List of rural localities statistically monitored from tourism activity point of view, in the period 2007–2020

Crt. no.	Constanța County		Tulcea County	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
1	Constanța Municipality	23 August	Tulcea Municipality	Baia
2	Mangalia Municipality	Adamclisi	City Babadag	Bestepe
3	Medgidia Municipality	Agigea	City Isaccea	C.A. Rosetti
4	City Cernavoda	Corbu	City Măcin	Ceamurlia de jos
5	City Eforie	Costinești	City Sulina	Chilia Veche
6	City Hârșova	Cumpăna	-	Crișan
7	City Năvodari	Horia	-	Jurilovca
8	City Ovidiu	Limanu	-	Luncavița
9	City Techirghiol	Mihail Kogălniceanu	-	Mahmudia
10	-	Oltina	-	Maliuc
11	-	Ostrov	-	Murighiol
12	-	Saligny	-	Nălbant
13	-	Seimeni	-	Niculitel
14	-	Tuzla	-	Nufăru
15	-	Valu Traian	-	Sarichioi
16	-	-	-	Sfântu Gheorghe
17	-	-	-	Somova
18	-	-	-	Topolog
19	-	-	-	Turcoaia
20	-	-	-	Valea Nucarilor

Source: Tempo-online data base, 2021, <http://www.insse.ro/>

Most of the rural localities with tourism activity are located in the area bordering the delta and have access to modernized county roads. In the Danube Delta there are only five localities: Saint George, C.A. Rosetti, Chilia Veche, Crișan and Maliuc, and access is provided navally on the three Danube arms: Chilia, Sulina and Saint George.

On the Black Sea shore are located six of the rural towns with tourism activity: Corbu, Agigea, Tuzla, Costinești, 23 August and Limanu with the villages 2 Mai and Vama Veche. The other localities are located either on the right bank of the Danube River (Oltina, Ostrov, Saligny, Seimeni, Horia) or some distance from the Shore of the Black Sea (Adamclisi, Cumpăna, Valu lui Traian and Mihail Kogălniceanu).

The most well-known and requested by tourists are:

- *Costinești*, station of the youth until 1989 year and tourism station of national interest, and also a spa and climate station, officially attested since the

2004 year due to the beneficial climate factors for the maintaining and improving of the health and/or the working capacity, as well for resting purposes;

- *Limanu*, with the villages 2 Mai and Vama Veche, which became a tourism brand of national importance with a unique resonance space of freedom and harmony with nature;

- *Jurilovca*, where the local people (ethnic Russians and Lipovans, orthodox of old rite, exiled from the Don and Nistre at the beginning of the XIX-th Century as they refused the application of canon rules imposed by the Russian orthodox Church and by the tsar Peter the Great) they turned into an attraction point their white and blue houses with thatched roofs, their folk dressing with happy colors and the men faces (of a certain age) covered with beards;

- *Murighiol*, an attraction point accessible to tourists, as in the village proximity there is a network of canals by which you can enter the most savage and picturesque area from the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve.

The Dobrogean rural offer of tourist accommodation (expressed in number of accommodation units, number of existing places and number of places in operation) recorded the same oscillating trend in both counties during the period under review (Table 3).

Table 3

Evolution of the tourism accommodation capacity in the rural areas from Constanța and Tulcea counties, in the period 2007–2020

Years	Constanța			Tulcea		
	Unit	Existing places	Seats in operation	Unit	Existing places	Seats in operation
2007	223	8077	348014	74	1708	185490
2008	222	7791	372687	79	2285	255518
2009	224	7758	452561	119	3320	197714
2010	231	8290	334410	110	3120	194947
2011	148	5969	472332	96	2307	213453
2012	184	6582	526031	112	3015	191856
2013	181	6596	459521	109	2482	207942
2014	171	6249	427504	115	2699	98888
2015	182	7337	584771	118	2348	100598
2016	181	7447	549650	116	2082	150179
2017	176	7367	533317	105	2288	199453
2018	166	7694	565267	261	5229	578879
2019	208	8014	581699	252	5318	604961
2020	177	7057	494502	263	5377	522217

Source: Tempo-online data base, 2021, <http://www.insse.ro/>

Dobrujan rural demand for tourism accommodation (expressed in the number of Romanian and foreign tourists who arrived and stayed in tourist reception facilities in rural localities, as well as the average length of stay) increased and decreased during the period considered, in both counties, depending on the reduction of the seaside tourist season or the proper promotion of the delta

destination, as well as on the motivations and expectations of those who opt for a holiday spent in rural areas (Table 4).

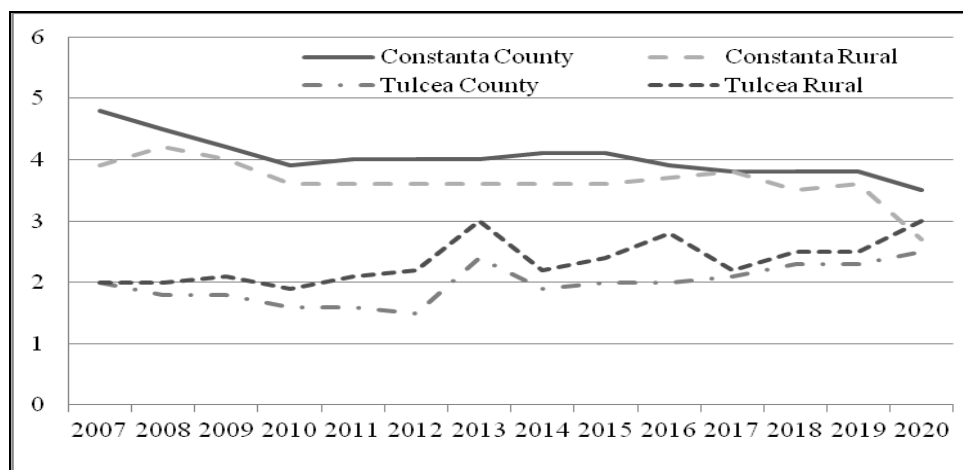
Table 4

Evolution of the tourism demand in the rural area of Constanta and Tulcea counties, in the period 2007–2020

Years	Constanța			Tulcea		
	Arrivals	Nights	Average length of stay	Arrivals	Nights	Average length of stay
2007	32052	124432	3,9	19119	38497	2,0
2008	34869	145658	4,2	37346	74145	2,0
2009	42620	171294	4,0	22488	47514	2,1
2010	28466	103680	3,6	20997	40739	1,9
2011	35221	126073	3,6	22879	48750	2,1
2012	45589	165470	3,6	19229	41859	2,2
2013	37112	133572	3,6	22937	68839	3,0
2014	42515	155313	3,6	17781	39587	2,2
2015	54625	199811	3,6	18595	44907	2,4
2016	57801	213642	3,7	25060	69827	2,8
2017	62828	236892	3,8	31284	75854	2,4
2018	77015	272913	3,5	75421	190670	2,5
2019	84775	306915	3,6	84022	214177	2,5
2020	51153	141111	2,7	75074	225767	3,0

Source: Tempo-online data base, 2021, <http://www.insse.ro/>

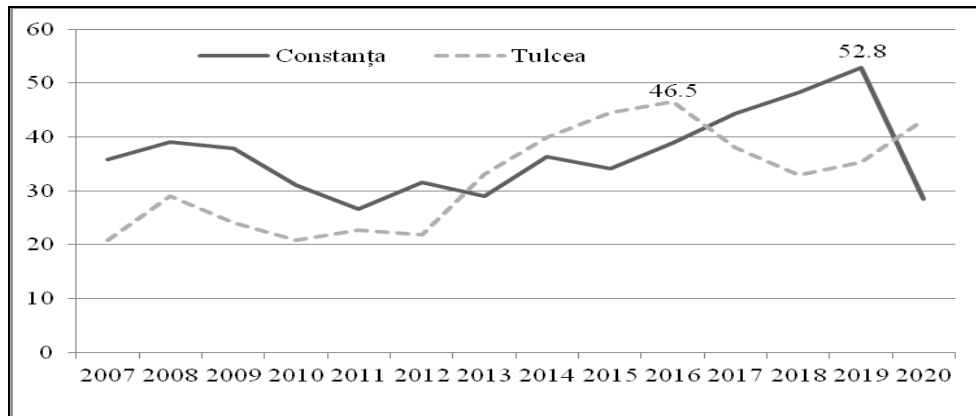
The average length of stay in Dobrujan rural settlements registered different values in the two counties. Thus, in Constanța County, stays in rural areas decreased from 3.9 days in 2007 to 2.7 days in the 2020 pandemic year, with values below those recorded at the county level, and in Tulcea County increased from 2 days to 3 days with values above those recorded at the county level (Figure 3).



Source: Tempo-online data base, 2021, <http://www.insse.ro/>

Figure 3. Evolution of the average length of stay in Dobrujan rural areas.

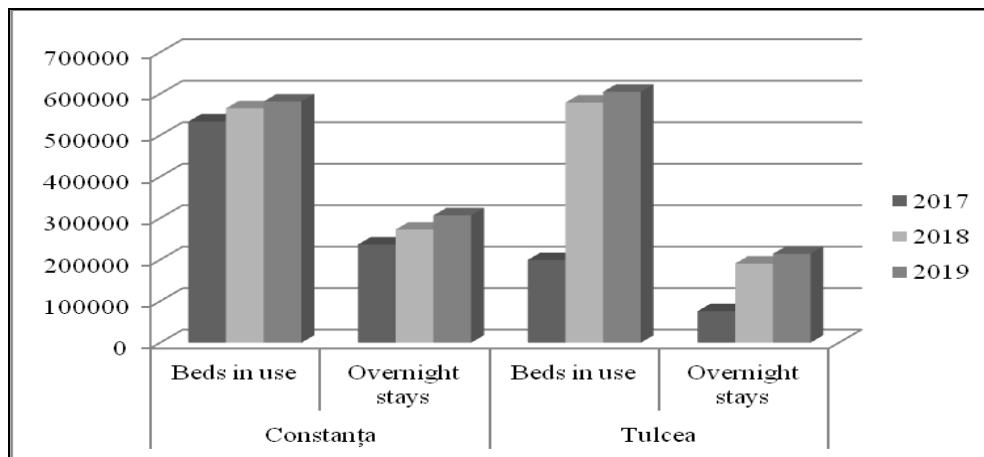
The evolution of the *net utilization indices of tourism accommodation capacity in use* in the investigated rural localities from Dobrogea, in the period 2007–2020 (calculated by the ratio of the number of overnight stays to the tourist accommodation capacity in use in a certain period), shows a maximum recovery of rural accommodation units of 46.5% in 2016 in Tulcea County and 52.8% in 2019 in Constanta County (Figure 4).



Source: Tempo-online data base, 2021, <http://www.insse.ro/>

Figure 4. Evolution of the net utilization indices of tourism accommodation capacity in use, in Dobrogean rural areas, in the period 2007–2020.

Starting to 2017 and ending in 2019, the evolution of supply (number of seats in operation) and demand (number of tourists who have drowned) in rural localities in Constanta and Tulcea counties has seen an upward trend (Figure 5).



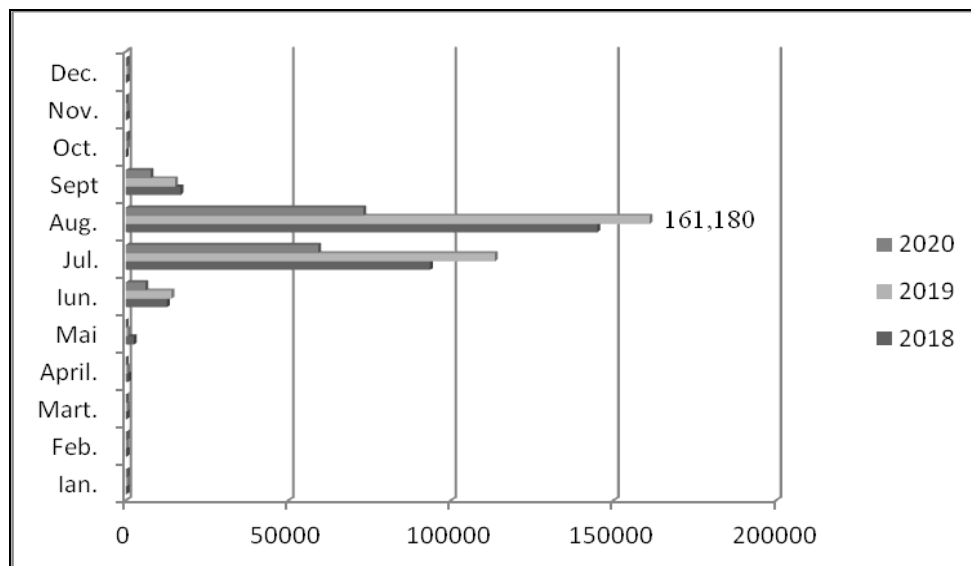
Source: Tempo-online data base, 2021, <http://www.insse.ro/>

Figure 5. Evolution of rural tourism activity in Constanta and Tulcea counties, in the years leading up to the pandemic (2017, 2018 and 2019).

This trend, characteristic to the whole Romanian tourism activity, is due to the system of holiday, value bonds, (nominal and not transmissible, deductible and tax free, both for the employer, and for the employee) very alike to the meal tickets, which were offered by the employers to their employees. Starting with the year 2018, they served as an instrument of payment for the tourism services, holidays, exclusively in Romania, for the beneficiary and his family, being able to cover more types of payments: obligatorily accommodation, then the transport, food, leisure and spa treatment.

The seasonality analysis for tourism demand (a basic characteristic of the tourism activity with effects both upon the degree of tourists' satisfaction, upon the environment, and upon labour force in tourism) shows the fact that also in the rural Dobrujan localities, the same as in the urban ones, the biggest number of tourists numărul cel mai mare de turiști who bedded overnight was registered in the peak period of the season, in July-August, as the planning of a vacation is still depending on the weather conditions (Figures 6 and 7).

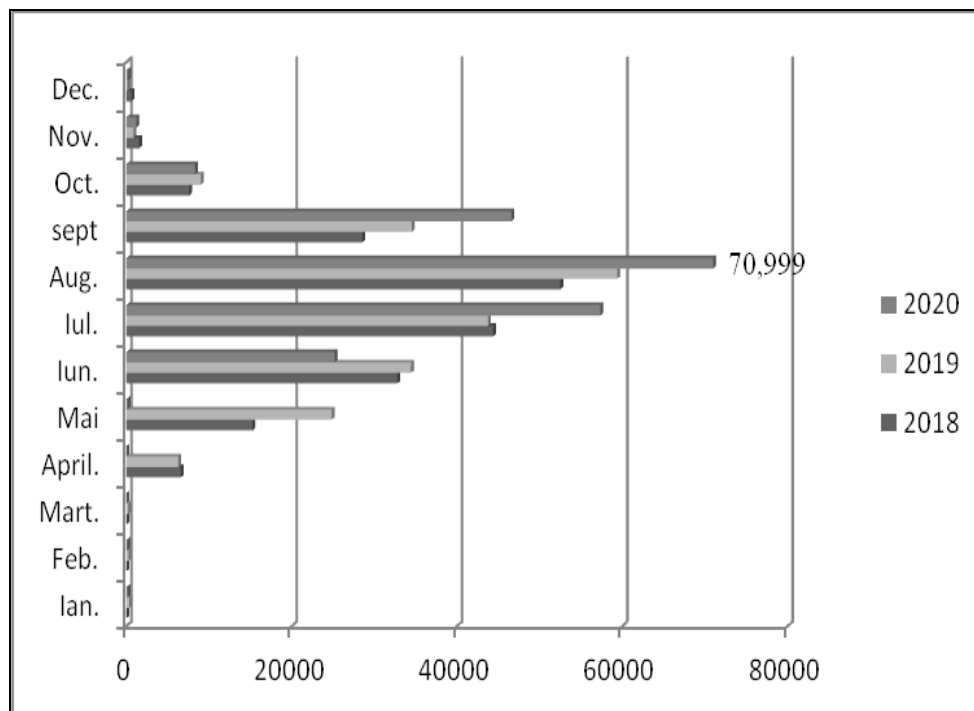
In Constanța county, theseasonality of the rural tourism activity is supported by the big concentration of the tourism flows in the Costinesti locality (where the activity starts timidly at end of May and ends in half September) and Limanu locality with ther two tourism villages, 2 Mai and Vama Veche. Vama Veche is the locality opening to summer tourism since end of April and ends at half of September. In the year 2019, the year before pandemics started, in Costinești there were registered almost 56% of the 161.180 tourists who bedded in the Constanta rural localities (Figure 6).



Source: Tempo-online data base, 2021, <http://www.insse.ro/>

Figure 6. Monthly evolution of the number of tourists who overnight stays in rural settlements in Constanța County in 2018–2020.

In Tulcea county, although the tourism activity of the rural localities is developing along several months the season peak is still in August. In 2020, although it was the first Covid-19 pandemics year, after two months restriction for circulation, the number of tourists who opted for a vacation in Danube Delta area exceeded 70 thousands (Figure 7). Among these, 39% were lodged in the Murighiol locality and 16% in locality Jurilovca, under sanitary safety conditions and far from the crowded tourism destinations.



Source: Tempo-online data base, 2021, <http://www.insse.ro/>

Figure 7. Monthly evolution of the number of tourists who overnight stays in rural settlements in Tulcea County in 2018–2020.

The ratio price-quality of the rural Dobrujan tourism services increased together with the European financial support for rural development in Romania, although the quality of infrastructure, communications and transport varies from one locality to another; there are significant differences as regards the quality of the tourism natural and anthropic resources; the quality standards are not implemented and respected the same way in all localities; the tourism strategy for the development and promotion of rural tourism is not clearly defined yet at local level, etc.

In the last years, except summer and spa tourism, the changes in behaviour at the level of tourism clients have reduced the importance of the mass tourism

organized in favour of other forms, as the transition tourism, of the week end, professional, scientific, business, culture, sports etc.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The natural and anthropic resources of a zone generates specific forms of tourism, completing each other within the framework of different destination categories. Rural tourism is that encompassing activities facilitating the encounter of man with nature's beauty, with the riches of land and with the local people's hospitality. The protecting of rural inheritance is extremely important as regards the rural tourism development as a way of promoting the romanian villages, with a positive effect upon the tourists attraction and with economic plus for the local population.

Analysing the Dobrudjan rural space, we will see that this is the keeper and preserver of a huge thesaurus of architecture and art, with hisorical monuments and vestiges, as well as of a genuine ethnic and folklore patrimony of a great value and purity. In this context, the rural tourism, as alternative to the seashore seasonal tourism, does not depend at the same extent on the seasonality characterising the classical tourism in Dobrudgea and can contribute to the socio-economic development of many rural localities.

In Tulcea county, the Danube Delta was and remains an important touristic objective, and Macinului Mountains do not represent yet a well-known tourism destination, and the tourism lodging and public food facilities are less developed, fact which is limiting the tourists access in the area.

In Constanța county, the trends in the settlement of the rural space for tourism are having in view the seashore zone, the localities along the Danube and those in the localities with archeological sites and religious objectives. The greatest variety of the structure for tourism reception, as well the most intense summer tourism activity is registered in the Costinești commune with the villages: cu satele Schitu and Costinești, as well as in Limanu commune with the villages: 2 Mai and Vama Veche,

The local people, the small enterprisers and the representatives of the Town halls in the rural localities with tourism objectives have manifested interest as regards the rural development programs, the goal of which was that to revive old habits and traditions, able to attract the admiration of Romanian or foreign tourists. The results obtained are far under the expectations, as the financial instruments are, in general, less accessible to the enterprisers in the rural (mainly the newly founded ones) and to the farm sector in general. Despite the financial mechanisms established within the rural development national programs, the issue of the access to banking loans is still a difficult one because of the high cost of credits, the lack of collaterals, especially on the background of an economic recession context.

According to analysed data, the insufficient promotion of the zone and the deficitary collaboration between the most important actors involved in the support for the development of the tourism activities in the rural Dobrujan space, represent the main reasons for which the Delta and Sea tourism are representative tourism products, although the tourism patrimony of the Dobrujan village is so diverse and represents an important source for development at local level, and the manifestation of the cultural identity, the traditions and habits are all contributing to the increase of life quality in rural zones, as well as to the development of the local trade marks and jobs creation.

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