

## THE TOURIST REGIONALISATION OF DOBRUDJA

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**ABSTRACT** – Taking into account tourism types and forms, the features of the natural, social, and of the economic environment, the attractive resources, and the touristic infrastructure, Dobrudja is a region consisting of four areas: the Danube river meadow, the Danube Delta and the Razim-Sinoie lake complex, the South-Dobrudjan seacoast, and the Dobrudjan Tableland. The main features of this touristic region are: diverse and attractive resources favourable for the development of two touristic activity categories characteristic of this region (e.g. ecotourism and agritourism); curative resources favourable for spas and recreational tourism; entertaining opportunities; the highest density of tourist areas in Romania.

**Key words:** tourist region, tourist area, tourism types, ecotourism, agritourism.

### INTRODUCTION

Situated in the South-East of Romania, between longitude 27°20' and 29°41' east, and between latitude 43°43' and 45°27' north respectively, Dobrudja has a surface of 15,570 km<sup>2</sup>. It is a well geographically individualised territory, limited by the Danube and the border with Ukraine (to the north), the border with Bulgaria (to the south), the Danube Delta and Călărași, Ialomița, Brăila, and Galați counties (to the west), and the Black Sea (to the east). In addition, it is a component of the *South-East Development Region* of Romania. The two component counties (Constanța and Tulcea) had a population of 971,643 inhabitants in 2002, 18 urban settlements (four municipiums), and 103 communes.

Among the tourist regionalisation researches for this region, we have relied on the following: Z. Oarcea (1977) – two tourist areas, the seacoast and the hilly one; I. Popovici *et al* (1984) – three tourist regions: the Romanian seacoast of the Black Sea, the Danube Delta, and the Dobrudja neighbouring the Danube; P. Cocean *et al* (2002) – two tourist regions: the Dobrudjan Tableland (with mixed tourism) and the Danube Delta (with recreation tourism); L. Nicoară and Angelica Pușcaș (2002): one tourist region (Dobrudja) with the following areas: the southern seacoast of the Black Sea, the Danube Delta, and the Dobrudjan Tableland; M. Ielenicz and Laura Comănescu (2006): the Dobrudja tourist province with two tourist areas (the Danube Delta and the Seacoast), a touristic axis (Constanța-Cernavodă), and a series of isolated tourist spots in Dobrudja. In the National Territory Arrangement Plan, Section VI Tourism (2004), these researchers identified two categories of areas with significant tourist potential: 59 % of the surface of the Constanța County and 83 % of the Tulcea County.

### RESULTS

Taking into account the historical, the physical-geographic, the territorial-administrative, and the infrastructure conditions as well as tourism types we have identified one single tourist region – DOBRODJA – with four tourist areas and 18 touristic sub-areas (figure 1). The main features we have identified for the Dobrudja tourist regions are:

*1. Diversified Attractive Resources, Favourable for the Development of Two Types of Activities Characteristic of This Region: Ecotourism and Agritourism*

*Ecotourism* has been defined by the UICN as “that segment of tourism that involves visiting the natural, quite undisturbed areas, in order to admire and study their landscape, to enjoy the world of wild flora and fauna as well as the extant cultural values”. A profound analysis of this definition gave us the opportunity to name this phenomenon also *eco-cultural tourism*, tourists visiting these regions less affected by economic activities, including large areas belonging to national parks and natural reservations, areas with significant material and spiritual culture of local specificity. Thus, eco-cultural tourism is an important

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instrument for preserving nature, educating visitors, and supporting sustainable development projects. Sustainable tourism means optimum ways for recreation and knowing the environment through the responsible management of the natural ecosystems and of the cultural and historical patrimony, ensuring local and regional development (Ionașcu, Cîrcu, 2006).

Areas with complex and diversified landscape, areas characterized by biodiversity, fragile natural environments, partially or totally protected palaeontological, geological, speleological, and morphological elements are very interesting and attract many visitors. In many of these areas there are human communities characterized by significant material and spiritual culture. Under certain conditions these were transformed into protection and conservation areas. Their way of life, due to their traditional activities and customs, is a tourist attraction.

Due to our field research, we were able to identify, at least, two distinct forms of ecotourism: *sea ecotourism* – characteristic of the seacoast of the Dobrudja, including the lagoonal and the deltaic environment and *hilly and tableland ecotourism* – characteristic of the hills in the north, the mountainous-like hills, the inselbergs, and the large tablelands in the centre and in the south.

Seacoast ecotourism includes specific activities, such as sea animal and bird watching, diving, beach walks, cliff climbing, walking along the shores in order to see the boats, and cruises along the shore. Julie C. Wilson (2005) considers that seacoast tourism includes a symbiotic relationship between tourism and the natural seacoast environment with a significant impact on the economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects of the region. A series of economic activities, such as extensive fishing, harbour activities, and hydro fuel exploitation, are incompatible with ecotourism. This indicates a dispersion of the area where it has been practised.

Hilly and tableland tourism is very popular and it includes walks into the woods with rare flora and fauna, panoramic views, rocky peaks climbing, and the exploration of underground places. Due to several characteristic activities, this type of tourism does not depend on the same seasonality characteristic of classical tourism in Dobrudja as it is a viable alternative to diminishing seasonality in the seacoast regions. In both situations, we have discovered multiethnic and cultural areas and therefore, we have named this phenomenon *eco-cultural tourism*. It is practised by those who visit regions less affected by economic activities.

Dobrudja hosts two protected natural areas which are significant on the national level. This includes, into the biosphere protected areas, national and natural parks (*the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve and the Măcinul Mountain National Park*) and 84 natural protected areas and monuments with a diversified potential.

Agritourism is a form of rural tourism that pertains only to the local inhabitants' households for accommodation and meals. Law 87/1998 stipulated a series of facilities for the development of rural tourism in Romania by defining agritouristic room and board facilities as structures which do not have more than 20 rooms, function in the inhabitants' households or in independent buildings and ensure part of the tourists' meals with fresh products of their own. In 1990 the *Romanian Federation for Mountain and Rural Development* was founded and in 1994 the *National Association for Rural, Ecologic, and Cultural Tourism* was founded as well. Their objectives are to identify and promote the rural touristic potential and to classify tourist and agritouristic room and board facilities.

The attractiveness of the rural area relies on the specificity of those particular rural settlements (piscicultural, viticultural, forestry, and agricultural villages), the specificity of the archaeological sites, of the religious edifices, and of the folk traditions. The most popular activities among the tourists visiting the villages were fishing, hunting, swimming, riding, and boating, cooking traditional meals, landscape watching, and photo taking. According to the above-mentioned attractive elements, we have identified two *agritourist areas* in the *agritourist region of the Dobrudja* (figure 5):

- A compact area where pisciculture was dominant in the humid places of the river meadows, of the Danube Delta, and of the lagoonal complex;
- A hilly and tableland area where people capitalise the fruit trees and vineyards of Niculițel, Babadag, Basarabi, and of Ostrov, and beekeeping.

**Viticultural agritourism** has a remarkable potential due to extensive vineyards (approximately 23,200 ha in 2003) of varied sorts (grapes both for wine making and for eating) and it includes specific activities, such as wine tasting, cultural events, and participation in the wine making process. A. D. Xenopol mentioned that Thracia, a large viticultural area, was considered the birth place of Dionysus, the god of wine,

whose cult had widely spread since the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD. Tourists can see traditional wine making installations, wine cellars and old wine collections during their visits to the main vinification centres and wine show rooms.

**Beekeeping agritourism** is favoured by the climate, the melliferous potential, and the traditions of this activity in the Dobrudja. Consequently, it has become a more and more attractive. In Roman Dacia, *Diana mellifica* is the protector divinity of bees (Maria Magiru, p. 187, 2003). In 1959, the International Symposium on Beekeeping in Tulcea confirmed the privileged position of Dobrudja in Romania as it also has a unique linden tree surface in Europe (Mariana Cuzic *et al*, 2006).

**Piscicultural agritourism** is the second basic component of rural tourism in Dobrudja. It has an old tradition and its centres are situated in the humid area of the Danube Delta and of the Danube river meadow. *Fisheries* specialised in fresh or sea water and they are usually built in traditional raw materials (reed and wood).

Villages with a clear piscicultural profile and households open to tourists are Crişan, Sfântu Gheorghe, Mila 23, Maliuc, Periprava, Jurilovca, Murighiol, Sfiştofca, Carcaliu, and Sarichioi. Tourism development in these communities contributes to the improvement of the social and economic environment and this can not be neglected in the areas where the capitalisation of natural resources is restricted. Therefore, certain official documents listed the basins (especially for the Danube Delta Biosphere Reservation) where fishing is permitted as a sports or entertainment activity.

**Hunting agritourism** is based on a diverse resource characteristic of the humid area and steppe environment and is practised according to the norms for the conservation and protection of the wild fauna. Too high a number of tourists that exceed the limits for rational resources exploitation have bad effects on habitats, disturbed the nutritional chain, and fauna reproduction.

After examining the game reserve fund, the quantity of game that could be hunted during the 2005-2006 hunting season was established. In the 2005-2006 hunting season, the following species could be hunted: the roe buck, the wild boar, the rabbit, the fox, the pheasant, the wild pigeon, the turtle dove, the ring dove, the quail, the starling, the thrush, the skylark, the big white-fronted goose, the wild goose, the wild duck, and the moor hen.

## 2. *Spas and Entertainment Opportunities Favourable for Balneal and Recreation Tourism in the Seacoast Area*

Known since antiquity, springs with mineral waters have been at source of tourist activities organised in modern times as a result of their multiple curative factors: sea water, salty lake water, sapropelic mud, saline aerosols, and sulphurous mesothermal waters. The balneal treatment means using a complex of natural factors: the climate and the balneal factors (mineral waters, lakes, salt mines, mud, therapeutical gases, beaches, sea water) in a resort or in a balneal-climatic settlement for prophylactic treatment, cure, and medical recovery (Elena Berlescu, 1982).

The area with the most numerous balneal resources is Techirghiol Lake that favours the development of several resorts: Techirghiol, Eforie Nord, Saturn, and Mangalia. These resorts offer a series of various procedures: hydro-thermal therapy (mud, sulphurous, galvanic, and plant baths, mud or paraffin wrapping, underwater showers, and pool gymnastics), electro-therapy, kinetic-therapy, geriatric cure (with gerovital and pell-amar products), mud massage, and medical gymnastics. These resorts are recommended for the following diseases: degenerative rheumatic diseases, inflammation diseases, articular and post-trauma diseases, digestive apparatus diseases (dysfunctions of the bile, chronic digestive disturbances), renal apparatus diseases (chronic urinary infections), respiratory apparatus diseases (chronic bronchitis, respiratory allergies), central and peripheral nervous system diseases, metabolism diseases (diabetes, obesity), dermatological diseases (psoriasis, chronic eczemas), gynaecological diseases, and associated diseases. *Sanatoria* are health care units which offer accommodation and ensure medical care by means of the curative natural factors associated to other therapeutic procedures, techniques, and means. The Balneal and Recovery Sanatorium Mangalia and the Balneal and Recovery Sanatorium Techirghiol lie on the seacoast and they are subordinated to the Ministry for Health,

Besides classical treatment, these spas also include: beauty clubs and saloons that offer massage, fitness, sauna, acupuncture, reflex-therapy, meso-therapy, gymnastics, etc.; boat cruises where balneal treatment and special diet are offered; specialised services for a better life style and physical and psychic

sanity recovery based on classical and complementary treatment; hydro-therapy wellness areas in the areas rich in mineral and sea water resources.

Entertainment has become a real touristic motivation. It has specific forms: nautical sports, sports, and culture. Outdoor activities usually mean sports (coach rides, horse riding, sightseeing by helicopter and by plane, parachute jumping, aquatic parks).

Tourism for water sports activities has had several peculiarities on the Danube and its branches and channels (kayak, canoe, sails, yachting, and nautical entertainment) and on the Black Sea (nautical ski, surfing, and hydro-scooter). Nautical tourism might get more international visibility by including the Tomis harbour into a Black Sea cruise on the Istanbul-Varna-Constanta-Odessa-Yalta route. One could extend this circuit by including other settlements on the Black Sea shore (e.g. the Bulgarian harbour at Varna and the Ukrainian one at Odessa) and the Danube Delta.

Special entertainment areas are the discos, the casino clubs, and the night clubs.

Holiday clubs have been integrated into hotel complexes (e.g. in Jupiter – in the Capitol Hotel Complex, in Venus – in the Adriana Hotel Complex, in Mamaia – in the Yaki Complex Hotel and in the Club Scandinavia Complex Hotel). They offer tennis, volley, football, and mini-golf clubs, discos, playgrounds for children, and casinos.

### 3. *The Highest Concentration of Tourism Facilities in Romania*

According to our researches, the seacoast is the most important tourist region of Romania. 42.7% of the accommodation facilities in our country are located in this area but they depend a lot on season variability so that on the whole tourists are only 15.4% of the total. *The Romanian seacoast to the Black Sea*, between Năvodari and Vama Veche had 153,477 places in 1989 and 114,103 places in 2004. Of the total tourist units of Constanța County on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July, 2004, 870 accommodation units were in *the seacoast tourist area* (114,103 places, representing 93.79% of the total number of 121,654 places). In 2004 in *the Danube Delta* there were 3,193 places in 121 accommodation facilities. Out of these, 1,115 places were in the Tulcea Municipium.

In the two basic tourist areas of Dobrudja (the seacoast and the Danube Delta) there are 991 accommodation facilities (96.21%) out of the extant 1,030. We have noticed an uneven distribution of accommodation facilities in *the seacoast area* (87.80%) and in *the Danube Delta* (12.20%).

The maximum *density* of the accommodation facilities is on the seacoast and it represents 44% of the Romania's total accommodation facilities (N. Ciangă, 2001). In the Dobrudjan tourist area, the distribution on tourist areas is the following: the touristic seacoast area between Năvodari and Vama Veche -91.14%, the Danube Delta tourist area and the Razim-Sinoie lagoonal complex -2.55%, and the Dobrudja Tableland tourist area -6.31%. In comparison to the values of the index for the entire Romania (1.5 places/km<sup>2</sup>), in the Dobrudja, this value was of 8 places/km<sup>2</sup> with the following disparities, according to the respective tourist areas: 465 places/km<sup>2</sup> on the seacoast, 0.74 places/km<sup>2</sup> in the Danube Delta and the Razim-Sinoie lagoonal complex, and 0.71 places/km<sup>2</sup> in the Dobrudja Tableland. The value of the index for Constanța County is 17.25 places/km<sup>2</sup> and for Tulcea County – 0.42 places/km<sup>2</sup>.

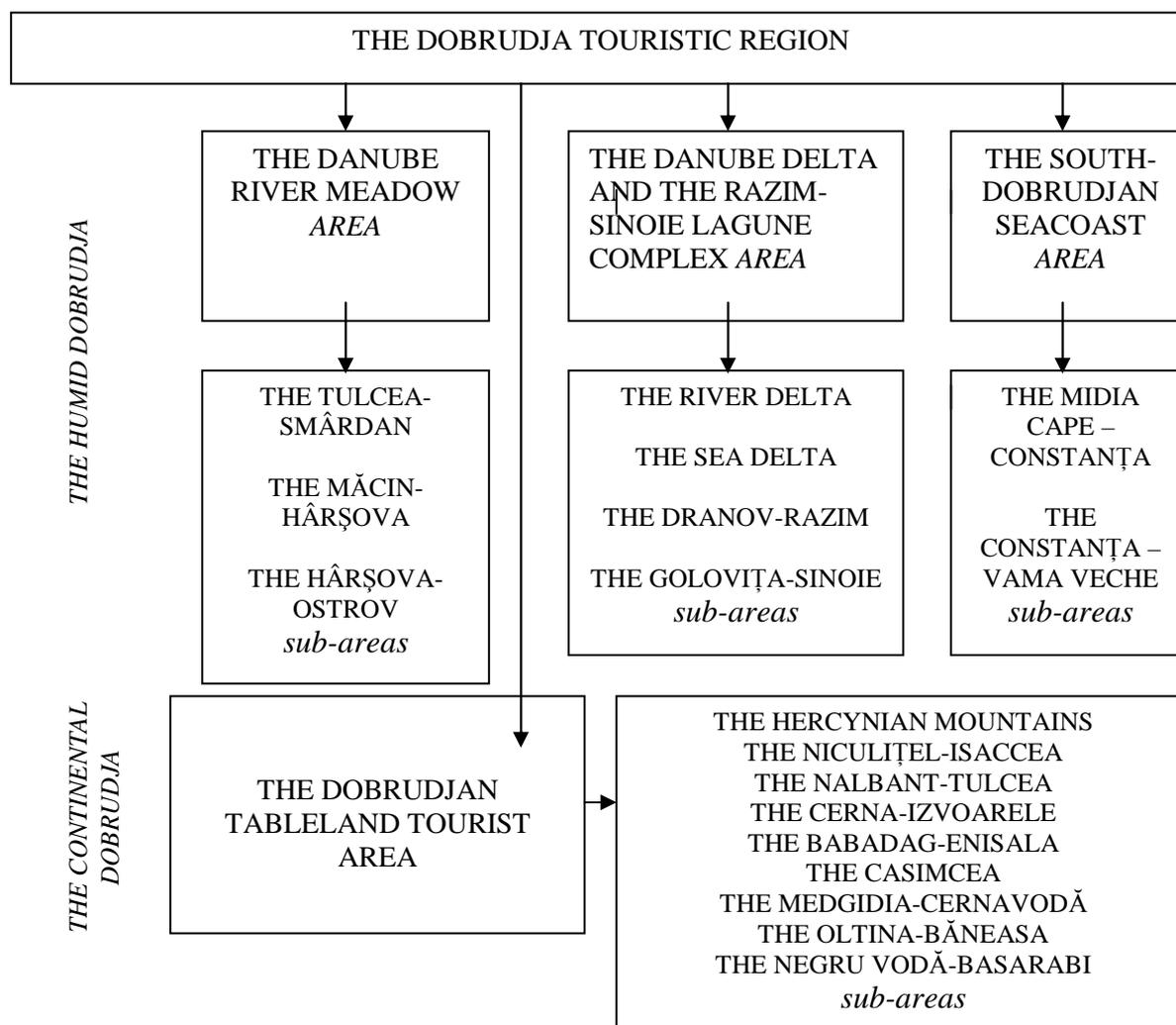
#### **THE RIVER MEADOW TOURIST AREA**

The river meadow tourist area in the north and in the west of the Dobrudja is in contrast to the neighbouring dry territory and is favourable to ecologic, cultural, entertainment, and sports tourism. Up to the Danube Delta, the river is characterised by highly picturesque morpho-hydrographical features (the riverbed, the secondary courses, the streams, the lakes, the marshes, the channels, the isles, the beach, the stripes of land). These morpho-hydrographical features together with the social and economic aspects allowed us to individualise three sub-areas: the Tulcea-Smârdan area, the Măcin-Hârșova area, and the Hârșova-Ostrov area.

#### **THE DELTAIC AND LAGUNAL TOURIST AREA**

The Danube Delta tourist area and the Razim-Sinoie lagoon complex hosted the largest wet area in the Dobrudja which lies between the Dobrudjan Tableland and the Black Sea. It also hosts an exceptional natural patrimony, unique both in Romania and in Europe and favourable to ecologic, rural, cultural, and entertainment tourism. We have delimited four touristic sub-areas: the river delta, the sea delta, the Dranov-Razim, and the Golovița-Sinoie. Their characteristic features rely on the geographical landscape, specific entertainment activities, their cultural patrimony, and the specificity of their rural households.

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### THE SOUTH-DOBRUDJAN SEACOAST TOURIST AREA

The south-Dobrudjan seacoast tourist area is characterised by mass tourism, as it had the greatest potential for balneal tourism, cultural tourism, recreation, sports and entertainment tourism, and professional tourism. The evolution of tourism capitalisation and seacoast morphology has given us the opportunity to delimit two sub-areas: the Cape Midia-Constanța and the Constanța-Vama Veche. *The Romanian seacoast at the Black Sea* between Năvodari and Vama Veche hosts the largest room and board facilities in Romania. The capitalisation of the natural factors (the water of the Black Sea, the sapropelic mud and the waters of Lake Techirghiol, the sand, the mesothermal waters, and the peat mud) and the significant anthropic objectives have led to complex arrangements of the geographical space. Entertainment and sports facilities have contributed to the diversification of tourist facilities increasing their attractiveness and volume of activities. Very attractive are the beaches, the lakes used for entertainment activities and curative purposes, the cultural institutions, the vegetation, the means of transport destined exclusively to recreation, entertainment areas, and holiday villages.

### THE TABLELAND TOURIST AREA

The Dobrudjan Tableland tourist area, the largest one, has significant spatial disparities and, in general, it is favourable to rural, ecologic, and cultural tourism. The attractive resources of the continental Dobrudja are characteristic of an environment different from the environment presented above. It has rigid relief with structures where all geological eras can be identified and it is also adapted to continental climate with strong aridity features. Therefore, on a rather small surface, in the Central Dobrudja, the tourist can see the oldest landforms of Romania. These landforms are delimited by Palaeozoic, Mesozoic, and Neogene

structures to the north and others, more recent ones – Miocene and Quaternary – to the south. It looks like a rigid region, with large table lands, rounded to the interior, and slopes that dominated the margins of river meadows, of lakes, and of the delta. As a result, to the contact of the two morphological units, one notices eroded land forms, promontories, capes, and inselbergs made of hard rocks offering a picturesque landscape. The morphological limit of this tableland, to the west, is modelled by the Danube, and beyond the river meadows, a series of slopes and hills dominate the surroundings: the Iacobdeal (341 m), the Peceneaga, the Piatra, the Dăieni, the Hârșova, the Topalu, the Cernavodă, the Nucului Hill, and the Mirlicea Hill. We have delimited the following sub-areas: the Măcin (*the Hercynian Mountains*, the highest part of the Dobrudja), the Niculițel – Isaccea, the Nalbant – Tulcea, the Cerna – Izvoarele, the Babadag – Elisala, Casimcea, the Medgidia – Cernavodă, the Oltina – Băneasa, and the Negru Vodă – Basarabi.

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