

**THE REPERCUSSIONS IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION, REDEFINITION AND PROPOSITION OF THE IDENTITY OF THE DANUBE DELTA THROUGH THE VALORIZATION OF THE TOURIST POTENTIAL**

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**Abstract**

*The present paper highlights aspects upon the stage reached by some possible trends of development of tourism in the Danube Delta, established in different studies and researches, as well as suggestions in successfully reaching them in order to eliminate disfunctions. As a result of the fact that tourism in the Danube Delta produces benefits and costs, the planning and development have been established by the main agents so as to aim getting an advantage from the interest shown by tourists in order to capitalize the economic opportunities, to protect the natural and cultural heritage, to improve the quality of life for all those living in the corresponding area.*

**Key words:** *Main tourist destination; Tourist accomodation units; Forms of tourism; Local cummmunity, Durable development.*

**JEL Classification:** *Q26, Z10*

**INTRODUCTION**

When it comes with the countries with political stability and an extremely high degree of urbanisation and industrialization, the rural space and / or the protected natural areas are no longer an unknown issue regarding the successful capitalization of the tourist potential. The situation is completely different in the case of post-communist countries which are behind from this point of view, being at the level of theoretical approach, in the stage of compiling strategies, plans regarding durable tourism, ecotourism and rural tourism so as to ensure the economic soundness and efficiency of the above mentioned areas through their implementation.

But, in the case of our country through the rapid awareness of the situation and through sustained efforts of the actors involved (people or groups of people, interested parties/ sides, closely linked with a company, an organization, a project, an event, etc) we consider that this level has been outrun. The active vectors in the tourist domain have as concrete task the development of tourism, its optimization and obtaining extra value out of this activity

Following this idea, besides statistics and different papers from the specialized literature consulted and different plans and strategies of

development within Romania ("The national strategy of developing the ecotourism in Romania" (www.mdrl.ro), elaborated in 2009, "The national strategy for the durable development of Romania" (strategia.ncsd.ro), published in 2008, "The national plan of development 2007-2013" (www.oirposdruvest.ro) elaborated in 2008, "The Master Plan for the national tourism of Romania 2007-2026") etc, our attention was drawn by the directions of possible development of the tourism largely specified in "The strategic plan for the development of the durable tourism in the Danube Delta" (www.ddbra.ro).

Starting from these, a series of aspects made us to focus *our attention on the stage of some of the directions of possible development*, even though the plan completed in the first part of the year 2009, such as:

- The Danube Delta is considered *one of the tourist destination of Romania*, according to the classification of the tourist destinations at national level in the data basis of the National Institute of Statistics (statistici.insse.ro), under the name of *The Danube Delta, including Tulcea*.

- The Danube Delta is framed in "The National Strategy of the development of ecotourism from Romania" (www.mdrl.ro) as *one of the main eco-destinations from Romania*, namely *The Biosphere Reserve Danube Delta and Dobrogea*;

- The Danube Delta is the only tourist destination of Romania which is framed, except Tulcea, in the wholeness of a protected natural area, namely The Nature Reserve of the Biosphere Danube Delta (considering the term tourist destination according to INSSB);

- The Biosphere Reserve Danube Delta was legally conceived right from the foundation *to constitute also a model of development of human communities in harmony with the natural environment, taking into account the presence of human settings within the reserve*; (www.ddbra.ro)

- The Danube Delta *has a unique value through the existence of the natural patrimony*;

- The Danube Delta, under the effect of the meaning of reserve of the biosphere, *seems to be one of the tourist destinations with many projects and developing programmes, some achieved through sources ensured by The European Bank of Investment and the Government of Romania or with funds coming from external programmes such as PHARE and SAPARD, others in feasibility stage or developing*, and through which a series of works and actions of socio-economic importance are running for towns on the territory RBDD, with the participation of Local Councils, of different economic agents specialized in works regarding especially the technical-edililar infrastructure.

### THE STARTING PHASE OF GETTING OUT OF RUCK IN ORDER TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF TOURISTS

Although for about 20 years The Danube Delta has been declared reserve of biosphere by the Government of Romania, decision confirmed by the Parliament of Romania through the Law no. 82/1993, and even though the universal value of the reserve was acknowledged through its inclusion in the international network of the biosphere network (1990), within The Programme "The Man and the Biosphere" (MAB), launched by UNESCO in 1970 (www.ddbra.ro), it seems that the impulse has been given in the last years in promoting the space through tourism and the success of connecting it with the European tourist market.

Situated under the level of the other destinations, The Danube Delta started to register a remarkable success in comparison with other tourist destinations regarding the tourists' arrivals on destinations and types of tourists (<https://statistici.insse.ro/shop/> is to be consulted).

On the whole, one can notice an increase in the total of tourists' arrivals in the last decade, being significant the annual increases (Figure 1) generated by the contribution of the insert of the tourist flows outside the country especially after 2006, and when Romania becomes member of E.U., even holds a privileged position from all the tourist destinations

(the second place after "Bucharest and towns-county residences, except Tulcea") at foreign tourists' arrivals; for example in the year 2011 the number of foreign tourists was almost 40 % of the number of the Romanian tourists and a little above a quarter of the total number of tourists. About 95 % of the foreign tourists are involved in organised tourism on tracks established yearly and a small percentage of Romanian tourists are involved in the unorganized tourism, individually which is still practised with licence in places well established by The Administration of The Biosphere Reserve of Danube Delta (ARBDD) (Gâştescu and Ştiucă, 2008).

We must mention that tourism mainly develops in the economic areas where there are the appropriate endorsements and facilities and is strictly forbidden, protected areas (except monitoring, and scientific research) and reduced a lot in buffer areas (Gâştescu and Ştiucă, 2008).

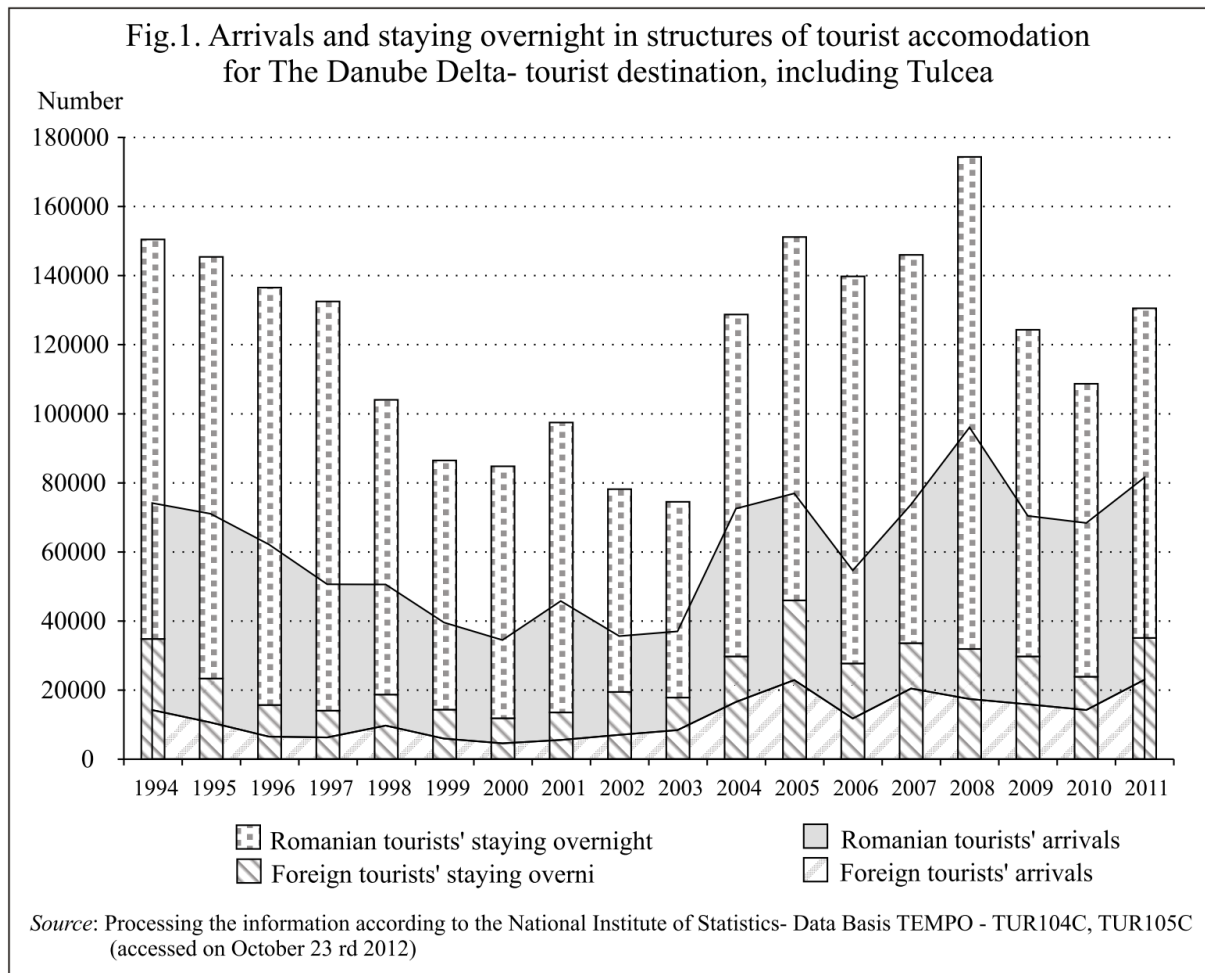
But, no matter the performance at which the tourism will arrive, the right applying of the principle of durable development, of ecotourism (as a distinct form of tourism meant to respect the integrity of the natural landscapes), of ecological biodiversity (in accordance with the requirements of some segments of tourists who want to spend their holiday/free time outdoors) on one hand and ecopedographic characteristics of the space, on the other hand, will permanently brake the spectacular increases reflected in statistics regarding the tourist welcoming structures, making impossible for for this destination to generally raise at the level of a tourist destination from Romania, such as „seaside, exclusively Constanţa”.

Functionally speaking, the ecotourism on the outlet market mainly unfolds individually or at a low scale (groups of 25 tourists and hotels with less than 100 beds) and is achieved through small and medium tour-operators in natural areas; it has an educational component and specialized local guides are used (Epler Wood, 2002). Also, in the world eco-tourist destinations, the building limits are restricted, firstly the governments are responsible for planning, elaborating the policy and arranging on areas that help ensuring the fact that there is no excessive building (Epler Wood, 2002). The capacity of support for The Reserve regarding the tourism must be known through the newly-launched project” Danube Parks” (www.capital.ro).

The Danube Delta has reached a more advanced level of the tourist activity after a long period of time, even troubled by failures, thanks to many attempts at different level, individual or collective, with public or private responsibility, focused on the tourist activity and tourists. The criterion of durable development of the natural resources has permanently been followed having as permanent strategic objectives connected with the preservation and efficient usage of the renewable resources (water, vegetation and fauna). It is essential to mention the first legal actions, when 13 tourist

villages are experimentally stated through The Order of the Ministry of Tourism no. 744/16 July 1973, among which also Mahmudia and Murighiol from The Danube Delta, and this shortly after Romania (the

70's) "signs" for the beginning of the rural tourism through promoting a tourist programme by O.N.T. Carpați – Bucharest (Glăvan, 2003).



**THE SELECTION WITHIN THE NETWORK OF TYPES OF ACCOMODATION UNITS AND PROVIDING APPROPRIATE ACCOMODATION SERVICES**

From the analysis of the quantification of some series of statistic data on the receiving/ welcoming units functioning as accomodation units (types, capacity, degree of confort) starting with 1994, including the ones reproduced in Figure 2, connected with the situatio on the field, as it has been perceived by us, results a situation influenced by motivations coming from the inside (which are up to communities), and also from the outside (here also including the tourists' preferences).

The selection and shuttering have gradually been ensured for almost 20 years, situation which we believe to get head in perspective, bringing the accomodation structure to the standards imposed, through the application of the recommandations from 2003 by the World Organisation of Tourism to the

National Tourist authorities in order to support the implementation of a certification in order to achieve a durable tourism to satisfy the national peculiarity, but to be based on the one that is valid internationally; a system of certification in ecotourism (Talabă, Talpaș et al, 2008) was not established in 2008, although there were already systems of certification in this domain some general and global, others local and specialized.

Here, besides the restrictions in the limits of building as eco-destination there are also the morpho-pedo-hydrographic characteristics of the delta space. The accomodation units are not so big (www.ddbra.ro)in comparison with those in Tulcea (hotels with more than 20 rooms, hostels and motels with more than 10 rooms), the maximum height being only 10 m., the equivalent of 3 levels, among which one loft or roof, except the unique buildings.

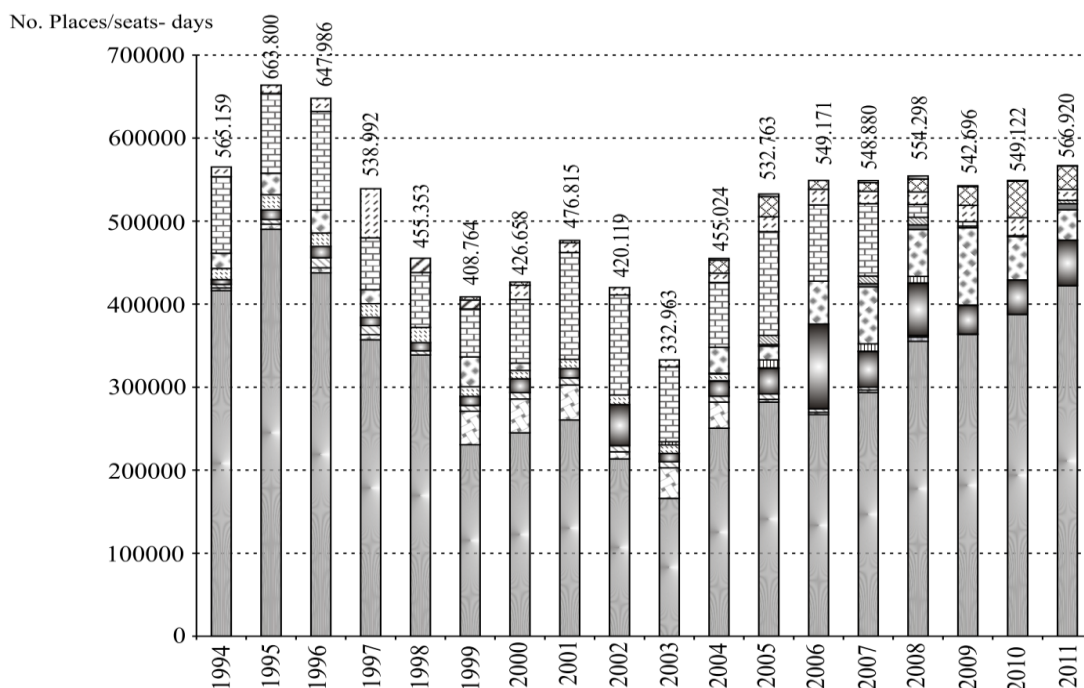
There is variety in the network of tourist accomodation units (Figure 2). It is made of the majority of types of units existing in Romania, according to the legislation in force, as effect of a game in keeping some in spite of the possible

fluctuations in number, capacity and confort, and others' inclusion or exclusion, lately coming into prominence the agrotourist hostels, tourist hostels and tourist villas – as the tourists' favourites.

For example, unlike the tourist hostels, the agrotourist ones are registered after 1999, moment which coincides with the measures taken at a legal level regarding the development of the Romanian

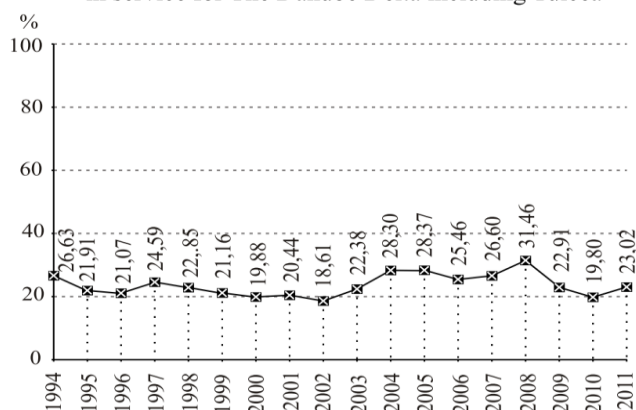
tourism, the revival of the Romanian village through the rural tourism; in the data series of the National Institute of Statistics *the urban hostels have recently redefined in tourist hostels, and agrotourist hostels comprise the rural and agrotourist hostel, a consequence of reviewing the typology of accomodation units, in accordance with The Minister's Order no. 636/2008.*

Fig. 2 The capacity of tourist accomodation in service on types of welcoming tourist structures for the Danube Delta including Tulcea



- Accommodation spaces on fluvial and maritime ships
- Agrotourist hostels
- Tourist hostels
- Students and preschool children camps
- Tourist houses
- Tourist stopovers
- Camping sites
- Holiday villages
- Bungalows
- Tourist chalets
- Cottages/ Villas
- Inns
- Motels
- Hostels
- Hotels

Fig. 3 The Index of net usage of the capacity of accomodation in service for The Danube Delta including Tulcea



Source: Processing the information according to the National Institute of Statistics- Data Basis TEMPO - TUR104C, TUR105C (accessed on October 23 rd 2012)

The tendency to increase their number, the capacity of accommodation in service and of comfort in the places from the area of the branch St. Gheorghe and of Tulcea, where the access is easy by motor means of transport, make us keep the idea we previously mentioned (Soare, Zugravu et al, 2011), namely that the *agrotourist hostel is the accommodation unit from the rural space as an element in promoting the value of the local culture and the development of rural economy*. Where the local people have become shareholders and owners of agrotourist hostels these are *an alternative for the decrease in the agricultural incomes and of those from fishing and pisciculture*, providing the visitors a natural and rural experience, and for increasing the monthly average income per household as a result of agrotourism; there are little farms within the Delta with a mixed profile, belonging to the owners of agricultural lands. These also involve feminine work force alongside with the masculine one. Many specialized studies have shown that woman's work is essential for the survival of the agricultural households, a domain traditionally led / run by women, focused on promoting the values of the local culture and the environment protection.

The increase of requirements, of attractiveness towards this type of accommodation units is given by the fact that the inventive entrepreneurs have built hostels in chime with the local environment, using local materials and domestic design, allowing the tourists to stay in a relatively high comfort enjoying the opportunities to see even the magnificent fauna "from their doorway". The entrepreneurs are supported by The National Association of Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism (ANTREC), a marketing consortium of the rural accommodation, through the involvement in promoting 92 hostels from those 126 existing in the county Tulcea ([www.cazarelapensiune.ro](http://www.cazarelapensiune.ro)).

The accommodation spaces on the fluvial and maritime ships are the foreign tourists' favorites when it comes to overnight staying (generally in a proportion of 80-90% from the total of overnight staying each year), according to a statistics. Based on the reality on the field we can state that a great number of the total of the accommodation spaces at the level of our country belong to The Danube Delta and that the values for this are much bigger than the statistics show; many years ago they were not in the data basis even though they were the object of a reduced tourist activity.

The decrease in the accommodation capacity in service for students and preschool children, taking into account that education for the environment is learnt in school, does not seem a solution for a durable development.

#### THE INCREASE OF STAYING PERIOD AND OF THE INDEX OF NET USAGE OF THE CAPACITY OF ACCOMODATION IN SERVICE

Finding new ideas, considered success factors in the development of tourism, accompanied by "a strict selection" and ensuring the services at the level of European standards (comfort, nourishment/alimentation) can lead to an increase of the degree of net usage of the capacity of accommodation in service and increasing the period of stay.

The fact that the period 2003-2009 indicates values a little higher of the net usage of the capacity of accommodation in service in comparison with the rest of the analysed period (Figure 3 - The index of net usage of the accommodation capacity from The Danube Delta, including Tulcea), although this is extremely low under 30 %, means a slight revival of the situation (insignificant but existent), with a maximum in 2008, reflected in the average duration of stay. For the time being, the stay period remains around 2 days, an obvious aspect even from the graphic attached, the total number of nights generally being twice as much as the total of arrivals (Figure 1). *A tendency to increase the stay period appears from the foreign tourists.*

There are increased chances to satisfy the motivations of different groups of potential Romanian or foreign tourists (youngsters, elderly couples, high-street tourists, very experimented and adventurous tourists, etc) interested in natural landscapes, entertainment, circuits, sports, history/cultural patrimony, local characteristics and cuisine, scenery and rural environment, city-break holidays to influence the quality of tourist offer and its diversification, as it is shown in "the Strategic Plan for developing a durable tourism in The Danube Delta".

An additional point in ensuring the motivations can be given by the restoration of ecological functions as a result of the deterioration of natural habitats of The Danube Delta, situation which can entail the development of resources typical for the area and to the traditional economic activities of the local population- fishing, hunting, reed harvesting, grazing and entertainment ([www.ddbra.ro](http://www.ddbra.ro)). The more varied and complex these resources are, and especially untainted by anthropic/ human activities, the higher the tourist interest is, and the tourist activities they generate are more valuable and attractive, answering many tourist motivations ([www.mdrl.ro](http://www.mdrl.ro)).

The tourist's persuading to spend more time than probable to repeat the experience would represent the success of the communities from The Danube Delta. It is very important for them to understand and promote the motivation that brings the tourists from the city there.

The findings at the worldwide level consider as something normal for a community to have success – *it must be more of a destination than a stopover, and the key to establish a successful tourist package is to exist a community that strives to attract tourists* (Wilson, Fesenmaier et al, 2001). In that direction the community that were successful in making tourists visit them, stay, spend money and even come back in that place, have acted, have established successful tourist packages, have developed tourist attractions of high quality involving the local authorities and the surrounding areas (even through beautifying campaigns), have created the appropriate mixture for business for tourism including, appropriate accommodation, restaurants, group of tourist attractions to make the tourists stay, and stores where tourists can spend their money.

These communities have worked to keep business and tourist attractions, addressed to certain groups of tourists, especially families and people of average – superior class with available relatively high incomes. They have tried to gather individual tourist attractions such as hunting, fishing, boating / rowing boats, golf and canoeing. At the same time they have worked to sponsor the special events connected with the local tourist attractions such as fishing tournaments for communities with outdoor entertaining tourist attractions and historic festivals for towns with historic sites. These events have helped promoting the local tourism as a package.

Thus through the actions of the community, as well as of the other actors involved, the objectives LDSC 3 (Creating conditions of economic growth and generating jobs, one of the 4 Head Strategic Lines of the Community FROM The National Strategic Programme of Rural Development) (www.madr.ro) can be achieved through the measure entitled *The Renewal, development of the villages, improving the basic services for the rural economy and population and making the most of the rural inheritance*, proposed within the strategic objective "The Increase of the attractiveness of rural areas" through the development of tourism.

*The development of the existing forms of tourism, announced and admitted as practiced* on the territory Of The Biosphere Reserve Danube Delta by the Administration of The Biosphere Reserve Danube Delta (www.ddbra.ro) (tourism for rest and entertainment, tourism of knowledge (itinerant), specialized tourism –scientific, rural tourism, tourism for water sports, photo-safari, special programmes for the young for knowing, understanding and appreciating nature, tourism for practicing angling and hunting as a sport) or the *application on the ones recently proposed*, with addressability to other market segments, richer and more interested – *being another alternative*. As development, on the basis of a qualitative evaluation and of the sustainable economic importance of tourism in "The strategic plan for developing a durable tourism in The Danube Delta"

(www.ddbra.ro), one can propose the necessity to focus on the activities for the destination The Biosphere Reserve Danube Delta and the county Tulcea – on entertaining tourism prioritizing the residential tourism of length, organized or unorganized. The emphasis is on this form probably because of the existence of a private fleet of leisure boats even though we cannot find out the exact number of these boats as they do not appear in the statistic data of INSSE.

The Master Plan of The Danube Delta (mmediu.ro) (completed in 2009) catches: the *agrotourism at Balnenii de Sus* (village Mahmudia, through keeping the residential character and enlarging the inhabited area to the east and the existence of small firms with mixed profile of the owners of agricultural lands), Uzlina (village Murighiol), village Caraorman, Mile 23, C.A Rosetti și Periprava (both in village C.A Rosetti), Letea, Sfiștofca, Ilgani de Sus, Tudor Vladimirescu (suburb of county Tulcea); seaside/coastline or spa tourism for Sulina and Sf Gheorghe (a little resort is proposed in the land outside the place), angling at Maliuc (village Maliuc), and ecotourism, generally for the sites mentioned as in the case of agrotourism, including Sulina. And through "The Annual plan of the development of destinations, tourist forms and products that aim at achieving more objectives regarding planning and developing the ecotourism at the level of our country the frame of applying the ecotourism for the analysed space is perfected."

The Danube Delta benefits because it is known that the more varied and complex the resources of a space are, but especially untainted by anthropic activities, the higher the interest for them is, and the tourist activities they generate are more valuable and more attractive, satisfying many tourist motivations (www.mdrl.ro).

#### THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND THE VALORIZATION OF THEIR OWN LOCAL PATRIMONY

The effects of the encouragement actions for those about 25 local communities are becoming a success through the active participation to protect, preserve and create economic value to their own local and regional patrimony and to hand over/ pass on to the new generations of consumers/ tourists their own cultural values, ecological reconstruction and space preserving actions to which they participate through the sustainable usage of resources. The encouragement, under different forms, may also constitute an alternative of keeping the youngsters in rural areas if they reach welfare conditions comparable to the situation in which they will migrate (Calado, Rodrigues et al, 2011).

Each community is given equal chances of "manifestation" in displaying their cultural

inheritance/heritage, as a mark of identity and as a distinctive feature of a social group, so of a place, although it may be about an object, a monument, an inherited craft or a symbolic representation.

The cultural patrimony of the space has a historic and dynamic load which is within the importance of the Danube and its mouths in the international trade traffic as an area of meeting for the interests of the great world powers in the last centuries (of the installation of The European Commission of the Danube in the middle of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century and the founding and development of the present town Sulina, of the geographical location of the ports within the Romanian Principalities, today Galați and Brăila, near The Black Sea as links in the merchandise traffic and their porto-franco status, the existence of consulates and viceconsulates, etc) and secondly of the presence of a multitude of ethnic groups (Turkish, Greek, Russian-Lipovan, Ukrainian) and of their religious status, just as a result of the position and functioning of the space analysed as an entrance gate to the east within the European continent, as a transit and refuge place in the south –western end of Russia.

For example, the maintenance or the recovery of the organisation of the most important cultural festivals, of the traditions or events with a local peculiarity, in which the local community is involved, is obvious when consulting more sources (the sites of the town councils, the site [www.info-delta.ro](http://www.info-delta.ro)).

This direction of development may be followed much more because there are a lot of opportunities, the most important ones are without echo, are not promoted in a way as to have a great impact, the ones in the rural space have a more religious character, they are not organised in the warm period of the year when tourism is in full development, there are no events to highlight the distinct characteristics of the ethnic groups (clothing, music and dance, cuisine based on the natural resources obtained through hunting and fishing).

Even the cookery patrimony from the rural areas corresponds to the memory of the entire group, its roots that generate a feeling of belonging to that particular area, embarking it with value. The cookery skills and practices can consequently differentiate an area from the other and are part and parcel of the individual, collective and territorial construction (Bessière, 1998). It is unanimously acknowledged and accepted that some places dispose of a numerous community of Russian-Lipovan who from an ancient lifestyle manage to define a brand in cuisine at the level of Romania for this space – on cooking the fish, like in many situations and spaces at European level.

However, the fact that the local population accepts granting the possibility to integrate its vision in the process of the durable development of tourism thus of duties and responsibilities, becoming more than an observer in the development process of tourism – is a small but visible step. The success will be greater when it becomes a collective interest in the valorization of the cultural patrimony and when a greater number of communities claim, defend and appreciate it, seeing it as a source of income, a label and an instrument of local development.

## CONCLUSIONS

The outcome that is seen as a result of the efforts and actions undertaken or even in a proposal stage, causes *the tourist destination The Danube Delta and Tulcea* to become a durable tourist destination, the only one at the level of our country. And this only on condition that the administration of the destination is done in a durable manner and if the process of management of the tourist destination is efficiently controlled in order to make the tourist destination more attractive, to protect nature and the cultural individuality of the local population and thus to provide opportunities of the development of tourism within the limits of a responsible development.

There are still disjunctions that come from the level of correct awareness of the benefits of tourism for the local communities from the rural environment, generated firstly by education and their degree of culture (even at the level of the local decision factors-townhalls and prefectures), from the fluctuations of the work force with a high degree of culture capable to understand the tourist phenomenon in its depth and the environmental issues, from the carelessness manifested by some community people with success potential, from the hostile attitude of some people in the community towards the Administration of The Biosphere Reserve Danube Delta and the government, as a result of the restrictions of some economic activities specific to those areas, and a lack of countervailing stimuli, from the extremely low degree of coverage of the quality of life at the level of all communities and ensuring the necessary comfort to all the tourists through a 100% coverage of the improvements with an edilitar character (without using the so called drinkable water from The Danube) and ensuring quality services in all welcoming tourist structures.

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