

THE ASSESSMENT OF TOURISM POTENTIAL - THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS AN EFFICIENT LOCAL TOURIST POLICY

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Abstract

This paper underlines the necessary interaction between the administrative decision and the valorization of academic expertise in terms of tourism. The structure of the paper deals with the assessment of the touristic potential for Galați city as a primary critical action to be substantiated in the local touristic policy. The assessment of the local potential is realized according to the classical geographical canons, while applying a new methodology for quantifying the most important parameters. The conclusion states that Galați city has an obvious unbalanced potential, having nevertheless a good-medium potential that the local administration should manage correctly.

Key words: *anthropic, Galați, natural, potential assessment*

JEL Classification: *P 48, Z 32*

I. INTRODUCTION

It is well known that the diversity of protagonists involved in tourism – experts, tourism service providers, politicians and beneficiaries/tourists – always interferes with the decision and the practice of the local administration. The policy of tourism administration structures is highly important due to the complexity of inter-organizational relations that implies. Often, a touristic potential considered as weak according to the rules of classic geographical-economical evaluations can be enhanced by means carried on by specialists of the local administrative apparatus. Anyway, this approach requires a thorough knowledge of the tourism reality on the spot.

Specialized literature is extremely rich concerning this topic and background as well as the touristic potential. Thus, according to Griffin et al, when dealing with issues related to tourism, the local public administration has three groups of indicators:

- a) Goals (assessment of administrative goals – environmental, economic, social and administrative);
- b) Policy (clear and capable management of tourism);
- c) Jurisdiction (monitoring and maintenance of regulations) (Griffin et al. 2012)

In the present paper, we analyze the case of Galați city where the local administration has chosen a prospective approach regarding the tourism potential of the city, as a basis for a future local strategy to stimulate the tourist traffic. The collaboration between the City Hall and the University can be a pertinent and significant example because, from the touristic point of view, the city on the Danube still holds on some imagistic stereotypes that are old and inappropriate for a real tourism development.

II. METHODOLOGY AND NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

In terms of methodology, the present paper outlines the steps, the results and the way to use the study regarding the touristic potential of Galați city. In order to develop the analysis of potential, we used the field research as well as the available bibliography and the cartographic material. For the assessment of the tourism potential, the methodological path followed the classical plan: data collection – data analysis – identifying problems – resources and perspectives.

The resulting material was submitted to a preliminary analysis made by the members of the local council, and then it was incorporated in the framework-document that subsequently followed the procedure of informing/ report and public debate.

In order to link the prospective approach to the regulation legal framework, first, we drew up an inventory of all legislative acts that directly concern the local tourism. Thus, we identified:

- Government decree no. 58/1998 regarding the organisation and operation of tourism activity in Romania (with amendments) and the Disposition 913/30.10.2009 regarding the creation of the interinstitutional working party for supervising the preparation of the Methodology concerning the analysis of the tourism potential of basic territorial and administrative division for the local government;
- Law no. 5/2000 regarding the National Land Management Planning - 3rd section - protected areas, published in the Official Gazette 152/2000, position 2.402;
- Romania National Tourism Master Plan 2007 – 2008;

- Government Emergency Ordinance 142/2008 regarding National Land Management Planning, section VIII touristic areas;
 - Government Resolution no.20/2012 regarding the endorsement of the Multiannual Program for Marketing and Tourism Promotion and of the Multiannual program for the Development of touristic destinations, forms and products;
 - Government Resolution no. 132/2013 regarding the endorsement of the foundation of Territorial divisions for Tourism Promotion;
- As well as
- Galați County Council Resolutions:
 - Resolution 46/1994 concerning the setting of the official protection system for some areas and monuments in Galați County.
 - Resolution 431/2007 concerning the endorsement of some obligations of Galați County Council for the implementation of the project *The Development of Cross-border Tourism in Gârboavele Forest*;
 - Resolution 766/2012 concerning the partnership agreement between Galați County Council, Dunărea de Jos University of Galați and the Cross-border Cooperation and European Integration Agency from Cahul, Moldavia in terms of implementation of the project *Improvement of the Economic and Social Environment in Border Areas by means of Rural tourism*;
 - Resolution 767/2012 concerning the partnership agreement between Galați County Council, the Natural History Museum Complex from Galați, Cahul City Hall, Republic of Moldova, Infomedia Association Cahul Subsidiary, Republic of Moldova, Agency of Sustainable Development and European Integration “Lower Danube” Euroregion; Izmail, Ukraine and the Department of Culture Izmail City council, Ukraine and the endorsement of some obligations that fall under the responsibility of Galați City Council in order to implement the project *Lower Danube Eurotourism*;
 - Resolution 741/2012 concerning the endorsement of some obligations that fall under the

responsibility of Galați City Council, in order to implement the *project Competencies Development for Sustainable eco-tourism in the Lower Prut cross-border area*; and

- The General Urban Plan, the Local Regulation for Urban Plan and the Land Development Strategy for Galați city (proposition in *Strategia de Dezvoltare Spațială a Municipiului Galați* (endorsement pending).

Moreover, as the specialized literature (meaning the tourism geography and tourism and services economy) often operates with words whose meanings are not unanimously accepted we tried to give a short conceptual explanation therefore the words have been explained as defined by the law and/or the International Tourism Organization or following the meaning given by the Romanian specialists in this field (in cases where there is not a common vocabulary).

III. ASSESSEMENT OF NATURAL AND ANTHROPIC TOURISM RESOURCES

According to National Land Management Planning section VIII – touristic areas, adopted by Government Emergency Ordinance 142/2008, Galați County is a territorial and administrative division with a high concentration of tourism resources (cf. Government Emergency Ordinance, Riders 1,2) without problems in terms of tourism infrastructure (cf. Government Emergency Ordinance, Riders 3, 4) of technical infrastructure (Government Emergency Ordinance, Riders 5, 6). This classification is made with respect to quantitative criteria and reference points with wide generality and national applicability.

However, if we take into account punctual analysis and comparisons, the situation of the tourism potential at the level of Galați City is more differentiated.

In the approach of identification and assessment of local tourism resources we used the categories and the groups of resources classified according to fig. 1.

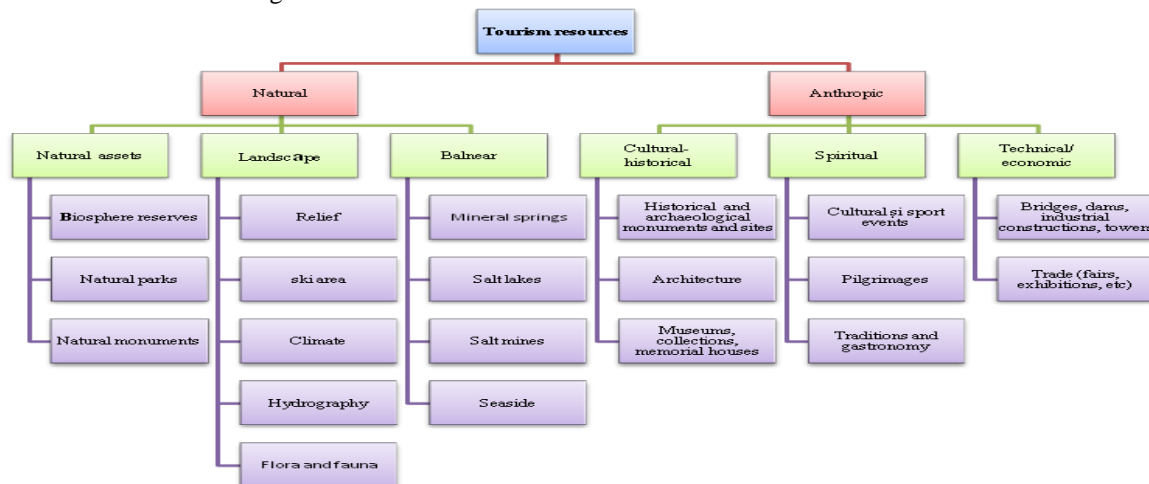


Figure 1. – Types of tourism resources

The detailing of each category was accompanied by quantification by score according to "The methodology regarding the tourism potential assessment within the basic territorial and administrative divisions" made by the inter-institutional work Group appointed by the Regional Development Minister by disposition ¹.

3.1. Natural resources

Among the components of the natural framework on the administrative territory of Galati city, 11 hydrographic elements (rivers and lakes), a forest area and two natural reserves: Prut Isle and the fossil area Tighina-Barboși were identified as significant in terms of tourism. Several natural elements in different stages of improvement can also be mentioned (table 1).

Table 1. Natural geographical elements significant for tourism

Natural element	Protected area	Features	Improvement works
The Danube		22 km long 4 km - the Danube esplanade	Yes
	The Danube Delta	< 1% on Galați territory	No
	The Prut isle	62 ha	No
The Prut	The Natural Park "The Lower Prut Flood Plain"	community importance	No
The Siret	Lower Siret River	Flood Plain	No
Lake Zătun		28,5 ha	Yes
Lake Brateș	Brateș lake	2069 ha <i>special protected avifaunistic area</i>	Yes
Lake Mălina		127 ha	Yes
Lake Cătușa		30 ha	No
Lake Seromgal		2 ha	No
Lake „La Salcâmi”		5 ha	Yes
Lake Vânători		10 ha	Yes
Balta Moartă		2 ha	No
Gârboavele Forest	Gârboavele forest	Of community importance 219 ha	Yes
	Tirighina Barboși	Paleontologic reserve (1 ha)	No

We notice the absence of the „balnear” category among the natural resources categories while „landscape” category is represented by only two groups of elements – hydrographic, fauna and flora. Under these circumstances of a limited natural diversity, it is absolutely necessary to maximize the value of the existing categories.

3.2. Anthropoc tourism resources

Given the diversity of anthropic elements with touristic potential, they have been grouped following the criteria used in tourism geography for the classification of anthropic resources (see fig. No.1) as well as according to their regulatory framework (if there is one). Since the possible number of elements to be valorized is too great to be presented in this paper we have chosen to submit here their brief synthesis.

B.1. Historical – cultural resources

Protected built areas

The Law no. 5/2000 concerning the endorsement of the National Land Management Planning Section III – protected areas - identifies and operates with 27 categories of monuments. Among these, there are only two on the territory of the city of Galati: Church Precista respective (*churches and monasteries category*) and the Roman castrum Tirighina Barboși (castrum, Roman byzantine fortresses category).

Historical monuments

According to the Minister of Culture written Disposition No. 2.361/2010, the list of historical monuments for Galati County has a number of 266 objectives. From this point of view, strictly in terms of quantity, Galati County is among the counties with a moderate number at national level and is situated on the 39th place out of 41 (followed by Ialomița and Brăila

¹ Disposition no.913/2009 concerning the endorsement of the inter-institutional work group for the supervision during the elaboration of the paper „The

methodology regarding the tourism potential assessment within the basic territorial and administrative divisions”

counties). Among the 266 monuments, 112 are situated in the city of Galați, that is why the city is on the 4th place at the South-Eastern region in terms of historical heritage concentration, after the city of Constanța (132 monuments), Focșani (128 monuments) and Brăila (115 monuments)².

A short analysis of these four monument categories points out to the following:

1. In category I (archaeology), out of the six different sites only Precista and Tirighina sites (also mentioned supra) can actually be capitalized as the others have inadequate localisation in order to be included in a touristic tour;

2. In category II (architecture), out of the 178 elements (positions 97-175 from the list, see supra), we find a great number in the area of the three urban groups – Domnească Street, Eroilor Street and N. Bălcescu Street – including the old part of the city, that explains the (re)evaluation of that area and a thorough concern in order to valorise its tourism potential;

3. Category III (monuments of public interest, positions 240-254 from the list) gathers elements that raise a weak touristic interest and their reevaluation could be enhanced after their inclusion in thematic touristic tours.

4. In category IV (funerary/memorial monuments), there are only two sites in Galați – the former Bulgarian school and the memorial house Nicolae Mantu. Other memorial houses can be identified and nominated in order to be included in a possible tour.

5. In the entire list of monuments, there is only one monument classified in category A (national importance) – the Roman Castrum Tirighina Barboși whose recovery and harnessing has already begun but is far from being valorized to the extent of its importance.

Museums and collections

In Galați city there are five museums covering a rich thematic area – history, ethnography, art and culture, science and technique, natural sciences, religion and Christianity, numismatics, filately, etc.

Beside these, we can mention the open air complex of monumental art „Metal sculpture camp” with most of the sculptures situated in the Danube Esplanade area. They are a kind of unique attraction given their position, theme, size, technique and the artistic symbols.

B.2. Spiritual places

a. Cultural events

In the category of cultural events with touristic relevance we include festivals, concerts, contests, exhibitions, etc. We can also add, distinctly, sporting

events and contests. As the number and the type of cultural events vary from one year to another, the present study is interested only in the ones with regular ongoing for many years.

In terms of attractiveness potential, we observe the scarcity of events in this category as only one event has national/international echo.

b. Sporting events

The sports events that take place regularly are more numerous (table no.4), and the annual schedule can also include other events with effects at touristic level (the national women’s basketball championship, the national men’s basketball championship, the national seniors’ hockey championship, the national football league).

c. Pilgrimages

The existence of a great number of orthodox churches and other religions churches or places of worship transforms the city into a place with a high religious and ecumenical tourism potential. The Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Lower Danube – St. Andrew and the majority of the old churches in town (table no. 5) are the most known places in terms of spiritual and religious attractiveness.

Moreover, the pilgrimage has become a special phenomenon during the last years within the Lower Danube Diocese and the most important one takes place on St. Andrew’s Day, the Patron Saint of the city.

d. Traditions and culinary art

Even if it has lost a significant part from the old personality due to its multi-ethnicity, Galați still has traces and rests of culinary traditions and customs. On the other hand, the contemporary cultural confluences are reflected in the opening of ethnic restaurants (table no.6), and they are a positive point in the monotonous and uniform landscape of the most of the food and beverage establishments.

In terms of local specificity, after we interviewed several persons, from different age categories, we came to the conclusion that, in addition to fish that should always mark the local cuisine, we can add other products. Some of these, without being pure local food, can attract by their quality and originality – Mucenici (dough arranged in the form of an 8-figure, baked and brushed with honey and crushed nuts), Little Lord’s diapers (baked batters, well soaked with a syrup, with grated lemon rind and rum), millet beer, baklava, zacusca (a vegetable spread - the main ingredients are roasted eggplant, sautéed onions, tomato paste, and roasted red peppers), etc.

² At the South-east region level, the city of Buzău (with 79 units) and the city of Tulcea (51 units) have a weaker local heritage than the city of Galați. At

national level, the most monuments are found in Bucharest (2627).

B.3. Techno-economic resources

a. Towers, bridges, industrial places

Although less common, these kinds of tourism resources complete the local palette, and we can mention here two major objectives in Galați: the television tower and River Station - Navigation Palace (the current headquarters of several institutions, including the „Maritime Danube Harbour Commission” or "Romanian River Navigation Company Navrom").

b. Trades, fairs, exhibitions

Just like in the case of cultural events, the fairs and exhibitions list may vary significantly from one year to another. However, these last years, there are a

few fairs to be mentioned as they attracted a large number of participants from both the county and the surrounding area as well as from Romania or from abroad – The International beekeeping Fair, The Autumn Fair, The Collectors Fair, The Educational “World education” Fair, The Travel Fair, the Bird Exhibition, etc.

IV. THE TOURIST POTENTIAL – SYNTHETIC TABLE

Taking into account the above analyzed data, the (quantified) tourism potential position for Galați city is presented as it follows in table 1 (using the methodology:

Resource type	Category	Criteria	Galati points
Natural	Natural framework	<input type="checkbox"/> position by relief levels	1
		plain (1 p)	1
		hills and plateaux (2p)	
		sub-Carpathian Mountains(3p)	
		mountains (4p)	
		seaside and the Danube Delta (4p)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> geomorphology	0
		The presence of some gorges, steep, karstic relief, vicinity of stately units 1	0
		<input type="checkbox"/> vegetation	0,5
		Forest over 30% (1p)	0,5
		Forest under 30% (0,5p)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> fauna	0
		large hunting interest (1p)	0
		medium hunting interest (0,5p)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> hydrography	1
	The presence of some lakes, fish farms, mineral springs, waterfalls 1	1	
	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	1	
High interest (2p)			
Medium interest (1p)	1		
Maximum of 10 p.	3,5/10		
Natural therapeutic factors	Maximum of 10 p.	0/10	
Protected natural areas	Maximum of 5 p.	5/5	
Total 25			8,5/25

V. CONCLUSION

Assessing the potential of Galați city is an important step in the process of tourism development at the local level. *The analysis reveals a medium-good potential for Galati city. More precisely, the overall score obtained at the level of Galați city is 33,5 points (33,5/50).* It is obvious that the city has an unbalanced

potential that should be capitalized via a rigorous and adapted strategy for developing some touristic activities. On one side that is correct, but on the other hand it could be the effect of too general evaluation grid. In a future article will expose also the tourism infrastructure component, thus giving the two dimensions of a fully local potential.

VI. REFERENCES

1. Law no. 5/2000 regarding the National Land Management Planning - 3rd section - protected areas, published in the Official Gazette 152/2000, position 2.402.
2. Romania National Tourism Master Plan 2007 – 2008.
3. Government Emergency Ordinance 142/2008 regarding National Land Management Planning, section VIII touristic areas.
4. Government Resolution no.20/2012 regarding the endorsement of the Multiannual Program for Marketing and Tourism Promotion and of the Multiannual program for the Development of touristic destinations, forms and products.
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