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Conference Paper

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Provided in Cooperation with:

The Research Institute for Agriculture Economy and Rural Development (ICEADR), Bucharest

Suggested Citation: Ciobanu, Eugenia-Dorina; Turek-Rahoveanu, Petruța (2017) : The tourism and agrotourism potential of the Tulcea and Vrancea Counties: Comparison, In: Agrarian Economy and Rural Development - Realities and Perspectives for Romania. 8th Edition of the International Symposium, November 2017, Bucharest, The Research Institute for Agricultural Economy and Rural Development (ICEADR), Bucharest, pp. 106-109

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/190885>

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THE TOURISM AND AGROTOURISM POTENTIAL OF THE TULCEA AND VRANCEA COUNTIES - COMPARISON

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Abstract: *Being part of the South-East Region of the country, Tulcea County as well as Vrancea County are important tourism areas, with high tourist potential, harmoniously distributed throughout the counties territories.*

Tulcea County is a gate towards the Danube Delta Biosphere Reservation, ranked on the third place by ecological importance in the world, is a tourism destination unique in our country, with large possibilities of development. Throughout the County there are 1 Municipality, 5 cities, 46 de parishes and 133 villages, which means that the area is mostly rural.

Vrancea County, located at Muntenia's borderline to Moldova, in the area of the Curvature Carpathians, is also an important tourist area with real chances of increasing the capitalizing degree of existing tourism potential.

It consists of 1 Municipality, 4 cities, 64 parishes and 331 villages, the rural area being dominant here also. The standard of living of the inhabitants from the rural area, in both counties is not a very good one, poverty being the problem which the inhabitants have been facing for years, in spite of the tourism potential that is not capitalized to its maximum.

The present article aims to analyze the tourist potential of the counties, to show the problems that limit the tourism activity and to highlight a few development and capitalizing possibilities of the tourist potential, on full capacity.

Key words: *tourism, agrotourism, tourist potential, tourist activity*

JEL Classification: *Q 11*

INTRODUCTION

Our country has a rich tourism potential, natural as well as anthropical, more diversified than other tourism competitor countries but, due to the fact that it's not fully capitalized, the standard of living of the inhabitants from the areas with a rich tourist potential is low, as they are living in extreme poverty in most of the rural areas.

The Danube Delta Biosphere Reservation, one of Romania's strong points from a tourism point of view, the tourist target that holds the 1st place in Europe when it comes to beauty and scientific importance and the 3rd place regarding the ecological importance in the world, all of this making Tulcea County one of the most visited counties by Romanian and foreign tourists. [3]

Also in the South-East region, another County, Vrancea County, has an appeal for tourists and it's visited by them every year due to the tourist potential diversity, to the enchanting country landscapes and the cities charm, that are rich in history and tourist attractions that are important from a cultural point of view, nationally as well as globally. [4]

In spite of the richness of the tourism of this South-East Region, respective of the Tulcea and Vrancea counties, the counties that are being analyzed in our article, the inhabitants from those areas deal with poverty, their standard of living bordering extreme poverty.

A possibility to increase their standard of living would be getting involved in tourism and agrotourism activities in order to capitalize the existing tourism potential and rendering a quality tourism product for the tourists who go, more and more, towards these types of tourism, namely, rural tourism and agrotourism.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The analysis of the two counties from the South-East Region, regarding the tourism and

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agrotourism potential, has been made with the help of the following indicators: the tourism development tally by localities for the Tulcea and Vrancea counties, the number of approved tourism units from the two counties of the analyzed region and the number of authorized rural tourism boards and agrotourism boards from the two counties, ranked by quality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the statistical data below, respectively the tourism development tally for the localities from Tulcea and Vrancea Counties, from the South-East Development Region, data that have been taken from The List of Areas with High Tourism Potential – Annex 10 from Sub measure 6.2 – Support for Setting Up Non-Agricultural Activities in Rural Areas – from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development/The Agency for Rural Investments Financing website, we can conclude that most localities that are developed from a tourism point of view and also have great tourism development possibilities are in the Tulcea and Vrancea Counties, the only one between them being Constanța County.

Boasting a number of 24 localities, Tulcea County sums up a 21,2% percentage of total administrative-territorial units with high tourism potential.

This County's advantage, as previously said in the rows above, is the existence of the Danube Delta Reservation on its territory, a well known and visited tourist attraction that has real possibilities of an even greater development and capitalization in the future.

The localities with a great tourism potential from Tulcea also have in their territory important reservations, parts of the Delta, the Măcin Mountains, hills, etc.

Vrancea County, ranked third by tourism development, has 19 localities with high tourism development potential, the calculated percentage being 17% of total administrative-territorial units that have tourism development possibilities from The South-East Development Region.

Vrancea attracts tourists and has localities with high tourism potential as well, that are being tallied in the table below through the availability of rustic landscapes and by conserving the traditions, the history and the culture of the area.

Most localities from the development region that we are analyzing have scores between 20-29 points, we can see in the table below that 63 localities out of 113 from the region are in this category, summing a 56% percent of total tallied in the 20-29 points category.

Above 50 points, regarding the tourism development potential, no locality from the South-East Region fits into this category. [5]

Localities in the counties of Tulcea and Vrancea,
depending on the tourist development scores, 2016

County	UM	Total		Total points development potential					
		Locality	%	1-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-50	50
Tulcea	Nr. loc	24,0	21,2	X	2	14	7	1	X
	%	100,0	X	X	8,3	58,3	29,2	4,2	X
Vrancea	Nr. loc	19,0	16,8	X	1	13	5	X	X
	%	100,0	X	X	5,3	68,4	26,3	X	X
Total inhabitants reg. Southeast	Nr. loc	113,0	100,0	1	13	63	32	5	X
	%	100,0	X	0,9	11,5	55,8	28,3	4,4	X

Source: Data processed after Annex 9 - List of areas with high tourist potential

Moving on with the analysis of the two counties from the South-East Region regarding the tourist potential, we will continue to analyze the capitalizing degree of this tourism and agrotourism potential, based on the number of authorized tourist units, on types, categories and comfort degree, for each county.

In the table below, we can find the data from the reference year 2016.

Therefore we observe in the data from the table presented below, the large number of authorized units in the two counties that we are analyzing, summing approximate 22% of total approved units from the South-East Development Region, which has 6 reference counties. [6]

Number of authorized touristic enterprises in Tulcea and Vrancea,
Regiunea Sud-Est, 2016

County	UM	Total		Hotel	Pensions	
		Nuber	%		Total	Agrotouristic
Tulcea	Nr.units	394	18,8	22	168	11
Vrancea	Nr.units	90	4,1	8	57	7
Total inhabitants reg. Southeast	Nr.units	2219	100,0	451	433	32
	%	100	x	20,3	19,5	1,4

Sursa: date prelucrate după -Lista structurilor de primire turistice cu funcțiuni de cazare clasificate-

The number of boardings surpasses the number of other types of tourist accommodation structures, which proves the tourist's preference for nature, open-air and simplicity and the number of agrotourism boardings, increasing compared to the last years is significant too, proving that agrotourism amplifies and that tourists are heading more and more towards rural tourism, towards authentic and natural.

This helps us reach another partial conclusion, that the inhabitants from the rural area have opportunities to improve their standard of living by engaging in tourism and especially agrotourism activities that tourists look for in their counties.

The data in the table below, data that represent the number of rural tourist boardings and the number of agrotourist boardings sorted by comfort, show us the offer diversity of tourist boarding in the rural area, which is something that started, as I previously stated, with the tourist large demands towards the rural area in the last years, for spending leisure and holidays in the rural areas with a high tourist potential. [7]

The number of rural guesthouses and fauna in Tulcea and Vrancea
counties by quality in the year 2016

Județul	UM	Total unitati		Unitati dupa numarul de flori				
		Numar	%	“1“	“2“	“3“	“4“	“5“
Tulcea	Nr. unitati	12	34,3	X	5	7	X	X
	%	100,0	X	X	41,7	58,3	X	X
Vrancea	Nr. unitati	7	20,0	X	2	5	X	X
	%	100,0	X	X	28,6	71,4	X	X
Total inhabitants reg. Southeast	Nr. unitati	35	100,0	X	11	21	1	2
	%	100,0	X	X	31,4	60,0	2,9	5,7

Sursa: date prelucrate dupa: -Lista structurilor de primire turistice cu funcțiuni de cazare clasificate-

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, Tulcea and Vrancea counties, important counties from the South-East Development Region regarding tourist and agrotourist activity, have a rich tourism potential and

there is the possibility of developing this activity through which it can be capitalized to the maximum tourist potential of the areas and, of course, of improving the standard of living of the inhabitants of those areas, especially of those from the rural area.

Involving a large number of inhabitants in the tourism and agrotourism activity, promoting the areas and the tourist attractions, rendering a quality tourism product with multiple recreation possibilities and the chance to take part in the household activities, offering traditional food, handicraft activities to which tourists can partake, those are just a few of the measures that could be taken in order to develop those areas with a huge, not only tourist, development potential.

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