

The Role of the Dobrogea Local Action Group in Increasing the Quality of Tourist Services in the Region

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Abstract

This article highlights the contribution of Local Action Groups in supporting the economic and tourism development of a locality or region, with reference to the possibilities through which tourism, as an economic activity, can revitalize a local community or a region, providing solutions to stakeholders. increasing the quality of life.

The aim of this paper is to present the natural and anthropic tourism potential of Dobrogea, but also to find solutions for the development, protection, protection and sustainable use of Dobrogea through the Local Action Group, starting from tourist resources and ending with tourism as a branch. of the national economy. The fundamental arguments of this approach are provided by the large number of existing protected areas in the Dobrogea area, where the maintenance of cultural traditions offers the possibility of a better use of local resources. It is considered that the implications of tourism highlight its economic importance by the fact that it is a means of diversifying economic structures, capitalizing on resources, creating new jobs, and last but not least stimulating investment.

Keywords

Local Action Group, tourism, Dobrogea, sustainable capitalization

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Introduction

The paper has three main objectives which are set out below:

- identification, centralization and description of tourist resources in Dobrogea;
- appreciating the degree of conservation of the tourist potential and identifying the main problems related to anthropogenic aggression;
- finding solutions for the sustainable capitalization of the tourist potential of Dobrogea, at the level of Dobrogea Center, through the Local Action Groups, which are set up in order to access European funds for the development of rural tourism in the region.

At the level of the Dobrogea region, the main forms of tourism are: coastal tourism - a form of tourism already established for which there is an appreciable tourist potential, recreational and leisure tourism - a form of tourism that has a direct link with coastal tourism in terms of relaxation and work capacity restoration, cultural tourism - historical, based on the multitude of resources and sports tourism - a form of tourism suitable and practicable (Hu and Shen, 2021).

Coastal tourism has seen a continuous increase in all states that have such a tourist potential. In the contemporary period, coastal tourism is a very strong attraction. Regarding the infrastructure, until 1930 there were only certain constructions with temporary function which will then constitute the nucleus of some tourist complexes and further of some famous coastal tourist resorts.

1. Review of the scientific literature

At the territorial level, several actors can play an important and decisive role at regional or local level (professional actors, institutions, tourists and the population of the receiving area), if they look together at the effectiveness of a productive tourism system.

The productive system of tourism works by involving different actors. The analysis of the functioning and relationships, the mobilization and communication of these actors within this system seems interesting and relevant for our study territory, indeed we are led to question the identity of each actor and then the identity of the space. Since each actor is tempted to define the place according to different objectives (image and promotion of the territory, mobilization, etc.), it will be interesting to analyze the skills of each actor.

However, empirical research on this topic in developing countries such as Romania is exceptional. More relevant studies, focusing on the actor system, appear in the scientific literature of developed countries (Koba, 2020). Other researchers have studied the key role of actors, especially in countries where tourism is strengthened.

In the actors' system, within the Dobrogea Center LAG, the geographical proximity has a well-established interest: each actor pursues his own interest depending on his strategic skills, their relationship with the territory.

We can ask ourselves about the organization and structuring of this productive tourism system, but then the problem of collaboration between actors becomes essential. The system of stakeholders greatly influences the success of tourism development. This system is dominated by public and private actors: the system of institutional actors is organized within the state and other public administrations. These are distributed at different levels such as: national level, departmental level, local level and municipal level, and the private sphere includes mainly companies involved in the production of a large part of the services in the tourism economy. In addition, an important actor is the tourist himself who has the power to create the tourist space.

In the territory, intermediation is carried out by incoming agencies, but public and semi-public bodies responsible for tourism and consular chambers have a role to play. It should be noted that the intermediation is also carried out by the inhabitants, who interact with the tourists, inform them, welcome them, etc. The involvement of actors in the local development process must also mobilize appropriate means by opting for the principles of good governance (participation, cooperation, evaluation, transparency, accountability). Among the radical elements of this governance, actors must be responsible for the exercise of their functions related to knowledge, action or recognition. We believe that it seems necessary to move forward in the tools and methods of decision-making or strategy. This chapter is dedicated to presenting the theory of our study.

2. Research methodology

The work is a combination of geography, history, tourism, marketing. In writing this paper we have used several working methods that we will briefly present in this introduction. Observation - was used to perceive the most valuable natural and anthropic aspects, but also to study the bibliographic materials, maps and images that were useful in our work. Working with the map - was one of the indispensable methods extremely useful in working on this topic. Numerous maps of the study area were analyzed. Some of these maps will be included, in the form of images and in the text of the paper. Problematization - involves raising the issues that have arisen during the research, identifying their causes and discovering ways to solve these slippages. It's a research method. Problematization involves several sequences: the perception of the difficulty, its detection and definition, the suggestion of possible solutions, the drawing of conclusions from the probable solution, the performance of observations and experiments that verify the probable solution. Synthesizing information - is a very important method, given that there are many sources of information (selective bibliography, specialized maps, internet, images) is very useful and necessary in equal measure. Comparison - will be used to analyze elements from several bibliographic sources. It is used to discover certain inaccuracies, but also to find out more opinions about a certain phenomenon, about the history of a tourist attraction or about certain historical events.

3. Results and discussion

In 2021, a questionnaire was implemented that targeted a number of 1,500 tourists, which showed that more than half of the tourists visiting Dobrogea are under 34, most of the tourists come from urban areas. One of the main objectives is to establish a strategy to attract as diverse categories of tourists as possible (Ielenic and Sandulache, 2018).

Among the directions of action and development of tourism in Dobrogea by the local action group are also targeted as vectors of the strategy: tourist equipment, urban experiences, marketing, cultural events. The following forms of tourism are proposed for development: seaside, spa, business, cultural events, city break, culinary.

3.1. Tourism demand analysis

The analysis of the tourist demand will analyze elements related to indicators such as the capacity of tourist accommodation in operation, the number of tourist arrivals including by types of tourists (Romanians, foreigners-by state), the number of tourist arrivals by types of accommodation units, the number of tourist overnight stays and the evolution of the index of net capacity utilization in operation, including by types of accommodation units. The analysis will be performed for the time interval between 2015-2021, and the data were taken with the help of the National Institute of Statistics. Table no. 1. and figure no. 1 insert data on the number of tourist arrivals.

Table no. 1. Number of tourist arrivals, Dobrogea, 2015-2021

The year	Number of tourist arrivals
2015	844 802
2016	953 008
2017	859 634
2018	883 947
2019	1,021,475
2020	1 162 958
2021	1 235 542

Source: tempo-online, INSSE

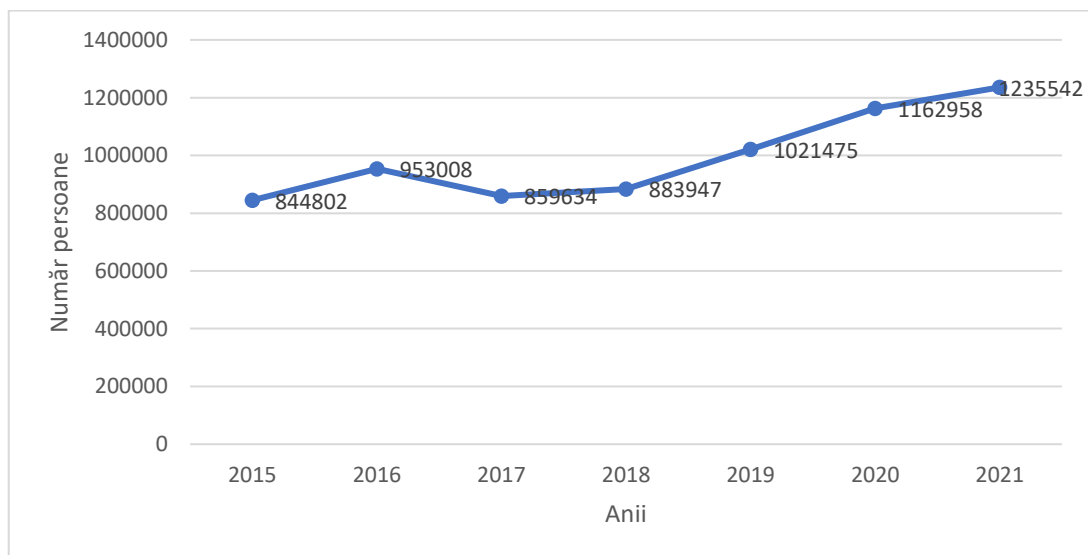


Figure no. 1. Number of tourist arrivals, Dobrogea, 2015-2021

Source: tempo-online, INSSE

The analysis of the data on the number of tourist arrivals in Dobrogea, 2015-2021 shows a general evolution of growth, even if initially the evolution was oscillating mainly due to the consequences of the economic crisis, with the year 2017, when a number of approximately 860,000 people, the evolution has been constantly increasing, reaching to accelerate from approximately 884,000 tourist arrivals to approximately 1,163,000 arrivals (year 2020), and the growth will continue in 2021, exceeding 1,235,000 tourist arrivals. This was possible due to the adoption of a strategy to attract tourists to the Romanian coast, a strategy that had a partial positive effect.

Among the reasons why Romanian tourists have gradually started to choose the Romanian coast are: security issues in other states recognized as countries for coastal tourism (the problem of terrorism in countries like France or Spain or North Africa) or conflicts armies near the borders of some states, such as Turkey or Israel, which is why a certain share of Romanian tourists began to prefer the Romanian coast.

3.2. Strategies for the development of tourism products sold in Dobrogea

Dobrogea, from a tourist point of view, has many tourist motivations, of which we mention: rest, sports leisure, complex spa treatment. Dobrogea's tourist vocation is equally conferred by its geographical location and the cultural-historical profile of the region (Pike, 2005).

Another important feature is the combination of old and new, between tradition and modernity. This complementarity gives the city an extra charm and creates the opportunity for tourists to know and understand the history and tradition of the places they visit.

Actions that contribute to the development of accommodation units in rural areas, in order to promote rural tourism, as a result of the implementation of projects on European funds of the Local Action Groups in Dobrogea Center:

- construction, renovation and aestheticization of the facades of all tourist units in rural areas, for sustainable tourism;
- installation of new road signs and tourist signs; In order to facilitate the access of tourists to the accommodation in rural areas, signposts have been placed next to the hotels in the resort; the panels are made in identical graphic dimensions and conditions;
- arranging 8 playgrounds for children, located between hotels;
- the realization of a modern and efficient irrigation system with the help of which the green spaces of the resort and the lawn surfaces around the hotels were invigorated; the irrigation system consists of 3 parallel networks: 2 spread on the Promenade and one on the shore of Lake Mamaia. The total length of the main pipe is 19,000 ml, the irrigation being done with the help of 311 sprinklers;
- increasing the accommodation capacity where this is required and diversifying the tourist services specific to rural tourism;
- modernization of accommodation units under 3 stars as a comfort category;
- hiring and training staff in the field of tourism;
- equip the hotels with modern swimming pools and restaurants serving a wide range of cuisine.

All these public investments in the area were both the hypothesis and the necessary support for private investments. Thus, in the last four years, in Dobrogea Centru, a whole series of private investments have been completed, having as a benchmark either the modernization of the accommodation capacity and the improvement of the related range of services, or the increase of the perimeter attractiveness by establishing new tourist interest objectives. . Thus, from private sources, three new 5-star hotels were built, and other hotel units significantly improved both the tourist classification and the quality of services offered to tourists (Hyde, 2008).

The governance of local tourism through LAGs in the Dobrogea region refers to actors, their relationships, structures and coordination processes. Several coordination and collaboration issues are particularly central to this governance: between public and private actors, professional or institutional.

The concept of "stakeholder" was integrated into the English-language scientific world by Freeman in 1984 through "Actor Theory", which states that "any group or individual that may affect or may be affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives". "should be considered an actor.

This theory was originally developed for use in business management. Therefore, the actors were identified by belonging to a group or organization, such as employees, traders, competitors and shareholders. However, Sautter, Leisen (1999) contributed to the translation of its use in the field of tourism. The concept of actor is increasingly considered in the social sciences, especially in geography, as it is increasingly considered a "major object" of territorial construction.

Within the Central Dobrogea LAG, the actors carry out individual actions in which they interact with other actors, but also collective actions with actors within a group (semi-organized or organized) with which they share common characteristics. Actors are all definable and distinguished entities that participate in the

dynamics and organization of a collective and / or individual action, which is active in a social process, which performs acts.

The actors are those who, through their involvement and action, contribute to the development of a certain sector, at the level of the Dobrogea region. These actors within the physical or legal LAGs can be public (state, local authorities, joint unions), private (consumers, producers, residents) or mixed. The main actors of the geographical space are: the individual, the group, the company, the local community and the state.

The concept of actor allows him to understand the qualities and abilities of a human being as he develops his intentions, strategies and discourses with a direction on these actions. The authors distinguish from the point of view of tourist objectives three types of actors:

- "Local actors", actors who develop a strategy without questioning where they are;
- "Local actors", actors who use the character of a place to create their outward-looking strategy;
- "Actors-place", whose strategy is created and organized internally related to the place.

At the level of the Dobrogea Centru region, the collaboration of stakeholders is a widely accepted approach to solving problems related to lack of understanding. And the sharing of common goals between these many stakeholders operating in different territories.

In this region, private actors (hosts) have their own strategy of attracting tourists to their homes, while some professional actors are already destined to attract them there. They do not collaborate, caught in this competition of the tourist market. Tourists travel for various reasons, more or less influenced by actors (Santos et al., 2022).

In the scientific literature there are studies to identify the actors, their strategies, their management plan and the constraints of collaboration for the development of the tourist destination (Mandić et al., 2020). Thanks to European funds, at the level of the Dobrogea Center region, more public, private entities, NGOs and individuals are collaborating to develop the area from a tourist, economic and social point of view.

The effort of these entities contributes to strategies on three levels: attraction, integration and management, in terms of developing the tourism potential. The aim of this study is to contribute to the knowledge base for understanding how stakeholders can be more involved in achieving sustainable tourism.

Some of the common features of community tourism destinations suggest that collaboration, as a dynamic, process-oriented strategy, may be appropriate for the management of local development areas. In addition to facilitating public-private interactions, collaboration can provide an effective mechanism for community participation in tourism planning by selecting key stakeholders to represent diverse public interests.

The communication sets out a set of messages issued by government institutions at various levels, especially those of cities, to be staged, to give a favorable image to the outside world. The competitive promotion of the site in question is a reason for this communication. Territorial communication through the LAG is achieved through the advertising image of places, promotional materials, events, in a competitive approach to the place where the territory is at the center of this marketing (Farmaki and Pappas, 2021).

It is also a set of messages issued by government institutions, public actors: town halls, regional and general councils, and its formatting is done by communication professionals to give the image of a territory. In this type of communication, local public actors engage with private actors to adopt a management logic to manage the territory.

Tourism is a system of actors, practices and places, whose purpose is to allow individuals to travel for recreation outside their usual places of life, to go and live temporarily in other places. Tourism involves three combined systems, a system of spaces, a system of actors and a system of images.

Development is perceived as a relationship of interaction between local or often regional institutional policies and entrepreneurs taking initiatives in the social and local fabric. Behind this development, we see a "tourism productive system", which works differently depending on the territory. This development is seen as an approach to local development due to the action of determined actors who will "invent" or "reinvent" a place in their territory.

All actors participate in this local development, whether they are political actors or local actors who are committed to implementing a strategy in this direction. In this context, the local term covers, from a social point of view, endogenous actors and "transition actors" (Soteriades, 2012).

The local development at the level of Dobrogea Centru, considers the policies aimed at reducing the role of the state, the relocation of decisions, giving more importance to the initiatives of local actors, resources

and values of the territory. Local development must be taken into account for the future of a territory, in order to make it evolve.

3.3. Proposals for the development and diversification of the tourist offer

Due to the special importance of tourism promotion, it must be done very carefully and especially, there must be a well-developed strategy. It should be borne in mind that before starting a tourism promotion campaign, it is necessary that the tourist resources be protected and arranged for visiting, the access roads to the resorts of Venus, Neptune and Olympus should be modernized as well as those to the main tourist attractions. of the locality (Minciu, 2019).

For all these resorts, the tourist image created both in the country and abroad is very important. From this point of view, making a logo can be the first step. The participation of the representatives of the resort in the domestic tourism fairs is more than a necessity, it is a condition for creating a favorable image but also for attracting a larger number of tourists.

The promotional activities in tourism, as in all economic activities, have as main purpose, attracting new customers as well as retaining existing ones, their loyalty. As such, it addresses the general public, potential customers but also specific targets. In other words, the activity of promoting the tourist product is a specific form of communication, it considers the transmission of messages through different communication channels, information through which tourism operators and potential tourists are informed about the characteristics of the tourist product and its components. (Seakhoa-King, Augustyn, and Mason, 2020).

Very importantly, tourism promotion has the following objectives in mind: customer loyalty, attracting customers to other tourist areas, transforming non-consumers of tourism services into potential and then actual consumers, awareness of the service-tourism product. informing about special services offered to the consumer, creating and improving the image of the tourist destination, advertising for special offers, expanding distribution channels, removing an aggressive attitude and forming a favorable image about a tourist destination, attracting new market segments.

Also, it is possible to create tourist programs for domestic tourism, which will capitalize on lesser known tourist objectives, and through this their value will gradually increase but also tourist programs for international tourism to highlight the strengths of the resorts. Neptune and Olympus, I mean water sports, practically everything that means tourist leisure, including motorized rides that will enhance the tourist trails in the Comorova Forest or along the coast, certain endurance trails and special landscapes.

In addition to the realization of such tourist programs that highlight the tourist objectives of the locality, other requirements are added for a proper capitalization of the tourist potential:

- *modernization of general and tourist infrastructure*: as the main lever in facilitating access to the main points of tourist interest; it is necessary to modernize the transports and the technical-municipal endowments;
- *expanding the range of tourist offers* in order to reduce the tourist seasonality, this can be achieved by developing complementary tourist services;
- *the practice of differential tariffs* at the beginning and end of the tourist season;
- *developing the strategy of multiple attraction for other types of tourism*, apart from the one for coastal tourism, already consecrated in Neptune-Olympus, it is about business tourism, meeting tourism, periodic or occasional festivals, events specific to the seasons or some historical events; this will lead in time to the diversification of tourist activities;
- *creation of animation centers* organized by professionals in the field;
- *launching in international tourism, for coastal tourism* through an efficient external promotion of the resort of the tourist potential in this respect.

If until now, the diversification, development and modernization of the tourist offer and services within a locality with tourist potential was achieved by highlighting products unique or of great tourist value, gradually move to capitalizing on tourism and highlighting the latent tourism potential and practicing some types and forms of relief.

The development and modernization of the tourist offer are related and depend both on the international effort, on the need to adapt to the current requirements in domestic and international tourism, with an increase in demand for superior quality services, but also on the structure and quality of the existing base.

On the basis of current tourism, efficient tourism can be developed only if it is adapted to the current requirements of international tourism (Fayos-Solà and Alvarez, 2014).

The resorts can be developed from a tourist point of view by implementing local programs or by interconnecting the resort within domestic and international tourist circuits. Equally, the emphasis can be on the development of specific coastal tourism, the modernization of the infrastructure specific to this type of tourism, the corresponding tourist promotion. However, it is a mistake for Neptune and Olympus to focus only on summer tourism and the resort's tourist offer needs to be diversified so as to include other types and forms of tourism (business tourism, meeting tourism). It is necessary to diversify the accommodation base. For a resort of this type, the existence of a few accommodation units in accordance with international tourist standards for coastal tourism is an inappropriate fact.

The enhancement of the tourist objectives must be done in parallel with a good organization of the tourist activity that involves better services, modernization roads, sources of information about certain tourist resources with information that can be interesting, general so that it becomes interesting for tourists. The tourist development also implies an economic development of the locality, so that the increase of the living standard becomes palpable. Resource protection, sustainable development of the resort is a necessity for local development (Lewis and Jönsson, 2016).

Conclusions

Regarding Dobrogea, the priority issue is to solve all the infrastructure problems in road and rail transport in order to increase the traffic safety of tourists and easier access to the coast (stopping all repairs and maintenance during the summer season, the introduction of speed trains, car transport from CFR Constanța Railway Station to the south of the coast to be done through resorts, etc.).

It is absolutely necessary for the southern coast to have access to European funds for the construction of attractions, sports facilities, sporting events, for the rehabilitation of historical monuments and the organization of domestic and international competitions, increasing the number of events, shows every weekend.

The main objectives for the development of the region can be mentioned:

- the Dobrogea region will become the most important tourist landmark in the region by consolidating its leading position in the summer tourism segment, but also by developing business, cruise and itinerary tourism;
- developing a cultural and regional identity;
- ensuring favorable conditions for private initiatives that aim, directly or indirectly, at capitalizing on the cultural and historical heritage of the area, especially in the field of tourism;
- every effort will be made to place the Constanta Metropolitan Area on the transit route of oil and other natural resources from the Sea and the Caucasus;
- this area, which is extremely interesting in terms of its natural resources, will be extremely exploited in the near future, which will require the determination of a route for the transfer of resources to Central and Western Europe;
- the inclusion of Constanța on this route will facilitate the development of the port economy and will increase the strategic importance of our city and the metropolitan area on the map of the extended region, with beneficial effects both in terms of long-term investments. medium and long, as well as in terms of ensuring high security and stability in this area;
- creating the premises for increasing the attractiveness of the area for foreign investors;
- in the short and medium term, by virtue of a real financial and administrative decentralization and in accordance with the recommendations and directives of the European Union in this field, all necessary steps will be taken to transfer to the local public authorities the Commercial Port of Constanta and coastal beaches.

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