

Niche Tourism in Dambovita County - Opportunities and Perspectives

Daniela Dumitrescu, Adrian-Aurel Baltălungă, Aurel Iancu

Abstract— Niche tourism represents a major opportunity for the national development of Romania and local development of Dambovita county. It is the “offensive” economical activity which will “irradiate” development, in a suburban area economically speaking, of outmost importance for the touristic resources. For Dambovita County the proximity of the great poles of touristic attraction – Prahova Valley and Bran-Rucar Corridor, is a decisive reason to orientate towards specific offers of niche tourism, complementary to the existing ones. Although in general, the average of stay is more reduced in the case of these subtypes of tourism due to their specific nature, the returns are generally higher.

The main question refers to the way of utilization, application and implementation of different types and subtypes of specific tourism. For that purpose there are a series of programs and projects of huge importance, in different stages of development. The main problems that are raised concern the high material and environmental costs, as well as the long completion time. Without underestimating the long term importance and benefits of this type of projects, we therefore present, analyze and suggest a series of smaller dimension projects, some even very small but with visible effects to the local communities on a shorter time frame. We here refer to the communities from the rural areas, which own a large share from the county level, characterized through demographic and economic brittleness and vulnerability, being the ones that have the most stringent need of such opportunities. By combining these two directions, we can assure a local and regional, sustainable development.

Keywords — key points, local development, niche tourism, opportunities, projects, strategies, threats, touristic resources, types of tourism, touristic routes, types of tourism.

I. INTRODUCTION

TOURISM is the economic activity which registered the highest increase and permanent diversification, whatever the shocks recorded by global economy and the global economic context. The most eloquent proof is the evolution of international tourist arrivals, which in 1950 were of 25 million, in 2010 were of 935 million (*UNWTO World Tourism Barometer at www.unwto.org/facts/eng/barometer.htm*) and the revenue recorded in the same year, were of 693 billion € (with 4,7% over those in 2009). The most significant increase was recorded in emerging and developing countries (over 31% in the number of arrivals and 8% of revenue, compared to only 5% for developed regions).

After the 2009 recession in spite of further economical and financial uncertainties, tourism represented the engine of development, prosperity and welfare, especially for the emerging states. All this time, the number of tourists as well as the returns from tourism have generated a positive trend. According to the date published by World Tourism Organization in 2011 (*UNWTO Tourism Highlights, 2011 Edition; UNWTO World Tourism Barometer at www.unwto.org/facts/eng/barometer.htm*) and 2010, the arrival number of international tourists has increased by 6,6% from 2009 as well as the total value of returns with 4.7% (693 billion Euro). The most important criteria was registered by the developing emerging states, over the world average, where the arrivals’ balance has surpassed by 8% that of the developed states.

This ascending tendency has maintained for the first eight months of the year 2011, when the number of arrivals’ has increased by 4,7% from 2010 (*European tourism grows above expectations, November 2011 - Volume 9, Issue 2, UNWTO World Tourism Barometer*), the highest record being registered in July, by 118 million tourists

A. Regional, national and local context

At regional level, the main important criteria over the world average, have been recorded this time by the developed countries (+4,9%), followed by the emerging ones (+4,0%), due to European states as a whole (+6%) especially the ones from Central and Eastern Europe (+8%), as well as Mediterranean Europe which benefited from the touristic decline of North Africa (-15%) and Middle East (-9%). As far as EU states (from which Romania is a member from 2007, this has surpassed the world average, recording an increase by +6% with all the economical problems that countries such as Greece, Ireland, Portugal or Spain confronted.

In the same time, it is impossible to not notice the appearance of some new destinations, more attractive, with classical also Western Europe and North. For example, if Europe as a whole has registered during 1990 – 2010 the lowest rate of annual increase of arrivals number (after America), only of (2,1%), (but with the highest percentage of tourist arrivals, 50.7 of total) the most significant increase was recorded by the Central and Eastern Europe with (3,2 %).

After the fall of the Communist Regime in December 1989, Romania has confronted with an acute economical crisis, accentuated by the new requests of a free market in full process of reconstruction. All this time in the last 21 years, the touristic sector has become a true engine of the economy, taking advantage of the numerous opportunities out there.

F. A., S. B. Geography Department, Valahia University of Targoviste, Bdul Regele Carol I, no. 2, Romania, danieladro@yahoo.com, aa_baltalunga@yahoo.com

T. C. Physical education and sports Department, Valahia University of Targoviste, Bdul Regele Carol I, no. 2, Romania, aurel_m_iancu@yahoo.com

Romania had the most revived economies of the European Union, during the third decade of the year 2011, tourism being placed number third, with 16% (INS, 2011), mainly due to the uniqueness of the eco-system of the Carpathian Mountains and other country brands of interest to the foreign tourists.

International tourists arrivals' have increased by 9% from June 2010, most of them arriving from Europe (93,2%), 55% only from EU countries. The biggest number of arrivals has been registered by Hungary (39,1%), Bulgaria (15,3%), Germany (9%), Italy (7,5%) and Austria (4,1%)¹.

Romania has a remarkable tourism potential that allows individualization, through the capitalization of all major types of tourism. But the regional and international frame, marked by a fierce competition in this market, require the need for separation of these of some niches with a higher potential for attraction, which are addressed to marked segments for more sophisticated customers and with higher financial opportunities. Thus, the capitalization efficiency will be increased and the seasonality will be mitigated. The proof of benefit and opportunities offered by this type of tourism is the 9th place Romania occupies in the world according to a study of George Washington University in partnership with the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) and Vital Wave Consulting, in an index of potential tourism of adventure that analyzes more than 160 countries and emerging territories, according to a study performed by George Washington University in partnership with Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) and Vital Wave Consulting, Romania went up three places this year, till position number 63, and according to a competitiveness in tourism chart performed by World Economic Forum (WEF), that includes 139 countries.

Among the many niches which there could be capitalized in Dambovitza County, will be mentioned: speleology, sportive tourism (equestrian, adventure, extreme sports), tourism of religious pilgrimage, business and congresses tourism, medical, culinary etc. Although in general, the average length of stay is lower in these subtypes of tourism, due to its specific the revenues are essentially higher².

Marketing plan of Romanian tourism³ identifies several directions for repositioning our country on the international tourist market:

- circuits (*Romania being considered among the top 10 European destinations from this point of view*)
- nature reserves
- Carpathian Mountains
- short holidays in cities
- holidays in the countryside
- wellness area
- wild
- adventure

Translated into the types of tourism these mean mountain tourism, urban, rural, spa, sports and cultural itinerary.

II. PROBLEM FORMULATION

A. Geographical Location

Dambovitza county is situated in the South part of Romania, at 80 km NW from the capital city, in the South-Muntenia region of development. It is placed South from the Meridional Carpathians, at the connection between the Romanian Plain and Ialomita Sub-Carpathians. It has a varied relief, that descends in steps from North to South, comprising all major forms: Bucegi Mountains and Leaota, followed to the South by a hill relief, represented by the Sub-Carpathian Hills, and Candesti Piedmont, and further on by Targoviste Plain and Titu Plain. The altitudes range between 125 m in the South part (Titu Plain) and 2505 m in the North part (Omu Peak). From the total of the county's surface, the field represents 68%, the hill side 23% and mountain area 9%. (*fig. 1*)

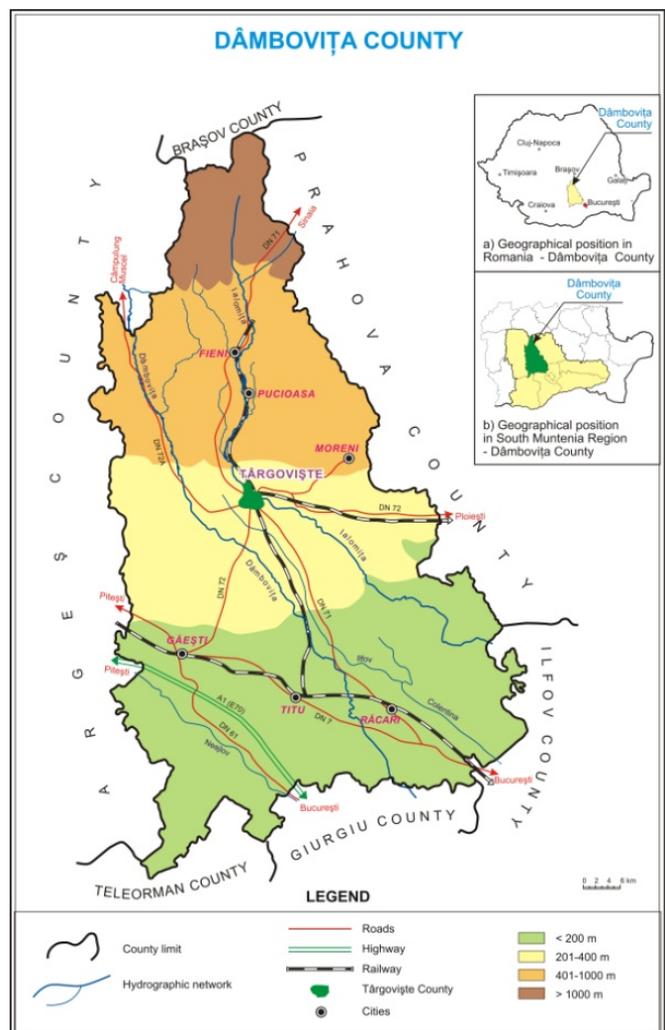


Fig. 1

Dambovitza County is one of the smallest county, with an area of 4054 km² (1.7% of the country area, on the 37th place), a population of 531. 011 people (2.5% of the Romanian population, on the 16th place) and brings together 7 cities and 82 localities (totaling 353 villages). It is distinguished by a

¹ INS 2011

² The costs of such a stay are averaging 400-500€.

³ Achieved by Horwath Tourism, Hotel & Leisure

high population density (130.1 inhabitants/km²) - 5th place nationally and of roads (46 km/100 km²) - 4th place.

The economical, social and cultural activity is polarized by the county capital Targoviste, ex capital of the Romanian Country (Valahia) for over three centuries (1396-1714), residence of 33 voivodes from Mircea the Old and Vlad Tepes, to Constantin Brancoveanu, cradle of Romanian civilization and history. After the capital was moved to Bucharest (1714) the city began to be less attractive, transforming over time in one of the profound rural county of the country (69.2 % rural population), way over the national average. This disadvantage can become an opportunity from a touristic point of view, through correlation with the historical, cultural elements, landscape, as well as the utilization of the rural area through eco-tourism, cultural and rural tourism, camping in the mountain areas.

Amongst the limitation factors, we mention the peripheric position against the major axes of circulation, which reflected in the degree of economical development, and reduced opportunities of attracting investments and placed the city in a continuous "fight of rearguard", due to the competition from cities like Ploiesti in the East, Pitesti in West, Brasov in North and Bucharest (the capital) in the South part. (fig. 2).

B. Impact upon the touristic activities

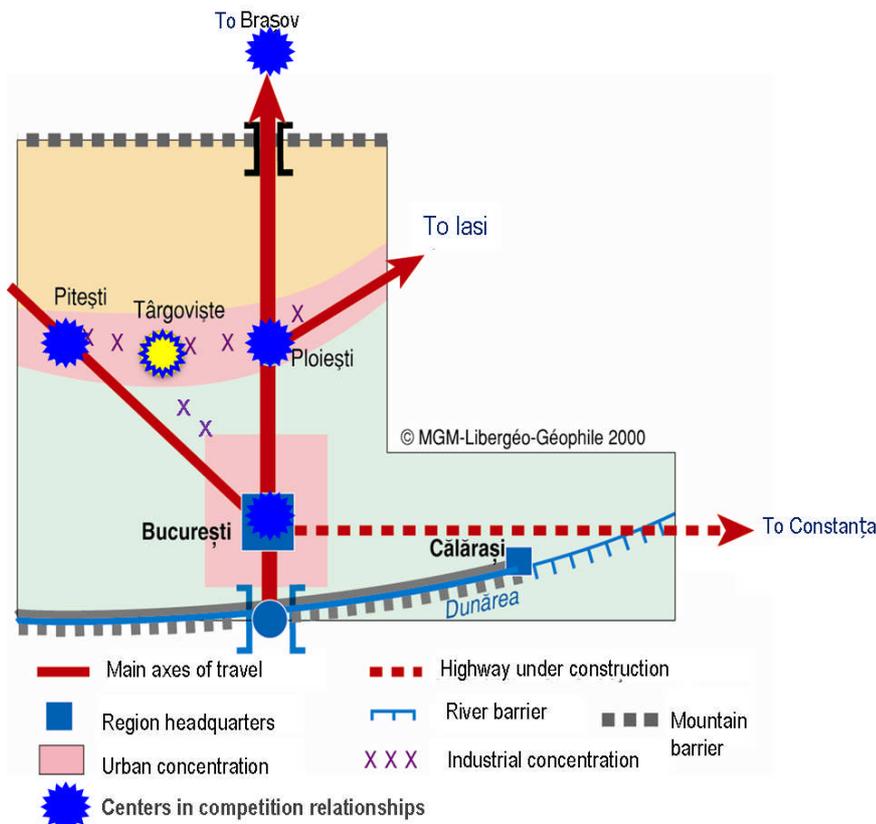
The major risks of this localization were the reduced attractiveness and the loss of qualified work force, Dambovita county becoming after 1990, one of the main county issuing emigrants. The solution for reducing the vulnerability to such risks is tracing those "offensive" economical activities which will "radiate development". In this context, tourism can become an essential activity for the economy of the county, which will value its assets through the niche tourism, taking into account its potential as well as the regional and inter-regional competition, which in the end will contribute on one hand to the development of the local communities and on the other hand, obtaining the necessary funds for financing the protected areas from the hills and mountain spaces.

Preserving the quality of environment in the rural space of Dambovita county may transform it in a region of attractiveness for the tourism in natural areas, which according to P.Eagles, represents: *that form of tourism in which activities are dependant on the characteristics of the natural frame is based on two fundamental components: a high qualitative level of environment and offering specific services*".

C. Touristic potential. Key points versus threats

When evaluating the durable potential of touristic development of this territory we started from a diagnosis as exhaustive as possible, respectively from identifying the key points, the weak points, and the opportunities in order to propose some projects of durable development, mainly based on the development of touristic activities with respect to the preservation and utilization of landscapes, traditions and patrimony.

Dambovita county holds remarkable touristic resources, in terms of natural patrimony (mountains, hill area, and valley passages) culture and architecture. The natural, touristic potential is represented in particular by the natural eco-systems from the Carpathic space- The Natural Park Bucegi, the 12 natural reservations and 25 monuments of nature (all these protected area sum up to 20134 hectares), the 15 rivers with over 20 km alongside the county, 11 mountain peaks of over 1500 m tall, 10 anthropic lakes of over 60 hectares, as well as numerous cultural, historical objectives that can be found within its boundaries.



Adaptation after : Rey, Violette (coord.), Atlasul României, 2002

Fig. 2. Geographical location. Limiting factors

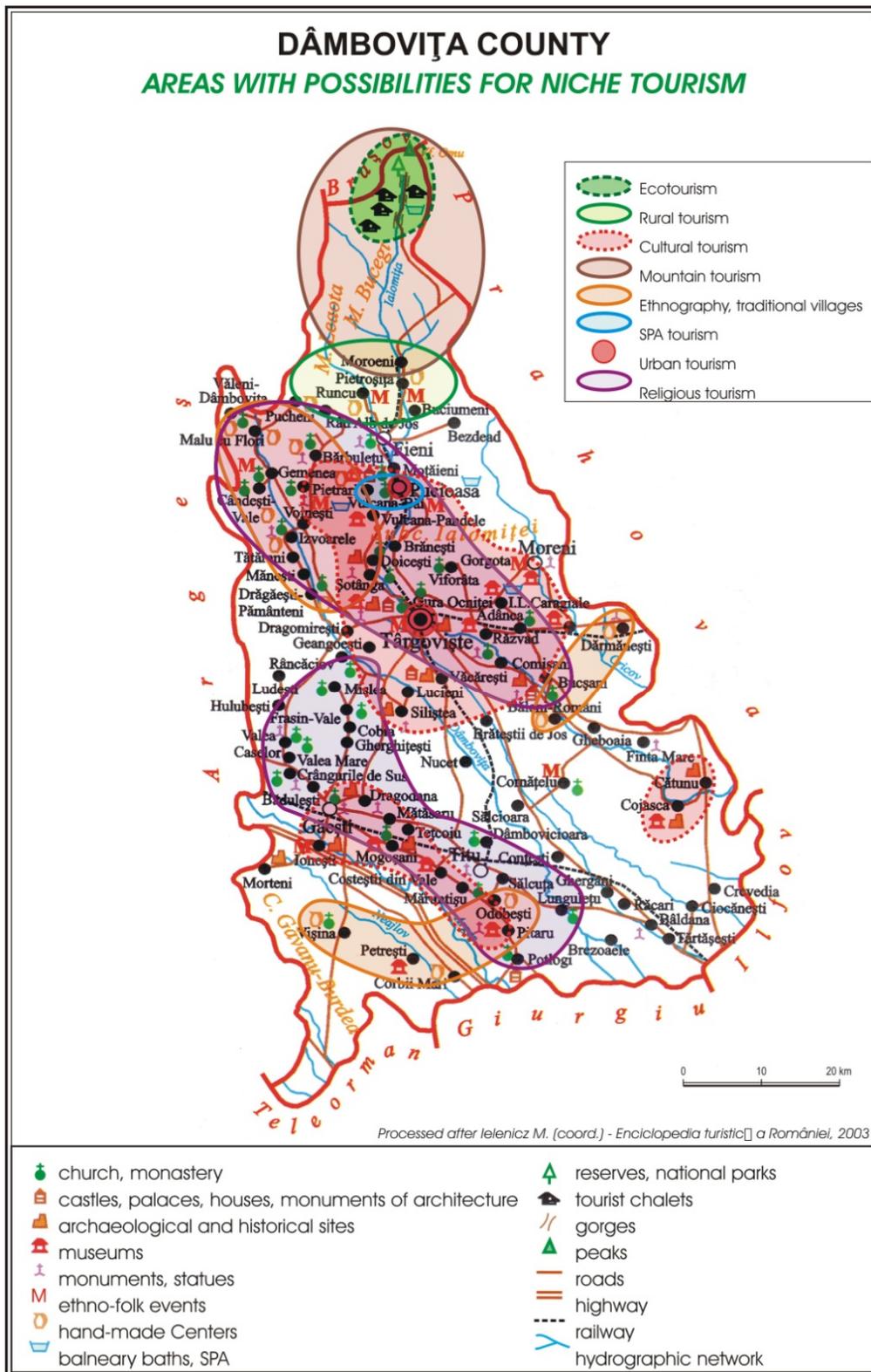


Fig. 3

Extremely valuable are the anthropic resources represented by the prestige of the cultural-historical objectives (fig. 3) the purity and quality of the products (it is one of Romania's fruit-growing main area, the most important one in apple, pear, and plum crop, without having centers of collecting and handling),

traditional architecture, popular port, traditions and customs (from which lots are on extinction, preserved unfortunately only in remote rural areas). Based on geographic position and location on the major steps of relief, it appears that the touristic potential offered by Dambovița County can

theoretically respond to all types and forms of tourism, both classic and niche ones, in the following way:

a. there are a number of destinations that can be included in national or regional tours (it is adequate to mention the already famous circuits: *Dracula circuits, Red circuit or the circuit of Palaces of Brancoveniu family*, in various stages of realization / implementation);

b. an important sector of the Carpathian Mountains and a series of reserves are present in the county; Targoviste city and Pucioasa town are and may becoming more urban tourism destinations;

c. Pucioasa and Vulcana resorts have a balneary untapped potential at the possibilities level (especially for Vulcana baths);

d. Subcarpathian and mountain area of the county can offer multiple options to practice sports tourism.

Capitalization of this very valuable potentially is not up to a special level if we analyze the infrastructure and the main indicators of tourist traffic.

D. Touristic Infrastructure

In 2010, *accommodation facilities* had a total of 55 units (1.1% at national level, placing the county on 26th position), whose structure is shown in *fig.4*. There is a clear predominance of rural tourist pensions (40%). Their total capacity is of 2391 seats (0.8% of the country total, the 27th place). The *structures of food service* are more modest quantitative - 44 units with a total of 5574 seats.

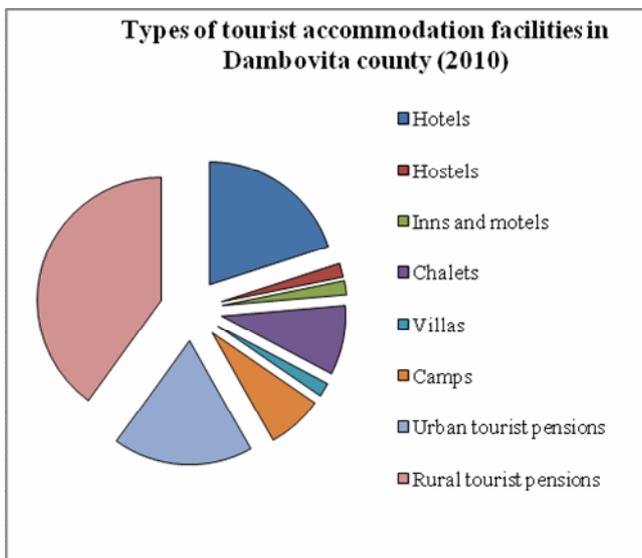


Fig. 4

Statistical data show an increase in the overall number of accommodation facilities but, nevertheless, the place of county at the national hierarchy is on decrease, which indicates that the rate at which they are developing is below that registered in other counties.

Fig. 5 illustrates the rate-of-increase of the number of commercial companies working in *hotels and restaurants sector*. Instead, the 296 companies registered in the year 2010, representing only 3.9% of all companies in the county, 90.8% of them are small companies with up to 9 employees and their

turnover (64,228,155 lei) represents only 0.67% of total. These statistics reflect also, the contribution of tourism in the county's economy.

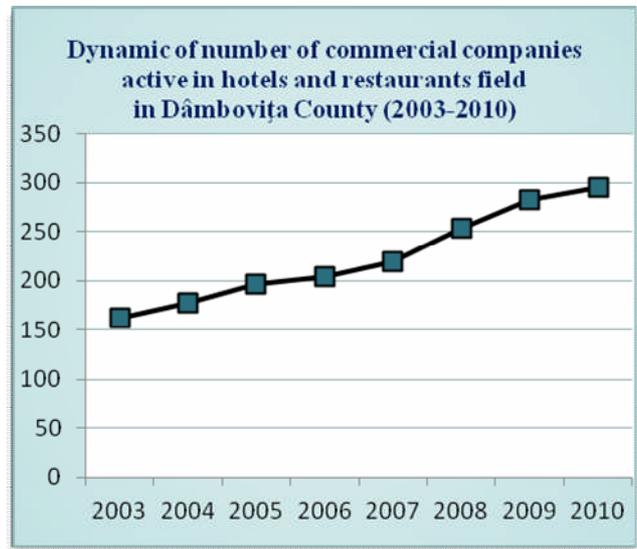


Fig. 5

E. Touristic Traffic

Evolution of the tourists number was oscillating (*fig. 6*), the most pronounced decrease being in 2009 - from 72,276 tourists in 2008 to 55453, which is only 0.9% of national total and a modest place - 27.

In this case, Dambovita County falls in national ranking. Among the tourists, 77.6% were Romanian, and only 22.4% foreign tourists.

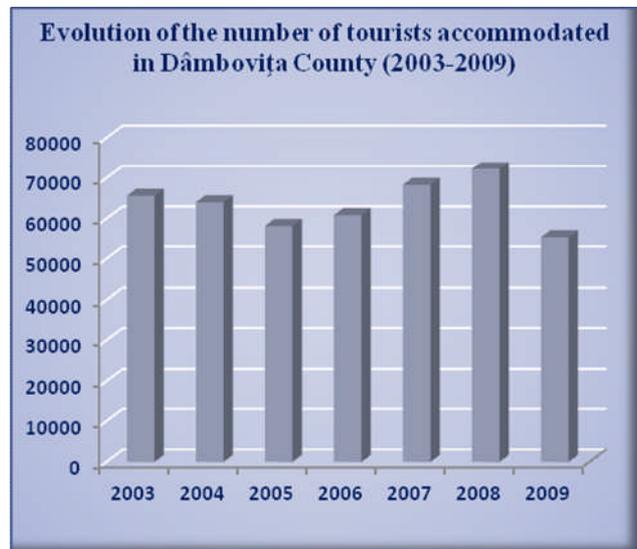


Fig. 6

The same oscillating dynamic can be detected also in the *index of use of touristic accommodation*, noting a maximum value in 2008 (39.2%), higher than national average (*fig. 7*).

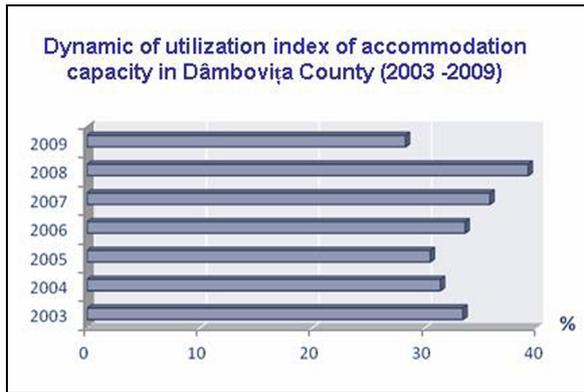


Fig. 7

F. Threats

After the year 1990, at county level, we are facing a deeper polarization of the economical activities, centred mainly on one hand on urban areas, often seen as „vectors” of the rural development (even when this is not possible anymore or very hard to achieve), and on the other hand, from a touristic point of view, on the financial opportunities to the prejudice of the needs or local and regional identity and the preservation of the

natural and anthropic patrimony. (fig. 8)

The majority of the solutions proposed by the local or regional authorities aim towards the promotion of the urban environment, of the mountain space, often eluding the sustainability principles. Obviously, the mountain areas have to face some tremendous challenges, due to the fact that through their nature, they are fragile areas. They require an integrated development, balanced by an artificial „conflict” between environment and economical development.

This uncontrolled evolution would result in the sinking of the local and regional disparities, an inefficient and harmful exploitation of the potential or a threat to the patrimony itself.

Although Dambovita is a profound rural county, and its degree of attractiveness is quite reduced- due to the peripheric position and lack of investments, it shouldn't be considered a burden to the more prosperous counties from the region.

III. PROBLEM SOLUTION. NICHE TOURISM IN DAMBOVITA COUNTY: POSITIONING AND LOCAL POLITICAL STRATEGIES

The current enthusiasm for niche tourism in Dambovita county, is part of the national and regional politics of touristic development of Romania in last few years. We can thus identify several scenarios:

a) Firstly *two opposite approaches* can be distinguished:

- Less frequented destinations, according to the potential they offer, eventually emerging destinations nowadays, who intend to show their uniqueness on the niche tourism market, developing Bucegi eco-system- Leota, a synonym for nature's conservation, authenticity that will allow its break-through on world market.

- The opposite of mass touristic destinations, which have surpassed the first stage of development, using different stages of niche tourism (eco-tourism, adventure tourism, alpine or cultural), in order to diversify the offer on a larger scale and a more intense distribution of their fluxes in the respective territories.

b) The diagnosis can also be followed through the prism of opportunities:

- Niche tourism can be the vector of a strategy for the activation of the suburbs areas much less developed;

- As opposed it can serve as a

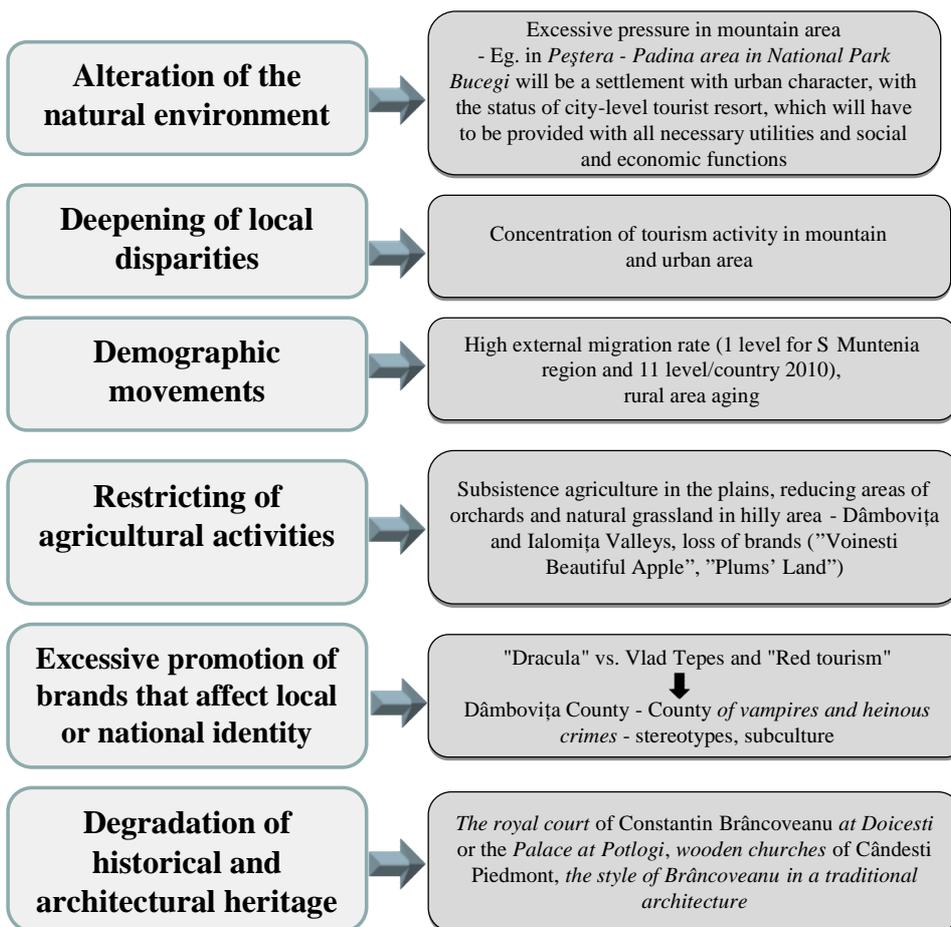


Fig.8. Threats

pretext to close down/preserve certain areas, to preserve certain resources for the benefit of a small number of privileged territories.

- Last but not least, this analysis concerns the financial dimension of these projects and their impact on the local development.

A. Niche tourism as strategy of national touristic development

This approach represents an advantage for a less developed economically county, which lacks strong attraction poles, and wants to get rid of this stigma (poor urbanization, precarious infrastructures, lack of attractiveness) but at the same time the beneficiary of a remarkable patrimony. Destinations such as the above mentioned ones are part of this logic of development. (*tab. I*)

The projects intended for them by the local administration presents a series of advantages, being large scale projects, integrated with a national, county and local development impact for the communities whose territories they are carried out. Main vulnerabilities lie in the fact that they are very expensive and with an high environmental impact.

To these we could add short scale projects of development through niche tourism with an insignificant environmental impact, but with beneficial effects upon a large territory/community- for example model sub-carpathic area (*the multiplying effect of tourism is thus better valued and emphasized*). Their advantage consists in the creation of certain intern poles of development, of socio-economical dynamics in the rural space.

A1. Ongoing projects

From the 136 projects for tourism that are part of the *Master Plan of Dambovita County* (2009) of a total value of 300 million Euro, there are two projects concerning the mountain space that propose to exploit different niche tourism forms which concern the construction of some important touristic resorts of national or international importance, which will transform this area in a destination with financial and

commercial character, in order to adhere to the international touristic market. Bucegi mountains Leaota are part of the emerging destinations, whose current position in the niche tourism is very obvious: the attraction of a large number of tourists all through the year, its integration in the neighbouring touristic circuits – Prahova Valley and Bran Rucar Passage Way, its enlisting in the touristic areas of international importance.

a) Infrastructure sports subsidizing for *The National Olympic Centre of winter sports from Padina-Pestera* –valued at 6.020.000 E. This will be the only place in Romania with slopes for all winter sports, situated at distances smaller than 15 km from the touristic facilities: cross country skiing, pursuit and baton, 90-120m tall springboards, skating rinks, biathlon polygon, sledge slopes, bob slopes.

A first investment concerns the construction of an Olympic slope for alpine ski, Cocora-Padina and several other ski slopes such as: Cocora-Pestera, Tataru-Padina (52.4 hectares) with the respective installation and access points. It will also facilitate from a series of other facilities: pools, ski lift, water installations, snow machines, as well as accommodation and road infrastructures, heliport platform, camping. These facilities will allow the practice of different types of tourism: sport tourism, eco-tourism, animal watch tourism, cycle-tourism, ski, mountain bike on public roads, mountain climbing (there are approximately 280 mountain climbing routes, with different degree of difficulty) speo-tourism, tirollian, rappel, wall and net climbing, slackline, rounders.

Another type of tourism that is already practiced in this area is the adventure one, as part of “Padina Fest”, Military Camp, Treasure Hunt, Balon, Camp, Climbing, Rapel, Tirollian, Bucegi Marathon, First Aid Classes, eco activities (waste collecting) , workshops, photography competitions. (*fig. 9*)

The aim of this project is to connect it to Prahova Valley and Braneana Platform, but it is also an alternative to these two (complimentary touristic project).

Table. I. County Projects

No.	Project Title	Total project value (Euro)
1	Leaota eco-tourism system - tourism development of Leaota mountain through the association of Argeş County with Dambovita County	41,500,000
2	Urbanistic Infrastructure - Olympic National Center for Winter Sports Padina - Peştera	6,800,000
3	Infrastructure of sports facilities - Olympic National Center for Winter Sports Padina - Peştera	6,020,000
4	Urbanistic Infrastructure - Leaota ecotourism resort	17,800,000
5	Infrastructure of sports facilities for Leaota ecotourism resort	9,090,000
6	Capitalization of balneary potential for internal cure in Pucioasa and Vulcana resorts and in Moţăeni Village	
7	Tourism infrastructure rehabilitation for "Kings Road" in the South Muntenia region on Curtea de Arges - Campulung-Targoviste route	8,300,000
8	Old center restoration of Targoviste Municipality	1,390,000
9	Restoration and rehabilitation of historical and architectural monuments of Targoviste Municipality and of surroundings	1,850,000
10	Information Centre and Tourist Support “La maison du patrimoine”	2,000,000
11	Valuing natural resources in Park of the Holy Apostles Petru and Pavel	1,950,000



Source: <http://itourblog.wordpress.com/2011/07/27/padina-fest-3-7-august-2011/> (with completions)

Fig. 9. Specific Improvements to niche tourism in Padina Plateau

By the length of the slopes and the cable transport installations – amongst the best equipped winter sports resorts in Romania (source: *Master Plan - Project Pesteră-Padina, 2009*). The main problem is respecting the standards and norms of environment protection- situated in an area of remarkable sensitivity, the protected PN Bucegi area. The accomplishment of the sport touristic infrastructures- gondola and ski slopes, with a total length in a preliminary stage (2006) of 17 km, will reduce to minimum the intervention upon the forestry fund (seriously affected by illegal clearing) and the embankments and leveling shall not affect the general or local stability of the mountains, thus becoming the highest permanent habitation in Romania- 1600 m.

The impact upon the local community will be of extreme importance. The average population of the resort will exceed 8000 inhabitants from which 6500 tourists. 1065 new jobs will be created for the population from Moreni (administrative unit of the territory).

b) Sport facilities infrastructure for the eco-touristic resort Leaota – 2500 accomodation places (part of the Leaota Eco-touristic System) comprises 6 resorts (fig. 10): Leaota (1.450 m), Mitarca (1.600 m), Sutila (1.500 m), Rătei (1.650 m), Cumparata (1.750 m), Tincava (1.700 m).

It will expand on the territory of three counties: Dambovita, Arges and Brasov. The resort will be projected for approximately 14,000 tourists who will benefit of 33 ski slopes and 12 cable transport installations. Ski slopes with artificial snow shall be built. Access on the slopes shall be done mechanically. Each resort will have ski schools, routes for practicing cyclo-tourism will be designed, as well as verticality sports, mountain backpacking, mountain climbing, free climbing, paraglide, swimming pools, water sports, fishing, hunting, etc.

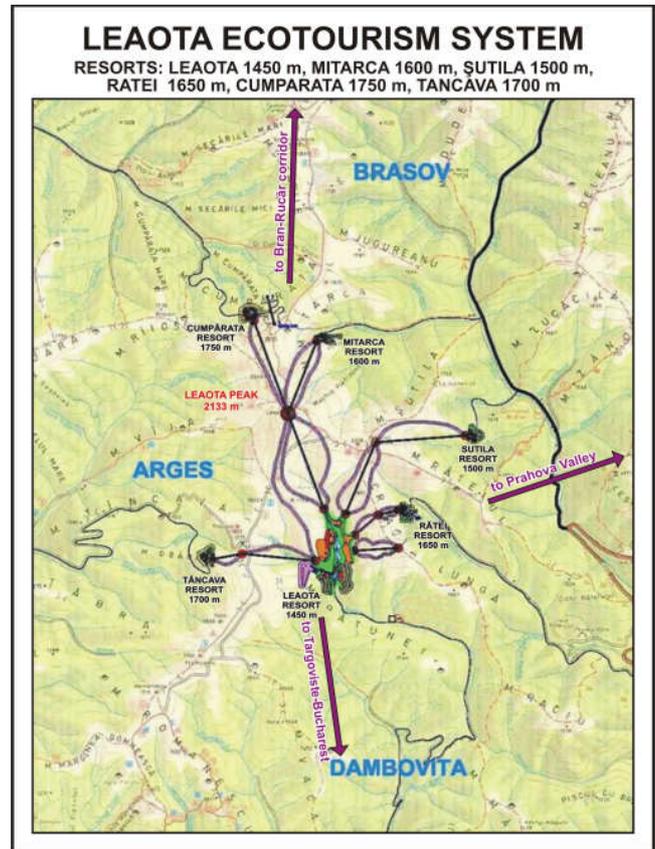


Fig. 10

A2. Possibilities of utilizing the touristic resources through niche tourism. Proposals

While evaluating the possibilities of utilization of the touristic resources through niche tourism we took into account the following: the position of Dambovita County in relation to the historical provinces Romanian Country and Transylvania, which is the accessibility degree related to the national pole

Bucharest, and other regional poles-Ploiesti, Brasov, Pitesti and the existence of certain forms of local, regional and inter-regional cooperation, that can rely on the touristic activity in general and the niche tourism in particular.

The results of the performed diagnosis lead us to the following conclusions

- In terms of landscape, natural and cultural patrimony, and pre-existing agro-touristic activities it confirms once again the development and attractiveness potential of the county on the whole and of the sub-carpathic space in particular, whose fragility is accentuated by several anthropic pressures.

- The statistic analysis of the economical, social and environmental potential, allowed us to identify the advantages and opportunities.

- The fragility of the infrastructures rather represents an advantage for practicing the ecological tourism and the elaboration of a policy of touristic development centered on emphasizing the traditional and natural patrimony.

The opportunities of such projects aim towards the uniform and diversified development of the tourism all through the year, exploiting not only the major poles (Targoviste, Pucioasa), but the advantages of smaller mountain „resorts „Bolboci, Zanoaga, Scropoasa, Caprioara, Cerbu, Vanatoru (winter sports and summer activities) and of the villages from the hill area from the axes of socio-economical dynamism , Dambovita and Ialomita. The main advantage is represented by the isolation of the some places (the ones from the valley of Dambovita from Candesti Piedmont)- by transforming this weak key point into an opportunity, increasing the degree of attractiveness, since they've managed in time to preserve best their traditions, customs and architectural patrimony.

Touristic projects proposals for revitalizing the rural space.

The rural space of the county can offer such opportunities – *farm tourism*, as a subtype of rural tourism, is an option worthy to be taken into account, *extreme sports tourism* and *adventure tourism* from mountain areas (rope crossing, bridges and walking boards made of wood, paraglide, rapel, surviving games, mountain hiking, mountain biking, horse riding, bungee jumping, via ferrata, etc) , *hunting and fishing tourism*, based on a generous hunting background and on a complex, water network, *medical tourism*⁴ in the urban centers, *speo-turism* in the mountain areas, *religious pilgrimage* based on numerous churches⁵ and monasteries classified as historical and architecture monuments or even *archaeological tourism* taken into account the multitude of archaeological sites in conservation condition due to lack of necessary financial resources.

Other methods through which niche tourism can be diversified are:

- The promotion of ethno-folkloric values – is facilitated by organizing annual fairs with the occasion of Religious

holidays. The promotion of such events together with the city days (more and more numerous) can attract an important number of tourists;

- The organization of social, business, cultural events which will be promoted by the media, on city halls' sites or tourism agencies, central and local administration;

- The development of a series of leisure structures (multi functional sport fields, swimming pools, bowling alleys, culinary fairs with traditional products), can diversify the offer, increase the attractiveness and the number of tourists.

- Amplifying the organization all through the year of other events with different themes: cultural, historical, sport, photography exhibitions.

IV. CONCLUSION

There is an obvious discrepancy between the tourism resources and tourism capitalization. Therefore, it is necessary to revitalize the tourism activity. It is not an easy approach, due to the competition from surrounding areas (also the owners of some very diverse and valuable tourist resources). The existing tourism, mostly classic in terms of type and organization style, proves its limits in Dambovita County case. Those new directions, of niche have to be detected and valued.

Through its position and its geographical characteristics Dambovita county offers the possibility of accomplishing the majority of the most important products specific to niche tourism- rural tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, etc. Thus, in addition to existing programs, which are more general, it is important to adopt some punctual ones, smaller but more numerous, which may arise from the private sector and exploit the resources more efficiently on smaller areas. Thus it can be assured a more balanced and sustainable development.

At the same time though, an integrated approach based on complementarity may determine their quicker accomplishment. Large projects from mountain areas from certain points of view unique in Romania, will be able to „dispel” development towards the other areas of the county connecting with the smaller ones, materialized mostly through different circuits, manifestations, events, punctual objectives (which will require a well organized promotion at the level of resorts from the mountain area). This way the local or regional objectives shall be valued, if presented by themselves, isolated won't have a sufficient impact to determine separate touristic fluxes.

On the other hand, the effects will be benefic in a regional context as well. A strong center of attraction at the limit of counties Dambovita, Arges and Brasov will decongest from a touristic point of view Prahova Valley and the North sector of Bran Rucar Passage, which at present confronts with a huge pressure from this point of view.

REFERENCES

- [1] Baltălungă A. A., *Tourism in Romania*, Valahia University Press, Târgoviște, 2008

⁴ According to *National Association of Tourism Agencies* 60,000 foreigners came for treatment in Romania , spending 250 million for medical services. Also, according to estimates, revenues from medical tourism in Romania could reach 500 million Euro per year by 2015.

⁵ Targoviste is the Romanian city with the biggest number of churches - historical monuments.

- [2] Baltălungă A. A., Dumitrescu Daniela, *Regional disparities and tendencies in the evolution of touristic activities from Romania* in GeoCarpathica, year VII, no. 7, Sibiu, 2007
- [3] Baltălungă A. A., Dumitrescu Daniela, Iancu Aurel, *Niche tourism - alternative of balanced and sustainable local development in Dambovita County*, in Proceedings of 1th WSEAS International Conference "Tourism And Economy Development", (TED '11), University of Craiova, Drobeta Turnu Severin Center, Romania, 2011, pp 166 - 172
- [4] Dumitrescu D., *Dracula et Transylvanie de Bram Stoker: usage touristique d' un mythe*, in Revue Geographie et Culture, Le Roman Policier – Lieux et itineraire, CNRS, Ed. L'Harmattan, Paris, 2007, pp. 115-122
- [5] Dumitrescu Daniela, Baltălungă A. A., *Dambovita county- population, places, health, tourism* Valahia University Press, Târgoviște, 2007
- [6] Daniela Dumitrescu, A. A. Baltălungă, G. Billard, G. Bailly, *Tourist Attraction Assessment of the Bran – Rucar Corridor (Romanian Carpathians)*, in International Journal of Energy and Environment, Issue 1, Volume 5, 2011, Published by NAUN, pp 154 – 163;
- [7] Dumitrescu D., Baltălungă A. A., Billard G., Bailly G., *Bran-Rucar Corridor - Risk Versus Prosperity in the Sustainable Touristic Development*, in Proceedings of 5-th WSEAS International Conference on Economy and Management Transformation (EMT'10), West Timisoara University, 2010, pp.92-97
- [8] Mirela Mazilu, Madalina Andrei, Daniela Dumitrescu (2011), *Tourism - Revival Factor at Social, Cultural and Economic Levels*, in the WSEAS Proceeding of the 4th International Conference on cultural Heritage and Tourism (CUHT 2011), Corfu;
- [9] Soare Ionica, Costachie S., Mazilu Mirela, Dumitrescu Daniela, *The repercussions of Romania's Integration in the European Union over the Spa Tourism Potential*, în Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Tourism and Economic Development (TED '11)
- [10] *** *Statistical Year-Book of Romania*, I.N.S., București, 2002 - 2010
- [11] *** *Masterplan DB 2007*, Dâmbovița Local Council
- [12] *** *Master Planul for the development of national tourism 2007 – 2026*, O.M.T., 2007
- [13] *** *Statistical breviary of Dâmbovița county*, D.J.S. Dâmbovița, 2009
- [14] *** *Government Decision no. 314* Regarding the approval of *The annual program of marketing and promotion and of Annual Program of development of touristic products*, Government of Romania, 2009
- [15] *** *Statistical Year-Book of Dâmbovița district*, D.J.S. Dâmbovița, 2010