

HERITAGE CULTURAL TOURISM – VIABLE ALTERNATIVE FOR LOCAL ECONOMY. CASE STUDY, CULTURAL - RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN DOBROGEA

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***Abstract:** The socio-economic transformations that Romania has gone through, bring significant changes in terms of branches of local economies and, implicitly, in terms of income sources of the population. The elements of historical and cultural heritage represent for any country a good that simply cannot be evaluated in a real and effective way, but by a customized use. In order to be used, however, it must be known first and foremost by the inhabitants located in their vicinity, by promoting them to other people which are interested in such tourist, cultural and historical goods or resources. Dobrogea is one of the provinces of Romania that has such resources. Our study followed this correlation between the possibility of exploiting the elements of cultural- historical heritage, especially those whose main subject is the Christian martyrs, the resident population and, the tourist interest for them. The methodology is based on the empirical analysis of the questionnaire among the resident population regarding the knowledge and promotion of these cultural treasures. The result of the study highlights two different aspects: on the one hand the knowledge and possession of information by the resident population regarding the historical monuments of heritage and regarding the traces of the Christian martyrs, and on the other hand, the fact that these objectives face the lack of promotion and capitalization for the purpose of tourism. Tourism is just one of transit, and the places where tourists could receive information and eye - witness exhibitions and visualizations of some documents or documentaries, are simply missing, for the most part.*

***Keywords:** heritage, cultural tourism, documents, human resources, historical monuments*

INTRODUCTION

Monuments, regardless of their type, represent a possible tourist source and resource. Cultural tourism is that form of tourism that highlights the cultural resources from a certain geographical area (Teodorescu, 2009; Hocaoglu, 2016; Ilieș et al., 2017; Ziakas, 2017). Capitalizing on these cultural monuments, brings together several areas, so tourism is the last of them. The major importance resides in the studies of archeology, religion, architecture and many other domains, which come with details that tourism re- unites, structures and finally creates that unitary and consistent form that addresses to the public interested in them.

The role of archeology is to preserve the material objects of the cultural heritage in order to be exploited by future generations (Barrera-Fernandez, 2016; Zieba, 2016; Kasagrande et al, 2016). The monuments keep alive the memory of their creators. There are made possible various parallels between the religious, cultural, historical and geographical diversity (Costa Hilário, 2014; Herman et al., 2014).

The attraction for cultural tourism is increasingly clear, especially for the discovery of the cultural values in a certain geographical area such as Dobrogea, where certain events have taken place, being marked today by the representation of the historical monuments (figure 1). All these material fingerprints are attractive today, for all types of tourists interested in cultural values (Vasquez, 2016; Teodorescu et al., 2016c .; Szemkovics et al., 2018).

Educational tourism or school tourism is another form of tourism that can provide the information needed to create a complete historical picture of a geographical area, such as the province of Dobrogea Romania, where, why not, by ludic method/ by means of games, one can know and understand all these aspects. The overall image can be obtained through detailed research on specific historical monuments (Teodorescu et al., 2016b .; Dincă et al., 2015). From this point of view, the archaeological monuments highlight the presence of a local population, the phenomenon of acculturation and the multi- ethnic coexistence. Religious monuments are those that complement the whole cultural aspect of a space (Teodorescu et al., 2016a; Pintilii et al., 2017; Grecu et al., 2019). The life of a community is hard to imagine without a religious life. The materialization of beliefs is reflected in this study through these monuments.

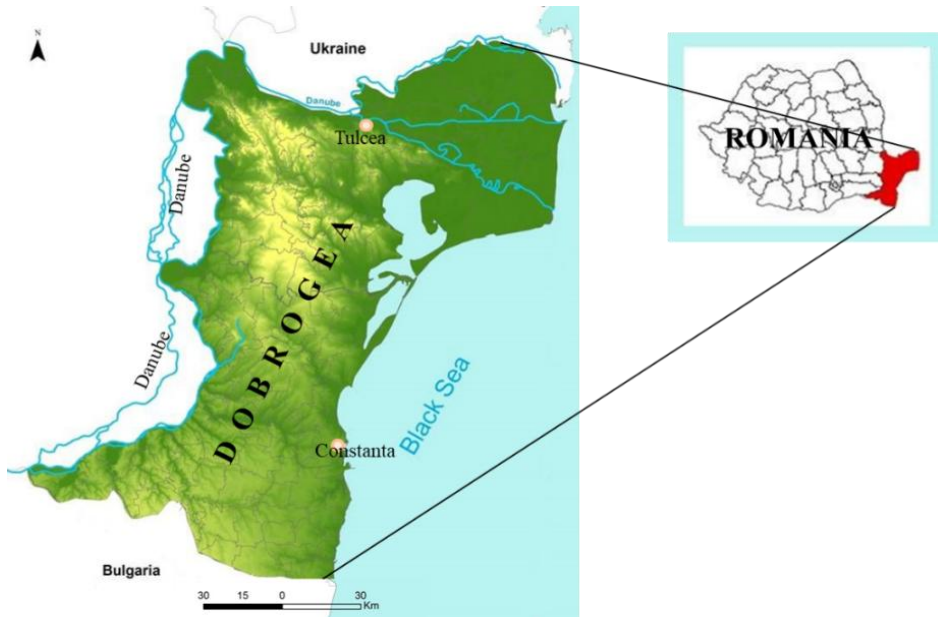


Figure 1. The location of the Dobrogea Province in Romania - the geographic area analyzed in the study

METHODOLOGY

There is a quite close relationship between the location of historical monuments and the type of relief. Dobrogea, through its position in Romania, near the Black Sea (figure 1) offers all the cultural and demographic conditions besides the historical ones mentioned.

The basis of the present study was the List of Historical Monuments made in 2016, published by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage in the Official Gazette of Romania. From this data we extracted information about the monuments existing in the Dobrogea region, trying to place the monuments in the administrative units according to the date when they were built, to highlight the period with the most numerous monuments of this kind, to group them in the three categories. The next step was to produce graphic materials, as follows: by using the QGIS software, maps were made for each category of monuments. In addition to the data extracted from the Monuments List, their mapping required geospatial data such as vector and raster data, as well as the boundaries of counties and of administrative units, and also the relief units.

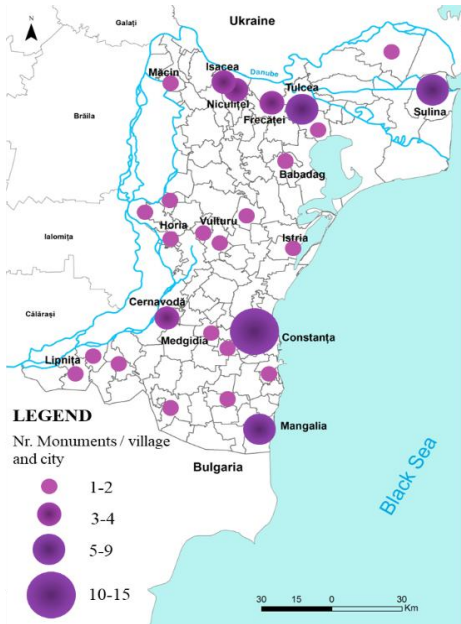


Figure 2. The location of historical-religious monuments on the list of the Ministry of Culture and National Patrimony

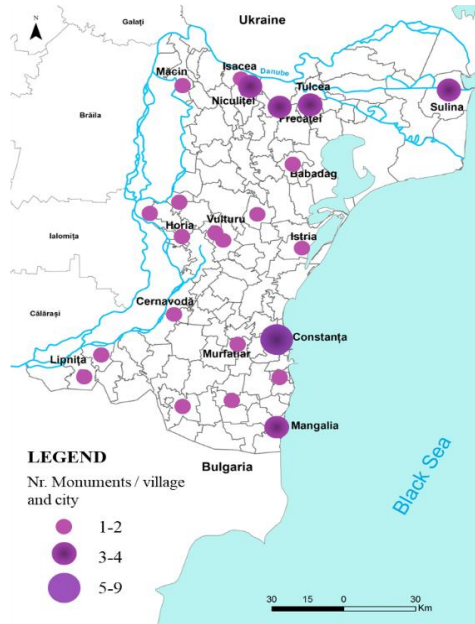


Figure 3. The location of the historical-religious monuments that can be used as tourist attractions

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of the first Dobrogea historical monuments implies the existence of the first Christian martyrs and the presence of religious constructions with special architecture.

Cultural-religious tourism could represent an attractive form of tourism in Dobrogea. Here were the first Christians recorded, here they suffered the repercussions for having supported Christianity. Historical religious monuments are well-used.

The list of heritage monuments made by the Romanian Ministry of Culture with religious specificity is very generous (figure 2). A good part of these monuments, compared to other monuments, represent tourist attractions (figure 3).

The material traces that can be used today as tourist attractions can be included in a tourist circuit that may have "the first Christian martyrs" as specific object. Following the analysis of the land and the applied questionnaire, the most of the resident population knows exactly the places of the discoveries related to this, as well as their names. The concern of the residents for knowing the local history is a very important thing in the potential exploitation of those cultural elements by tourism (Teodorescu et al., 2016b). The questionnaire applied to the 137 respondents generate the following structure:

- a. Personal data – relevant for tracking the age segment interested in exploiting the historical cultural heritage for tourist purpose, as well as for analyzing the positive or negative reactions depending on the age and level of education. The results are as clear as possible (figure 4 and figure 5). Most of the population is represented by the people over 65 years old. The phenomenon of age average aging is common to the entire Romanian space, including Dobrogea. Despite their age, the people participating in the study are good connoisseurs of the history of their own place of birth or of their own residence place.

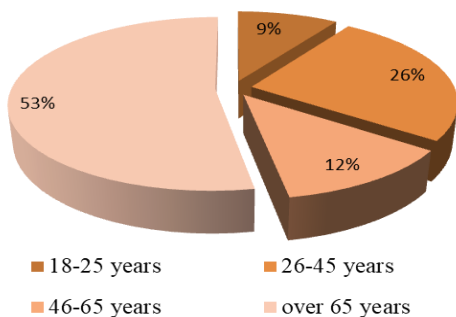


Figure 4. Structure from the point of view of the age of the participants to the study

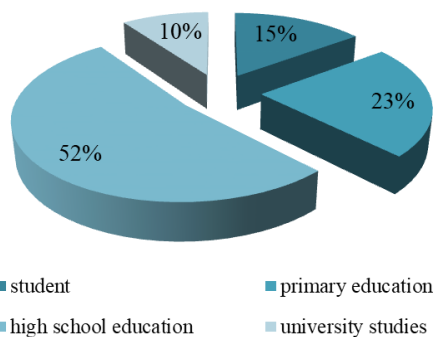


Figure 5. Educational structure of the residents participating to the study

- b. Contextual variability - the appreciation and consumption of religious and cultural-tourist or heritage services is the second point followed in the present study (Figure 6). Raising children in a family environment in which culture has been a form of education, is beneficial to the possibilities of development of cultural tourism within the area in which they live (Figure 7). Familiarity with the

cultural tourism - in this case, the religious tourism, is an advantage. The existence of the notions of local culture expressed in a family environment, has long-term effects upon the cultural mentality of the children.

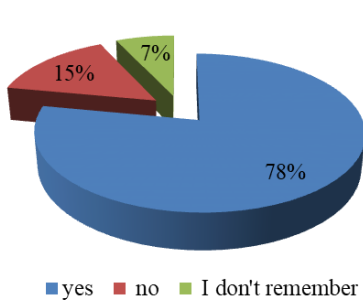


Figure 6. Degree of participation, along with the family, when visiting heritage monuments

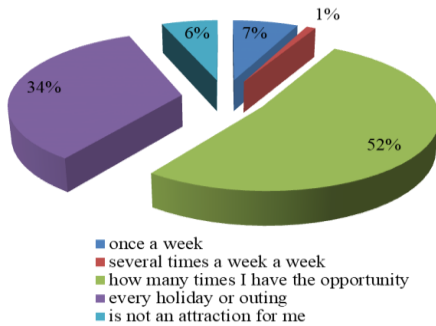


Figure 7. Expression of the measure of visiting of the cultural monuments, made by the participants to the study

In many of the villages of Dobrogea, the local cultural values have been maintained for centuries. Familiarity with the cultural values in the vicinity, as well as in other geographical areas, constitutes added knowledge. As a result of the answers received, most of them have benefited from knowledge along with their family. Most of the visits have been to the church. This gesture, which has become a habit for generations at a time, is perhaps the most important source of knowledge of the local cultural values and heritage in general. Thus there have been laid the foundations of the Christian culture and the general culture on which there have added then the moral values of a society.

- c. Knowledge of the historical data related to the cultural heritage or knowledge of the neighborhood heritage monuments, by the residents

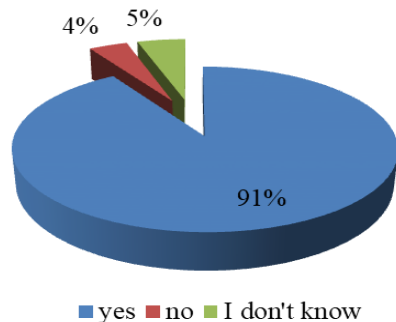


Figure 8. The ruiniform patrimony within the perimeter city- considered as symbols of the culture by the residents

As an example of familiarity in the family environment, besides the specific cultural customs and traditions, over 80% of those interviewed in the villages near Cernavoda, knew about the Christian martyrs in the vicinity of their localities, Chiril and Tasiu (figure 8). So were the many who had (Figure 8). There were also equally numerous those people who had knowledge about the martyrs from Niculitel, moved by the Cocos Monastery: the Christian Martyrs - Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis and Filippus. These are the only remains of the Christian martyrs in Dobrogea and in the country. All these details known by the local population represent a plus in the possibility of developing cultural tourism in this geographical area.

- d. Involving of the residents in arranging the heritage monument for the purpose of tourism recovery

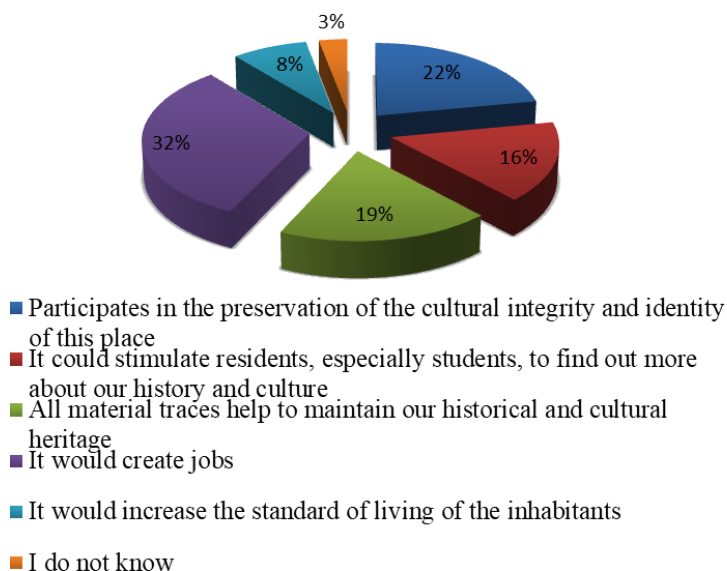


Figure 9. The positive effects of the tourism valorization of the ruiniform heritage

Local residents believe that tourism has the potential to promote their sense of place, pride in their own culture and self-esteem, and awareness of culture and local identity. It can also improve the quality of life of local people through job providing potential and income generation opportunities. In addition, it can promote the conservation of local and environmental heritage and can also promote public awareness of environmental issues.

The nineteenth century records the most numerous religious monuments (figure 10), followed by the 20th century (figure 11). The explanation could be, first and foremost of historical nature, that Dobrogea was attached to Romania, which supported the construction of religious monuments, especially Orthodox (except the Communist period of the 20th century) and, on the other hand, the economic development of Dobrogea in these centuries. After having consulted the list of heritage monuments made by the Ministry of Culture in Romania, we appreciated that it is very interesting to see which are the centuries in which the most numerous places of worship were built. These were raised, for the most part, on the places of other places of worship or places of prayer. These two centuries presented have the largest number of constructions of this type. Each of them has a specific one related to architecture, mosaic, painting or representation (Dinca et al., 2015). What is important is the attitude of the residents in regard to these jewels of the Romanian religious art, places of worship that have a very interesting history, Dobrogea being rightfully considered and named as an "open air museum".

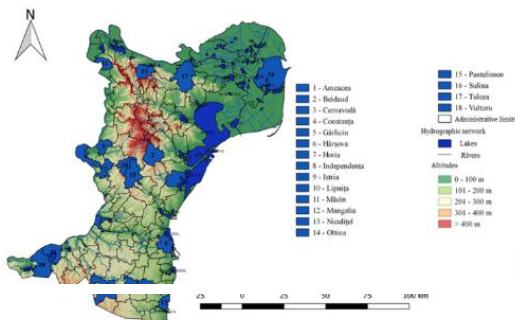


Figure 10. Places where there are religious monuments dating back to the 19th century

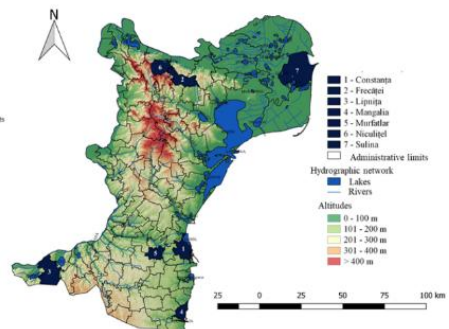


Figure 11. Localities where religious monuments are present dating back to the 20th century

CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between tourism and residents is more than necessary. A sustainable economic activity must start from the premise that it brings a quality added value in the lives of the inhabitants. In this case, throughout Dobrogea, the region between the Danube and the Sea, the historical heritage could be a real source of income.

The study starts from this idea, to consult the residents regarding the development of a cultural tourism in each village of Dobrogea, especially of a cultural tourism based on the material and immaterial heritage tourism, which has as its first center of analysis, the Christians from Dobrogea, especially the Christian martyrs from Dobrogea. The resident population is an aged population, and the economy of the locality is in a visible decline. Many of the economic units that functioned within the communist period, based on a centralized economy, are today ruins. The workforce is in a situation which is not quite pleasant or secure. In this case, on this socio-economic background, the idea of developing tourism in a geographic area loaded with history, is an important plus. The existence of a prosperous economy 30-35 years ago, explains the level of cultural perception of the residents nowadays. The residents participating in the study, especially those over the age of 65, are the ones who hold the idea of capitalizing on this material and immaterial cultural heritage. They are very knowledgeable about the historical data of these places. They are the ones who identify with these monuments and insist that the young ones should know equally as much, the history of these places. The young people, those between the ages of 18-45 years, are modest in quite high percentage with regards to the measure of their knowledge of the history of these monuments, but, they have a greater openness towards the social-economic side, that of the valorization, and they sustain the idea that these monuments should be better presented and there should be found the resources needed to highlight them.

In this way, the shortcomings related to the road or rail infrastructure, which traspas the area, are overpassed, as the the young generation comes up with ideas for capitalization. Thus, every generation sustains the idea that the symbols of their places with historical and cultural load should be known by as many people as possible.

The study brings as a novelty, a possible implementation of cultural- religious tourism based on material and immaterial cultural heritage, based on the certainty of supporting the residential population. It is a market study for what cultural tourism means.

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