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**ASPECTS OF TOURISM IN ROMANIA AND BULGARIA,  
IN THE POST-COMMUNIST PERIOD**

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*Abstract: Neighboring countries with similar economic backgrounds in the communist period, Romania and Bulgaria have a different trajectory of tourism in the current period. Romania, compared with Bulgaria, is characterized by a huge potential for tourism. The tourism in Romania focuses on the country's natural landscapes and its rich history, but promoting tourism is inadequate and fails to attract foreign tourists. By the other way, the tourism in Bulgaria is a significant contributor to the country's economy. New types of tourism, including cultural, architectural and historic tours, eco-tourism, and adventure tours, are expanding the range of visitor experiences. Bulgaria is popular with its night and disco clubs attracting tourist in the sea resorts. Different marketing policies make a difference to attract tourists in the analyzed countries.*

**Keywords: Romania, Bulgaria, tourism, marketing, promoting**

### **General presentation of the geographical environment**

The general characteristics that present the geographical environment, the relief, the climate are just a few factors that influence the touristic potential of a country. The variety of natural environment, the history and the culture as well as the constructions built in the last years, show that Romania disposes of a rich touristic potential, exploited in a certain measure. [1]

#### **The natural and anthropical environment of Romania**

Romania's sea-coast lays on a 244 km length, from the Danube's inflow into the Black Sea in the north part (Chilia channel – Romania's border with Ukraine) and till Vama Veche village (border with Bulgaria ), in the south part. The Danube Delta occupies 40 km from the shore, between Gura Chiliei and Sfântul Gheorghe. The rest of the shore lays in an area with low sands because of lagoon complex called Razelm. The Midia Head divides the littoral in two sectors: the nordic one is represented by low and sandy beaches with formations which attest the fluvial genesis (areas covered with canes, lagoons, natural levee deposits ), less favourable to tourism, and the southern part with sea front and wide beaches that lays on a 82 km length, arranged for public purposes. [2] (fig. 1).

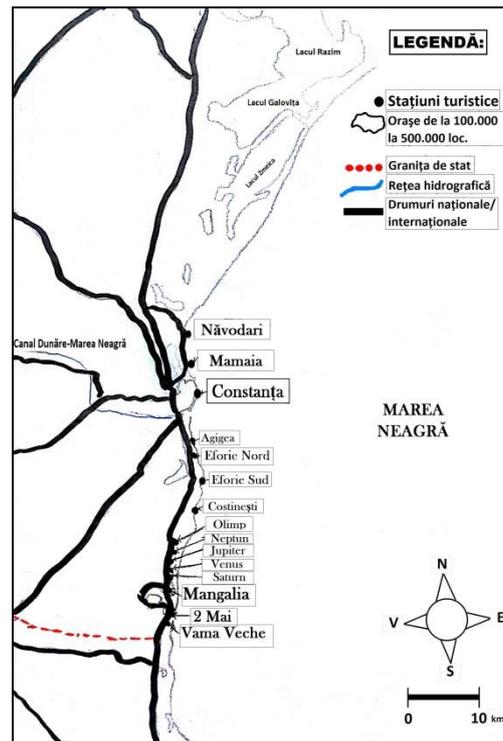


Fig. 1. Romania's littoral

Source: <http://bit.ly/15fAqq4> - personal adaptation

The littoral touristic potential stands out in relief through the sea water and balneary resources. Besides the cultural-historical and economical objectives found in the neighbourhood, the tourist disposes of a varied range of services, such as comfort, complexe balneary treatment (prophylactic, therapeutic, recuperative, talasotherapie), nautical and sporting recreation, cultural relaxation, etc.

The position of the beach allows the sun to give an exposure of over 10 hours during the day, which is very rare on the beaches in Europe. The gentle descend in the sea encourages the sea bathing as well as walking in the water, which are highly therapeutical procedures. The beach is mostly natural, with a breadth of 400-500 m at Mamaia and Techirghiol and 18-50-200 m in the rest, the whole surface being covered in organic, calcareous or siliceous sand with high purity and over average fine-grained sand.

A very important factor for the balneary treatment is the sea water, due to its chemical composition (the elements are chlorine, sulphate, sodium and magnesium), reduced salinity (17-18g/l), favourable to the human body under therapeutical and osseous aspect, the thermic contrast water-air, and to the action of waves and sogasoid.

The optimal usance of the beaches is due to non existing tides, and the reduced salinity of the water allows the nautical sports and especially the subacvatic ones to develop. The marine bio-climate from the Romanian littoral of the Black Sea is different from the baltic one or from the North Sea climate and from the Channel Sea by bigger temperatures (11,2°C annual average, 21,8° C the average for the July and 0,2° C for January) and is less baking than the adriatic and mediterranean one. In summer, the period when the sun shines is of 10-11 hours a day, and over 2500 hours of sun shining which favours sun bathing. There are two types of mineral waters found on the Romanian littoral: the depth ones, brought at the surface with the help of bores in Mangalia areas; Venus, Neptun and Eforie and the ones

from the salty lake (Techirghiol and Mangalia). The natural or anthropical touristic objectives are of big interest for the touristic activity, for example Taşaul lake, Siutghiol lake (near Mamaia), Belona lake (Eforie Nord), Neptun lake, Jupiter lake with sweet water, the forests nearby (Comorova), but also parks and green areas that offer a rich landscape and give the opportunity to practice nautical sports. Along the sea shore there are 13 touristic resorts with different specializations (sections), the balneary function (climatic and balneary function) being the most important. Comfort- recreation, helio-marine treatment, balneary treatment, nautical recreation, cultural and transit tourism are forms of tourism that we can encounter in Mamaia, Costineşti, Olimp, Jupiter, Cap Aurora, Saturn, Năvodari, Eforie Nord, Eforie Sud, Neptun, Venus, Mangalia and Techirghiol. In Mamaia the aquatic and fun Aqua Magic Park was build, besides other 8 nautical recreation bases,<sup>4</sup> on the sea shore and 4 on the Siutghiol lake bank, as well as a tele-gondola which has attracted a large number of tourists eager to admire the resort's landscape.

Another investment was made in Saturn, where the aquatic complex from around Hora- Balada – Sirena hotels was built, a complex which contains swimming pools, artesian wells, acvatic slide, water bar, etc.

The first private recreation harbour for small boats in Romania was built, after occidental standards – Yacht Club – “Europa” in Eforie Nord, the first private authorized aerodrome in Romania, at Tuzla, where tourists are offered the possibility to enjoy recreational flights and parachute jumps. Also, the stud farm from Mangalia was modernized in 2004.

#### **Anthropic and natural environment of Bulgaria**

The Black Sea Coast lays from Romania's border with Bulgaria, in North, till much lower, in South, with Turkey, forming a big number of deep and full of sand bays. The big majority of foreign tourists will arrive at one of the two airports near the coast- North Varna and South Burgas. The Balcan mountains chain splits the coast in two almost equal parts. [3] (fig. 2).

##### *The north coast of the Black Sea*

On the north side of Varna, the Black Sea coast is sprinkled with golden sand. Among the most important attractions there also is one of the Queen's residences, an ancient monastery and Caliacra Head. A great part of the northern area is limited by elevated chalk rocks and surrounded by the forest Baltata. Fter Varna, between Albena and Balcic, the coast turns suddenly to east, connecting to the narrow land slip which is called the Caliacra Head. Beside the border, the land slip is getting more deserted and wilder, but, also in this area, golf courses are being built and investitions are made.

The Dobrogea plain forms a wide area in the corner of nort-eastern Bulgaria, which, during summer, is transformed in dark yellow corn and sun-flower fields. Dobrogea is the free zone between the Danube and the Black Sea, being divided by Romania and Bulgaria. Dobrici is the “capital” of the Bulgarian section, a big and uninteresting city, although here, in the city's museum, there are some archeological discoveries.



Fig. 2. Bulgaria's littoral

source: <http://bit.ly/1aoyAc8> - personal adaptation

### *The southern coast of the Black Sea*

The Balcan Mountains form between the northern and southern part of the coast of the Black Sea, a natural border. At Emine Head, in the southern part of Obzor, the tall peaks of the northern part make way to long beaches, with big sand surfaces, which lay till the border with Turkey. Inside the country, amid hills, the rural life is very little influenced by the international tourism next to them. Sunny Beach, St. Vlas and Nessebar are the main attractions, and Sozopol, situated closer to the southern part, still holds the image of a fishermen village, with traditional wood houses and old churches. Burgas is the most important city on the southern coast of the Black Sea. Although the attractions are not quite so evident, the city is worth visiting.

### **Comparative analysis: Romanian littoral vs. Bulgarian littoral**

The area from the Black Sea littoral has grown as importance, especially because of the improvement made both in Romania and Bulgaria, alongside those made on Turkey's coast and on ex-Soviet territory. When it comes to our country, natural factors (fine sand beaches, the expended period of solarization, onshore mud) determined, together with the modern constructions, the convergence of many international fluxes, especially coming from Central and Western Europe.

The string of Romanian resorts (Mamaia, Eforie, Venus, Mangalia, Costinești, Olimp) continues on the Bulgarian littoral with others, visited by a great number of foreign tourists (Albena, Balçik, Golden Sands, etc).

As it can be well seen from the Evolution analyzed by Tourism and Development Ministry in Romania, the number of foreign tourists coming to the Romanian territory remained unchanged between 2006 and 2012. [4] Moreover, the Romanian resorts at the Black Sea are also starting to be avoided by their own citizens, who find pretexts to spend their vacations in the country laying in the southern of Danube. Estimations show that the number of Romanians that will spend their summer vacations in Bulgaria will be bigger in comparison to last year. This has been going on for years. Starting with the way the hotels were privatized and with the advertising the state made to tourism, and continuing with the services the tourists beneficiate from, the differences approached by Bulgaria and Romania are now visible even to the undemanding tourist. (fig. 3)

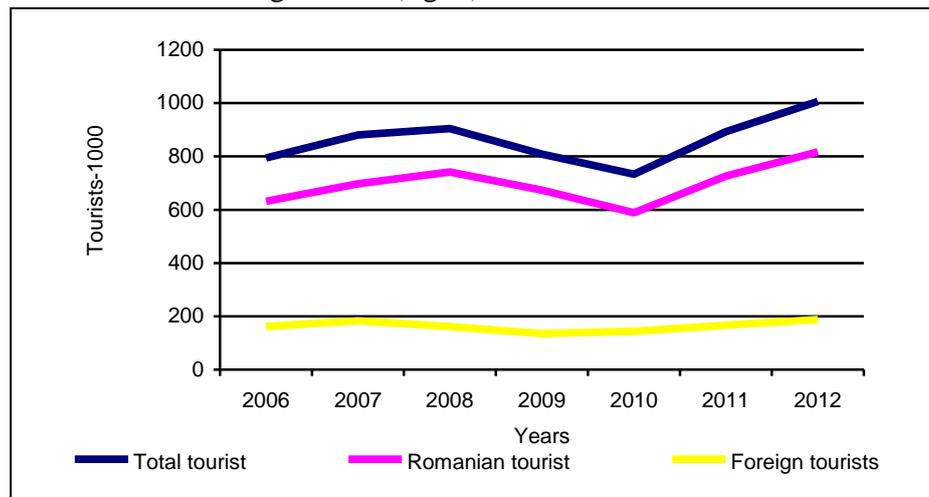


Fig. 3. The evolution of tourists number on the Romanian littoral between 2006 and 2012  
*sursa: <http://bit.ly/13YNssQ>*

The accommodation capacity in Romania is held in proportion of 35% by the hotels placed on the Black Sea littoral. This segment only has contributed with at least 7% to the general growth in number of tourists during this year. In spite all this, only 10 000 from the approximately 1,5 million tourists who visited the Black Sea littoral this summer were foreigners. In the analysis based on the three fundamental components of tourism: geography (relief, climate), infrastructure (including here also the touristic objectives) and people (services mostly) Bulgaria beats Romania with 3-0, in the game of coast tourism, which emphasizes the importance of a detailed analysis of all the elements which should be ameliorated in the approach of Romanian touristic market.

#### **Problems involving the staff and the management**

The main problem that involves the coast tourism is, in present, major staff problems, with a profound lack of qualified jobs. Romanian waiters, receptionists and cooks work in Greece, Italy or Spain and in Romania, the exaggerated costs of salaries, the restrictive anticipations of the Labour Code together with the short season character of littoral tourism destroy Romanians interest to work for the local tourism. The immediate consequences are extremely small salaries, the weakly and unmotivated qualified personnel as well as the poor service quality. [5]

The Romanian hotel-keepers are unfortunately extremely occupied. The biggest step is the training of the staff, both of the ones put in key points but also of those who are directly involved providing services to tourists. A hotel-keeper isn't compulsory also an efficient manager. There are a lot of persons from the Romanian littoral who don't have the necessary abilities for tourism, and in many cases, either touristic preparation nor touristic formation, necessary for presenting offers. It can't be brought in discussion the idea of a long term business plan, reducing costs through investment, attracting tourists or promoting their image on internet sites or at tourism conferences. [6]

The measures which can lead to the development and to the touristic progress on the Romanian littoral are the personnel training, common strategies ( resort level ), for the presentation in guide lines similar offers and the implication of the local administration.

At least 10% of the hotels from the Romanian littoral have an efficient manager, but most unities encounter problems when it comes to the organization and the quality of services, relations with clients and contractual partners, declare the representants of the tourism agencies.

They also say that Romania can't attract foreign tourists in the situation when prices are double compared to the ones offered by other destinations, like Spain and Bulgaria, and the quality of services is poorer. An example of this kind is the evolution of charter flights to the littoral resorts. If, from Belgium to Bulgaria four charters a day had been announced this summer, from Belgium to Romanian littoral resorts there hadn't been announced any of this kind. Hotels had been purchased mostly by people who had nothing in common with the tourism, but having a hotel on the coast represented for these people a hobby, and especially, had no idea in running such a unity. A major problem is also the lack of qualified personnel, not only in management level but also for mere employees – room attendants, receptionists, waiters. Another impediment is represented by the fact that some employers in the coast hotels are seasonal.

### **Privatization**

The present situation is explained by the fact that in Bulgaria the management of the hotels had been done a lot earlier, namely in 1993, and the concession wasn't an option, like was the case for Romania. All hotels are private and were bought by Bulgarian investors. Only after that negotiations had started with the most important tour-operators, TUI or Neckerman, which invested money either for the modernization of the hotel, or for the construction of a new one, according to their project. After this, the debt was paid from the render of services to tour-operators. In this way, the Bulgarian investors profitted twice from the situation: they obtained the money and consultancy to have hotels at international standards but also took care of their clients from abroad. In Albena, for example, the most known resort in Bulgaria, the shares are detained by a Bulgarian society. There is also strong collaboration with the big tour-operators from abroad. In Romania, a single hotel opted for this modality, of closing a deal with a foreign tour operator.

### **The balneary component and infrastructure**

A big problem in the Romanian resorts is constituted by the infrastructure. In Romania there are well kept hotels but the owners can't get back the investment because of the infrastructure problems. [7]

In Albena the situation is simple: there is a society which holds the shares and which handles the infrastructure. In other resorts, in which there are different owners, there are corporations which, having taxes cashed from the hoteliers, have to deal with the resorts infrastructure. Also, the touristic potential is fully exploited. On the Bulgarian littoral the touristic season begins on the first of May, a date that the Romanian authorities are trying to impose. An interesting aspect is that the hotels which are found in the proximity of thermal water springs function much longer, and there are some opened all year long, because there are a lot of persons who simply love the water. In Romania, the situation is different. The balneary component was transformed in a seasonal activity, although it can be used all year long.

#### **Bulgarian specialists in strategy and services**

One of the main invoked reasons is the geographical disadvantage, because in Bulgaria the summer lasts a month longer than in Romania. [8] That means that Bulgarians have four warm seasons, while Romanians have only three. And this is a growing phenomenon, if we consider the climacteric warming in the last recent years. Greece and Turkey also have the advantage of a longer summer. Which leads to the possibility that the hotels' exploitation in these countries should amortize in a shorter period of time. Without having golf terrains, hippodromes and few tennis courts or other possibilities of spending leisure time, the Romanian littoral offers as main activity swimming in the sea and sun bathing. If the weather isn't good for sun bathing, the tourists have all chances to get bored.

#### **Long term perspective vs the immediate gain**

The tour operators say that there is no one to protect their investment: the taxes are the same all year long and the staff, once qualified, migrates to other countries which offer bigger salaries. On the other side, marketing experts declare that Romania and Bulgaria are adopting different strategies. While in Romania investment has been done on short term, the German management in many sectors of the Bulgarian tourism implemented the long term policy. More precisely, the Romanians expect to get back the money in two-three to five years, and the Bulgarians opt for a long term strategy, the investment in the hotelier sector is recovered in 20-25 years.

#### **Conclusions**

As it comes out of the comparative analysis, Romania has much more problems in much more chapters which have to deal with the approach of coast tourism. Bulgaria isn't perfect either, but the numbers are the proof that Bulgarian market is developing much faster than the Romanian market. The statistical data offered by WWTC show that annually, on the Romanian territory come much more tourists compared to Bulgaria. [9] The numbers, taken out of accountancy, say that our country gains four times less money than our southern Danube neighbours. The installments from tourism in Romania are one of the smallest in the area. Even though theoretically we have a good position and the number of foreign tourists attracted by the beauty of the Romanian natural environment grows from year to year, they are not spending great sums in our country. As a matter of fact, foreigners prefer short staying periods, under the conditions when the average for accommodation/night is of 2,5, while in the case of Romanian tourists there is a report of four night stay. Moreover, the statistic report also takes in consideration the ones who don't visit Romania for touristic purposes. So, the

majority of the specialists confirm the Romanian potential from a geographical perspective, while statistics show that, in comparison to Bulgaria, Romania is enlists losses in the economical domain field. Which are the factors that generate this paradox? Of all the factors that participate essentially in the realization and in the implementation of a healthy marketing strategy, there are some which might determine an efficient and productive approach for the touristic market of the Romanian coast on a long term. Hence, we distinguish: facilitation policies, human policy and investment policy.

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