

The Exploitation of Tourism Resources in Braila City, Port on the Danube River

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Abstract: The port city on the Danube, Braila has a long tradition in travel. This Danubian port appears named “Drinago” in an old Spanish geographical description and travels, “Libro del conocimiento/Book of Knowledge” (1350) and several Catalan maps (Angellino de Dalorto, 1325-1330 and Dulcert Angelino, 1339). Intense commercial transactions carried out in port, the opportunity of achieving high and quick results have attracted many foreign merchants - Bulgarian, Macedonians, Albanians, Greeks, but also French, Belgian, Austrian, Italian, Hebrew, and many Romanians from Transylvania, thus Braila became a multiethnic entity. Future activities, specific to the trade from ports enlist it on the tourist map of Romania. Tourism resources are the most diverse. The natural resources combine the picturesque ponds and lakes with the charm of wild beaches or protected areas such as the “Balta Mica a Brailei/The Small Pond of Braila”.

Keywords: tourism; Danube port; economic development

Introduction

Numerous studies concerning the origin of Braila show that the region was inhabited since ancient times, this is confirmed by the archaeological remains dating from 5000 BC, relics that testify the continuity of life and civilization in this region. Traditions, habits and their beliefs were integrated into the cultural and spiritual life of the city. Panait Istrate, Panait Cerna, Fratii Minovici, Maria Filotti, Ana Aslan, Mihail Sebastian, D.P. Perpessicius are outstanding personalities of science and culture, world-renowned reputation that made the city famous and they are the proud and joy of its inhabitants.

Tourism Resources

The anthropogenic resources are concentrated in a relatively small number of centers, among them most notably being Braila City. Braila, the oldest and largest

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urban center of the county, is unique by a number of sights of great value such as “Maria Filotti” Theatre, Puppets Theatre, History Museum with numerous objects and documents on the evolution of the city and surroundings. The museum has a model of the Braila citadel, which was located in the area of the current Central Park in the Traian Square, and a copy of the urban plan elaborated during 1831-1835, in the plans it was set up the basis of systematizing the city in the shape of an amphitheater. The Museums from Braila have a rich collection of paintings, sculptures and graphics of Roman masters. Braila is also famous for its architecture and we should mention: The “Buna Vestire” Church known as the “Greek Church” with numerous frescoes painted by Gh. Tatarascu, the Church “Sf. Arhangheli Mihail si Gavril” former mosque, converted in 1831 into Orthodox Church. In Braila it is the world headquarters of the Lipovan community and the Episcopal Church of the old rite Orthodox Christians. Other objectives of historical value are presented in the network of cellars and city wall fragments of the Braila citadel. In the southwestern part of the city is the largest park of Braila, the Monument Park, recreation area and beyond, as here it can be visited the Museum of Natural Sciences, but also there may be practiced sports on specially designated fields.

The natural resources are dominated by the Danube.

Braila County, although it is not located in an area of utmost importance for tourism, offers many possibilities for the development of active partnerships due to, in part, resources of natural factors: the opening of the Danube and the presence of lakes, many of them rich in salts slightly soluble, with therapeutic qualities, for which some of them are used in the treatment of diseases. There are salt lakes, shallow, present in the floodplains of Ialomita and Siret in full steppe. Being stationed on the bottom of near oval depressions (the ones in the plain between Buzau and Ialomita) or within elongated depressions such as valleys, it explains their origin as meander and left arm lakes. They have got into the attention of specialists geologists, balneologist botanists for some time due to particular properties of water and mud of some lakes, such as Salt Lake/Lacu Sărat, Căineni, Movila Miresii/Bride's Mound.

By the Law no. 5/2000 on the approval of the National Landscaping Plan - Section III of protected areas, there are identified three protected areas: the Small Pond Natural Park of Braila within the list of “Biosphere Reserves, the National or Natural Park with an area of 17 529 ha”; it was originally established as a nature reserve in 1979 and reconfirmed it in 1984. It has global avifauna value, which is designated as a wetland of international importance by the Ramsar Convention Secretariat. In 1999 it was observed a total of 101 bird species that nest here; the Camnita Forest, a protected area of national interest with a surface of 1.30 ha; the forest reservation is located in Buzau River floodplain and the entire forest is protected by an elongated parcel of pure *Fraxinus*; the Ornithological reserve Lake Jirlău-Vișani, a protected area of national interest on a surface of 930 ha; the aquatic vegetation has favored nesting or only stopover for many species of birds.

Subsequently there were identified new natural treasures of county interest, contributing to the development of the protected areas network: Popina Blasova - natural monument, located in Balta Braila, witnessing the Hercynic erosion; Blasova Lake - oxbow lake, located in Balta Brailei; Movila Miresii Salt lake, as ornithological reserve; Zăton Lake - oxbow lake, located in Balta Brailei; Căineni Lake as ornithological reserve; Vișoara forest as forest reserve, with a surface of 1693.6 hectares.

Protected area assessment (conducted by the Institute of Geography of the Romanian Academy)

The name of the protected area	Territorial-Administrative Units	Points (maximum 5)
Natural Park Balta Brailei	Braila	5
Natural Park Balta Brailei	Chiscani	5
Natural Park Balta Brailei	Tichilesti	5
Natural Park Balta Brailei	Gropeni	5
Natural Park Balta Brailei	Tufesti	5
Natural Park Balta Brailei	Stancuta	5
Natural Park Balta Brailei	Bertestii de Jos	5
Jirlau Lake- Visani	Jirlau	3
Jirlau Lake- Visani	Visani	3
Jirlau Lake- Visani	Galbenu	3
Camnita Forest	Sutesti	2

Source:

[http://www.cjbraila.ro/Portal/Braila/CJBraila/portal.nsf/All/E1F42BEFBCD9B11AC2257656002A4F98/\\$FILE/TURISM.pdf](http://www.cjbraila.ro/Portal/Braila/CJBraila/portal.nsf/All/E1F42BEFBCD9B11AC2257656002A4F98/$FILE/TURISM.pdf)

Of particular importance in the domain of tourism exploitation of the Braila territory are the balneary resources that are based on curative mud from the salt lakes. The salt Lakes from Bărăganului Plain have waters with high content of chlorides and alkali sulphates, to which it is added bromide and sodium iodide, along with significant quantities of therapeutic mud, which is why they have been recommended for nearly a century by the balneologist researchers for spa treatment. Numerous geomorphological and geological, hydro chemical studies aimed at explaining the origin of lakes and their salinity. It is known that in terms of genesis, the lakes can be grouped into three categories - lakes located in the water meadow of the Danube

and rivers, located at the confluence of rivers or located in depressions without drainage and the salinity comes from contributions salts via groundwater (springs), from the inflow of surrounding ground water or runoff waters washing the salts deposited in the capillaries of the rocks. In the county of Braila, they were exploited in various periods or were exploited partly by simple arrangements or by appropriate facilities, therapeutic resources of Salt Lake / Braila, Lake Căineni and Lake Movila Miresii.

At a distance of only 5 km from Braila, on the lakeside of Salt Lake, it is the balneary resort spa Salt Lake, located 16 m above the sea level and it is surrounded by 70 hectares of forest that mitigate the climate steppe thus making from the resort a pleasant resting place. The lake with high salinity is an old course of the Danube, being now blocked. The bottom of the lake is covered with therapeutic shore. The therapeutic value of the water and mud from Salt Lake resort is known for a long time by the inhabitants of this region, but lately, many tourists come here for treatment. Danube also attracts tourists due to specific flora and fauna related the hydrographical network that give a special note to tourism offering the opportunity to hunt and fish. The tourism offer of the Braila County consists also in cruises on the Danube, with accommodation and special tourist programs (fishing, hunting, etc.) on the Small Island of Braila, Fundu Mare, Corotisca, Blasova and Zaton.

The Tourism in Braila area reunites well-known forms of tourism – the balneary and circulation tourism has the largest share. Other types of tourism: *treatment, recreation, sport fishing, nautical tourism* – which are achieved spontaneously, picnic and as an included non-dissociated form, valid for all types *knowledge tourism*, confused at some point with *cultural tourism*.

Tourism transport on nautical ways has been noticed since the beginning of the century, especially by high-income tourism consumers. The appeal of traveling on water as the main leisure and not only as a possibility of accessing a tourism destination has giving birth to “cruise” - travel arrangements comprising transport and other tourism services provided during the trip. Braila, a Danube port, was until recently linked to other river ports from the downstream up to Sulina and upstream up to Hirsova by scheduled passenger ships. In the recent years, however, due to high costs and fewer passengers, these cruises have been canceled, so as currently Braila no longer benefits from river transport of passengers. Nevertheless it is maintained the link with Dobrogea via ferries that carry passengers and vehicles. For recreational cruise there are used two passenger ships: “Salt Lake” and “Borcea”, the only ship with paddle driven by a steamer engine built in 1845.

Tourism Traffic

The tourism accommodation capacity indicator can highlight the possibility of promoting the tourism flow. The table below shows that the tourist accommodation capacity has an upward trend in the period 2010 -2012 with a maximum number of seats in 2013. In the following period a decrease is observed.

Table 1. Tourist accommodation capacity by types of tourist accommodation structures, Braila counties and cities / places

Tourist accommodation capacity by types of tourist accommodation structures, Braila counties and cities / places					
	Year 2010	Year 2011	Year 2012	Year 2013	Year 2014
Total	2082	2364	2589	2659	2544
Hotels	1377	1589	1724	1768	1780
Hostels	:	:	15	15	15
Apartment motels	:	:	6	6	6
Motels	64	90	113	113	113
Villas	20	20	72	72	72
Campsites	:	78	78	78	78
Tourist stops	84	104	104	104	104
Tourist Cabins	114	36	16	16	16
Camps for students and preschoolers	391	391	391	391	251
Guesthouses	32	56	60	86	99
Agro tourism pensions	:	:	10	10	10
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Table 2. Arrivals of tourists in the structures of tourists' reception by type of establishment, in Braila County / No. of tourists

Arrivals of tourists in the structures of tourists' reception by type of establishment, in Braila County / No. of tourists					
	Year 2010	Year 2011	Year 2012	Year 2013	Year 2014
Total	51052	66411	62050	57078	56246
Hotels	45905	60717	52892	48029	46243
Hostels	:	26	709	534	166
Apartment motels	:	:	125	:	:
Motels	359	586	1674	1367	1375
Villas	2118	1368	2139	1684	1811

Campsites	:	435	372	309	97
Tourist stops	705	945	1449	1338	1963
Tourist Cabins	237	6	:	:	:
Camps for students and preschoolers	810	1103	759	1233	881
Guesthouses	918	1225	1739	2228	3019
Agro tourism pensions	:	:	192	356	691
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Tourist accommodation capacity by types of tourist accommodation structures in Braila county / places

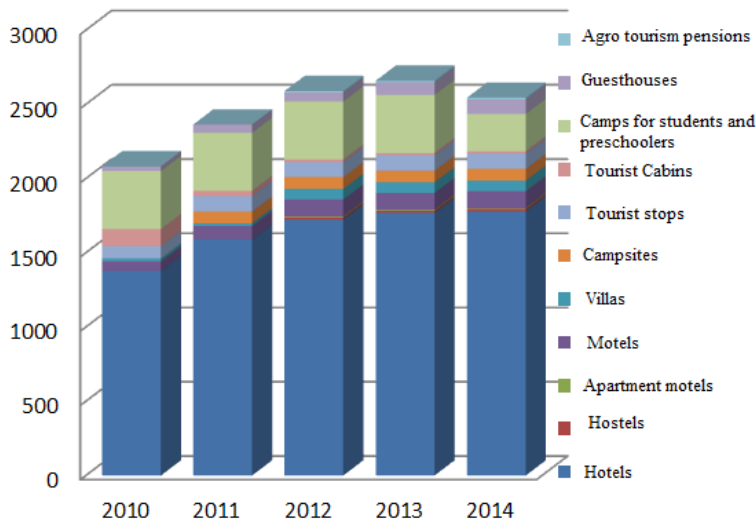


Figure 1. Tourist accommodation capacity by types of tourist accommodation structures in Braila county / places

Braila County is among the counties with a small, in operation accommodation capacity. In the statistical data presented in the above table it can be noticed an increase in arrivals in hotels, insignificant compared to the number of arrivals in motels and villas that has skyrocketed.

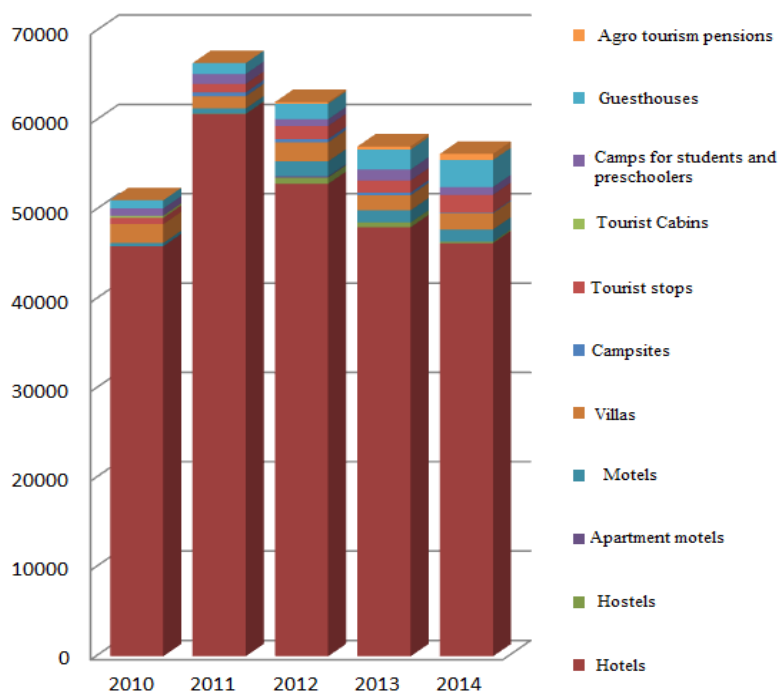


Figure 2. Arrivals of tourists in the structures of tourists' reception by type of establishment, in Braila County / No. of tourists

Table 3. Overnight stays in tourist accommodation by type of establishment in Braila county / number

Overnight stays in tourist accommodation by type of establishment in Braila county / number					
	Year 2010	Year 2011	Year 2012	Year 2013	Year 2014
Total	183821	229613	226689	204760	195944
Hotels	173237	217234	203172	183544	175174
Hostels	:	93	1146	730	250
Apartment motels	:	:	625	:	:
Motels	2867	4280	6489	4005	3625
Villas	2118	1368	3841	2636	2823
Campsites	:	490	495	498	202
Tourist stops	1446	1955	3546	2795	4367
Tourist Cabins	284	14	:	:	:

Camps for students and preschoolers	1315	1616	1142	1804	1242
Guesthouses	2554	2563	5347	7315	6753
Agro tourism pensions	:	:	886	1433	1508
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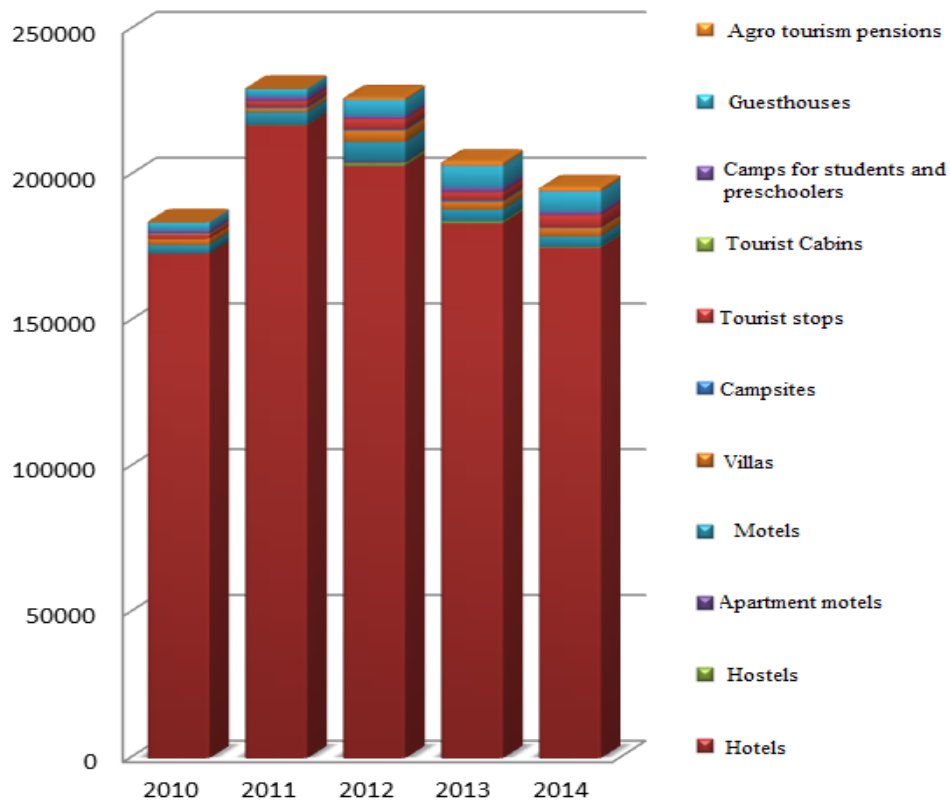


Figure 3. Overnight stays in tourist accommodation by type of establishment in Braila county / number

Also in the case of overnight stays it is kept the same trend, a growth in the first part of the analyzed interval and a slight decline in the final period.

Conclusion

The special nature of the environmental framework representative for Braila is necessary to protect and preserve, but also to be known, becoming an important pole in terms of tourism and functionality intensely frequented by either county residents, visitors or tourists.

Braila's diverse tourism potential of the area should be popularized and promoted, not only nationally, but also internationally, the foreign tourism market could be a significant source of potential tourists, especially for balneary tourism. But in order to boost this tourism demand it is vital to make known the tourism offer. A special emphasis should be on the most current ways of promoting tourism services area both nationally and internationally, the Internet is a priority in this regard by making tourism sites more attractive for the inclusion of Braila area in the international tourist flows.

Another major objective in order to increase the capitalization of tourism resources in the region should be diversifying the leisure possibility.

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