

The Priorities of Romanian Coastal and Maritime Tourism From The Perspective of Land and Sea Interactions

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Abstract

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) is an integrated approach to the long-term management of maritime areas, in order to ensure sustainable development and use of marine resources, advocating the need for the sustainable growth as far as maritime economies are concerned. MSP is based on an integrated and participatory decision-making process which involves stakeholders from all sectors of the marine environment, tourism being one sector which requires support from a variety of stakeholders. The aim of this paper is to form a picture of the perception of the MSP stakeholders regarding coastal and maritime tourism, i.e., to see whether it is a priority from the perspective of analyzing land-sea interactions (LSI) in the Romanian Black Sea coastal area. Their views regarding the priorities and role of tourism sustainability in the local economy are needed, considering that LSI is strongly connected to the economic benefits of MSP.

Key words: coastal and maritime tourism, stakeholders, Romanian coastal area, Land-Sea Interaction (LSI), Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)

J.E.L. classification: O20, R10.

1. Introduction

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) is an integrated approach to the long-term management of maritime areas, so as to ensure sustainable development and use of marine resources, advocating the need for the sustainable growth as far as maritime economies are concerned (Directive 2014/89/EU). It seeks to balance the economic, environmental/ecological and social objectives by integrating the different activities taking place in the marine environment, so that conflicts can be avoided, and compatibilities encouraged (Friess and Grémaud-Colombier, 2021, p. 2). MSP can help reduce the effects of coastal development on the marine environment by supporting land-sea interactions to be sustainable, equitable and effective.

The coastal areas are complex environments which accumulate high anthropogenic pressures caused by socio-economic activities (Stan, 2014, p. 53), these activities being very important for the economy of many countries, as they provide jobs and other benefits in industries such as tourism, agriculture, fisheries, energy production, transport, shipping, oil and gas, etc. At the same time, they are directly impacted by urbanization, industrialization, agriculture and aquaculture, as well as climate change (Doxaran *et al*, 2019, p. 1), therefore rapidly becoming essential tools for a sustainable tourism management (Hanafiah, Jamaluddin, and Kunjuraman, 2021, p. 2).

This paper analyzes stakeholders' perceptions of land-sea and sea-land interactions regarding the tourist activities performed in the Romanian coastal area in terms of ecological, economic and social priorities.

2. Literature review

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) is a planning process which focuses on the long-term management and sustainable use of the maritime environment, its main purpose being the management of spatial uses and conflicts in marine areas (Directive 2014/89/EU). MSP is a holistic

approach which considers the complexity of human activities, their interconnections, and their impact on the marine environment, therefore, understanding the relationships between the multiple human pressures and the state of the ecosystems is crucial to the development of spatial plans (Petrişor *et al*, 2020, p.3).

In order to assist planners in the implementation of the MSP Directive, eight key LSI marine development sectors have been defined: fisheries, minerals and mining, aquaculture, desalination, ports and shipping, tourism and coastal recreation, offshore energy and marine cables and pipelines, (Creamer *et al*, 2020, p.11). MSP can be used to identify and manage the conflicts between various maritime activities and to identify and develop sustainable development opportunities in the coastal areas.

Tourism is the main driver of the coastal areas' economy, and it can play a decisive role in the development of local economies. Coastal tourism and maritime tourism are interconnected. Thus, coastal tourism, which is defined as any form of tourism that takes place near the sea, depends mainly on the physical environment and the various natural resources, such as fisheries, aquaculture and water quality (Mejjad, Rossi and Pavel, 2022, p. 1). It encompasses the full range of tourist accommodation and eating facilities, sandy beaches, entertainment venues, leisure and recreational tourist activities taking place in the coastal area. Maritime tourism refers to a certain form of tourism which includes any tourist activity related to the sea and coastline, such as various boat trips, cruises, as well as activities such as water skiing, windsurfing, underwater fishing, scuba diving, swimming, boat tours, jet ski activities (Diakomihalis, 2007, p. 421).

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) is based on an integrated and participatory decision-making process which involves stakeholders from all sectors of the marine environment, given that tourism is a sector which cannot develop alone; it requires support from various stakeholders (Hanafiah, Jamaluddin, and Kunjuraman, 2021, p. 2). The stakeholders involved in MSP can be broadly divided into two categories: public stakeholders and private stakeholders. Collaborative planning relies on the inclusion and interaction of stakeholders (Erkkilä-Välimäki *et al*, 2021, p. 2), in order to understand sustainability and the aspirations of various groups in the pursuit of durability (Dimitrovski *et al*, 2021, p. 2).

Coastal and maritime tourism is an important part of MSP, as it provides economic benefits to the coastal communities, offering opportunities for recreation and relaxation. It is therefore important to consider the potential impact of tourist activities when developing MSP, as MSP enables integrated, forward-looking and consistent decision-making regarding the activities in the marine environment (Pataki and Kitsiou, 2022, p. 2).

The implementation of the MSP Directive at Member State's level implies the development of MSPs. In this regard, Romania and Bulgaria have carried out, in the 2019-2021 period, the project "Cross-border Maritime Spatial Planning for Black Sea - Bulgaria and Romania (MARSPLAN-BS-II)", in order to develop national and regional/cross-border maritime spatial planning for the Black Sea area, these plans being essential for achieving better coherence between land and marine planning. In view of the implementation of the project, several studies have been carried out regarding the ongoing and prospective endeavors, activities and usages designed for the Romanian and Bulgarian Black Sea coasts (Aivaz, Stan and Vintilă, 2021; Aivaz *et al*, 2021; Stan, *et al*, 2021a; Stan, *et al*, 2021b; Stan and Vintilă, 2022; Stan, 2022; Stancheva and Stanchev, 2021; Stancheva *et al*, 2021), tackling environmental, socio-economic and technical issues faced by both public and private entities.

Therefore, the Land-Sea Interactions (LSI) analysis within MSP provides a platform for the stakeholders to communicate their interests in the marine space. Whereas dynamic changes in the composition of the marine stakeholders can be expected due to new and emerging uses of the sea (Zaucha and Kreiner, 2021, p.3), the role of the MSP stakeholders is to provide information and feedback on the proposed plans and to participate in the decision-making process.

3. Research methodology

This research endeavors to create a picture of the perception of the MSP stakeholders regarding coastal and maritime tourism, namely whether it is a priority in connection with the land-sea interactions (LSI) analysis in the Romanian Black Sea coastal area.

The methodology for investigating LSI within MSP is the result of certain pilot projects carried out in Europe and it is a process divided into 4 key steps: LSI delineation, value chain analysis, governance analysis and recommendations for good management of LSI (Creamer *et al*, 2020, p.13).

Within the MARSPLAN-BS-II project, the partner National Institute for Marine Research and Development "Grigore Antipa" has drafted a 65 question-questionnaire in order to implement Activity 2.3 "Integration of Land-Sea Interactions (LSI) in MSP for the cross-border region". The questionnaire was administered online to the MSP stakeholders by all the partners involved in the MARSPLAN BS II project and it was construed by the research team members from "Ovidius" University of Constanța.

The questionnaire was developed into three sections, and it considered land-sea interactions and their mutual impact from a two-way perspective: (1) land-to-sea assessment, i.e., how land-based improvements and developments affect and assist marine developments and how they influence the environment; (2) sea-to-land assessment, i.e., how the sea supports or influences land-based activities, particularly with regard to ensuring the welfare of coastal communities. When processing the questionnaire, the perceptions of public and private entities regarding LSI within the Romanian coastal area in the context of maritime spatial planning were taken into account (Vlasceanu *et al*, 2021, p. 242). The grouping of the variables which resulted from the questionnaire's questions was carried out according to the scale of activity - international, local and national - of the participating organizations.

Methodologically, for each marine activity or natural process it was necessary to establish the ecological, economic, and social value, by using a numerical set from 3 to 0, which was marked according to how high priority the marine domain or process was considered. In this sense, the value/priority can be High (score 3), Medium (score 2), Low (score 1) and Not Known (score 0). The data processing, the systematization of results, and obtaining the indicators used for the statistical analysis were performed using the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

4. Findings

A first part of the LSI within MSP investigation is based on assessing how land-based improvements and developments affect and assist marine developments and how they influence the environment with respect to *coastal and marine tourism, sports and recreational activities*, as evaluated by the MSP stakeholders.

In terms of the question "*To what extent can coastal and marine tourism, sports and recreational activities (tourist facilities, bathing areas, water sports, etc.) be considered an Ecological Priority?*", 62.80% of MSP stakeholders rated it as High, 23.50% - Medium, 7.80% - Low and 5.90% - Not Known (Table no. 1).

Table no. 1 Stakeholders' assessment regarding the ecological priority of coastal and marine tourism

			The scale on which the organization operates			Total
			International	Local	National	
To what extent can coastal and marine tourism, sports and recreational activities be considered an Ecological Priority?	3	Count	6	15	11	32
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	60.00%	71.40%	55.00%	62.80%
	2	Count	3	5	4	12
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	30.00%	23.80%	20.00%	23.50%
	1	Count	1	0	3	4
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	10.00%	0.00%	15.00%	7.80%
	0	Count	0	1	2	3
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.90%

	% within The scale on which the organization operates	0.00%	4.80%	10.00%	5.90%
Total	Count	10	21	20	51
	% within The scale on which the organization operates	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Author's own processing

Coastal and marine tourism, as well as sports and recreational activities, can have a positive impact on the environment if they are managed responsibly and in accordance with the principles of sustainable coastal and marine management, in order to reduce the vulnerability of the coastal area and its inhabitants to natural hazards and to preserve key economic processes and the biological diversity (Braşoveanu, 20, p. 20). These activities can contribute to the conservation and protection of marine and coastal biodiversity by creating jobs, stimulating the local economy, and promoting responsible practices. One can see that for entities at the local level these activities represent, in a percentage of 71.40%, a high priority, as tourism and sports and recreational activities provide benefits to the local communities and local economies. In this sense, ecosystem services need to be integrated into the planning decisions (Stan *et al*, 2021a, p. 635), while public and private entities must ensure that measures are taken to protect the natural habitat and to avoid the pollution caused by these activities. Moreover, it is important to promote the social responsibility of coastal and marine tourism and of sports and recreational activities in terms of supporting local communities.

As regards the question "To what extent can coastal and marine tourism, sports and recreational activities (tourist facilities, bathing areas, water sports, etc.) be considered an Economic Priority?" 66.70% of the surveyed entities, regardless of the scale on which the organization operates (international, local, national), view it as a High priority, 23.50% - Medium, 2.00% - Low and 7.80% - Not Known (Table no. 2).

Table no. 2 Stakeholders' assessment regarding the economic priority of coastal and marine tourism

			The scale on which the organization operates			Total
			International	Local	National	
To what extent can coastal and marine tourism, sports and recreational activities be considered an Economic Priority?	3	Count	7	16	11	34
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	70.00%	76.20%	55.00%	66.70%
	2	Count	3	3	6	12
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	30.00%	14.30%	30.00%	23.50%
	1	Count	0	0	1	1
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	2.00%
	0	Count	0	2	2	4
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	0.00%	9.50%	10.00%	7.80%
	Total	Count	10	21	20	51
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Author's own processing

As can be seen, the local entities give a high score to this criterion, 76.20%, since these activities play an important role in the coastal and marine economy. Coastal and marine tourism is an economic activity which generates important revenue for the coastal economies. It offers entertainment and recreational opportunities, as well as financial benefits.

Coastal and marine tourism is an economic development priority, as it can provide opportunities for economic growth and sustainable jobs creation. The communities which have the privilege of a seaside location can earn income from accommodation, restaurant, leisure and entertainment facilities, given that the trend to build new tourism facilities and infrastructure in the fragile coastal area is still rising (Papageorgiou, 2016, p. 44).

Another coastal and marine economic priority is the development of infrastructure. Investments in infrastructure can include the development and modernization of ports, maritime transport facilities, the construction of beach facilities and ports - dams, as well as upgrading tourist facilities in order to boost tourism and trade in the Romanian coastal zone (Stan, Vintilă and Țenea, 2014, pp. 579-579; Filip, Stan and Vintilă, 2016, p. 526; Stan, Aivaz and Ionițiu, 2019, p. 112). These investments contribute to increasing revenue and developing the local economy.

In terms of the question *"To what extent can coastal and marine tourism, sports and recreational activities (tourist facilities, bathing areas, water sports, etc.) be considered a Social Priority?"*, 52.90% of all respondents assess it as a High priority, 33.40% - Medium, 3.90% - Low and 9.80% - Not Known (Table no. 3).

Table no. 3 Stakeholders' assessment regarding the social priority of coastal and marine tourism

			The scale on which the organization operates			Total
			International	Local	National	
To what extent can coastal and marine tourism, sports and recreational activities be considered a Social Priority?	3	Count	7	10	10	27
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	70.00%	47.60%	50.00%	52.90%
	2	Count	3	6	8	17
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	30.00%	28.60%	40.00%	33.40%
	1	Count	0	2	0	2
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	0.00%	9.50%	0.00%	3.90%
	0	Count	0	3	2	5
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	0.00%	14.30%	10.00%	9.80%
Total	Count	10	10	21	20	
	% within The scale on which the organization operates	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	

Source: Author's own processing

Coastal and marine tourism should be a social priority, as it provides benefits to local communities and economies, being a source of income for the people living around the coastal areas (Mejjad, Rossi and Pavel, 2022, p. 1). Sports and recreational activities, such as water sports, fishing, sailing, and swimming provide opportunities for recreation and entertainment, prevention of health problems, as well as opportunities to explore marine and coastal ecosystems.

It is noteworthy that international entities regard these actions as main priorities (70.00%), given that recent analyses (Aquino, 2022, p. 1) have shown that social entrepreneurship is a strategy which answers the call for community-centered tourism development. This opinion of the stakeholders can be explained by the fact that coastal and marine tourism, sports and recreational activities are very important from a social perspective as they can also help create jobs and stimulate the local economy.

The second part of the LSI within MSP investigation is based on the sea-to-land assessment, i.e., how the sea supports or influences shore-based activities, particularly for the purpose of ensuring the welfare of the coastal communities with regard to *maritime tourism*, as assessed by the MSP stakeholders.

As regards the question "*To what extent can maritime tourism be considered an Ecological Priority?*", the distribution of stakeholders' answers on the assessment of this priority are: 37.30% - High, 29.40% - Medium, 17.60% - Low and 15.70% - Not Known (Table no. 4).

Table no. 4 Stakeholders' assessment regarding the ecological priority of maritime tourism

			The scale on which the organization operates			Total
			International	Local	National	
To what extent do you consider maritime tourism (yachting, various boat trips, cruises) to be an Ecological Priority?	3	Count	3	10	6	19
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	30.00%	47.60%	30.00%	37.30%
	2	Count	4	7	4	15
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	40.00%	33.30%	20.00%	29.40%
	1	Count	3	3	3	9
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	30.00%	14.30%	15.00%	17.60%
	0	Count	0	1	7	8
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	0.00%	4.80%	35.00%	15.70%
Total	Count	10	21	20	51	
	% within The scale on which the organization operates	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	

Source: Author's own processing

Maritime tourism can have a positive impact on the natural environment if properly planned and managed. Maritime tourism involves activities for tourists, such as yachting, various boat trips, cruises on the Black Sea. The ecological priority in maritime tourism implies that the stakeholders, i.e., the government, public administrations, tourists, local communities and, implicitly, the tourism industry, should do their utmost to protect and preserve marine biodiversity by promoting responsible environmental practices, given that only healthy marine ecosystems increase the resilience to the impact of climate change and ensure a sustainable development of activities (Machado and de Andrés, 2023, p. 1).

In terms of the question "*To what extent can maritime tourism be considered an Economic Priority?*", according to the analysis of the data, regardless of the scale on which the surveyed organization is operating (international, local, national), the following assessments were obtained: 45.10% - High, 35.30% - Medium, 9.80% - Low and 9.80% - Not Known (Table no. 5).

Table no. 5 Stakeholders' assessment regarding the economic priority of maritime tourism

			The scale on which the organization operates			Total
			International	Local	National	
To what extent do you consider maritime tourism (yachting, various boat trips, cruises) to be an Economic Priority?	3	Count	4	13	6	23
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	40.00%	61.80%	30.00%	45.10%
	2	Count	5	6	7	18
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	50.00%	28.60%	35.00%	35.30%
	1	Count	1	1	3	5
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	10.00%	4.80%	15.00%	9.80%
	0	Count	0	1	4	5
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	0.00%	4.80%	20.00%	9.80%
Total	Count	10	21	20	51	
	% within The scale on which the organization operates	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	

Source: Author's own processing

Maritime tourism can be an important economic priority. It can contribute to local development by creating jobs and stimulating the economy, which is confirmed by local entities, which assigned a high score to this criterion, 61.80%, considering it a high priority. Maritime tourism can generate additional local and national revenue through the taxes collected, as well as through an increased demand for local services and products. These activities provide business opportunities and economic benefits in several ways: they create jobs in the maritime sector, and provide business opportunities for companies in the respective field and those with related activities. Moreover, maritime tourism can contribute to the development of local infrastructure through the creation of ports and facilities for ships. These ports can be used to provide transport services, as well as for the development of other port activities, such as maritime trade and the transport of goods (Stan and Vintilă, 2022, pp. 371-372; Stan, 2022, p. 161).

As regards the question "To what extent can maritime tourism be considered a Social Priority?", the public and private organizations gave the following structure of the scores: 29.40% - High, 41.20% - Medium, 13.70% - Low and 15.70% - Not Known (Table no. 6).

Table no. 6 Stakeholders' assessment regarding the social priority of maritime tourism

			The scale on which the organization operates			Total
			International	Local	National	
To what extent do you consider maritime tourism (yachting, various boat trips, cruises) to be a Social Priority?	3	Count	4	7	4	15
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	40.00%	33.30%	20.00%	29.40%
	2	Count	4	9	8	21
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	40.00%	42.90%	40.00%	41.20%
	1	Count	2	2	3	7
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	20.00%	9.50%	15.00%	13.70%

	0	Count	0	3	5	8
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	0.00%	14.30%	25.00%	15.70%
Total		Count	10	21	20	51
		% within The scale on which the organization operates	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Author's own processing

While maritime tourism is a social priority for many countries, as it can have a positive impact on the local economy, the environment and people's lives, at the level of the Romanian coastal area stakeholders have a more balanced view regarding this activity. Thus, maritime tourism, considered an economic catalyst for coastal destinations (Lam-González, León, and de León, 2019, p. 1), is a medium social priority (42.90%) for local entities, even though it can provide opportunities for the coastal communities: job creation, quality of life services for the residents, development of investment programs and projects.

5. Conclusions

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) is a process related to managing the use of marine space, including land-sea interaction (LSI). It is a process based on an integrated approach to decision-making, which takes into account the economic, environmental/ecological, social and cultural values of the sea and coastal areas (Directive 2014/89/EU). It aims to reduce the conflicts between uses, to prevent the degradation of the marine environment and to ensure sustainable development and activities.

Tackled in terms of the connections with the general national economy, it may be noticed that tourism behaves as an element able to invigorate the world's economic system. The progress of tourism entails particular demands for products and services, thus enhancing production. Moreover, tourist demand entails an offer adjustment process, which, in turn, boosts the technical and material base of this area and, indirectly, invigorates the sections involved in the construction, development and equipment of accommodation and food units, the refurbishment and modernization of road networks, the development of the means of transportation, leisure facilities, etc. (Aivaz and Micu, 2021, p. 324; Aivaz and Căpățână, 2021, p. 289).

In the context of Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), in order to effectively promote sustainable development and tourism development in the Romanian coastal area it is necessary to involve local administration, business stakeholders and members of the local community (de Bruyn and Meyer, 2022, p. 87). Their views regarding the priorities and the role of tourism sustainability in the local economy are needed, given that LSI is strongly connected to the economic benefits of MSP (Creamer *et al.*, 2020, p.13).

6. Acknowledgment

This research paper was supported by the European Commission through the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, Cross-border Maritime Spatial Planning for Black Sea – Bulgaria and Romania (MARSPLAN-BS-II), EASME/EMFF/2018/1.2.1.5/01/SI2.806725.

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