

THE TOURISTIC INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE ROMANIAN SEASIDE

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Abstract: The following paper intends to spatially analyse the four main component categories that comprise touristic infrastructure (accommodation, restaurants, treatment, and entertainment) of the 12 Romanian seaside resorts, the coordinating center of the entire touristic activity in the area (the City of Constanța), the towns of Năvodari and Ovidiu, as well as some rural settlements: 23 August, Agigea, Corbu, and Limanu (2 Mai and Vama Veche), that register a more intense touristic bustle. The accommodation capacity of this main touristic region of the country was 111,986 beds in 2016, out of which 60.5% were in hotels, 11.2% in rented apartments, 8.7% in camping sites, 7.6% in villas, 6.3% in hostels, while the remaining 5.7% in bed & breakfast, bungalows, school camps, and touristic cabins. The total number of accommodation units with restaurant facilities reached 1197 units with 175,016 seats, the dominant category being restaurants, mostly ancillary to hotel units. The most complex resort is Mamaia, with a capacity of 22,271 beds, and 47 large and very large hotels, most rated with 3, 4, or 5 stars.

Key words: the Romanian seaside of the Black Sea, Mamaia, hotels, accommodation,

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INTRODUCTION

Depending on its main destination, there are two types of material basis: *touristic and general* (infrastructure). In the current endeavour, we will deal with the former in the case of the Romanian seaside. *The touristic base* encompasses all facilities needed to satisfy touristic demand which emerges alongside tourism in a certain territory, being generated by it and serving it at the same time. This material basis includes: *accommodation units, food and drink establishments, treatment facilities, entertainment facilities, and communications used exclusively for tourism*. There are also several additional special facilities such as *touristic equipment* (Ciangă, 2006; Herman and Wendt, 2011; Ilieș *et al.*, 2013; Susan, 1980). In our endeavour, we will only focus on the first four touristic facilities: the network composed of accommodation and nourishment establishments, treatment and entertainment units.

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METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

The first stage, that of information gathering, included consulting several articles and papers focused on tourism (Ciangă, 1997, 2006; Ciangă and Dezsi, 2007; Cocean, 2004; Dinu, 2005; Glăvan, 2000, 2005; Herman and Tătar, 2015; Herman *et al.*, 2017; Ilie *et al.*, 2017; Ilieș *et al.*, 2016; Mac, 1998; Miniciu, 1995, 2005; Neacșu, Baron, Snak, 2006; Neacșu *et al.*, 2011, 2012; Nedelcu, 2015; Tofan and Niță, 2014; Tofan *et al.*, 2016; Susan, 1980). We then began to collect statistical data provided by the *National Tourism Authority*.¹

This source provided very good information regarding the type, name and exact location of accommodation and food serving units, their degree of comfort, size, registration number as well as the expiration date of each certificate (Tofan & Niță, 2014).

We did not employ data from the National Institute of Statistics (TEMPO-Online data base), as they are more general and only contain LAU 2 level data, not microscalar data as needed (village, component settlement). If we compare the data from these two sources, the numerical differences are considerable. That is why we believe that the statistical data from the former data base are the closest to reality. In stage two, analysis, we proceeded to organise, process, and interpret data as tables and maps which enabled a better information dissemination.

TOURISTIC BASE

The accommodation infrastructure of the Romanian seaside, in 2016, is highly complex and extremely diversified, with 1,436 units totalling 111,986 beds (12.3% of the total accommodation units, or 27.4% of the total accommodation at national level). It can be categorized as follows: *hotels* with 67,780 beds (60.5%), *rented apartments (rooms)* with 12,609 beds (11.2%), *camping sites* with 9,831 beds (8.7%), *villas* with 8,595 beds (7.6%), *hostels* with 7,140 beds (6.3%), *tourist pensions* with 2,635 beds (2.3%), *bungalows* with 2,445 beds (2.1%), *other categories* with 1,951 beds (1.3%) which includes *school camps*, *agricultural pensions*, and *touristic cabins*. The largest seaside resort is Mamaia, with a total capacity of 22,271 beds, over 85% provided by hotels. The largest number of accommodation units can be found in the so called „youth resort”, *Costinești*, with 307 units, almost half being rooms for rent.

Characteristics of main accommodation categories

The touristic technical-material base of the Romanian seaside is comprised of 10 categories, grouped in basic as *basic accommodation units* (hotels, hostels, villas, apartments for rent, touristic and agrotouristic pensions) and *ancillary accommodation units* (bungalows, school camps, camping sites, and touristic cabins), with different degrees of comfort (Tofan and Niță, 2014).

Hotels are the main accommodation unit, and there were 358 such units in 2016 (67,780 beds) on the Romanian riviera, mostly concentrated in resorts of national importance, 296 in total, 78 in Mamaia, 70 in Eforie Nord, 24 in Neptun, 23 in Eforie Sud, 22 in Venus, 21 in Costinești, 17 in Jupiter, 15 in Saturn, Mangalia and Olimp with 8 each, Cap Aurora, 7 units and Teghirghiol, 3 units, followed by the county residence city, Constanța with 40 hotels, Năvodari 13, Vama Veche 8 and 23 August with one. Out of total of 358 hotels, 8 are apartment hotels, half located in Năvodari, and Constanța, Mamaia, Eforie Nord și Saturn with one each. Most hotels have three stars (175), followed by those with two stars (114), four stars (52), one star (11), and five stars (*Grand Hotel Rex*, *Mamaia Hotel* and *Vega Hotel* from Mamaia; *Saturn Hotel* from the same resort; *Inter Hotel* from Venus, and *Arena Regia Hotel & Spa* from Năvodari).

In terms of size, almost half (151) are *middle sized* (between 50-200 beds), 114 are *large* (200-500), 72 are *small* (below 50 beds), while 21 are *extra large* (*Delta Hotel* - 330 rooms and 660 beds in Jupiter; *Amfiteatru Hotel* in Olimp with 318 rooms and 639 beds; *Complex Club Dunărea Hotel* - 305 rooms and 610 beds, and *Felix Hotel* with 299 rooms and 598 beds, both in Eforie Nord; large hotel concentrations are found in Neptun (*Hotel Apollo* - 348 rooms and 698 beds;

¹ <http://turism.gov.ro/autorizare-turism>

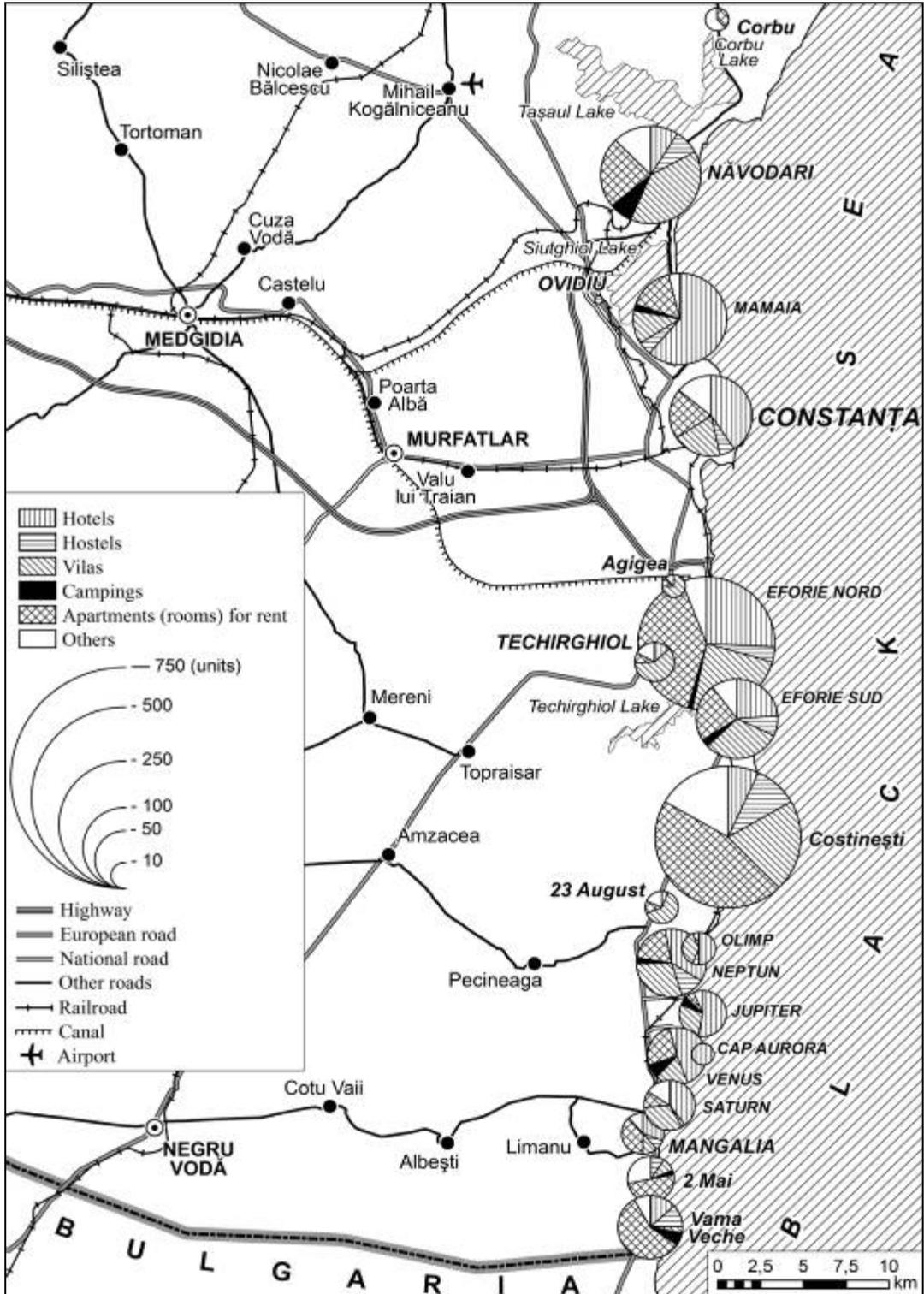


Figure 1. Percentage of main accommodation categories from the Romanian Black Sea coast

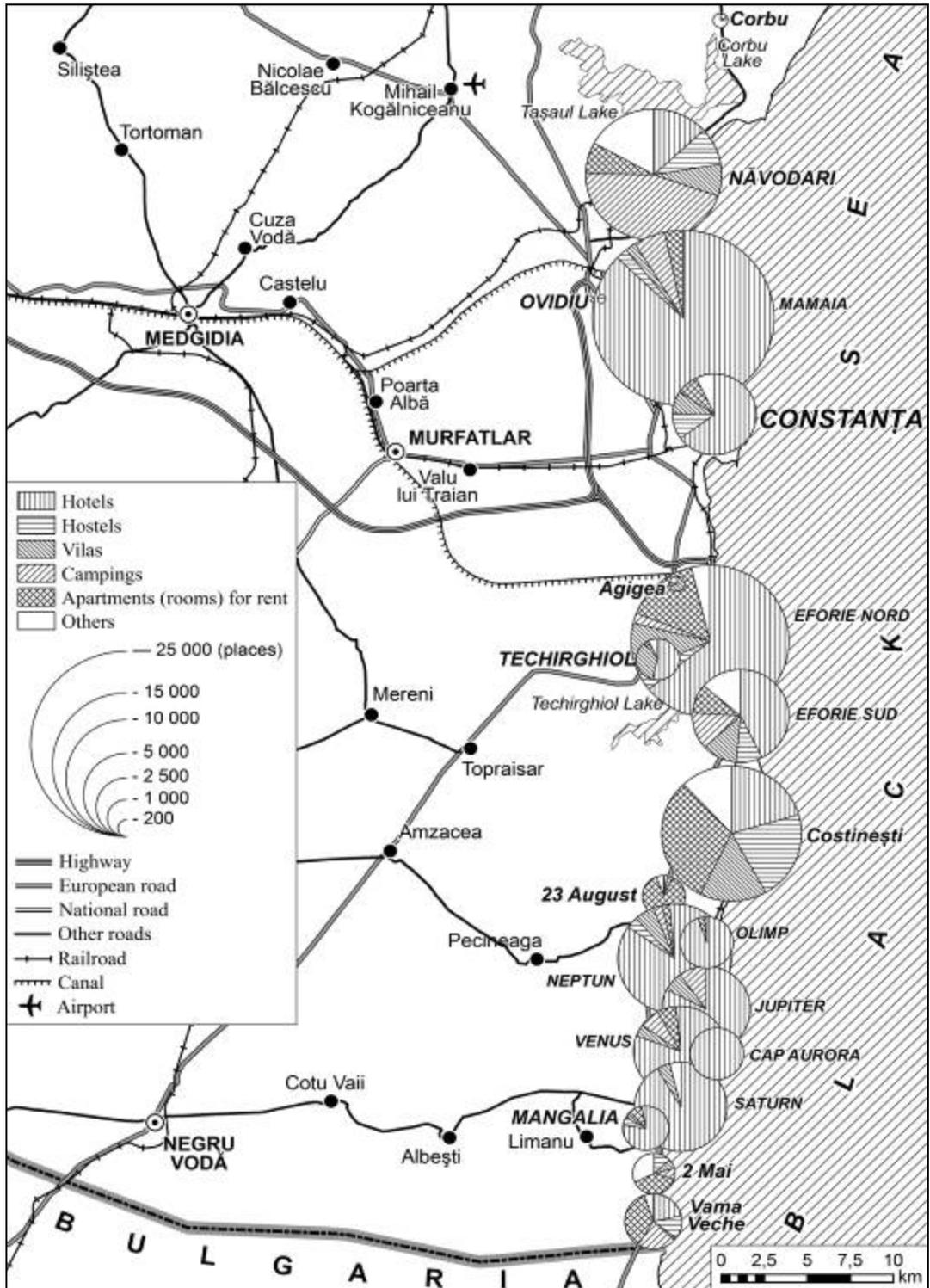


Figure 2. Percentage of accommodation beds from the Romanian Black Sea coast

2 D Resort & Spa Hotel 321 rooms and 642 beds; Terra Hotel - 28 rooms and 566 beds; Romanța Hotel - 275 rooms and 550 beds; Bălea Hotel - 260 rooms and 520 beds), Saturn (Narcis Hotel - 320 rooms and 640 beds; Sirena Hotel - 283 rooms and 566 beds; Balada Hotel - 283 rooms and 566 beds; Hora Hotel - 283 rooms and 566 beds; Cleopatra Hotel - 277 rooms and 554 beds) and Mamaia (Aurora Hotel - 343 rooms and 686 beds; Victoria Hotel - 330 rooms and 660 beds; Flora Hotel - 339 rooms and 646 beds; Zenith-Conference & Spa Hotel - 288 rooms and 636 beds; Caraiman Hotel - 307 rooms and 614 beds; Majestic Hotel - 262 rooms and 524 beds and Parc Hotel - 315 rooms and 523 beds).

There were 95 *hostels* with a total of 7,140 beds, almost half having a three star rating (42), followed by those with two stars (35) and one star (18). Most are located in Costinești (30), which confirms the fact that such units are preferred by tourists with a lower budget, mostly young people, as they provide only basic services. Most are small or medium sized establishments, with a lower degree of confort - 1, 2, and 3 stars.

As for „*villa*” type units, the Romanian seaside also witnessed a considerable reduction due to lack of investment and inadaptation to new touristic trends and demands (Ciangă, 2006). In 2016 there were 345 villas (8,595 beds), in resorts such as Eforie Nord (65, 1,752 beds), Costinești (64, 2,042 beds), Năvodari (57, 983 locuri de cazare), Eforie Sud (30, 746 beds), Neptun (21, 496 beds), etc., most of them being small (below 50 beds) and predominantly 2-3 stars.

Apartments for rent were the most abundant accommodation units (448), providing 12,609 beds. The most sought after in summer are studio apartments and two room apartments due to lower renting costs. Such establishments are concentrated in areas like: Costinești, Eforie Nord (both providing more than half of the entire number of beds), Vama Veche, Năvodari, Mamaia (luxury apartments), etc.

Touristic pensions reached 106 units in 2016 (7.38% of the total number of accommodation establishments), offering 2635 beds (2.3% of the total), most being classified as 2-3 stars/flowers, mainly located in Costinești, Eforie Nord, Constanța, Năvodari, 2 Mai, etc. According to statistical data, the resort of Costinești has two such units with 32 beds (*Iubesc Marea*, 10 rooms and 20 beds, and *Florea Ghe. Magdalena*, 6 rooms and 12 beds, in Schitu village). Ancillary accommodation establishments include *bungalows*, *school camps*, *camping sites* and *touristic cabins*. The first have limited accommodation capacities, are temporarily occupied, are constructed out of wood or similar materials, and are mostly found humid areas. There are 41 such units (2,445 beds), most being located in Costinești (19) with a total of 810 beds, Năvodari (6), with 842 beds, and Saturn (6), 222 beds, mostly rated with 1-2 stars.

We would also like to mention the *school camps* that exist on the Romanian seaside, one being „*Delfin*” Camp from Năvodari, a half a century old establishment, recently renovated (2013), with a capacity of 1,000 beds, as well as „*Luminița*” camp in Eforie Nord, still not refurbished (250 beds), recently acquired by the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Seasonal functionality also describes *camping sites*, totalling 34 establishments (9,831 beds), located in: Năvodari (11 units with 5,620 beds), Mamaia (three units with 1,249 beds), Eforie Sud (three units with 805 beds), Jupiter (two with 530 beds); Vama Veche (four with 482 beds), Venus (four units cu 422 beds), Eforie Nord (three units with 369 beds), Neptun (two units and 226 beds), while the camping sites of 2 Mai and Costinești have a more limited capacity (under 200). There are also three touristic cabins in Costinești (*La Tudor No. 1, 2 and 3*) with 21 beds.

Food serving touristic structures

Tourist food services, alongside transport and the accommodation structures, are a major component, thus structurally being part of the touristic basic services. In tourism, such units can be located in resorts, as well as in accommodation units. There are five types of units in the analysed area, classified according to the methodology approved by the National Tourism Authority, through Order 65/2013. They include: *restaurants*, with the following subtypes classic, specialised (fishing, family, or hostel) or specific (winery, local or national, restaurant

with an artistic programme, brasserie or bistro, summer garden and terrace); *bars* (day bar, coffee shop, disco-bar/club, and cafeteria-bar); *fast-food joints* (restaurant-self service, express, pizza, fast-food, and snack-bar); *confectionery* and *pastry shops*. There are 1,197 food serving establishments with 175,016 seats on the Romanian seaside. The majority are self standing restaurants and hotel based restaurants (Ciangă, 1997), totalling 596 units (123,633 seats), followed by bars with 416 units (28,102 seats), 159 fast food units (22,870 seats), five confectioneries (352 seats), and three pastry shops (59 seats).

Restaurants are mostly located in resorts and towns with high concentrations of hotels: Mamaia (135 restaurants with 28,579 seats); Constanța (124 and 20,089 seats); Eforie Nord (84 and 13,329 seats), Neptun (36 and 11,362 seats), and Eforie Sud (35 and 5,894 seats), the majority being classical restaurants, with a three star rating. Four and five star restaurants are found only in Mamaia and the City of Constanța.

Mamaia also accommodates several brasseries (bistros) comprising 1,325 seats, terraces (1,242 seats), restaurants with certain national specificity (Romanian, Chinese, Brazilian, Greek, Turkish, etc). The same resorts, alongside Constanța has the highest number of *bars* (97 units with 2,991 seats in Mamaia, and 103 units with 2,983 seats in Constanța).

The entire seaside region incorporates 298 day bars (12,472 seats), 49 *buffet-bars* (4,407 seats), 36 *disco-bars/clubs* (9,270 seats), mainly clustered in Mamaia (12 units with 3,695 seats) and Costinești (5 and 2,360 seats), and 33 café-bars with a total of 1,953 seats.

A third category of food serving establishments is *fast-food joints*. According to size, this set of establishment includes *self-service restaurants* (82 units with 16,792 seats), *pizza joints* (23 and 2,371 seats), *snack-bars* (20 and 1,845 seats), *fast-food* (30 and 1,834 seats), and *express buffets* (4 and 77 seats). The last two categories are *confectioneries* (5 units with 352 seats) and *pastry shops* (3 units and 59 seats).

Therapy and entertainment infrastructure

This category contains *hotel therapy facilities*, a distinct set due to its activity and provided services (Ciangă, 2006). Can be found in Techirghiol (*Spa and Recovery Sanatorium*, 921 beds; *The Spa and Recovery Complex „Corpore Sano”*, 108 beds; *St. Mary Treatment and Rest Center*, 170 beds); Eforie Nord (*Europa Hotel, Grand Hotel*);

At Neptun (*Cocor Spa Hotel, Doina*), Saturn (*Sirena Hotel, Hora Hotel, Balada Hotel*), Venus (*Palace Hotel & Resort, Mezotermale Palace Spa & Balneo Hotel*), Mangalia (*Paradiso Hotel*, belonging to Mangalia Spa and Recovery Sanatorium).

The same category also comprises two entertainment centers, run by the Constanța County Sports and Youth Department. The first one is „*New Paradise*” *Entertainment Center* located in Eforie Sud, with a 96 rooms and 448 beds capacity, and the *entertainment center located in 2 Mai* (46 rooms and 200 beds), both being able to provide meals for their visitors. The activities of the both centers are adapted to the conditions and profiles of these two resorts: sports, games, outside fitness equipment, dance halls, clubs, etc.

The mapping of the *cultural establishments* of the Romanian seaside is highly problematic since a series of summer theaters and gardens, showrooms, cinemas, etc, have been closed in the last decades.

2016 is the year when a major project, funded by the European Union, was completed, involving the rehabilitation and expansion by more than 33 hectares of the beaches of Mamaia, Constanța, Agigea, and Eforie. The most modern Romanian seaside resort, Mamaia, also has a *cable run transportation system*, the Mamaia cable car, with a total length of 2,000 meters, and a capacity of 1,000 people per hour.

CONCLUSIONS

The main touristic region of our country has a complex and diverse touristic infrastructure with an accommodation capacity of 111,986 beds (1,436 units), as of 2016.

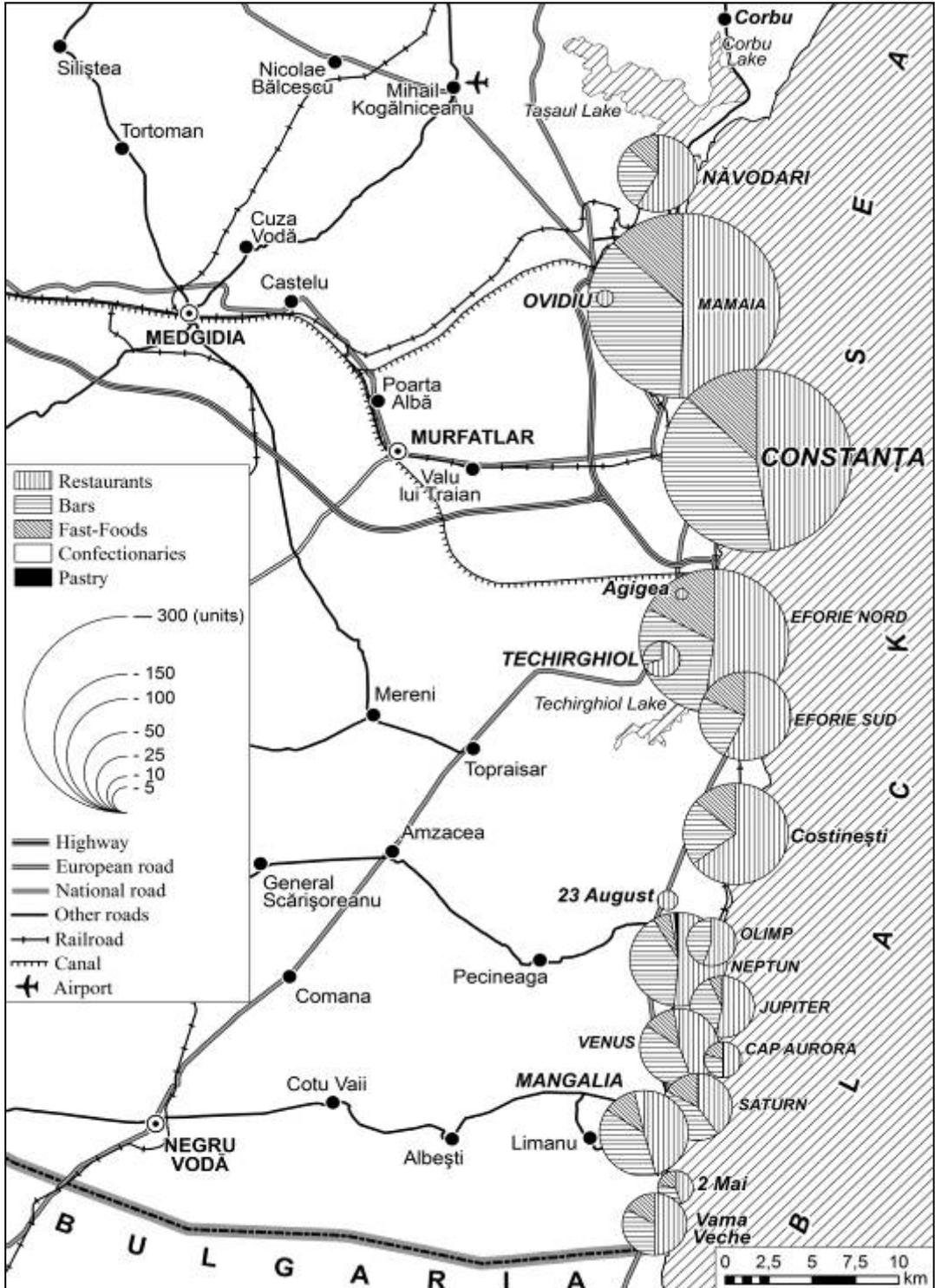


Figure 3. Percentage of food serving structures from the Romanian Black Sea coast

Among the 10 mentioned accommodation categories, the most prominent is the hotel, providing 60% (67,780 beds) of the total accommodation capacity of the area, mainly clustered in: Mamaia, Eforie Nord, Neptun, Saturn, Venus, Jupiter, mostly rated with three stars, as solely 62 hotels have been rated with four or five stars. Villas, camping sites and school camps continuously scaled down their capacity due to the poor conditions provided, which basically reduced tourist interest in such establishments.

We do not have official data regarding secondary residences (summer houses), which insure extra accommodation as touristic flows intensify, mainly on weekends when the number of tourists double, as this class is not found in the data banks of the Ministry of Tourism nor in the data bases of the the National Institute of Statistics. The touristic food provision infrastructure depends on accommodation capacity, being mostly comprised of restaurants, bars, and fast-food units. The intensity of touristic activities in Mamaia for instance enabled this category to register the highest available number of seats (43,010) out of which 28,579 can be found in restaurants, 8,046 in bars, and 6,335 in fast-food establishments.

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