

TRENDS OF TOURIST DEMAND IN ROMANIA. POSITIONING OF RURAL TOURISM AMONG THE TOURIST PREFERENCES

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Abstract

Rural tourism in Romania has significant potential, acknowledged both internally and internationally. Keeping up old customs in villages, including in regard to the daily life, existence of remarkably beautiful landscapes, as well as the promoting in the foreign press, create the premises required for the take-off of the activities specific to the rural area among the domestic tourists.

Considering the resources at the disposal of the Romanian villages and assuming that modern people are more and more interested in returning to nature, for disconnecting from the job-related stress, the author wanted to find out what is the position of this type of tourism among the tourist demand. After carrying out an administered questionnaire-based quantitative survey, the results showed that the preferences concerning the place of spending the holiday are the seaside and the mountains, while the rural areas are considered as the main option in 2% of the cases. However, the tourist profile that arises from the research shows that there is a base from which the rural tourism can progress in the medium and short-term preferences, as the respondents reveal a significant preference over the elements of the rural tourist offer.

Keywords

Rural tourism, tourist demand, tourist demand trend, tourism in Romania, tourist profile

JEL Classification

L83

Introduction

Romania has high tourism potential, with important edifices and natural areas included into the UNESCO Heritage (National Heritage Institute, 2016), having resources that can be successfully used to advantage rural tourism. The landscapes that are cherished internationally, as well as the customs preserved in many villages in the historical areas of the country resulted in Romania being considered as a destination for the European rural tourism. According to the Statistical Abstract (2016), at an internal level, during year 2015, 23% of the total leisure and business travellers choose urban areas (33%) and the seaside (31%); this aspect points out the fact that the tourist interest toward the traditional village is still a medium one.

The appreciation of the landscapes and the protected natural areas is also invigorated by the attention paid by the foreign press in recent years. The promotion made by Charles, Prince of Wales, who owns a residence in Valea Zalanului (Covasna County), the choice made by the producers of such programmes as Top Gear or Survivor with Bear Grylls, as well as the success of the documentary series Wild Carpathia, have increased the notoriety of the high-potential Romanian areas. At the same time, Romania has also become more attractive for foreign tourists targeting new experiences in destinations which they haven't visited before and which are not promoted intensively.

However, monetization of the specific activities has not come up to expectations and to the best of its potential (Badulescu et al., 2015). The direct contribution of this industry to the Romanian GDP was only 1.3% in 2015 (Ministry of Economy, Commerce and Business Environment, 2016), positioning just below half of the world level of 3% (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2016).

Still, the numbers do not faithfully reflect the reality and the fact being known that the statistical records in tourism are currently behind their times. They do not contain all relevant information, and in Romania, the National Institute of Statistics particularly collects information about the seaside tourism, health resorts, mountain resorts, Danube Delta, Bucharest and residential towns. Information regarding the tourism taking place

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in the villages may be retrieved from the categories of accommodation options, where the specific units are included in the “agrotourist pensions” category (INSSE, 2017). Equally, at the European Union level, the database Eurostat Appso (2017) does not mention the evolution of the rural tourism, as it has other criteria for analysis.

Against the existence of a wide natural and anthropic heritage both at national and international level, the author proposes through this article to learn which is the position of the rural tourism within the trend of the current tourist demand, if it ranks among the preference of Romanians or if they appreciate its main features.

1 Literature Review

Rural tourism is a concept with a comprehensive history both in Romania and in the other European countries, representing in 2014 approximately 15% of the total accommodation capacity in Europe and generating over 100 billion Euros (Tourism Review, 2015). It has high notoriety in Europe, the main stakeholders being the microenterprises (Radulescu & Stanculescu, 2012) with a perspective of generating income and jobs twice as high, when compared to the average value of these thresholds on the European territory, the percentages being between 10% and 20% (European Parliament, 2013).

In the past few decades, this type of tourism has gained obvious momentum, especially against the excessive urbanization and the organizational stress (Aluculesei et al., 2015). Moreover, the accessibility of transport and the increase in the financial resources have determined more and more inhabitants from crowded cities to seek the peace of mind in traditional towns (Talanga, 2013).

1.1 Rural Tourism in Romania – Main Characteristics

In recent years, the predisposition of ever more people to spend their spare time in harmony with nature has caused the rural tourism to grow among preferences. The progress is obvious in Romania also in terms of the investments made by private entities that have accessed European funding (Postelnicu & Dabija, 2016), through the National Rural Development Program and the Regional Operational Program (Tascu, Popescu & Stoica, 2016). Despite accessing these grants, the issue still remains in regard to the lack of enough capital as to allow the development of a profitable enterprise. The voids in the national laws and the deficient management abilities of the entrepreneurs add to it. Moreover, difficulties are also pointed out in making a connection between the micro, small and middle business frameworks, and the financial support from the credit institutions (Okech et al., 2012).

In the areas in which solutions have been found to overcome the difficulties of the business environment, the benefits of the rural tourism are visible, contributing to the economic and social growth of the local population. The most important effects have been the following: decrease of labour migration, new job creation, setting up new business opportunities or offering some alternatives to young people. At the same time, these activities enhance local pride and protection of customs, which otherwise would not stand the test of time. The contribution upon the environment and the preservation of village architecture without any major interventions should not be neglected at all (Gozner & Zarrilli, 2012; Irshad, 2010).

One main characteristic of the specific market in Romania is the fact that the economy is mostly influenced by agriculture, and the predominance of small sized farms amplifies the agrotourism potential. This way, the rural tourism becomes an actual possibility of valorising the specificity of the Romanian village, contributing at the same time to minimizing of economic disparities (Gavrila-Paven, Barsan & Lia-Dorica, 2015).

Another notable aspect is the contemporaneousness of the Romanian village that has been facing a demographical challenge. The population has been marked by labour deficit, resulted from the migration of the active population after 1990 towards cities or other countries. Although some of those who left to work abroad have returned in order to invest in their place of birth, the lack of labour directly reflects in the quality of services. However, despite the individual efforts, the specific infrastructure is not at the level of current standards and a national program is not yet in place, which unifies this drawback (Ioan et al., 2015).

Just as in the other countries, the terminology in Romania is not unified, confusions being present. This way, a delimitation of the concepts is required, the Tourism Law (2015) explaining the “rural tourism” term as being the body of occasional activities that are performed in a period within the rural area, the accommodation structure being the peasant farm or the pensions, hotels or halting places. The agrotourism is also defined by the law as a constituent part, bringing one addition, involving the consumption of agricultural produces from the farms and participation in the specific agricultural activities. Another category that may distinguish itself from here, creating an ever more valued niche, is ecotourism, which features the responsibility of the individual as to the actions which they perform during their recreation (Florescu, 2015).

Therefore, rural tourism may be considered an umbrella term, which includes all forms that occur in a rural area, disposing of the area resources and the cultural and economic context, as well as of the specific tourist facilities, such as agrotourist pensions (Ancuta, Olaru & Ianas, 2012). Besides, it also implies the existence of a natural scenery rich in traditions, with valued natural beauty and a pursuit expressed by tourists towards involving in outdoor activities (Cofas, 2014; Stefan et al., 2013).

Starting from 1990, the rural tourism has become an actual phenomenon in Romania, aligning with the international trend. Although in the beginning the residents used to be rather reluctant to the arrival of other foreign people into their own space, the trend has eventually started to be accepted by the inhabitants of the villages too (Stoian, 2013). This type of tourism has seen changes, taking on new features. The target segment, which it presently addresses, consists of tourists who prefer individual travels, at reasonable prices, with relaxing activities that also offer them the possibility to experience peculiar customs and traditions (Tanasa, 2014; Scutariu, Nastase & Popescu, 2017).

The behaviour of the consumer of agro-tourist services is influenced by two main groups of factors: endogenous and external (Marin et al., 2013). The variables that obviously influence the behaviour of the rural tourism consumer are according to Pop (2013) the location category, the amount of money available for a stay and the accommodation unit for which they opt.

It is also worth mentioning the typology of tourists who prefer ecotourism, classified according to the following pattern: are aged between 30 and 59 years, with higher education and an appreciated social status, earning above the average. They generally have high expectations and want to receive high quality services, local guide with proper knowledge and training, high quality food, made with local ingredients; they also want that the area in which they spend their holiday to be remote from traffic and noise, with high-quality facilities, not necessarily luxurious (Dorobantu & Nistoreanu, 2012). The National Strategy for Ecotourism Development in Romania (elaborated by the National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism upon the request of the Ministry of Tourism, 2009) also mentions that those who choose ecotourism have a better health status, are nature-loving people and are considerate towards the environmental issues. The main motivations for spending the leisure time in nature are the enjoying of the scenery, appreciation of wild nature and involvement in camping (Simion et al., 2009).

Starting from the main aspect found in the professional literature: the current need of the people to spend their spare time in nature, the following question of the survey has been asked: **“What is the position of the rural tourism in the trend of the tourist demand in Romania?”** To be able to answer this question, through this scientific approach, the author proposes to find out which is the profile of the tourist spending at least one vacation in the home country or abroad and which is their perception regarding the tourism taking place in the rural area: what high-potential areas they know, what activities they prefer and which are the determinants when choosing the destination.

2 Research Methodology and Ethics Aspects

This survey contains the analysis of the tourist demand trend in Romania, especially focusing upon the rural tourism. The survey is quantity-type, using the administered questionnaire, and the results have been analysed and interpreted with the aid of the statistical software SPSS and Public Tableau. When distributing the questionnaire and interpreting the results, the norms of scientific research have been complied with and data confidentiality has been observed. The respondents were informed regarding the survey subject and purpose, both verbally and in writing, as the questionnaire had an introductory paragraph containing the main information. The time and availability of the participants were also considered.

Because the proposed survey assumes an intermediate level of tourist knowledge and interest towards this industry, the following criterion of inclusion has been employed for the respondents: spending at least one holiday per year in the home country or abroad. At the same time, a location and a time interval have been chosen, relevant to the subject: Romexpo Bucharest, where the Romanian Tourism Fair was held, starting from the assumption that the visitors have at least an average interest for travels.

The data were gathered in three stages, following the distribution of the questionnaire at the Romanian Tourism Fair in 2015-2016, during the autumn editions in 2015 and during the spring and autumn editions in 2016, with the aid of the Department of Tourism and Geography of the Bucharest University of Economic Studies. The respondents were asked to provide information as clear as possible, explanations being provided to them when required.

The questionnaire had 18 questions and consisted of three main parts: one offering a view of the tourist demand as a whole (11 questions), the second including details regarding rural tourism (1 open-ended question and a

matrix-type question, with 9 sub-items) and the third containing identification questions (5 questions), useful in drawing the tourist profile. In all, most questions were closed questions, with predefined answer versions (simple and multiple), and two questions were open-ended: “*What new expectations do you have from a vacation and you have never had in Romania*” and “*Please name three tourist rural villages in Romania*”.

520 questionnaires were distributed in total, of which 451 could be validated, with a response rate of 86.7%. The high number of persons answering the questions in full is the result of the fact that the research tool had been previously validated on a 30 respondent sample group and the fact that it was self-administered, the respondents not being allowed to ask questions when they could not understand the answer choices.

The structure of the 451-participant lot makes the survey statistically representative, taking into account the sample group determining formula Taro Yamane (Valentin, 2013). This specifies that in the case of total communities above 10 million, the minimum size of the sample group may be 399, at an error level $e=5\%$.

In order to answer the survey question, two main objectives have been formulated:

- **Objective 1:** Identification of the general profile of the Romanian tourist;
- **Objective 2:** Identification of the main motivations that lie at the basis of the demand for rural tourism.

In order to be able to fulfil the proposed objectives, statistical interpretations of the results have been employed, based on correlations (Pearson correlation), and the absolute frequencies have been coded as the case may be, represented as maps, tables or charts.

3 Results and Discussions

The studied sample group mostly consists of female respondents: 62.1%, for the most part belonging to the age group 18-25 years: 35.9%, followed by the ones aged 35 to 49: 23.3% and those between 26 and 34: 22.6%. The 50-64 year old category was represented by 12.6% of respondents, while those over 65 were 5.6%. It is worth mentioning the fact that the age structure of the sample group does not follow the structure at a national level for the analyzed year. According to the National Institute of Statistics (2016), the population of Romania has the following distribution of age groups: 18-25 years: 5.6%, 26-34 years: 15.3%, 35-49 years: 25.1%, 50-64 years: 18.3% and above 65 years: 15.7%. Thus, considering the homogeneity criterion age-wise, one may not say that the sample group is statistically representative at a national level.

These are students, in a percentage of 38.7%, most of them at faculties with economic profile: 59.2%, while the rest work in various fields, the most representative being commerce: 22.6%, followed by hotels and restaurants: 16.9%. Most of participants in the survey come from Bucharest: 36.3%, followed by those from Banat: 28.1%, Wallachia: 28.1% and Oltenia: 10.9%. The rest are native of Moldavia: 10.9%, Transylvania: 7.3%, Dobruja: 4.8% and Banat: 3.9%.

The first part of the questionnaire, also including the information required for the fulfillment of the first objective: **which is the general profile of the Romanian tourism**, contains 11 questions that aim at clarifying the following aspects:

- favourite form of tourism;
- travelling habits;
- means of transport employed;
- average period of stay;
- allocated budget;
- appreciation of the accommodation specific elements;
- decision-making factors;
- travel period;
- favourite form of accommodation;
- favourite destinations and expectations.

The results of the survey show that the favourite form of tourism is the seaside one, with 26.5% of the answers, followed by recreational tourism: 20.5% and by mountain tourism: 14.3%. *Rural tourism* ranks at the end of the preferences, as only 2% of the respondents chose this form as the favourite one.

In terms of travel habits, the fact distinguishes itself that the Romanian tourists are sociable, wishing to have company during their holiday. A percentage of 41.1% answered that they preferred going on vacation with friends or kin, 27.1% prefer to have their parents and children beside them, 21.3% together with their partners in life and only 4.9% prefer to have tourist experiences without being accompanied. The rest of 5.6% prefer other alternatives. When travelling, the tourists especially choose their own car, which offers them high freedom of movement: 50.1%, followed by plane: 17.4%, train: 11.1%, coach: 10% and other alternative: 6.2%.

Although the weekend holidays gather more and more momentum, the average stay period remains for half of respondents of 7 days, followed by the short stays of 2-3 days: 26.3% and those between 10 and 14 days: 23.4%.

As regards the budget allocated for the holiday, significant differences distinguish themselves according to destination: in the home country or abroad. Most tourists answered that they allocated between 500 and 1000 Euro when leaving the country: 44.5%, while the average amount preferred by the most for the domestic destinations: 43.4% is between 1000 and 2000 RON (222 Euro to 444 Euro).

The two questions regarding the budget in Romania and in other country allocated for the holiday show that there is no dependent relationship; however, if the lot is divided into two sample groups according to gender (split file -> gender), one may note that, among the male participants in the survey, there is a high direct connection between the money allocated for internal travels and the money allocated for external travels ($r=0.615$, for a degree of confidence of 1%). This means that, if the budget for the home country vacations increases, the one for the vacations abroad also rises (table no. 1).

Table 1. Pearson correlation between the budget for the domestic and the budget for the foreign holidays

Correlations – male				Correlations ^a – female			
		Average budget allocated (home country)	Budget allocated (abroad)			Average budget allocated (home country)	Average budget allocated (abroad)
Average budget allocated (home country)	Pearson Correlation	1	.615**	Average budget allocated (home country)	Pearson Correlation	1	.455**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	154	103		N	246	153
Average budget allocated (abroad)	Pearson Correlation	.615**	1	Average budget allocated (abroad)	Pearson Correlation	.455**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	103	115		N	153	179

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

a. Which gender are you? = Male

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

a. Which gender are you? = Female

Source: elaborated by the author based on the research findings (takeover SPSS)

The question that aimed at highlighting which are the influencing factors in selecting an accommodation unit was a matrix-type question; it had one answer version for each item, on the scale from 1 to 10 (1 being the least important and 10 the most important). The results have shown that tourists have high standards when it comes to the access road: 21.3% appreciating this criterion as being in the 8th place on the importance scale. The quality of the services provided by personnel, the products served in the food unit, housekeeping, the room facilities and the position of the unit near the tourist spots had the most answers with the maximum rating (Table no. 2).

Table 2. Factors that influence the selection of an accommodation unit (%)

How do you evaluate the following/Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Access road	1.3	0.9	2	4.3	11	9.4	16.1	21.3	15	18.6
Attention given by the unit employees	0.9	1.6	1.1	2.5	4.9	4.9	14.8	21.1	20.6	27.6
Quality of the products served in the unit restaurant	0.7	0.2	0.7	2.7	3.6	5.4	10.3	22.2	20.2	34.1
Quality of the cleaning services	0.4	0.4	1.1	2.9	3.1	4.7	8.1	19.1	22	38.1
Accommodation fee	0.7	0.2	1.8	3.2	7	7	15.4	22	21.1	21.5
Smoking areas	23.8	4	5.1	5.6	9.1	5.1	4.9	11	12.1	19.2
Play areas for children	19.9	6.2	5.1	6.9	11.1	7.9	10.2	9.5	9.5	13.9
Room facilities	0	0.4	1.1	1.3	5.6	6.7	13.2	19.1	25.6	26.9
Position in relation to the main tourist spots	0.7	0.2	1.6	1.6	5.1	6.3	13.8	19.6	20.8	30.4

Source: elaborated by the author based on the research findings (processing based on the SPSS percentages)

The accommodation price is rather important, the percentages of the 8, 9 and 10 rankings being very close: 22%, 21.1% and 21.5%. The least important are the smoking areas and the play areas for children, with the highest percentages at the lowest ranking on the importance scale: 23.8% and 19.9%.

As regards the correlation between variables, the value of the Pearson correlation shows that there is a medium connection between the access road and the attention given by the accommodation unit employees ($r=0.49$) and between room facilities ($r=0.474$). The data have also shown that the respondents who appreciate the quality of the products served in the unit restaurant are also expecting proper housekeeping services and room facilities at high standards ($r=0.640$; $r=0.751$, $r=0.519$). On the other hand, no significant correlations have been identified with such parameters as accommodation price, smoking areas, play areas for children or the position in relation to the main tourist spots (table no. 3).

Table 3. Correlations between the determinants in selecting the accommodation

How do you evaluate the following:		Correlations				
		access road to hotel/pension	attention given by the employees of the hotel/pension	quality of products served in the unit restaurant	quality of the cleaning services in hotel/pension	facilities of the rooms in a hotel/pension
access road to hotel/pension	Pearson Correlation	1	.490**	.400**	.391**	.335**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	446	444	445	445	445
attention given by the employees of the hotel/pension	Pearson Correlation	.490**	1	.640**	.577**	.474**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	444	446	444	444	444
quality of products served in the unit restaurant	Pearson Correlation	.400**	.640**	1	.751**	.519**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	445	444	446	445	445
quality of the cleaning services in hotel/pension	Pearson Correlation	.391**	.577**	.751**	1	.563**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	445	444	445	446	445
facilities of the rooms in a hotel/pension	Pearson Correlation	.335**	.474**	.519**	.563**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	445	444	445	445	446

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: elaborated by the author based on the research findings (takeover SPSS)

When choosing the holiday destination, the most important determining factors are the beauty of the landscape, the calmness of the area, the history and the price level (very important), followed by the quality of the environmental factors and the habits and traditions of the region (important). Organization of local traditional events is considered as having medium importance: 31% of the respondents (Table no. 4).

Table 4. Determining factors in choosing the destination

Determinants in choosing the tourist destination / scale	Very important	Important	Medium importance	Low importance	Very low importance
Quality of the environmental factors	31.8	39.8	21.5	5.3	1.6
Customs and traditions specific to the area	26.2	31.4	28.7	11.5	2
Beauty of the landscape	71.8	23.9	3.4	0.7	0.2
Quietness of the area	35.8	30.2	21.5	9.5	2.9
Region history	26.2	24.4	32.3	12.3	4.8
Accessible prices	37.1	30.1	25.6	5.7	1.6
Local traditional events	20.5	25.5	31	16.4	6.6

Source: elaborated by the author based on the research findings (processing based on the SPSS percentages)

The participating tourists have asserted that they preferred to spend their holiday during the summer period: 51% and springtime: 9.3%, while the main areas are the historical regions: Maramures: 18.2%, Transylvania: 20.8%, Moldavia: 17.7%, Dobrudja: 14%, Bucovina: 13.5% and Wallachia: 5.8%. The favourite accommodation option

is the hotel: 61.8% stated that they chose this type of accommodation when going on holiday, followed by agrotourist pensions: 18.4% and a combination of the 2 main alternatives: 11.5%.

As regards the factors that cause dissatisfaction during the holiday, the service quality is first (39%), followed by the lack of suitable access infrastructure (12%) and the quality/price ratio which does not fit the reality on site (11%).

For the holidays spent abroad, the preferences are similar. Most percentages were recorded for the warm period of the year, when 54% prefer to leave to foreign destinations, followed by spring with 8.6%. A significant change is pointed out in regard to the celebration of holidays, when a double percentage of respondents said they preferred to go abroad instead of spending these holidays in the home country: 7%.

The answers regarding the foreign destinations preferred by tourists are presented in the chart below (Figure no. 1), for an easier view. One may notice that the highest percentages occur in the European countries (the European part of Turkey being included here), for which no visa or passport is required or, in case of Turkey, for which the visa may be obtained in the airport or at the border.

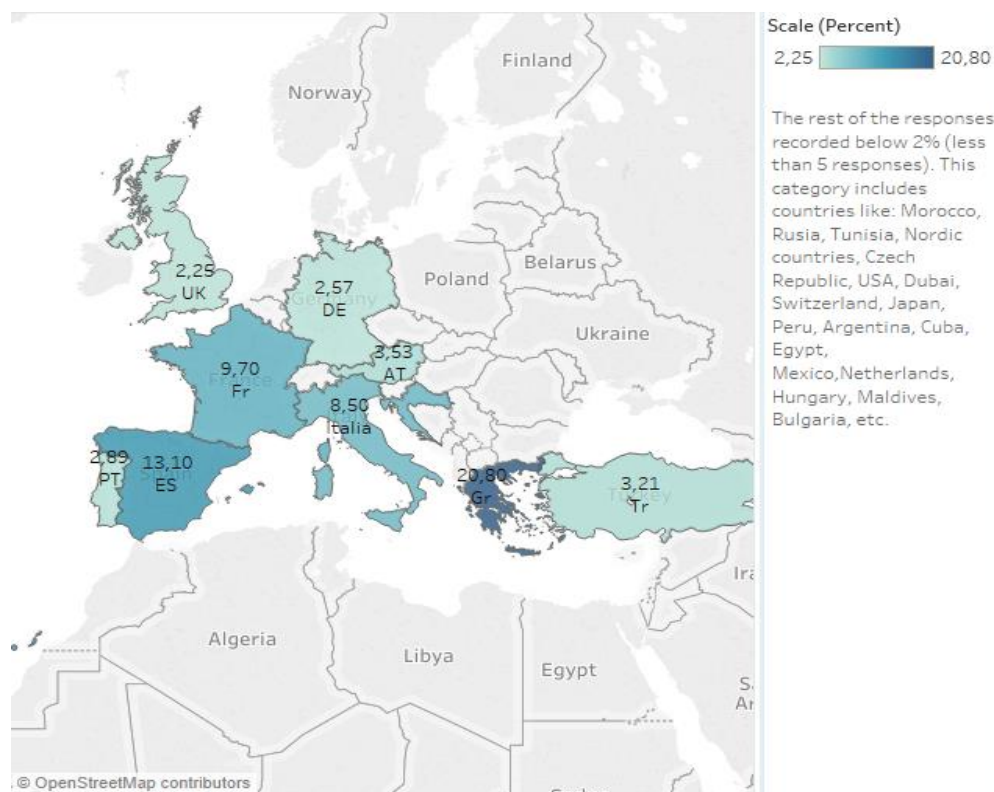


Figure no. 1: Foreign destinations preferred by the respondents

Source: Elaborated by the author based on the research findings in the Public Tableau software

Greece is the top preference, 20.3% of the survey participants stating that they would like to spend their vacation there in the following two years, followed by Spain: 13.10%, France: 9.7% and Italy: 8.5%. Other reasons for these choices are the consumer habits created in recent years, the introduction of low-cost flights and relatives' relocation in these countries. The language may also be a determining factor, except for Greece, as the next three favourite countries are Latin countries, with a vocabulary similar to the Romanian one.

Based on the results achieved in this part of the survey, the conclusion is that the **profile of Romanian tourist** may be classified according to the following parameters:

- prefers the seaside and mountain destinations, rarely opting for the rural tourism as first option;
- goes on holiday with friends or family, preferring to have company. The means of transport that they mostly employ is their own vehicle, followed by plane; they especially opt for the 7-day periods. They choose to go on holiday mostly in the summer and in the spring, choosing to stay in hotels and agrotourist pensions;
- the budget for the vacation varies according to the destination: home country or abroad; the average amount in the first case is between 200 and 400 Euros while in the second case it is between 500 and 1000 Euros.

The correlation between these two variables is more obvious in case of the male tourists. The favourite countries for the holiday belong to the European Union, Greece, Spain, France and Italy being the first;

- when selecting a destination, most tourists are interested in the attention paid by the employees of the accommodation establishment, the quality of the products served in the restaurant, the housekeeping, the room facilities and the positioning in relation to the main objectives. Highly important are also the quality of the environmental factors, the customs and traditions, the beauty of the destination area, the quietness, the history and the prices.

In order to fulfill the second objective: **identification of the determining elements in the demand for rural tourism**, the author wanted to find out which are the favourite activities and which are the existing correlations between them. In addition, the question was included regarding the villages with a high potential for rural tourism, in order to allow building of a chart of the tourist interest, locating the attraction areas that way. Thus, the tourist profile may be drawn in depth, falling into two categories: tourists preferring more demanding activities for recreation and tourists preferring to be more passive.

In terms of rural tourism activities preferred by tourists (Table no. 5), camping stands out (17.1%), followed by biking (19.4%), boating (17%), city visiting (31.1%) and monument visiting (30.1%). On the other hand, the least popular activities are golf (61.1%), equitation (26%), fishing (33.5%), practice of handicrafts (17.9%) and hunting (55.2%).

Table 5. Favourite rural tourism activities

Rural tourism activities/scale *)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Golf	61.1	7.3	7.8	4.5	5.2	3.3	2.1	3.3	2.1	3.1
Equitation	26	8.4	6.6	6.3	10.5	7.3	7	10.8	7	10.1
Camping	4.2	3	3	5.1	9.5	6.2	9	15.9	17.1	27
Biking	13.4	4.6	4.4	4.6	10.9	6.5	9.2	12.5	14.5	19.4
Boating	10.5	6.3	3.5	5.1	10.2	9.8	9.1	13.3	15.3	17
Fishing	33.5	9.8	8.9	4.4	7.3	7.3	6.1	8	5.4	9.4
City visiting	1.6	2.5	3.9	3.4	6.9	4.1	10.1	15.8	20.6	31.1
Monument visiting	2.3	3.6	4.8	3.9	5.9	7.3	8.9	15.3	18	30.1
Practice of handicrafts	17.9	8.6	6.5	7.7	8.6	7.5	8.2	10	11.2	13.8
Hunting	55.2	7.5	6.6	2.3	4.9	2.6	3.8	4.5	5.9	6.8

*) Scale: 1- least favourite activity; 10- most favourite activity

Source: elaborated by the author based on the research findings (processing based on the SPSS percentages)

The correlations between the parameters included in this part (Table no. 6) reveal the profile of the tourists who want to spend their spare time in the rural area. Those who prefer visiting the city in which they stay are mostly the same people who want to visit the neighbouring monuments ($r = 0.687$), while the hunting correlates at an average level with fishing ($r = 0.414$) and with golf ($r = 0.329$).

Table 6. Correlations between the activities in the rural area

Correlations						
What do you prefer as a touristic rural activity:		golf	city visiting	monument visiting	fishing	hunting
golf	Pearson Correlation	1	.029	.031	.236**	.329**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.555	.519	.000	.000
	N	422	421	422	419	418
city visiting	Pearson Correlation	.029	1	.687**	.130**	-.111*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.555		.000	.007	.023
	N	421	437	436	426	425

Correlations						
monument visiting	Pearson Correlation	.031	.687**	1	.100*	-.050
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.519	.000		.039	.301
	N	422	436	439	427	426
fishing	Pearson Correlation	.236**	.130**	.100*	1	.414**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.007	.039		.000
	N	419	426	427	427	423
hunting	Pearson Correlation	.329**	-.111*	-.050	.414**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.023	.301	.000	
	N	418	425	426	423	426
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						

Source: elaborated by the author based on the research findings (takeover SPSS)

The actions that involve such nature activities as golf, equitation, camping or biking also have a medium to high correlation level, at an error level of 1%. The Pearson correlation shows that those who play golf also prefer equitation ($r = 0.427$), while those who want to spend their time allocated for rural nature area by camping on foot also like biking ($r = 0.555$).

Table 7. Correlations between tourist activities

Correlations					
What do you prefer as a rural tourist activity:		golf	equitation	biking	camping
golf	Pearson Correlation	1	.427**	.101*	.087
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.039	.078
	N	422	419	420	417
equitation	Pearson Correlation	.427**	1	.308**	.375**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	419	427	424	422
biking	Pearson Correlation	.101*	.308**	1	.555**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.039	.000		.000
	N	420	424	433	426
camping	Pearson Correlation	.087	.375**	.555**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.078	.000	.000	
	N	417	422	426	433
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

Source: elaborated by the author based on the research findings (takeover SPSS)

In regard to the cities known by respondents as fit for rural tourism, they have been classified according to the County to which they belong, and then coded according to the NUTS structure (e.g. Alba County has code RO121); thereby they could be identified by the software employed and positioned geographically according to the absolute frequency of the answers. To be able to classify the knowledge of the respondents in this stage of the survey in one of the categories poor, medium or strong, we have used the similar answer rate above 6 as main tie-break (Figure no. 2). Thus, if the cities that received less than 6 answers had a share up to 30%, then the information level is classified as high, for a share between 40% and 30% it is classified as medium and under 40% it is classified as poor. The Counties with most cities identified by the survey participants were Brasov (155), Maramures (67), Sibiu (62), Suceava (57), Arges (42) and Prahova (33).

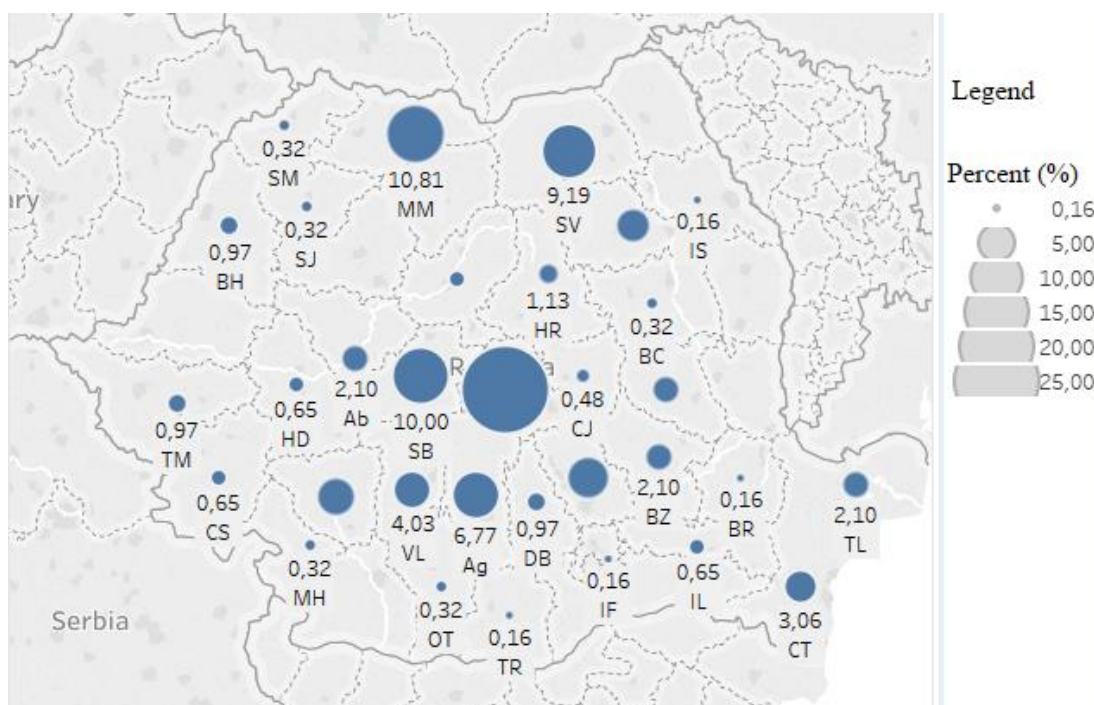


Figure no. 2. The geographical positioning of the villages identified by the respondents
Source: elaborated by the author based on the research findings in the Public Tableau software

Most villages (that scored more than 3% of answers) were from Brasov, Sibiu, Maramures, Suceava, Arges and Prahova Counties. The villages scored most answers are:

- From Brasov County: Bran (16.5% answers), Moieciu (16.5% answers), Viscri (11.6% answers), Fundata (10.2% answers), Sirnea (4.3% answers), Dragus (3% answers), Magura (3% answers);
- From Sibiu County: Sibiel (9.7% answers), Rasinari (8.2% answers), Salistea Sibiului (4.8% answers);
- From Maramures County: Sapanta (13% de answers), Breb (6.3% answers), Borsa (3.9% answers);
- From Suceava County: Pojorata (10.2% answers), Sucevita (3.4% answers), Ciocanesti (3% answers);
- From Arges County: Rucar (8.8% answers);
- From Prahova County: Cheia (4.3% answers).

Thus, as regards the achievement of the second objective, **identification of the determining elements in the demand for rural tourism**, the survey results have shown that two categories of tourists may be recognized. On one hand, those who prefer such activities as golf, fishing, equitation and hunting, on the other hand those who opt for city visiting, tourist spots and who camp on foot or by bike.

Their knowledge regarding the villages with potential for the development of rural tourism is at medium level, the main answers corresponding to the established destinations. The high percentage of answers with a frequency under 6 (45.6%) prove that respondents gave examples from the rural areas in their natal place, who do not yet have an infrastructure required for the development of tourism activities.

Conclusions

Considering the fulfillment of the two main objectives, the answer to the question formulated at the top of the article and which represented the basis of the scientific approach, **“Which is the position of rural tourism in the trend of the tourism demand in Romania”**, may be given as follows: tourists in Romania are prevalingly attracted to the holidays spent at the seaside or in the mountain resorts, preferring rural tourism to the detriment of other forms in a very low percentage: 2%. The tourist profile of those spending at least one holiday per year in the home country or abroad shows that they have the information required in order to appreciate a holiday in the

rural area: they appreciate the landscapes, the quality of the environment, they prefer to visit the village in which they stay, the neighbouring monuments, they have high demands when it comes to the quality of the food products and the accommodation at the hotel or agrotourist pensions and also have an average level of knowledge of recognizing the villages with a high potential for this form of tourism.

In conclusion, the domestic rural tourism market is not yet developed and attractive enough as to significantly influence the trend of the tourist demand. Still, a background of preferences and knowledge distinguishes itself, enough to represent optimistic forecasts in connection to the growth of this segment.

This article presents a quantitative analysis of the tourist demand trend in Romania, investigating the general profile of tourists and the position of rural tourism within the demand. The results are useful for the field of tourism, as they present recent data that may contribute to the creation of dedicated tourist packages, which would fit the requirements and preference of the tourists.

The main advantage of the analysis is represented by the fact that the respondents were included in the lot according to pre-established inclusion criteria; thus, their answers are relevant as they participated in the survey informed. The fact that the data was gathered during several periods sustains the validity of the data, showing the fact that the results were not a coincidence. As regards the main limit, the lack of a comparison with other countries distinguishes itself, or the splitting up and the subsequent comparison according to macro-regions. The information arisen at this time may be rendered in a general context only. At the same time, the results may not be generalized at the level of the entire country, as the structure of the study lot does not correspond to the structure of the Romanian population in point of predominant age groups.

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