

SOME MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS THAT DETERMINE ROMANIAN PEOPLE TO CHOOSE CERTAIN TRAVEL PACKAGES

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ABSTRACT

The primary theme of this research paper is to study the motivational factors that determine Romanians to choose certain travel packages. This research issue will be explained by applying a number of 100 questionnaires during the spring edition of Romania's Tourism Fair of 2014, as follows: 50 questionnaires were applied to the fair visitors and the rest were applied to the exhibitors. By analyzing the survey responses, we have come to the conclusion that Romanian people choose foreign destinations, to the detriment of Romania, due to the price/quality ratio. Also, promotion is a major problem of the Romanian tourism, as stated by both groups of respondents.

Keywords: *motivation, holiday, tourism, Romanians*

1. Romanian tourism in the European context

Though it started as a migration flow, the travel activity has become, nowadays, a genuine need, „a form of recreation together with other activities and ways to spend free time”¹, because people are tired of routine and they want to relax, to travel, to get out of the monotony.

At European level, the tourists who went on holiday for at least four nights chose their destinations as follows: four out of ten tourists spent their holiday in their own country, while less than four out of ten tourists went abroad for holiday. Most of the respondents who haven't been on holiday in 2013 were limited to this choice due to financial reasons, and only 44% of them had other reasons for staying at home. The same tourists said they would choose to return to the same location, but for different reasons. “Nearly half the respondents say that the natural features of a holiday destination would persuade them to go back for another holiday, the quality of accommodation is the next most significant factor, followed by cultural and historical attractions.”²

In Romania, the usage indicator of the operational accommodation capacity was equal to 21.5%³, a rather small percentage, which indicates the fact that a more thorough approach is needed in order to study tourists' motivation in selecting a travel package.

As regards the travel and tourism competitiveness index in Europe, Romania ranks 68th.⁴ The ranking was based on certain indicators, such as regulatory framework, business environment and infrastructure, human, cultural and natural resources. Considering the fact that, in the previous report of 2011, Romania ranked 63rd, while in 2013 it fell to 68th place, we could say that it has not progressed in matters of tourism, but rather regressed.

A country's level of tourism development can be analyzed from several perspectives:

- Its natural, cultural and human resources
- The legislative framework
- The infrastructure
- Accommodation and catering units
- Technical equipment.

¹ J. Ch. Holloway, *The Business of Tourism*, ed. IV, Pitman Publishing, London, 1994, pp. 1

² *** WTTC, *Report of preferences of Europeans towards tourism*, 2014

³ Romanian National Institute of Statistics

⁴ *** WTTC, *The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report*, 2013

Romania's tourism potential is high, but far from being fully exploited, regardless of the tourism sector. For example, only 23% of the 60 mountain massifs dispose of satisfactory technical equipment. Another example is the poor capitalization of the health and wellness tourism, since Romania has over 160 health resorts, of which only 19 resorts of general interest and 13 resorts of international interest. The situation is no better in the case of the seaside tourism, because only 12.1% of the accommodation units are destined for balneary treatment.

Also, the National Network of Protected Areas consists of 579 protected areas, of which 13 national parks. The ecotourism and rural tourism represent another type of tourism practiced on the Romanian territory.

As an EU country, Romania allows cross-border traffic without of a visa, aspect which encourages international tourism. The infrastructure is rather poor, because there are only 4 highways, very few airports and, usually, missing road signs.

In terms of national economy, tourism is seen as a development strategy, both directly, through its contribution to GDP, and indirectly, by the engagement of other economy sectors.

„Rural tourism will increase the intake of this important industry to the national gross domestic product and will equilibrate the commercial balance.

It is obvious that the development of the tourist activity in a certain area has a number of consequences, whose nature isn't only economic or statistic, but also related to:

- proper use of the local and household resources,
- managing and arranging the necessary facilities,
- maintaining a positive image”⁵

The motivations of tourists for choosing travel packages can be regarded from the perspective of Maslow's pyramid, as follows:

- ✓ physiological reasons: shelter, food
- ✓ safety reasons: a country's political stability, its attitude towards tourists (physical safety)
- ✓ motivations of belonging: visiting the family/ friends
- ✓ self-esteem motivations: desire of uniqueness, depending on the person's status
- ✓ self-development reasons: the need to explore, to learn.

Based on the psychological structure of each individual, the motivations can be different; thereby, the psychocentric persons choose to travel to well-known places, because they are permanently in search of security. The psychocentric tourists will always prefer the organized forms of tourism, while the allocentric tourist will seek the adventure, will travel to unknown places and will prefer the exotic destinations.

2. Research methodology

In order to achieve the research objectives, I chose the structured interview approach, namely the use of questionnaire method.

The data was collected during the spring edition of Romania's Tourism Fair of 2014. One hundred questionnaires were applied, as follows: fifty questionnaires were applied to the visitors, while the other fifty were applied to the exhibitors. The total number of visitors during the four days of fair was 30 000. The total number of exhibitors was 280, representing 24 countries, among which Romania.

The purpose of the research amongst the fair visitors was to identify:

- The importance of the components of the travel package, as seen by the tourists,
- The motivation of the Romanian people in choosing travel packages,
- New ways to promote Romania as a tourist destination,
- Information about promoting travel packages to Romania.

⁵ Puiu Nistoreanu, *Ecoturism și turism rural*, Ase Publishing, 2006

The purpose of the research amongst the exhibitors was to identify:

- Tourists' motivation in choosing travel packages,
- Advertising during Romania's Tourism Fair,
- Opportunities of practicing ecotourism and rural tourism in Romania.

In developing the questionnaire, I used both identification questions and problem-solving questions.

The answers will be analyzed by taking into account the context in which they were asked, the percentage of the exhibitors who were promoting Romania, the various marketing strategies used during the fair, but also by considering the psychological aspect. The aim is to outline an overall picture, and then to consider the answers in detail.

The results will be analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The annexes contain:

- Questionnaire examples
- The dashboard

The dashboard contains information regarding the absolute and the relative value of each answer. This table is useful in interpreting the results.

3. Interpretation of research results amongst visitors

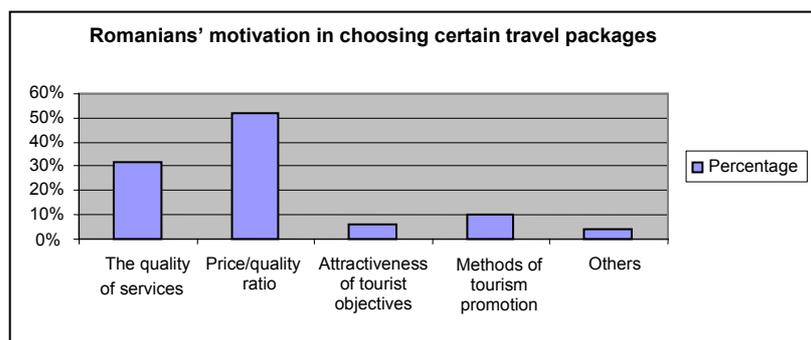
The purpose of the survey was to learn about the motivation of the Romanian tourists in choosing travel packages. This questionnaire was applied during Romania's Tourism Fair, because the individuals who participated to this fair were potential buyers of travel packages.

The survey comprised a set of 9 closed questions, which were expected to return only one answer per question. The first six questions are punctual, while the last 3 are identifying questions. The purpose of these 3 verification questions was to identify the target market of this kind of fairs, and, of course, of the travel packages proposed during the fair.

68% of the 50 interviewed visitors went on holiday in 2013, and 58% of them spent it abroad. The situation in Romania is different from the worldwide situation, because tourists from other countries use to spend their holidays in their own country, not abroad. Unlike them, the Romanian people chose to spend their holidays abroad, and not in their own country. The economic situation in our country indicates the main reason why some of the Romanian people didn't go on holiday in 2013 – due to financial causes. From this point of view, we are in line with the global situation, because more than half of the interviewed individuals, at worldwide level, considered that they didn't leave on holiday because of the lack of money. The percentage of those who have spent their holidays in Romania is only 16% lower than the percentage of those who went on holiday abroad.

The analysis of the purchasing preferences concerning the travel packages revealed that 70% of respondents choose the travel packages sold by the tourism agencies. This aspect could be explained in two ways: first, this situation could be a result of the fact that this questionnaire was applied during a tourism fair, where most exhibitors were tour operators and people had come with the intention of buying travel packages. Alternatively, this outcome, correlated to the answers to the previous questions, could be explained by the fact that the percentage of the travel packages to Romania is lower than the percentage of the travel packages to foreign destinations.

The respondents' answers in regards to the factors that determine Romanians to spend their holidays in foreign destinations instead of Romania were surprising, because 52% of them considered that people make these choices as a result of the price/quality ratio, while 32% assumed that the quality of the services represents a strong motivational factor. The below diagram shows which was the proportion of responses across the interviewed visitors.

Figure 1. Motivational factors that determine Romanians to choose certain travel packages

Source: graphic made by the author, based on the responses to survey questions

Although the advertising wasn't considered the main reason of people's choice to spend their holidays abroad to the detriment of spending them in Romania, the question of whether the holidays in Romania are well promoted reflected the fact that the respondents considered that Romania isn't promoted well enough. Thus, 78% of the people interviewed think that marketing is an aspect which should be visibly improved and only 22% of them said that it needs a slightly better promotion. None of the respondents affirmed that Romania is sufficiently well promoted as a tourist destination. The answers also revealed the possibility that people hide their lack of information by focusing their attention on reasons like service quality and prices.

The visitors were also asked to express their opinion in regards to the importance of the accommodation services, food, transport, entertainment and so on. 86% of the respondents considered that accommodation was a very important factor, while food was seen as very important and important; the transport was regarded as an important aspect during the holidays. 72% of the potential buyers valued entertainment as a very important part of their holiday, while other services were considered less important. This deduction gives us a better idea on the reasons behind the choice for certain travel packages, but also reinforces the supposition according to which many individuals choose the travel packages according to their needs.

The identifying questions outlined the following profile of the interviewed visitors: men aged between 25 and 35 years, with an income between 1000 and 2000 RON.

As a consequence, after a thorough analysis of the answers provided by the visitors, Romania should be better promoted as a tourist destination and the price/quality ratio would require an improvement.

4. Interpretation of research results amongst exhibitors

The purpose of the survey was to find out the opinion of the exhibitors concerning the motivation of the Romanian tourists in choosing travel packages. This questionnaire was addressed to the exhibitors present at the Romania's Tourism Fair, which gathered 280 exhibitors from Romania and abroad.

The survey comprised a set of 8 closed questions, which were expected to return only one answer per question. The set contains one identifying question, intended to categorize the type of travel packages offered, and 7 punctual questions, meant to accomplish the research purpose.

In order to identify the type of travel packages promoted by the exhibitors, the survey asked a simple question: "What kind of travel packages are you offering?" The answers to this question revealed two types of travel packages, both proposing holidays abroad, and also a third type of travel package, proposing holidays in Romania and abroad. This kind of offer represented 42% of the packages sold during the fair, while the travel packages to Romania registered a proportion of only 16%. This survey was completed by 50 exhibitors, which represents 18% of all exhibitors who attended the fair.

Simply by observing the stands, one could have noticed that Romania was not promoted as much as other destinations. While various travel offers for other countries were gathered in a thick catalogue, Romania was being advertised through a flyer.

The exhibitors were asked to evaluate how does their participation to the fair contributes to the sale of the travel packages. Most of them (42%) said that their presence to the fair is a great advantage, which significantly helps them very much, while another large share of the respondents (40%) affirmed that participating to the fair helps them in some way.

By visiting the stands, it was also found that ecotourism and the rural tourism is less promoted, and the exhibitors who weren't selling ecotourism and rural tourism packages were asked to consider, whether they would also exploit this niche. More than half of the respondents had no knowledge about all the implications that this domain implies and said they didn't know if they would try such a business. A fewer respondents (16%) affirmed they had actually considered to redirect their services to this area.

We tried to learn about exhibitors' opinion in regards to the motivation of the potential buyers while choosing travel packages. More than half of the respondents to the second question of the questionnaire, that concerned the motivational factors that determine the Romanian people to choose a travel package, said that the price/quality ratio was the main reason.

In order to identify the profile of the individuals interested in buying holidays abroad, two questions were asked. The responses to these questions revealed that most of the buyers are adults over 35 years old (as indicated by 66% of the exhibitors), followed by the young people under 35 years of age. The exhibitors also considered that the education level of the customers determined them to choose destinations outside the borders of Romania.

The exhibitors were also asked about the main way to choose the travel packages. Most answers revealed that tourists choose their travel destinations by seeing flyers, catalogues, brochures, either at tourism fairs, or in other places. The next top answer was that people tend to choose their destinations depending on friends' recommendations. People often want to visit the places that their friends enjoyed. Since this topic is related to advertising, the next question aimed to evaluate whether the exhibitors think that Romania is sufficiently well promoted as a tourist destination. Their opinion was similar to the feedback received from the visitors. The exhibitors (74% of them) consider that Romania isn't sufficiently well promoted, whether we talk about promoting it during tourism fairs or within travel agencies.

Therefore, we can easily notice a certain correlation between visitors' and exhibitors' responses concerning Romania's promotion as tourist destination. Also, both visitors and exhibitors considered that the main motivational factor in choosing a certain travel package is represented by the price/quality ratio.

Conclusions and suggestions

The survey regarding the study of the motivational factors which determine the Romanians to choose travel packages helped me find out that tourists usually seek those travel packages which offer optimal ratio between quality and price.

By visiting the autumn and also the spring edition of Romania's Tourism Fair, I noticed that Romania isn't sufficiently well promoted at this fair. We were led to the same conclusion by the responses to the 100 questionnaires, as both the exhibitors and the visitors think that the promotion of travel packages to Romania could use some improvements.

Unfortunately, the insufficient promotion is impacting the usage indicator of the operational accommodation capacity, which is very low. Although Romania has a great tourist potential, it doesn't stimulate in any way the growth of the usage indicator of the operational accommodation capacity.

In order for the Romanians to choose to visit their own country, the first step that should be done is to improve the advertising, the means of promotion, because the factors motivating the consumers of these services are subjective and they are often easily influenced by the opinions of their friends. As shown by the survey, the tourists choose where to spend their holidays after seeing flyers, catalogues, brochures. This usually happens when attending a tourism fair.

Another action that should be taken is to increase the quality of the services and to create an optimal ratio between quality and price. This should be done by harnessing the tourist potential of

various areas of interest, such as: proper technical equipment in the mountains and seaside area, suitable accommodations for balneary treatments at the seaside.

By analyzing Romania's tourist potential and the types of tourism promoted during the fair, I would suggest the exploitation of some new niches, such as rural tourism and ecotourism. The research carried out revealed that exhibitors don't know much about this kind of tourism. Since the exhibitors don't have much knowledge in this domain, the author's proposal is that some public awareness campaigns about the opportunities to practice this type of tourism to be organized at national level. These campaigns should be promoted by the Association of Ecotourism in Romania.

It is considered that the development of this niche will increase the number of Romanian tourists who visit their own country; hence, the usage indicator of the operational accommodation capacity will also increase. The growth of tourists will involve the development of other industries and the increase of gross domestic product.

To conclude, the main motivational factors which determine the Romanian people to choose certain travel packages are the price/quality ratio and promotion during tourism fairs.

"The real purpose of traveling is not to visit foreign countries, but to come home a foreigner"

G. K. Chesterton

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*** WTTC, *Report of preferences of Europeans towards tourism, 2014*

Appendix no. 1

Questionnaire

-visitors-

1. Did you go on holiday in 2013?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
2. Where did you spend your last holiday?
 - a. in Romania
 - b. abroad
3. How did you purchase the travel package(s)?
 - a. via tourism agencies
 - b. on your own
4. What importance do you assign to the following aspects?

	Very important	Important	Neither/ nor	Less important	Least important
Accommodation					
Food					
Transport					
Recreation					
Others					

5. Why do you think that Romanian people choose foreign destinations, to the detriment of Romania?
 - a. the quality of services
 - b. the price/quality ratio
 - c. the attractiveness of tourist objectives
 - d. methods of tourism promotion
 - e. others.....
6. Do you consider that travel packages to Romania are sufficiently well promoted?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
 - c. somewhat
7. What is your median monthly income?
 - a. 0-1000 lei
 - b. 1000-2000 lei
 - c. 2000-3000 lei
 - d. higher than 3000 lei
8. What is your gender?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
9. What is your age group?
 - a. under 25
 - b. 25-35
 - c. 35-50
 - d. over 50

Questionnaire

-exhibitors-

1. What kind of travel packages are you offering?
 - a. travel packages to Romania
 - b. travel packages outside Romania
 - c. both travel packages to Romania and travel packages abroad
2. Why do you think that Romanian people choose to go on holiday abroad?
 - a. the quality of services
 - b. the price/quality ratio
 - c. the attractiveness of tourist objectives
 - d. ways of tourism promotion
 - e. others.....
3. What kind of tourists choose to go on holiday abroad?
 - a. young people under 35 years of age
 - b. adults over 35 years of age
 - c. seniors
4. Do you consider that the education level determines the potential buyers to choose foreign destinations?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
 - c. I don't know
5. Which is the main method through which tourists choose their destinations?
 - a. their own experiences
 - b. friends' recommendations
 - c. flyers, catalogues, brochures
 - d. others.....

6. What can you say about the promotion of the travel packages to Romania?
- they are sufficiently promoted
 - they are not sufficiently promoted
 - their promotion could be improved
7. To what extent does your participation to Romania's Travel Fair contributes to the sale of the travel packages?
- to a small extent
 - to some extent
 - to a great extent
8. After attending this edition of Romania's Travel Fair, would you consider exploiting new niches, like offering ecotourism travel packages?
- yes
 - no
 - I don't know

Appendix no. 2. Dashboard

-visitors-

No. of question		Absolute value	Relative value (%)
1.	a.	34	68
	b.	16	32
2.	a.	21	42
	b.	29	58
3.	a.	35	70
	b.	15	30
5.	a.	16	32
	b.	26	52
	c.	3	6
	d.	5	10
	e.	2	4
6.	a.	0	0
	b.	39	78
	c.	11	22
7.	a.	6	12
	b.	25	50
	c.	9	18
	d.	10	20
8.	a.	23	46
	b.	27	54
9.	a.	5	10
	b.	18	32
	c.	15	30
	d.	12	24

Dashboard
-exhibitors-

No. of question		Absolute value	Relative value (%)
1.	a.	8	16
	b.	21	42
	c.	21	42
2.	a.	2	4
	b.	27	54
	c.	3	6
	d.	16	32
	e.	1	2
3.	a.	15	30
	b.	33	66
	c.	2	4
4.	a.	34	68
	b.	10	20
	c.	6	12
5.	a.	13	26
	b.	15	30
	c.	21	42
	d.	1	1
6.	a.	0	0
	b.	37	74
	c.	13	26
7.	a.	9	18
	b.	20	40
	c.	21	42
8.	a.	8	16
	b.	15	30
	c.	27	54