

The Identification of the Preference, Motivation, Attitude and Satisfaction of Consumers towards Resorts from the Semenic Tourist Area

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Abstract

The purpose of the research is to identify the preference, motivation, attitude and satisfaction of consumers towards the resorts found in the Semenic Tourist Area.

The paper presents the results obtained through direct research, respectively an occasional survey using the questionnaire, through used to identify if there is tourist demand, what is the frequency of consumption and what budget is reserved for a minimum stay, respectively the attitude of consumers regarding the main sources of information when choosing a tourist accommodation structure, depending on unit type, classification, rates and payment methods.

At the same time, the preference for purchasing tourist services, the motivation, the selection criteria used when choosing a tourist accommodation structure, the degree of satisfaction with the basic and additional services offered, the degree of satisfaction with the natural environment, road transport and cable installations, tourist routes, ski slopes, facilities for entertainment and relaxation were also identified.

Key words: mountain resort, consumers, preference, satisfaction, motivation

J.E.L. classification: M31, L83

1. Introduction

After the economic crisis felt during the last years, a crisis caused by the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 coronavirus, the national economy recovery began in Romania starting with the year 2022. Economic growth was felt in all sectors of activity of the national economy, but especially services domain. In the tourism sector, once restrictions on the free movement of foreign nationals were lifted, as well as the granting of holiday vouchers as an incentive to employees in the public sector, substantial increases have been generated in the field of tourism. Currently, Romania does not have a database at the regional level regarding the tourist demand by types of tourist resorts, which is why, in order to identify the consumer's demand, marketing studies must be carried out. In this sense, the purpose of this paper is to identify the consumers' degree of satisfaction and appreciation regarding the tourist potential, the technical-material base specifically for tourism, respectively the existing tourist services in the resorts of the Semenic tourist area, Caraş-Severin County.

2. Theoretical background

In tourist resorts, the tourist offer is composed of, on the one hand, the structure and value of the natural and anthropic tourist potential with a determining role in the development of tourism, and on the other hand, the specific material basis for accommodation, food, leisure services, the number of professionally trained employees to produce quality services. Minciu (2004, p. 149) claims that "the offer represents the second defining essential category of the market, including the tourist one".

Of course, the tourist offer is designed according to the tourist demand in order to achieve tourist consumption because the tourist offer cannot be stored, and the elements that make it up give it a heterogeneous and complex character, that is precisely why “tourist consumption, as an expression of demand” effective, represents all the expenses made by the subjects of the request for the purchase of goods and services with a touristic motivation” (Ionci a et al, 2005, p. 87)

One can appreciate that the tourist demand can be satisfied if the tourist offer contains the elements of attractiveness, climate conditions that determine seasonality, tourist services that value the elements of attractiveness, as well as an optimal price because “with the price increase, the demand for a good, usually decreases” (Stoica, 2005, p. 122).

The existing tourist offer in a tourist resort is much more complex because in Romania, the attestation of tourist resorts of local and national interest, according to the mandatory criteria provided in Annex 1 of Government Decision no. 852/13.08.2008 for the approval of the norms and criteria for the attestation of tourist resorts, can be achieved if “30% of tourist reception structures with accommodation functions are classified between 3-5 stars/flowers” (<https://turism.gov.ro/web/atestare-statiune-turistica/>), respectively if the following exist “1. The natural setting, natural healing factors and the quality of the environment, 2. Access and roads to or in the resort, 3. Urban-building utilities, 4. Tourist reception and leisure structures, 5. Tourist information and promotion” (<https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/96733>). “Tourist resorts of national and local interest are certified by a Decision of the Government of Romania at the initiative of the Ministry of Tourism (national interest) with the support of the local public administration authorities, or initiated by the local public administration (local interest) which sends the Ministry of Tourism a letter of intent and the opportunity study from which the necessity of the respective tourist certificate can result” (Gherghina, 2007, p.16).

For sustainable tourism, tourist services are designed based on consumer demand, that is why it is very important to study the consumers’ behaviour when it comes to tourist services, namely knowing the influencing factors: perception, information, learning, personality, motivation, attitude, preference, image, price, family, membership groups and reference groups.

“Perceptions of sustainable tourism can be strongly influenced by a multitude of factors, and the respondents’ domicile is no exception” (Hubel and Condrea, 2023, p. 379).

“The purchase process represents the customer’s acts, attitudes and decisions, before and after the actual purchase of a certain economic good” T anase (2013, p. 120). That is precisely why “in order to know the extent to which purchase intentions expressed at a given moment turn into actual purchases, it is necessary to repeat the study of purchase intentions on the same sample of consumers” (C atoiu et al., 2004, p. 88). Thus, need satisfaction is achieved through consumption, and the consumer allocates a part of one’s income for the purchase of tourist products or services.

3. Research methodology

In order to identify the preference, motivation, attitude and satisfaction of consumers towards the resorts in the Semenice tourist area, respectively with regard to spending their leisure in the mountain tourist resorts of Crivaia, Secu, Semenice and Trei Ape, the tourist demand was first identified, in order to develop proposals that can be used in the improvement of the tourist offer.

“Popovici Gheorghe appreciates that the Banatul Montan tourist destination is divided into five large areas: “*Semenice tourist area, Aurora Banatului tourist area, Clisura Dun rii tourist area, Scorilo tourist area, B ile Herculane tourist area*” (Popovici, <http://www.banatul-montan.ro/index.html>, cited by Gherghina (2017, p. 79-80).

A survey based on a questionnaire was used to carry out the direct research, which was distributed to the subjects both face to face - 22.86%, and online on Google Forms - 77.14%, between January and June 2023. The respondents were identified according to the criteria of age, gender, occupation, average monthly income, and the sampling method used was simple random sampling, resulting in 140 respondents.

After establishing the research objectives, the questionnaire was designed by types of respondent identification questions and research topic questions. The measurement was realized using the percentage method, the ranking method, the Likert scale, the semantic differential.

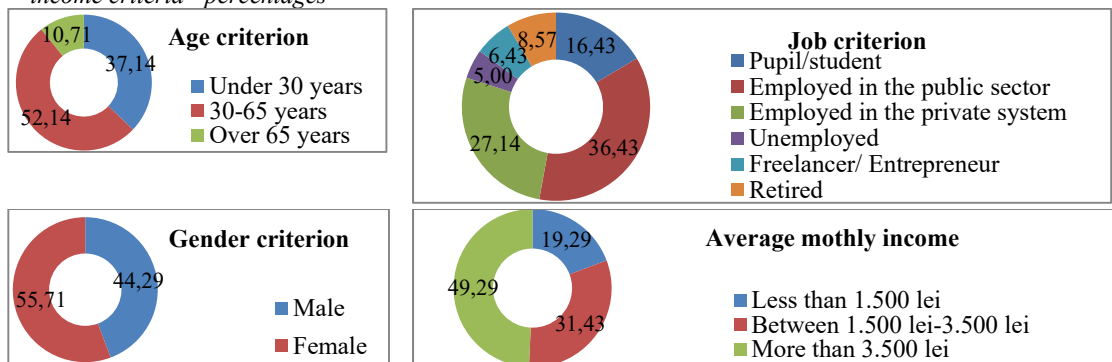
After the pre-testing of the questionnaire, the research hypotheses were developed, which aimed to identify the tourist demand and the frequency of visiting the resorts, respectively the sources of information chosen, the type and category of classification of the tourist accommodation units, how the rates charged in the four resorts are perceived, which is the allocated budget/person for a stay of at least 3 nights, as well as the payment method used with priority when paying for tourist services. At the same time, the preference for purchasing tourist services, the main motivations for traveling and the selection criteria when choosing an accommodation structure, the degree of satisfaction with basic and additional services, as well as respondents' satisfaction with natural tourism potential, road infrastructure, the cable installations, the marking of tourist routes, the arrangement of ski slopes, areas for entertainment and relaxation in the tourist resorts of Crivaia, Secu, Semenic and Trei Ape in the Semenic tourist area were also identified.

4. Findings

The results of the study regarding the identification of consumers' preference, motivation, attitude and satisfaction towards the resorts in the Semenic Tourist Area are presented below. The tourist area analysed is located in Caraş-Severin County, in South-West Romania, and the Secu and Trei Ape climatic tourist resorts are certified as being of local interest, respectively the Crivaia climatic resort and the Semenic balneo-climatic resort are certified as being resorts of national interest.

➤ *Identification of respondents according to socio-professional criteria*

Figure no. 1., no. 2, no. 3, no. 4. Respondents according to age, gender, occupations and average monthly income criteria - percentages

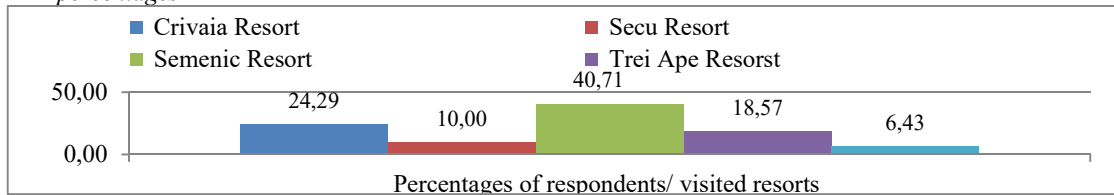


Sources: Made by the author

Following the centralization and processing of the data in the tables and graphs above, the following findings were underlined, namely most respondents are in the age group between 30 - 65 years - 52.14% and under 30 years - 37.14%, women completed the priority questionnaire having a significant percentage of 55.71%, employees in the public system - 36.43%, employees in the private system - 27.14% and Pupils/student s- 16.43%, with average monthly income of family members over 3,500 lei - 49.29% and between 1,500 – 3,500 lei – 31.53%.

➤ *Identification of the tourist demand for priority visits to the resorts in the Semenic tourist area, in the last five years*

Figure no. 5. The share of respondents visiting the resorts of the Semenic tourist area, in the last five years - percentages

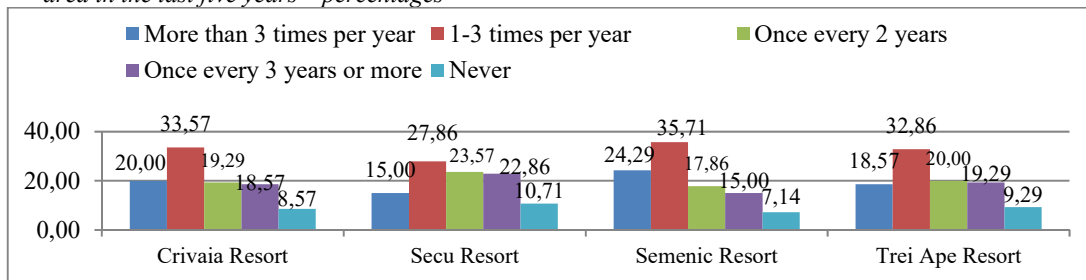


Sources: Made by the author

The results of the research show that in the last five years there has been demand for the resorts in the Semenic tourist area, the Semenic Resort being the most chosen - 40.71%, Crivaia Resort on the second place - 24.29%, Trei Ape resort on the third place - 18.57%, and on the last place Secu resort – 10%. Only 6.43% of respondents do not know or do not remember what was their choice.

➤ *The frequency of visiting tourist resorts in the Semenic Tourist Area in the last five years*

Figure no. 6. The share of respondents regarding the frequency of visiting the resorts in the Semenic tourist area in the last five years – percentages



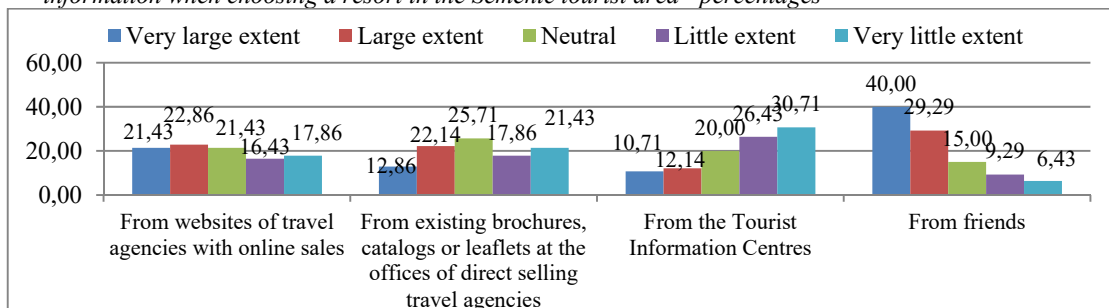
Sources: Made by the author

The research results demonstrate that, in the last 5 years, the highest frequency of visiting the resorts in the Semenic Tourist Area was more than 3 times per year for the Semenic Resort 24.29%, with a score of 3.5500, respectively 1-3 times per year for Crivaia Resort – 33.57%, with a score of 3.3786, once every 2 years for Trei Ape Resort – 20% with a score of 3.3214, once every 3 years and more for Secu Resort – 22.86%, with a score of 3.1357.

Some of the respondents claim that, in the last 5 years, they have never visited 10.71% Secu Resort, 9.29% Trei Ape Resort, 8.57% Crivaia Resort and 7.14% Semenic Resort.

➤ *The extent to which the sources of information were identified when choosing a resort in the Semenic tourist area*

Figure no. 7. The share of respondents regarding the extent to which they identified the sources of information when choosing a resort in the Semenic tourist area - percentages



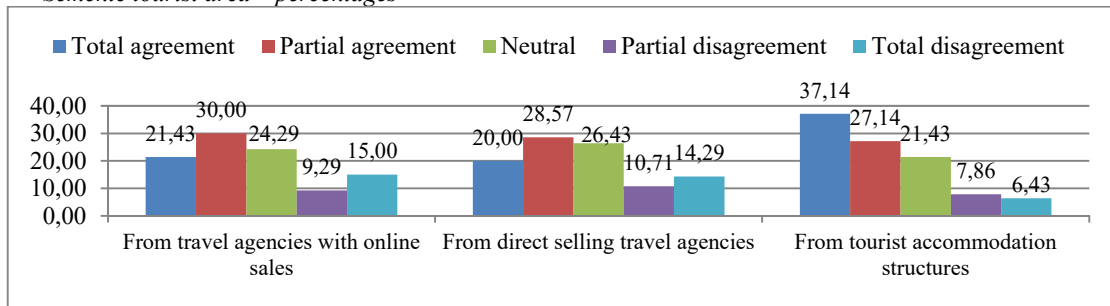
Sources: Made by the author

The results of the research demonstrate the fact that, when choosing a tourist resort in the Semenic Area, most respondents get information from friends - 40% to a very large extent and 29.29% to a large extent, with a score of 3.8714, respectively from the websites of travel agencies tourism with online sales – 22.86%, with a score of 3.1357.

From the brochures, catalogues or leaflets available at the offices of the tourist agencies with direct sales 25.71%, with a score of 2.8714, the respondents get information neither to a large nor to a small extent, and to a very small extent only 30.71% from Tourist Information Centres, with a score of 2.4571.

➤ *Preference for purchasing tourist services in the resorts of the Semenic Tourist Area*

Figure no. 8. The share of respondents regarding the preference for purchasing tourist services from the Semenic tourist area – percentages



Sources: Made by the author

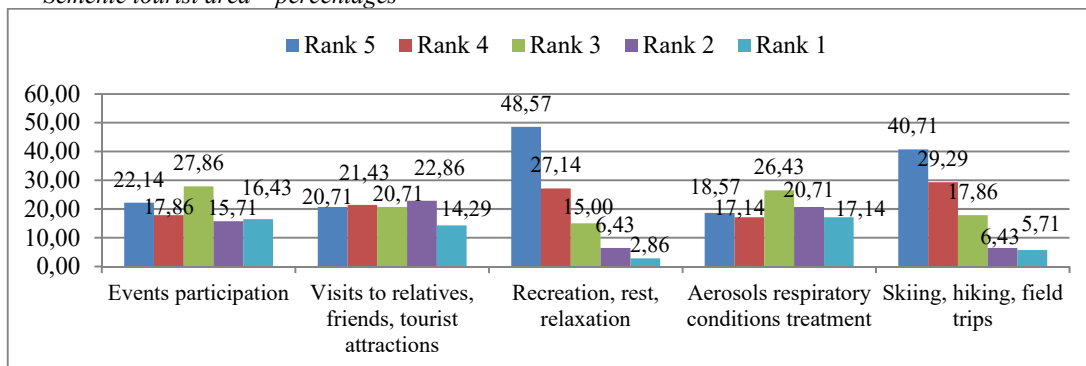
The results of the research show that the respondents prefer to purchase tourist services in the resorts of the Semenic Tourist Area, with total agreement from tourist accommodation structures - 37.14%, with a score of 0.8071, respectively with partial agreement from travel agencies with online sales – 30%, with a score of 0.3357, as well as Neutral from travel agencies with direct sales – 26.43%, with a score of zero 0.2929.

Regarding the disagreement, one can appreciate that only 15% totally disagree and 9.29% partially disagree to buy from travel agencies with online sales, and 14.29% totally disagree and 10.71% partially disagree to buy from travel agencies tourism with direct sales, respectively 7.86% are in total disagreement and 6.43% are in partial disagreement to purchase from the tourist accommodation structure.

The total score of 0.4786 shows that the respondents partially agree with the purchase of tourist services from travel agencies or tourist accommodation structures.

➤ *The main motivations for travelling to a tourist resort in the Semenic tourist area.*

Figure no. 9. The share of respondents regarding the main motivations for traveling to a resort in the Semenic tourist area – percentages

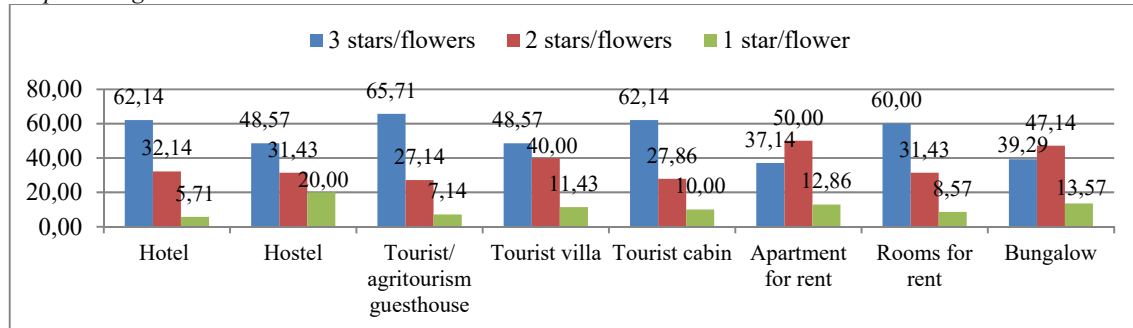


Sources: Made by the author

The results of the research show that the respondents prefer as the main motivations of the trip, in order of percentages and ranks: recreation, rest, relaxation - 48.57%, with a score of 4.1214, skiing, hiking, field trips - 29.29%, with a score of 3.9286, events participation – 27.86%, with a score of 3.1357, visits to relatives, friends, tourist attractions – 22.86%, with a score of 3.1143, aerosol treatment of respiratory ailments – 17.14%, with a score of 2.9929.

➤ *Type of unit and preferred classification category for a tourist accommodation structure, from those existing in the resorts of the Semenic tourist area*

Figure no. 10. The share of respondents regarding the type of unit and the preferred classification category for a tourist accommodation structure, from those existing in the resorts of the Semenic tourist area – percentages



Sources: Made by the author

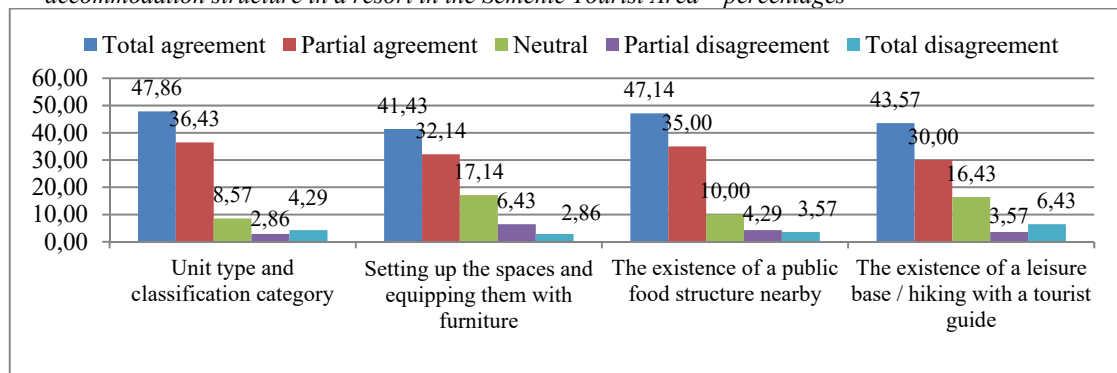
Following the centralization and calculation of the percentages and the average of the assessments, one would find that the majority of respondents prefer that the tourist accommodation structure, depending on the type of unit, be classified in Category 3 stars/flowers for: tourist/agritourism guesthouse - 65.71%, with a score of 2.5857, hotel – 62.14%, with a score of 2.5643, tourist villa – 62.14%, with a score of 2.5214, rooms for rent – 60%, with a score of 2.5143, tourist villa – 48.57%, with a score of 2.3714, hostel – 48.57%, with a score of 2.2857, bungalow – 39.29%, with a score of 2.2571, apartment for rent – 37.14%, with a score of 2.2429.

There is a part of the respondents who prefer tourist accommodation structures classified in the 2 star/flower category for: apartment for rent – 50%, bungalow – 47.14% and tourist villa – 40%.

The smallest share of respondents also prefer tourist accommodation structures classified in the 1 star/flower category for: hostel – 20% and bungalow – 13.57%.

➤ *The main selection criteria when choosing an accommodation structure in a resort in the Semenic tourist area*

Figure no. 11. The share of respondents regarding the main selection criteria when choosing an accommodation structure in a resort in the Semenic Tourist Area – percentages

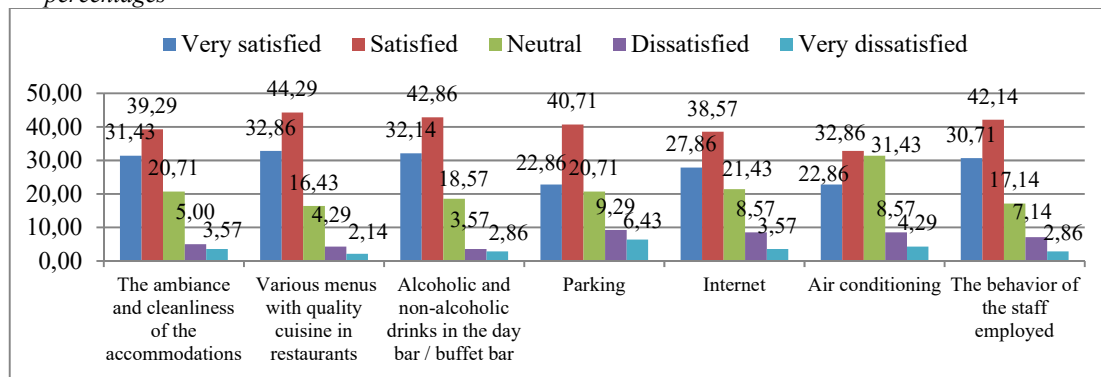


Sources: Made by the author

Following the centralization of the data, the calculation of the average of appreciations and percentages, regarding the main selection criteria for choosing an accommodation structure in a tourist resort in the Semenic Area, the total score resulted was positive 1.1054, and the majority of respondents totally agreed to choose the tourist accommodation structure according to the type of unit and classification category – 47.86%, with a score of 1.2071, as well as according to the existence of a public catering structure nearby – 47.14%, with a score of 1.1786 . 32.14% of the respondents partially agree to choose the tourist accommodation structure depending on the arrangement of the spaces and the furnishing, with a score of 1.0286 and depending on the existence of a leisure base / hiking with a tourist guide 30% of the respondents, with a score of 1.0071. Only 17.14% of the respondents are indifferent to choosing the structure of tourist accommodation according to the layout of the spaces and the furnishing, respectively the existence of a leisure base / hiking with a tourist guide only 16.43%. As for the disagreement, only 6.43% are in partial disagreement for the selection criterion of setting up the spaces and equipping them with furniture, respectively 4.29% for the existence of a public food structure nearby. In total disagreement to choose the tourist accommodation structure according to the existence of a leisure base / hiking with a tourist guide are only 16.43%, and 4.29% according to the type of unit and classification category.

➤ *The respondents’ degree of satisfaction regarding the basic or additional tourist services offered in the reception structures in the existing resorts in the Semenic tourist area*

Figure no. 12. The share of respondents regarding the degree of satisfaction with the basic and additional tourist services offered in the reception structures in the existing resorts in the Semenic tourist area – percentages

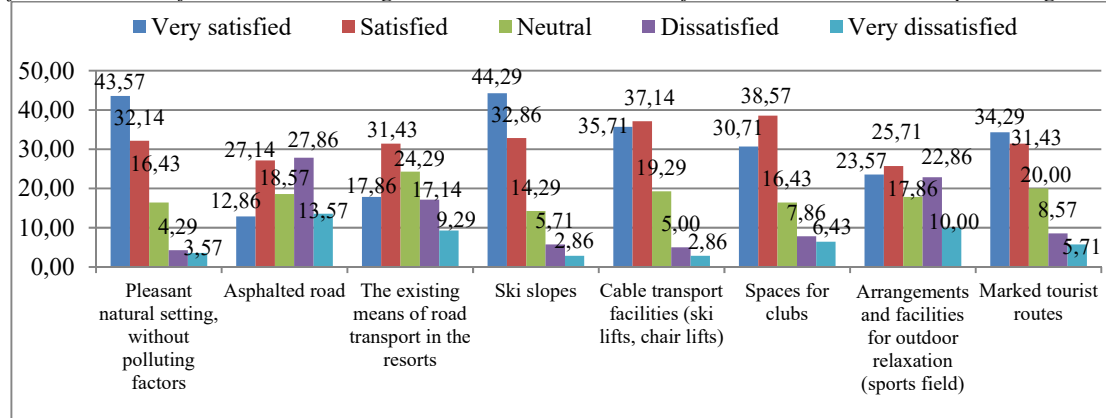


Sources: Made by the author

From the centralization of the data, the calculation of the percentages and the scores regarding the basic or additional tourist services offered by the tourist reception structures in the existing resorts in the Semenic Area, the respondents were: satisfied with a tendency to very satisfied with various menus with quality culinary preparations in restaurants – 32.86%, with a score of 4.0143 and alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks in day bar/buffet bar – 32.14, with a score of 3.9786; satisfied with the behaviour of the staff employed – 42.14%, with a score of 3.9071 and with the ambience and cleanliness of the accommodation spaces – 39.29%, with a score of 3.9000; neither satisfied – nor dissatisfied with air conditioning – 31.43%, with a score of 3.76143 and with the Internet – 21.43%, with a score of 3.7857; dissatisfied – 9.29% and very dissatisfied – 6.43% parking, with a score of 3.6429.

➤ *The respondents' degree of satisfaction regarding the natural environment, road access, transport means and facilities, leisure facilities and existing tourist routes in the resorts of the Semenic Tourist Area*

Figure no. 13. Respondents' satisfaction with the natural setting, road access, transport means and facilities, leisure facilities and existing tourist routes in the resorts of the Semenic tourist area - percentages

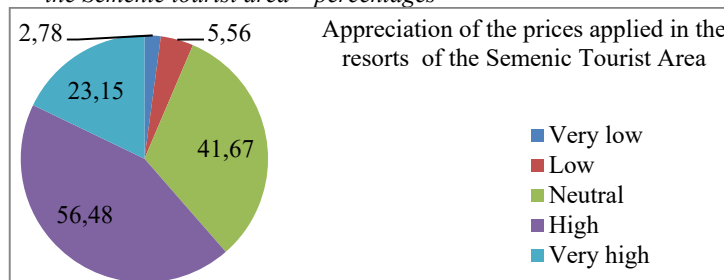


Sources: Made by the author

After the centralization of the data, the calculation of the percentages and the scores, the respondents had the following degree of satisfaction: satisfied with a tendency towards very satisfied with the ski slopes - 44.29%, with a score of 4.1000, as well as with the setting naturally pleasant, without polluting factors – 43.57%, with a score of 4.0786; satisfied with spaces set up for the clubs or discos - 38.57%, with a score of 3.7929, as well as cable transport facilities (ski lifts, chairlift) - 37.14%, with a score of 3.9786; indifferent to the existing means of road transport in the resorts – 24.29%, with a score of 3.3143 and marked tourist routes – 20%, with a score of 3.8000; 27.86% of respondents are dissatisfied and 13.57% are very dissatisfied with the asphalt road, with a score of 2.9786. Also, 22.86% of the respondents are unsatisfied and 10% are very unsatisfied with the arrangements and facilities for outdoor relaxation (sports field) – with a score of 3.3000.

➤ *Respondents' appreciation of the rates charged in the tourist resorts in the Semenic tourist area*

Figure no. 14. The share of respondents regarding the appreciation of the rates applied in the resorts of the Semenic tourist area – percentages

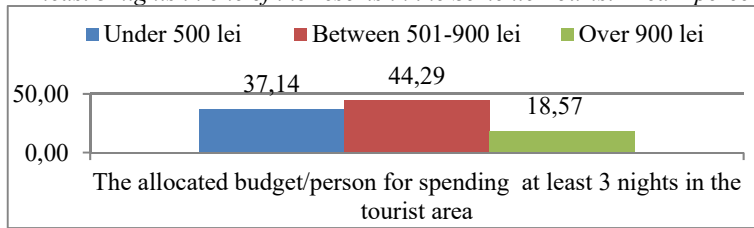


Sources: Made by the author

The respondents appreciate that, in the tourist resorts in the Semenic Area visited by them, the prices charged were: very low - 2.78%, low - 5.56%; neither small nor large – 41.67%, large – 56.48%; very high – 23.15%. The results of the research demonstrate the fact that the rates applied in the resorts of the Semenic Tourist Area are rated as neither low nor high - 41.67% with a tendency towards high - 56.48%, as evidenced by the average rating (score) of 2.2929.

- *The budget allocated/person by the respondents for a stay of at least 3 nights in one of the resorts in the Semenic tourist area*

Figure no. 15. The share of respondents regarding the amount allocated/person for spending a stay of at least 3 nights in one of the resorts in the Semenic Tourist Area – percentages

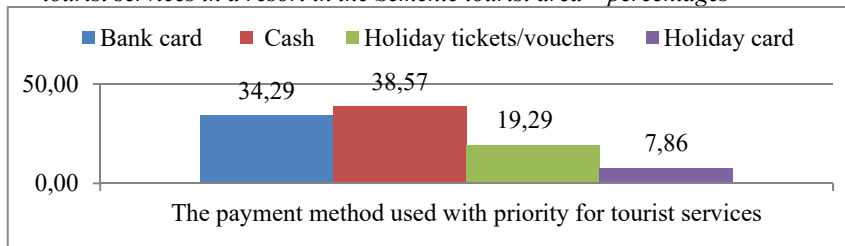


Sources: Made by the author

The results of the research show that in the last 5 years tourist consumption has been registered, respectively for spending at least 3 nights in one of the tourist resorts in the Semenic tourist area, most respondents allocated a budget/person: Under 500 lei - 37.14%, Between 501-900 lei - 44.29%, Over 900 lei - 18.57%.

- *The preferred payment method used by respondents to pay for services in a tourist resort in the Semenic tourist area*

Figure no. 16. The share of respondents regarding the payment method used with priority when paying for tourist services in a resort in the Semenic tourist area – percentages



Sources: Made by the author

The results of the research demonstrate the fact that the payment method used with priority by respondents when paying for tourist services in a resort in the Semenic Tourist Area, respectively the payment of tourist consumption was: cash- 38.57%, bank card - 34.29%, holiday tickets/vouchers - 19.29%, holiday card - 7.86%.

6. Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to identify the preference, motivation, attitude and satisfaction of consumers towards the resorts of the Semenic Tourist Area.

After carrying out the research, the results show that respondents of the study are part of the 30-65 age group, female, employed in the public and private sector, with an average monthly income over 3,500 lei, and that, in the last five years, there has been tourist demand because respondents from all age groups visited the Semenic Resort and the Crivaia Resort with priority. Frequency of visits to the resorts in the Semenic tourist area, in the last five years was more than 3 times a year for the Semenic Resort, 1-3 times a year for the Crivaia Resort, once every 2 years for the Trei Ape Resort, once at 3 years and over for the Secu Resort.

When choosing a resort in the Semenic tourist area, the majority of respondents are informed to a very large extent by friends and from the websites of travel agencies with online sales, neither to a large nor to a small extent, respectively to a small extent from brochures, catalogues or leaflets available at the offices of travel agencies with direct sales and to a very small extent from Tourist Information Centres. At the same time, the respondents prefer to purchase tourist services in the resorts of the Semenic tourist area, with full agreement from tourist accommodation structures,

respectively with partial agreement from travel agencies with online sales, as well as indifferent from travel agencies with direct sales and prefer that main motivations for the trip, in order of rank: recreation, rest, relaxation, skiing, hiking, excursions, participation in events, visits to relatives, friends, tourist attractions, aerosol treatment respiratory ailments,. The majority of respondents prefer the tourist accommodation structure to be a tourist guesthouse/agritourism unit, hotel, tourist cabin, rooms for rent and fewer respondents tourist villa, hostel, bungalow and apartment for rent, all classified in the 3 star/flower category.

Most respondents when choosing an accommodation structure in a resort in the Semenic Tourist Area, are in total agreement to choosing according to the type of unit and the classification category, as well as the existence of a public food structure nearby. Some of the respondents partially agree to choosing the accommodation structure according to the arrangement of the spaces and the furnishing and the existence of a leisure base/hiking with a tourist guide.

The respondents are almost very satisfied with the basic tourist services offered by the tourist reception structures in the existing resorts in the Semenic Tourist Area, respectively with various menus with quality culinary dishes in the restaurants and alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks in the day bar/buffet bar, satisfied the behaviour of the staff employed and the ambience and cleanliness of the accommodation spaces. For the additional tourist services offered by the tourist reception structures in the existing resorts in the Semenic Tourist Area, there are respondents neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with air conditioning, Internet, and even dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with parking.

The satisfaction degree with the existing tourist offer in the resorts of the Semenic tourist area, shows that the respondents are very satisfied with the ski slopes and the pleasant natural setting, without polluting factors, respectively they are satisfied with the spaces arranged for the discotheque and the cable transport facilities. The respondents are indifferent to the means of road transport existing in the resorts and to marked tourist routes, dissatisfied with the paved road and very dissatisfied with the arrangements and facilities for outdoor relaxation.

Even if the prices charged in the resorts of the Semenic tourist area are considered by most respondents to be high, in recent years tourist consumption has been recorded, for spending a stay of at least 3 nights in one of the resorts, most respondents allocate a budget/person between 501-900 lei, and the preferred method of payment used to pay for tourist services was cash and bank card.

Taking into account the results of the research, in order to develop the Semenic tourist area and to increase the number of tourists in the Crivaia, Secu, Semenic and Trei Ape tourist resorts, economic operators are recommended to promote their tourist offer at national and international level, respectively to participate in the fairs of tourism organized annually, to create a website to promote both the tourist area, including the tourist objectives, as well as each tourist accommodation structure by creating its own website. At the same time, it is recommended to improve one's technical-material basis according to the minimum mandatory criteria in order to be able to apply for a higher classification category of tourist accommodation units at least 4 stars/flowers, respectively to practice differentiated prices according to consumer segments, as well as to set up indoor and outdoor recreation area for the two seasons, summer and winter, considering that mountain tourism has a bi-seasonal activity.

At the same time, the local public administration should support the tourism development in the area by placing free electronic banners and posters in Resita, containing information from the existing resorts in the Semenic tourist area. More events should be organised in the resorts, the ski slopes from Semenic and Văliug should be properly managed, respectively with chair lifts and high-performance ski lifts, create optimal access routes to and in the four resorts, respectively improve the transportation infrastructure road, including means of transport and parking spaces.

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