

Study Regarding the Preferences and Attitude of Consumers for Spending Vacations in Tourist Resorts in Romania

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Abstract

The purpose of the study presented in this paper is to identify and evaluate the preferences and attitude of consumers when it comes to spending vacations in tourist resorts in Romania, respectively of knowledge of tourist demand.

The study involves direct research, by applying an occasional survey-type survey, in order to discover if there was a demand for spending holidays in Romania, in the last two years and what is the type of resort preferred by Romanian tourist. At the same time, we identified the frequency of going on vacation, the preferred sources of information and the main motivations for spending a vacation in Romania, the main criteria in choosing a tourist accommodation structure, the preference for buying tourist services, the degree of satisfaction and the satisfaction regarding the offer and prices, and the minimum sum of money reserved for a trip in a tourist resort in Romania.

Key words: tourist resort, accommodation structure, vacation, consumers, preference.

J.E.L. classification: M31, L83

1. Introduction

The sharp development of the economic crisis, caused by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, during the last two years, resulted in restrictions in terms of free movement at national or international level for the Romanian population, as well as the fact that part of the tourist accommodation structures from Romanian tourist resorts of Romania suspended their activity for a period of time. Thus, this study was established in order to discover the actual and potential demand of tourists, respectively the preferences and attitude of consumers regarding spending vacations in tourist resorts in Romania, and to be able to propose suggestions for the improvement of tourist services in the resorts.

2. Theoretical background

Studies published in specialty literature prove that at the national and international level, a tourism development system is desired, by adapting Romanian legislation to that of the European level, including tourist resorts.

In Romania, according to Government Decision no. 852/13.08.2008 for the approval of the rules and criteria for the attestation of tourist resorts “the locality or the part of a locality that has natural and human resources and that cumulatively fulfills for one of the categories the criteria set out in annex 1, is certified as a tourist resort of national or local interest, as the case may be”. (<https://turism.gov.ro/web/atestare-statiune-turistica/>).

In order to be certified, tourist resorts, of national or local interest, must meet several mandatory and additional criteria. The mandatory criteria for the attestation of tourist resorts aim at: “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>).

In a tourist resort, "the classification category of tourism companies with tourist accommodation functions is of particular importance, for example more than 30% of them must be classified between 3-5 stars/flowers" (Gherghina L. 2019, p. 101 -102).

Tourist resorts are "classic tourist destinations (mountain resorts)" or "destinations for business tourism (spa resorts)" (Gherghina (2017, p. 77)) and can be of local or national interest which "is certified by a Decision of the Romanian Government at the initiative of the Ministry of Tourism with the support of local public administration authorities" (Gherghina L., 2007, p. 16).

The tourist offer is particularly important in a resort, because it aims to satisfy the tourist demand. The tourist offer contains both the value of services and final goods created in tourism over a certain period of time, as well as the set of attractions that motivate the trip or visit of the tourist resort, respectively the network with specific tourist equipment and infrastructure.

"Tourism is one of the most dynamic fields of activity, which generates foreign exchange resources and jobs" (Boiță M. and Păiușan L., 2020, p. 568), and the increase in tourism activity is achieved if "there is a well-developed transport network" (Crăciun et al, 2020, p. 66).

The behavior of consumers of tourism services is important to be studied because tourism services are designed according to the needs, wishes and demand of consumers. "The totality of acts, attitude and decisions belonging to the buyer regarding the use of a part of one's income for the purchase of services defines the consumer's behavior. Satisfying the need for services is achieved through consumption" Gherghina (2009, p. 110). The consumer's behavior when it comes to tourist services can be influenced by factors such as: personality, group, price and image, the service desired and motivation.

3. Research methodology

In order to identify and evaluate the preferences and attitude of consumers with regard to spending vacations in tourist resorts in Romania, and the tourist demand, in order to improve the tourism, offer, direct quantitative research was carried out, using a survey, and as a tool an online questionnaire, uploaded on Google Forms, it being completed by the respondents between January and July 2022, the sampling method being simple and random.

We established the objectives of the research, we designed the questionnaire with 17 questions, of which: 4 identification questions and 13 closed questions on the subject of the study, structured on scales, with binary and multiple variables. The questionnaire was pretested, unclear questions were reformulated, the final questionnaire resulting in a total number of 72 answers. After pre-testing the questionnaire, the research hypotheses were developed in order to discover if there was a demand for spending holidays in Romania, to identify the type of resort preferred by the respondents and the frequency vacations, the sources of information and motivations for spending holidays in Romania. At the same time, main selection criteria in choosing a tourist accommodation structure, the preference in choosing tourist services, the degree of satisfaction and satisfaction regarding the offer, prices and the minimum cost reserved for a vacation in a tourist resort in Romania were also analyzed.

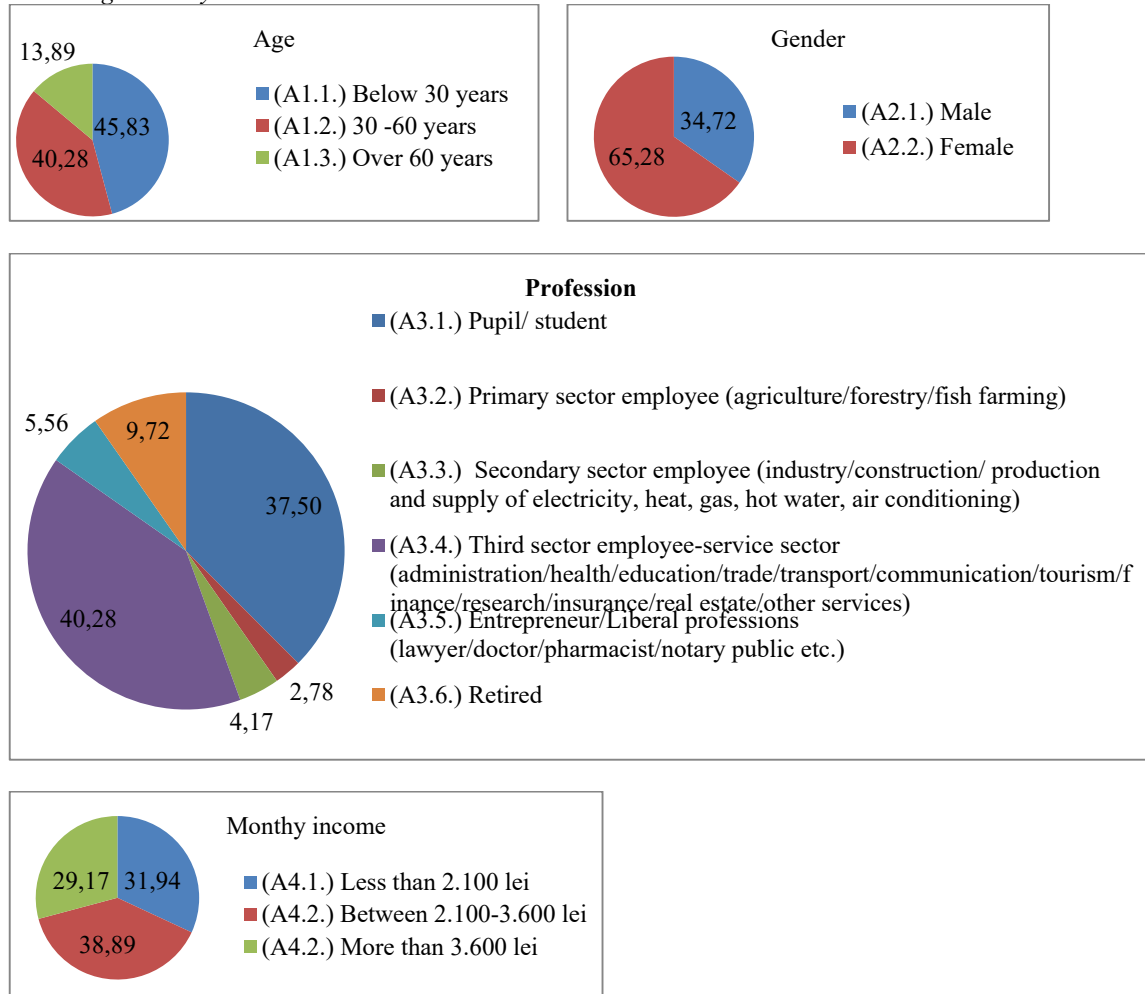
A direct research method was used to obtain the information needed, the occasional survey based on a questionnaire was used to evaluate the consumer preferences and attitude was carried out using the method of percentages and scales, respectively the nominal scale (questions Q01-Q05), the ordinal scale (preferences) - Likert scale (questions Q08, Q10, Q11, Q17, Rank ordering method (questions Q06, Q09), interval scale (attitude) - semantic differential (questions Q07, Q12, Q13, Q14, Q15) and the scale for the constant sum, amount (question Q16).

4. Findings

The results of the study regarding the preferences and attitude of the consumers introduced in this study, in connection to spending holidays in tourist resorts in Romania, are presented below

➤ *Identifying respondents according to socio-professional criteria*

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

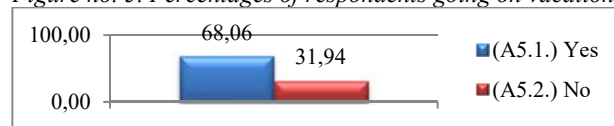


Source: realized by the author

According to the graphs, the majority of respondents are younger than 30 - 45.83% (33 respondents), female - 65.28% (47 respondents), According to their employment- 40.28% (29 respondents) are employed in the tertiary sector - the service sector, with incomes between 2,100-3,600 lei (28 respondents).

➤ *Identifying tourist demand for vacations in Romania for a period including the last two years*

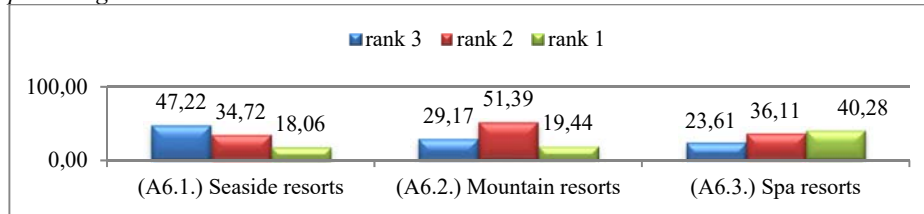
Figure no. 5. Percentages of respondents going on vacation in the last 2 years in Romania



Source: realized by the author

From the graph presented above, one could observe that in the last 2 years, 68.06% (49 respondents) went on vacation in Romania, and 31.94% didn't (23 respondents).

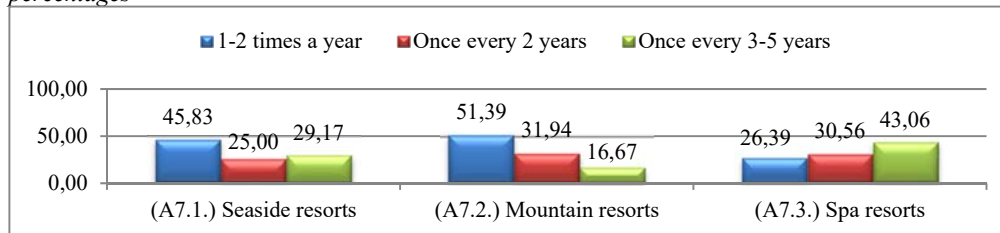
- *The type of resort preferred by the respondents for spending their vacation in Romania*
Figure no. 6. *The type of resort preferred by the respondents for spending their vacation in Romania - percentages*



Source: realized by the author

According to the graph and the average of the ratings, the majority of respondents prefer resorts for spending their vacation in Romania, on the first place one could observe seaside resorts, rank 1 - 47.22% (34 respondents) and a score of 2.29, on the second-place rank 3 mountain resorts - 51.39% (37 respondents) and a score of 2.10, and on the third-place rank 1 spa resorts – 40.28% (29 respondents) and a score of 1.83.

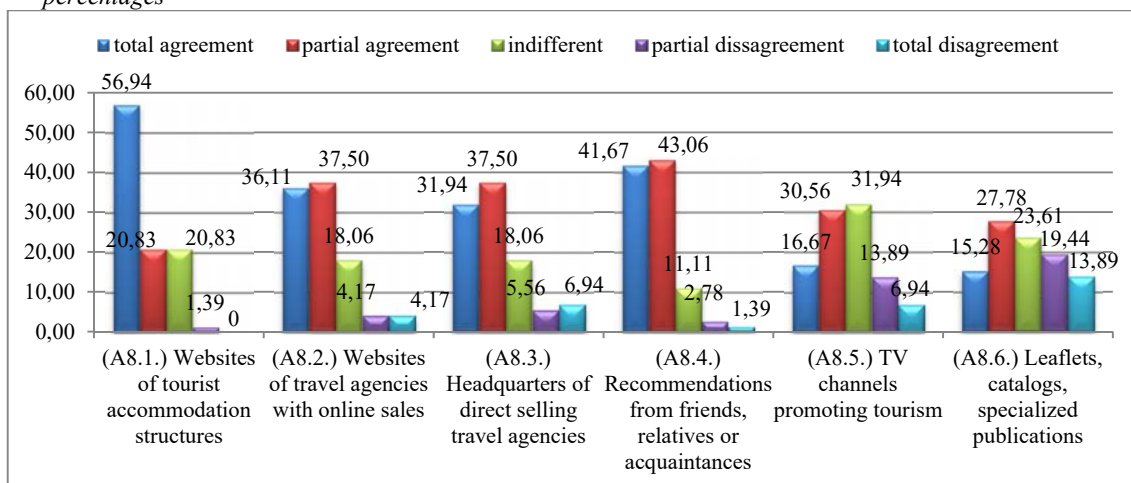
- *The frequency of respondents' vacations, in Romanian resorts, in the last 10 years*
Figure no. 7. *The frequency of respondents going on vacation, Romanian resorts, in the last 10 years - percentages*



Source: realized by the author

Regarding the frequency of respondents going on vacation, in the last 10 years, in Romanian resorts, most respondents appreciate that they went to mountain resorts 1-2 times a year - 51.39% (37 respondents) with a score of 2.35, to seaside resorts once every 2 years – 31.94% (23 respondents) with a score of 2.17, respectively to spa resorts – once every 3-5 years – 43.06% (31 respondents) with a score of 1.83.

- *Information sources preferred by respondents for choosing a tourist resort in Romania*
Figure no. 8. *Respondents' preferred sources of information for choosing a tourist resort in Romania - percentages*



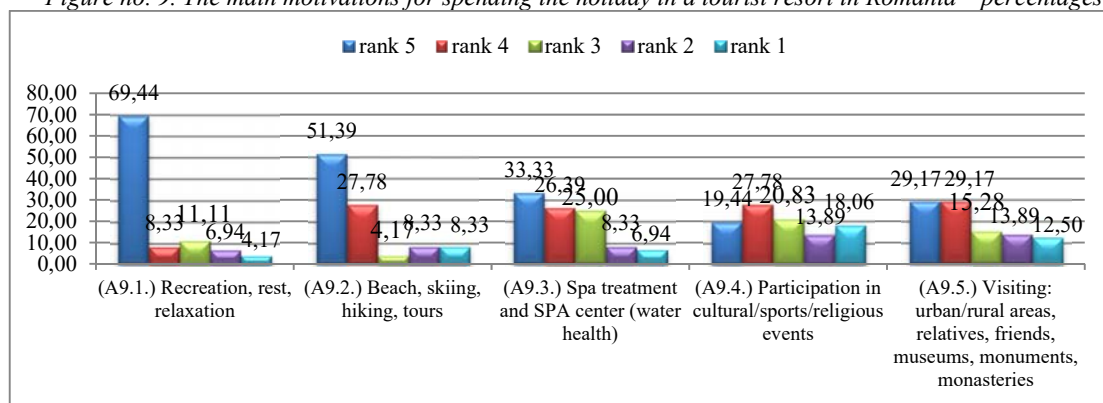
Source: realized by the author

Regarding the information sources preferred by respondents for choosing a tourist resort in Romania, 56.94% (41 respondents) with a score of 1.33 totally agree that they prefer the website of tourist accommodation structures, 43.06% (31 respondents) with a score of 1.21 partially agree that they prefer recommendations from friends, relatives or acquaintances, and the cumulative weights are 75% (54 respondents) for the website of travel agencies with online sales with a score of 0.97, respectively the headquarters of travel agencies with direct selling with a score of 0.88.

31.94% (23 respondents) with a score of 0.36 are indifferent if they can get information on tourism promotion from TV channels, and 19.44% (14 respondents) with a score of 0.11 partially disagree, respectively 13.89% (10 respondents) with a score of 0.11 I totally disagree with the information in leaflets, catalogues, specialized publications. The total score of 0.80 demonstrates that the respondents prefer to get information from the online environment from tourist accommodation structures and travel agencies, as well as from friends, relatives, acquaintances and direct sales travel agencies, and less from the others sources.

➤ *The main motivations for spending the holiday in a tourist resort in Romania*

Figure no. 9. The main motivations for spending the holiday in a tourist resort in Romania – percentages

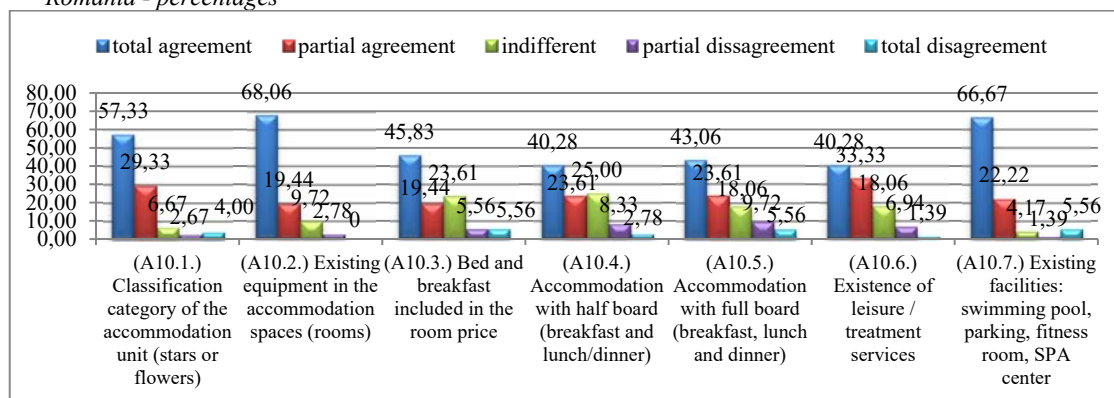


Source: realized by the author

In order of preference, the main motivations for spending a holiday in a tourist resort in Romania are: on the first place - Rank 5 recreation, rest, relaxation - 69.44% (50 respondents) and a score of 4.32, second place - Rank 4 beach, skiing, hiking, excursions – 51.39% (37 respondents) and score of 4.06, third place -Rank 3 spa treatment and SPA center (water health) – 25% (18 respondents) and score 3.71, fourth place -Rank 2 visiting: urban areas /rural, relatives, friends, museums, monuments, monasteries – 13.89% (10 respondents) and score 3.49, fifth place - Rank 1 participation in cultural/sports/religious events – 18.06% (13 respondents) and score 3.17.

➤ *The main selection criteria of a tourist accommodation structure in a tourist resort in Romania*

Figure no. 10. The main criteria for selecting a tourist accommodation structure in a tourist resort in Romania - percentages



Source: realized by the author

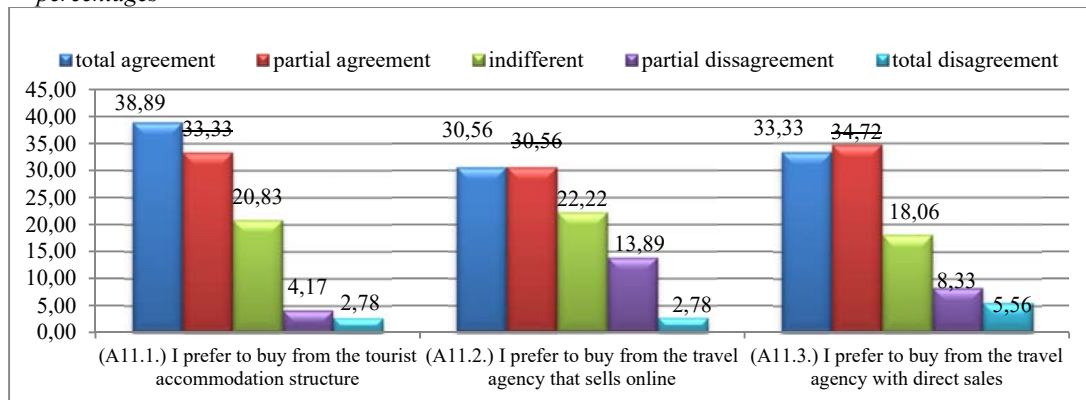
Regarding the main criteria for selecting a tourist accommodation structure in a tourist resort in Romania, the majority of respondents fully agree that they choose the tourist accommodation structure according to the existing facilities in the accommodation spaces (rooms) – 68.06% (49 respondents) with a score of 1.53 and existing facilities: swimming pool, parking, fitness room, SPA center – 66.67% (48 respondents) with a score of 1.43. The respondents partially agree with the criterion of the classification category of the accommodation unit (stars or flowers) - 29.33% (22 respondents) with a score of 1.33 and the existence of leisure / treatment services - 33.33% (24 respondents) with a score of 1.04.

25% (18 respondents) with a score of 0.94 are indifferent to the selection criteria according to accommodation with half board (breakfast and lunch/dinner), as well as accommodation with breakfast included in the room price – 23.61 (17 respondents) with a score of 0.90, and 9.72% (7 respondents) with a score of 0.89 partially disagree with the selection criterion based on accommodation with full board (breakfast, lunch and dinner).

The total score of 1.15 demonstrates that for the respondents the main criteria for selecting a tourist accommodation structure in a tourist resort in Romania are the existing facilities in the accommodation spaces, existing facilities: swimming pool, parking, fitness room, SPA center, the classification category of accommodation unit, the existence of leisure/treatment services and less the other criteria.

➤ *Respondents' preference for purchasing tourist services in a tourist resort in Romania*

Figure no. 11. Respondents' preference for purchasing tourist services in a tourist resort in Romania - percentages



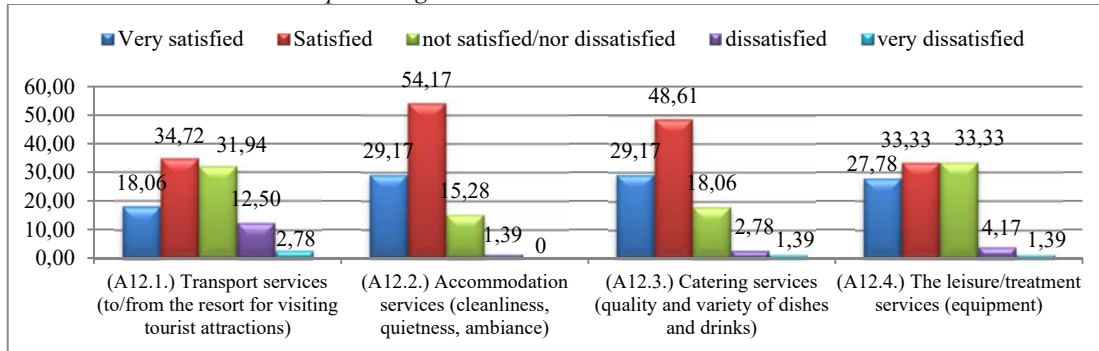
Source: realized by the author

The majority of respondents who prefer to buy tourist services in a Romanian tourist resort fully agree with the tourist accommodation structure - 38.89% (28 respondents) with a score of 1.01, partially agree with the direct sales travel agency - 34.72% (25 respondents) with a score of 0.82.

22.22% (16 respondents) with a score of 0.72 are indifferent if they buy tourist services in a resort in Romania from a travel agency with online sales.

The total score of 0.85 shows that most respondents prefer to buy tourist services in a Romanian tourist resort directly from the tourist accommodation structure and less from travel agencies.

- *The degree of satisfaction of the respondents regarding the basic tourist services offered in the tourist resorts visited in Romania*
 Figure no. 12. Respondents' degree of satisfaction with the basic tourist services offered in the tourist resorts visited in Romania - percentages

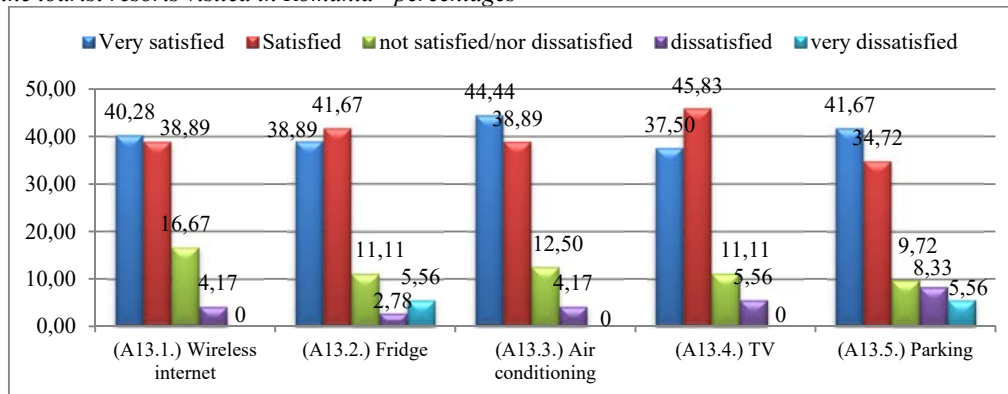


Source: realized by the author

Regarding the degree of satisfaction with the basic services offered in the tourist resorts visited in Romania, 54.17% of the respondents are satisfied, with a tendency towards very satisfied - 29.17% of the accommodation services (cleanliness, quietness, ambience), with a score of 4.11 – the cumulative percentage being 83.34% (60 respondents), as well as public food services (quality and diversity of dishes and drinks) – satisfied 48.61% with a tendency towards very satisfied – 29.17%, with a score of 4.01 – the cumulative weight being 77.78% (56 respondents).

At the same time, some of the respondents are neither satisfied/nor dissatisfied with the leisure/treatment services (equipment) – 33.33% (24 respondents) with a score of 3.82 and the transport services (to/from the resort for visiting tourist attractions) – 31.94 (23 respondents) with a score of 3.53.

- *The degree of satisfaction of the respondents regarding the additional services offered in the tourist resorts visited in Romania*
 Figure no. 13. The degree of satisfaction of the respondents regarding the additional services offered in the tourist resorts visited in Romania - percentages

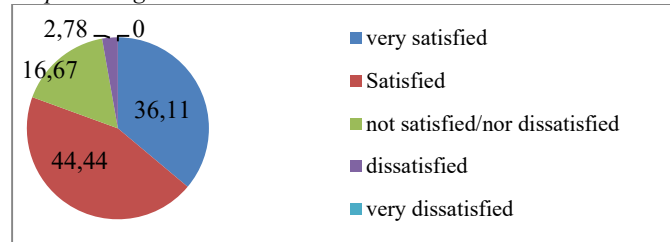


Source: realized by the author

Regarding the degree of satisfaction of the additional services offered in the tourist resorts visited in Romania, 44.44% (32 respondents) with a score of 4.24 are very satisfied with the existence of air conditioning, 41.67% (30 respondents) with a score of 3.99 are satisfied with the parking available at the tourist accommodation structure, and 45.83% (33 respondents) with a score of 4.15 are satisfied with the provision of a television, as well as the provision of a refrigerator - 41.67% (30 respondents) with a score of 4.06 . Only 16.67% (12 respondents) with a score of 4.15 are indifferent if there is wireless Internet at the tourist accommodation facility.

➤ *The respondents' degree of satisfaction regarding the attitude of the staff in the resorts visited in Romania*

Figure no. 14. The respondents' degree of satisfaction regarding the attitude of the staff in the resorts visited in Romania – percentages

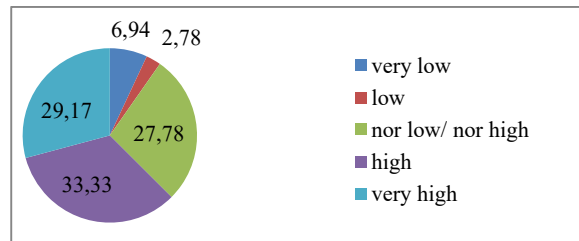


Source: realized by the author

44.44% (32 respondents) are satisfied with the attitude of the staff from the tourist resorts visited in Romania, and with a tendency towards very satisfied - 36.11% (26 respondents) the score being 4.14.

➤ *The respondents' evaluation of the prices charged in the tourist resorts visited in Romania*

Figure no. 15. Respondents' assessment of the prices charged in the tourist resorts visited in Romania – percentages

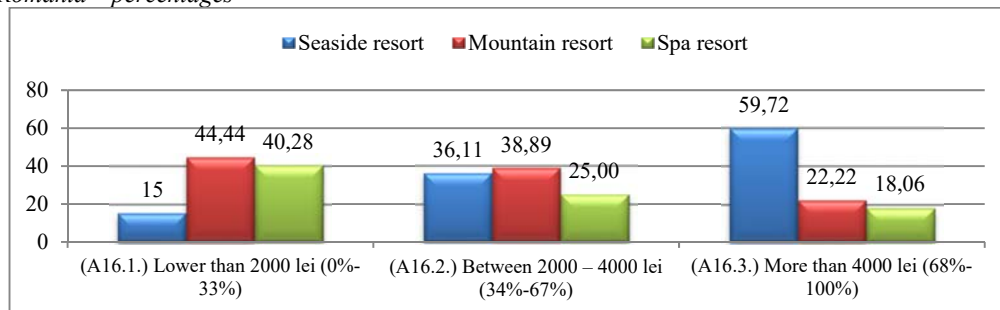


Source: realized by the author

The prices charged in the tourist resorts visited in Romania by the respondents are appreciated as high by a percentage of 33.33% (24 respondents) with a tendency towards neither low/neither high 27.78% (20 respondents) with a score of 2.25.

➤ *The minimum value allocated by the respondents for a vacation in a tourist resort in Romania*

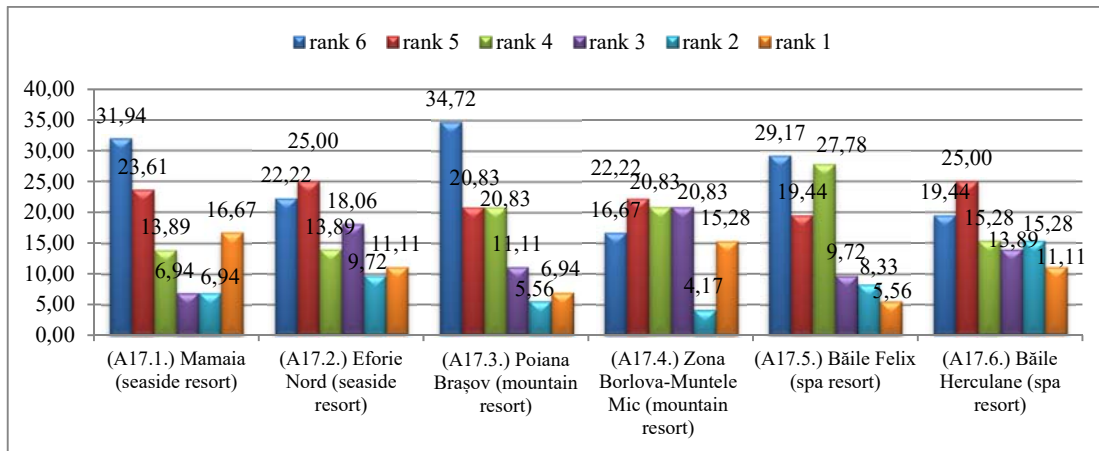
Figure no. 16. The minimum value allocated by the respondents for a vacation in a tourist resort in Romania – percentages



Source: realized by the author

The minimum value reserved and offered by the respondents for a trip to a tourist resort in Romania is over 4000 lei for a seaside resort - 59.72% (43 respondents) with a score of 2.40, under 2000 lei for a mountain resort - 44.44% (32 respondents) with a score of 1.79, respectively for the spa resort – 40.28% (29 respondents) with a score of 1.73.

- *Respondents' preference for six tourist resorts of national interest in Romania, for spending holidays in the coming years*
 Figure no. 17. Respondents' preference for six tourist resorts of national interest in Romania, for spending holidays in the coming years – percentages



Source: realized by the author

The respondents chose in order of preference the six tourist resorts of national interest in Romania where they want to spend their holidays in the following years as follows: first place Poiana Brasov (mountain resort) – 34.72% (25 respondents) with a score of 4.47, second place Băile Felix (spa resort) – 27.78% (20 respondents) with a score of 4.35, third place Mamaia (seaside resort) – 31.94% (23 respondents) with a score of 4.17, fourth place Eforie Nord (seaside resort) – 25% (18 respondents) with a score of 3.99, 5th place Băile Herculane (spa resort) – 25% (18 respondents)) with a score of 3.86, 6th place Zona Borlova-Muntele Mic (mountain resort) – 20.83% (15 respondents) with a score of 3.81.

5. Conclusions

The study presented in this paper had as motivation the desire to discover what is the preference and attitude of consumers regarding spending vacations in tourist resorts in Romania. As part of the direct research, the objectives of the research were established, and after pre-testing the questionnaire, the hypotheses to be researched were developed, through which we identified that in the last two years there was a demand for spending holidays in Romania, and currently, in order of importance, the type of resort preferred by Romanian tourist consumers is both for mountain resorts and seaside resorts, and less for spa resorts, as evidenced by the frequency resulted from the respondents answers on going on vacation in the last 10 years, 1-2 times a year in mountain resorts, once every 2 years in seaside resorts, respectively once every 3-5 years in spa resorts.

For respondents, the most important sources of tourist information for choosing a tourist resort in Romania are the website of tourist accommodation structures and travel agencies with online sales, recommendations from friends, relatives or acquaintances, as well as the headquarters of travel agencies with direct sales, and the main motivations for vacationing in Romania are recreation, rest, relaxation, beach, skiing, hiking, excursions, as well as spa treatment and SPA center.

The respondents chose as the main criteria for selecting a tourist accommodation structure in a tourist resort in Romania, both the existing equipment in the accommodation spaces and the existing facilities - swimming pool, parking, fitness room, SPA center, as well as the classification category of accommodation unit.

The respondents prefer to buy the basic tourist services in a tourist resort from the tourist accommodation structure or from the travel agency with direct sales. They are satisfied with the attitude of the staff, the cleanliness, the tranquility and the existing ambience of the accommodation services, as well as of the quality and diversity of the dishes and drinks in the public catering

services, as well as satisfied with the additional services, as the provision of air conditioning, parking, television and refrigerator.

The prices practices in the tourist resorts visited in Romania are considered to be high, and the minimum value to be spent in a trip is over 4000 lei in a seaside resort, under 2000 lei in a mountain resort and spa resort.

When asked to choose from six tourist resorts of national interest, the type of resort preferred for spending holidays in the coming years, the respondents prefer the mountain resort Poiana Brasov, the spa resort Băile Felix, as well as the seaside resort Mamaia.

In order to improve tourist services, tourist resorts should be located in an optimal natural environment where there are no sources of soil, air or water pollution. All tourist resorts of national interest must have rail and road transport services, respectively to have a train station and a bus station, with a panel displaying the times and routes of the trains and buses. At the same time, tourist resorts must have first aid and pharmaceutical points, ambulance service, illuminated pedestrian roads, tourist information centres, ATMs and commercial spaces, tourist signs, parks and playgrounds for children, spaces for the organization of shows and treatment bases with qualified personnel. The previously mentioned in some resorts do not exist.

In the rural environment, emphasis must be placed on the tourist promotion of resorts in Romania through TV channels and through printed promotional tools because some consumers do not have phone or internet signal or do not know how to use Internet sources, respectively they do not have a tourism agency in the locality from which they could find out about certain cultural, sports, religious events or monuments, museums and monasteries they want to visit.

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