

# MARKETING STUDY ON THE DESIGN OF QUALITY TOURIST PRODUCTS

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## **Abstract.**

*Starting from the premise that, in the field of services, their quality is obtained only by making the client their epicenter, we made it our objective to find out to what extent, in the field of tourism, the population participates in obtaining quality tourism products and how their consumption influences individual development and society as a whole. Based on these facts, this paper aims to determine how tourism products should be designed as to comply with the sustainability principles. In this regard, we conducted research on the opinions of foreign tourists who arrived in Constanta, Romania, to find out from them what those who conducted the research in the tourists' country of residence could not find out. Thus, a combined tourist product was designed to include a circuit in three European countries. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the way in which tourist products are created as to best meet the needs of foreign tourists. This work can be used both by Romanian tour operators and other competent authorities in designing tourist products.*

**Key words:** *tourist product, research, foreign tourist*

**JEL Classification:** Z32

## **1. Introduction**

The diversification and modernization of tourist services partake in the permanent fundamental concerns of tourism companies, as one of the basic directions of stimulating tourist demand and achieving a superior quality level to meet consumers' needs for tourist goods and services. Tourism is an industry that benefits from extremely optimistic forecasts, its importance becoming gradually higher, both globally and regionally, nationally and locally.

The competitive development of tourism products leads to the creation of new jobs, both directly - in the field of tourism services production and distribution - and indirectly, through the multiplier effect on related branches. Tourist products launching will lead to remarkable effects on the connections that will arise between hosts and tourists, on the rapport between the way of appreciating the values and the standard of living between the participants in the tourism act, communication, exchanges of ideas, etc. The uniqueness of a competently designed tourist product, the existing conditions, the culture of people and areas, doubled by hospitality, interest, motivation and aspiration for progress, will set forth the development of a truly sustainable tourism.

By launching the tourist product on the international market, the rural, mountain, eco and cultural tourism, will become a cultural-educational ambassador, a constant and inexpensive tool - for example the continuation of the economic activity in a poorly productive environment (e.g. Apuseni Mountains), the prevention of the unemployment rate soaring, the major contribution to the increase in the general progress level for a large category of the population, especially by the improvement of the hygienic-sanitary conditions, social behavior and cultivation of the aesthetic taste.

## **2. Analysis of the specialty literature**

Tourism plays an essential role for the sustainable development by highly contributing to the economic relaunch and recovery of Romania. The development and diversification of tourist services are debated and supported by many specialists who study modern tourism, being considered key-elements capitalization on the tourism potential. A high quality service is a way to ensure profitability as it brings greater stability of rates under conditions of fierce

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competition. In addition, a quality service translates into satisfaction because it stands as the foundation of a company's culture. (Minciu, 2014, p.412). Another aspect to be highlighted is the fact that tourism, as a phenomenon, but also activity, is unique in its own way precisely due to its dependence on the natural, social or cultural environment, but also transport. Thanks to this dependence, tourism has an undeniable interest in ensuring their sustainability.

In agreement with a reputable specialist, the tourist product exerts a complex influence on the overall level of economic development of the localities considered (Stanciulescu, 2014, p.56). Thus, strategic objectives to be achieved have in view the assurance and protection of the human factor, the technical endowments and patrimony preservation, grouped in three directions of action as follows:

- preventing people migration from certain disadvantaged areas (eg. rural areas) and stimulating their return, at least partially, back to these respective areas;
- ensuring the conditions of living and civilization in the respective environments, thus stimulating the stability of the active population in these environments;
- conservation and protection of the natural environment - factor of attracting the local and foreign population.

From the analysis of the positive economic effect of tourism on the national, regional or local economic development we can note that it leads to the idea that there are at least three important multiplier effects: the multiplier effect of tourism, the multiplier effect of investment in tourism and the multiplier effect from the foreign investment ( Cristureanu, 2018, p.178).

Classified as a particular field of economic activities, tourist services have several features that, although characterizing the tertiary sector in general, are defined by specific particularities, mainly determined by the content of tourist supply and demand, the forms materialized as a result of how the demand meets supply. Thus, the consumption of tourist services is characterized by a wide range of features (specific features) that differentiate it from the consumption of goods and, moreover, define its content (Rezeanu, 2017, p.153).

The studies carried out by a series of specialized institutes from 11 countries where Romania has Tourism Promotion Offices: Austria, Germany, Italy, Finland, Hungary, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Spain, France and Denmark were published on the official website of the Ministry of Tourism of Romania ([www.mturism.ro](http://www.mturism.ro)). The studies were commissioned by the Romanian Offices and their main objectives targeted, for almost all countries: how Romania is perceived as a potential tourist destination by the tourists in all 11 countries; what the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats are for the Romanian tourism products and the image of Romania as a tourist destination on each country's market; which specific Romanian tourist products would be the most interesting for the travelers from the 11 countries; how Romania is perceived as a tourist destination compared to other Eastern European countries in terms of natural potential, services offered, value for money, etc.

Of all evaluated studies it results that Romania has considerable natural resources, with great potential for the development of tourism.

The study carried out by InterPress on the Spanish market shows that the potential of the Romanian tourist market is high enough to be promoted in Spain: diverse and complementary tourist resources (culture, nature, sports and ethnography); the "Latin" specificity with a language of common origins and certain cultural traits that make them similar; relatively geographically close to Spain (less than four hours by plane); the recent air connections that can promote traveling between the two countries; the growing presence of Romanians in Spain, which made the Spanish more interested in finding out more about a country they barely knew anything before; a well-preserved nature, in some cases authentic and highly attractive (especially the Carpathians and the Danube Delta); the enormous cultural, architectural and artistic treasures ("the greatest jewels - the monasteries, castles,

churches and traditional villages of Maramures and Bucovina should be capitalized", according to the interviewees).

The Danes emphasize that Romania has the potential to offer many opportunities for a family vacation with children. In addition to the values regarding adventure and family, many former Danish tourists say it is cheap to visit Romania.

Without the intention to present Romania's values, as they were perceived by tourists or tour operators from all 11 countries, we were struck by the opinion expressed by the British. According to the "Romania in the UK Travel Market - Image and Product Perception Analysis", conducted by TripVision in February 2006, Romania's strengths are: unaltered nature; life at the countryside; patrimony; multiculturalism; diversity; undiscovered beautiful smaller or larger cities (excluding the capital); lifestyle (outside the capital); safety for children; deep family orientation; organic food in rural areas (good for vegetarians) etc.

But there are other English travelers, strongly motivated by the desire to see and discover new things and places. TripVision dubbed them "Explorers" and found them the segment of consumers with the greatest potential for the Romanian tourism market. Explorers travel more than the average tourists, but more importantly, they are more open and independent and want to experience authenticity before comfort.

According to the study conducted on the UK market, Romania's main opportunities would consist of: being different from other Eastern European countries (through language, culture, food) and the promotion of specific holiday offers and images known as international. Romania was spontaneously described by English respondents as "romantic", starting from life in the country, moving to architecture and the history of the destination. Romanticism is what the other Eastern European countries lack and should stand up as the basic message for Romania, around which a number of specific product offers can be added. For example: skiing, sledding, pleasant evenings with good food and drinks at a lower price than in other ski resorts. There are enough themed holidays that can be linked to the same primary communication to confer Romania a differentiating, distinctive and positive influence compared to other destinations, especially those in Eastern Europe, which can be seen as competitors.

In Norway, the articles found on Romania and especially the holidaymakers focus on the following issues:

- a new holiday destination, which can be further developed;
- a convenient destination in terms of tourist products prices;
- an interesting destination for consolidating the Eastern European myth;
- few exotic tourist attractions.

Romania is a destination that surprises most visitors, especially due to the low initial expectations. Tour operators often face the positive surprise of tourists traveling to Romania, often due to the total lack of or low expectations. The feeling of security is one of the aspects that positively surprises many tourists in Romania.

The conclusion of this study is that what is crucial for Romania is not necessarily the new inventions in the field of tourism. Instead, there is a need for marketing and focus on the fact that this country has many things to offer for those interested in trying something different.

### **3. Research methodology and hypotheses**

Marketing research conducted among foreign tourists arriving in Constanta with various travel purposes, in regard to identifying their preferences for tourist attractions in Romania, preferences regarding accommodation services (type of accommodation, category of accommodation, etc.), type of boardinghouse (full board, half board, etc.), preferred form of tourism.

Based on the results of this research, we will create an inclusive tour package in the areas indicated by foreign tourists as familiar to them (or which they want to visit), with

tourist attractions that can be visited in those areas (we consider the form of tourism: hiking), with the type of accommodation most frequently indicated by them, etc.

The research was based on the following three hypotheses:

I.1. 50% of foreign tourists use a combined means of transport.

I.2. More than half of foreign tourists travel for business in Romania

I.3. More than half of the foreign tourists consider it opportune to include Romania in a tourist circuit.

For financial reasons and due to the didactic purpose of this research, the survey was reduced to 100 people. We distributed 110 questionnaires that could be validated based on questions.

The first stratification variable was represented by foreign tourists accommodated in units (hotels, pensions, villas, motels), and the second variable was represented by the size of the accommodation unit in which foreign tourists were accommodated, in relation to the number of employees. To ensure the representativeness of the survey, in the random selection of the accommodation units where the foreign tourists were accommodated, their percentage in the total population under research was followed, respectively:

- foreign tourists staying in hotels 52%;
- foreign tourists accommodated in urban tourist boarding houses 31.5%;
- foreign tourists accommodated in agritourism boarding houses 11.21%;
- foreign tourists staying in villas, chalets, camping, etc. 5.29%.

In order to obtain the most accurate and precise data, we used the direct interview method, which involved traveling to each accommodation unit and conducting an interview with the foreign tourists accommodated there. The information was collected directly from the foreign tourists who wished to participate in the interview and who were informed about the researched topic and assured of the importance of the answers given. The accommodation units in which foreign tourists were lodged (hotels, tourist boarding houses, agritourism boarding houses, villas, tourist chalets, etc.) were randomly selected.

The working tool of this research was a questionnaire consisting of 27 questions grouped as follows:

1. The first part of the questionnaire was comprised of questions to identify:

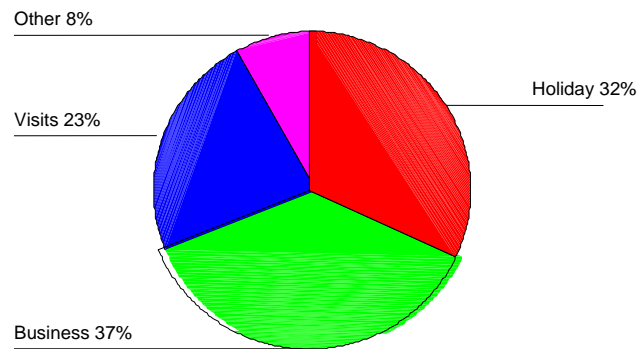
- the reasons of the interviewed tourists to visit Romania;
- the quality of the different types of services requested by tourists during their stay in Romania;
- the positive and negative aspects identified by tourists;
- the areas visited more often by foreign tourists.

2. The second part of the questionnaire was made of questions to identify the interview subjects related to age, gender, level of education, country of residence.

#### **4. Results interpretation**

The survey showed that out of the 100 people interviewed, 32% indicated vacation as the main reason for visiting Romania, 37% - business, 23% indicated visits to friends and relatives, and 8% revealed another reason. However, we note that adding up the number of tourists who visit Romania for holidays with those paying visits to their friends and relatives, the result amounts to 57% of all respondents, which means that they could be willing to go hiking and sightseeing.

Figure 1 presents the main reason for which foreign tourists arriving in Constanta visit Romania.

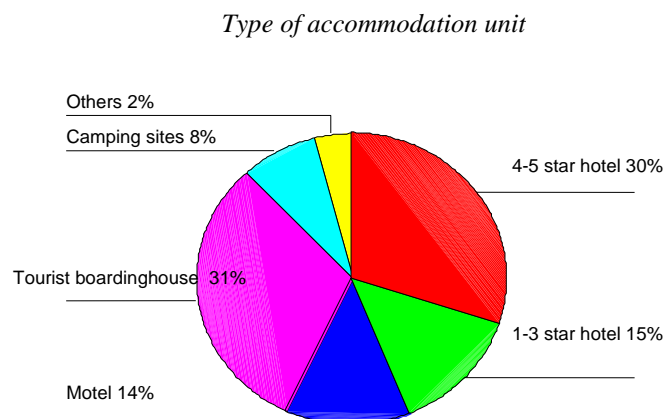


**Figure no. 1. Main reason why foreign tourists visit Romania**

Regarding the means of transport used to travel to Romania, out of the 100 people interviewed, 46% answered that they arrived by plane and only 5% mentioned ship. Second in the preferences of tourists came the vehicle (27%), so as a conclusion - the transport of tourists in Romania can be carried out by means of a combined option of the two types of transport, namely plane and vehicle.

As a result of said survey, out of the total of 100 tourists interviewed, 34% indicated Bucharest as a tourist destination visited in Romania and only 2% stated Bucovina. It is observed that, in ascending order, the preferences of the interviewed tourists turn to Transylvania (21%) and the Carpathian Mountains (12%). Therefore, a mix of tourist areas can be put together as a tourist product.

As the main attraction, the interviewed tourists indicated traveling for business in proportion of 36% whereas the second next place was occupied in proportion of 25% by the legend of Dracula, followed by mountain hiking with 14%. Only 3% of those interviewed indicated both the traditional culture and history of Romania, which shows that the two positions should be promoted much more, both at tourism fairs and in tourist reception units.



**Figure no.2. Type of accommodation unit preferred by foreign tourists**

Regarding the opportunity to incorporate Romania in a tourist circuit together with other neighboring countries, 68% of the interviewed people answered “yes” and only 32% gave a negative answer, which shows that Romania would be much more sought out as tourist destination in such a circuit.

The preference of tourists regarding the type of accommodation unit used shows that 31% of the interviewed people opted for boardinghouses, followed by the 4–5-star hotels, in proportion of 30%. At a very low percentage were the camp sites that were preferred by 8% of the interviewed tourists and this is since there are few such units functional and of a superior quality.

With respect to the opinion of tourists on the quality of tourist services, the research recorded the average values presented in Table 1 (on a scale from 1-excellent to 5-very poor, 6-I do not know).

The best average of the Romanian tourist services according to the tourists’ preferences expressed in the research is indicated by attractions/ museums with 2.13 and by B&B accommodations where the calculated average is 2.14. All other services are considered by tourists as an average between good and satisfactory.

**Table no. 1. Quality of tourist services**

<b>Tourist services</b>	<b>Average values</b>
Hotel/Motel	2.23
Boardinghouses/B&B and full board	2.14
Services of the travel agencies	2.37
Restaurants/Bars	2.25
Local and road transport	2.80
Airport services	2.37
Guide services	2.48
Leisure activities	2.57
Attractions/Museums	2.13
Shopping	2.49
Souvenirs	2.39
Information services	2.96

*Source:* Author

Following this research, a profile of the foreign tourist in Romania or a picture of their preferences can be sketched, which can deliver a tourist product that corresponds to the expressed wishes of the interviewed tourists.

Below is the summary of their preferences:

1. the main reason for visiting Romania
  - holidays and visits - 55%
2. means of transport used to travel to Romania
  - plane - 46%
  - vehicle - 27%
3. Preferred regions to visit
  - Bucharest - 34%
  - Transylvania - 21%
  - Carpathians - 12%
4. specific attractions sought out in Romania

- business - 36%
- legend of Dracula - 25%
- hiking - 14%

5. the opportunity to create a tourist circuit where Romania will join other countries -  
Yes 68%

6. the factors of choosing Romania as a tourist destination

- curiosity - 26%
- recommendation - 22%
- price - 20%

7. the most appreciated tourist services in Romania

- attractions and museums - 35%
- full board - 60%.

Based on the analysis of these data we designed an inclusive tour package in the form of a tourist circuit that will bring together several forms of tourism and in which Romania will participate together with other neighboring countries such as: Hungary, Bulgaria. We will use the plane and bus for transporting tourists to tourist destinations. In Romania, the tourist product will include visiting the capital, Prahova Valley, Transylvania, while mountain hiking will become a means of leisure. The tourist services will come at affordable prices, and we will choose accommodation in 4–5-star tourist lodgings, where possible, with full or half board. This tourist product will include in addition to the areas known by foreign tourists, other regions, which is also a great opportunity of promoting them.

### **5. Combined tourist product design**

Based on the marketing research for the creation of the inclusive tour package, the conclusion drawn indicated that over 60% of the foreign tourists interviewed consider that Romania (as a tourist destination) would be much more attractive if included in a tourist circuit along with the surrounding countries - Bulgaria and Hungary.

We will further present an inclusive tour package that consists of a tourist circuit in which we will combine seaside tourism in Bulgaria with mountain tourism in Romania and cultural tourism in Hungary. Certainly, along with the mountain tourism that we will present in Romania as mountain hikes, we will also visit objectives of cultural interest within the areas we'll travel to, ergo we will also mix mountain and cultural tourism.

The theme of the inclusive tour package entitled "Let's discover Romania" refers to sports tourism, intertwined with the exploration of tourist and cultural objectives in Transylvania and the Apuseni Mountains. "Țara Moșilor" is a very beautiful area, with an insufficiently exploited natural potential, yet which offers optimal conditions for mountain hiking and adventure sports, such as: paragliding, river-rafting, climbing, mountain-biking, etc.

In addition to sport opportunities, tourists can visit attractions with cultural value recognized abroad: Prahova Valley, with its famous mountain resort - Sinaia (Sinaia Monastery, Peles Complex which boasts Peles Castle, Pelisor Castel, Foisor Hunting Lodge, Guard Corps and Economat building), the city of Brasov (Black Church, the Church of St. Nicholas in Scheii Brasov, the Fortress of Brasov), the city of Sibiu declared the European Capital of Culture in 2007 (Brukenthal National Museum, Council Tower, Carpenters' Tower, etc.). By interlinking the forms of sports (adventure sports) with the exploration of the cultural treasures in the region, the aim is to fully satisfy the tourists' expectations and needs, especially since the tourist product is addressed to foreign tourists.

The inclusive tour package "Let's discover Romania" is an 18-day holiday, organized as follows:

- Bulgaria - 5 nights (6 days) in the Albena Resort on the Black Sea coast, at the 4-star Hotel Laguna Garden, in all-inclusive system;
- Romania -10 nights (11 days) planned as follows:

Sinaia - 2 nights (3 days) - accommodation at Boema Villa \*\*\* in all-inclusive system  
 Sibiu - 1 night (2 days) - accommodation at Arpasel Boardinghouse - 4 daisies - dinner  
 Alba Iulia - 2 nights (3 days) - San Benedictus Mansion - full board accommodation  
 Garda de Sus - 2 nights (3 days) - accommodation "Mama Uta" – bed & dinner  
 Padis - 3 nights (4 days) – full-board accommodation ‘Ic Ponor’  
 • Hungary - 2 nights with accommodation at \*\*\* Star Budapest Hotel.

The transport of tourists to the destination is executed by plane, the starting point being the tourists' country of destination - Varna (Bulgaria), then after the 5 day-stay on the Bulgarian coast, transport by plane on the route Varna (Bulgaria) - Bucharest (Romania) and then transfer by bus from Bucharest on the whole circuit through Romania and Hungary, following the return to the destination country done by plane from Budapest (Hungary). In addition to the basic services, accommodation, meals and transport, a series of leisure services are offered, consisting, on the one hand of mountain hiking, and on the other hand, of visiting some cultural-historical objectives in the area.

Mountain hiking is practiced in groups, with a specialized guide speaking an international language, following certain rules and instructions.

## 6. Conclusions and proposals

A well-designed tourist product, based on research, can influence the development of a disadvantaged area by:

- attracting a flow of foreign tourists in the area.
- modernization and extension of infrastructures: accommodation, food, transport as to not affect the existing natural environment.
- creating new jobs and developing local human resources by training employees.
- maintaining the preservation of traditions, customs, and spiritual values in the area.

The tourist product created was shaped based on the preferences of foreign tourists, expressed in the analyzed research, which should ensure the tourist flow in the areas promoted by the product and a high degree of tourist satisfaction. The quality and competitiveness of tourism products contribute to the development and maintenance of sustainable tourism.

Of the proposals we will mention the following:

- informing and raising the awareness of travel agencies and tour operators regarding the importance of creating competitive tourism products that will determine the achievement of a sustainable tourism in the area;
- state involvement by providing facilities to the travel agencies that promote such Romanian tourism products in economically disadvantaged areas;
- hiring specialized staff with superior education in the field by tour operators and travel agencies.

The trend of tourist services customization and the development of new forms of tourism will lead to an increase in tourism jobs, and, in parallel, to the diversification of tourism professions. Some of the main activities are rendered in the field of tour operators, travel agencies and in the field of tourism promotion, advertising.

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