

CUSTOMERS OF ACCOMMODATION UNITS IN BIHOR COUNTY DURING 2021-2023. FEATURES AND BEHAVIORS

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Abstract: *The present work intends to analyze the degree of occupation and the socio-economic characteristics of the people using the accommodation units in Bihor county during the period 2021-2023. Aspects related to the origin of accommodated persons, demographic indicators, length of stay have been analyzed. Their relationship with the accommodation units is pursued in order to identify problematic behaviors as well as a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the reviews provided. The purpose is to identify possible accommodation models (higher frequency in certain periods, gender/demographic differences, etc.) as well as the identification of accommodation units that stand out in this context.*

Key words: *behavior, customers, accommodation units, Bihor County*

INTRODUCTION

Consumer's behavioral patterns concerning the Romanian tourists continues to be still an under researched topic in the academia. This is particular important at the accommodation experience of the customers in hotel sector could provide key insights in order to develop custom based services and relevant policies in the accommodation sector.

The research of consumer behavior for tourism industry is vital, however they do not make all necessary efforts in this regard [15].

The document highlights the main elements regarding the degree of occupancy of accommodation units (hotels, tourist guesthouses, agro-tourism guesthouses) at the level of Bihor County (January - September 2023), the number of tourists in the period 2021-2022, but also the capacity of tourist accommodation on the one hand, and on the other hand aspects of tourists' behaviors.

The quality of tourist services is one of the aspects that consumers consider the most important in order to make a purchase decision. As some authors show, family and friends' behavior and experiences can be a strong influence in tourist behavior, motivation and satisfaction. [16]. The subject of consumer behavior in the tourism context is the key to the foundation of all marketing activities which are implemented in order to establish, advertise, and sell tourism products [2].

Online reviews have become an important source of information as they allow customers to look up detailed and trusted information, based on sharing past consumer experiences.

New habit needs and trends in the global tourism creates more sophisticated consumers who systematically look for different and specific tourism experiences [9].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper adopts a quantitative approach as it analyses the official data available on the statistics website and relevant other data bases (National Institute of Statistics - Tempo online for 2021-2023) in order to provide some key insights and to identify behavioral patterns, if the case arise.

We also performed an analysis of the specialized literature used in the introductory part to highlight the importance of the theme and the purpose of this paper.

Simultaneously, we applied a questionnaire to highlight elements that refer both to demographic aspects of the 209 respondents who visited Bihor County in the period 2021-2023 along with the importance of the online reviews that they analyzed before making reservations, but also highlighting some accommodation units from the Bihor county level. The questionnaire included 9 questions and sought to highlight aspects such as:

- ✓ County of origin;
- ✓ Age of respondents;
- ✓ Respondents' income;
- ✓ Duration of stay and location;
- ✓ Method of reservation;
- ✓ The importance of reviews in making the decision to book;
- ✓ Dealing with problems during the stay;
- ✓ The way to solve various unforeseen situations as a tourist;
- ✓ The hotel where they want to stay in Bihor County in the future.

We emphasize that the respondents were requested that the locality of origin is not in the territory of Bihor County, precisely in order to succeed in highlighting the touristic importance of the area, especially of the Băile Felix resort at the level of the country.

RESEARCH RESULTS

A first series of analyzed data were meant to review the total proportion of the tourists arriving in Bihor County by comparison with the total North-West area for the 2022 period. The results have shown that hotels tend to be the most favorite accommodation structure, followed by agrotourism units. This may hint that the tourist coming here tend to prefer more standardized services and that the rural appeal of the Bihor County is lagging behind the hotels.

Bihor county has numerous geothermal springs, which has led to several recreation centers and treatment. Of these the most important are: Baile Felix, 1 Mai, Baile Tinca and complex at Sarcau. These spas are one of the major tourist attractions in the county [6].

In 2022, in Bihor County, a number of 406,458 people were registered as tourists who stayed in hotels, and of these 50% were accommodated in Oradea, the county seat, and 45% in hotels in Sanmartin, recognized at national level for the Băile Felix and 1 Mai resorts. There is also an increase in the number of people accommodated in 2022 compared to 2021, this is evidenced by the fact that in May 2022 all the restrictions caused by the SARS Cov 2 pandemic were stopped.

Travel in 2022 was significantly different from what it was in 2021. While current challenges in the hospitality industry are affecting the way hotels operate, they are also affecting traveler trends and guest behavior which has also undergone changes as a result of the period traversed [5].

We note that at the level of agro-tourism guesthouses, the town of Sanmartin was the first with a percentage of 57% of the number of people who stayed in 2022.

Some authors have observed that in recent years we are witnessing to an intensification of the demand for agritourism activities, due to the increase of the living standard of the population, the diversification of the tourist motivation but especially the desire of the population to spend a few days in picturesque, unpolluted places, away from agitation and pollution of urban agglomerations [1,7,11,14].

So, we can conclude that Oradea and Sănmartin are the localities where more than 90% of Bihor County visitors stay.

Table 1.
Arrivals of tourists in tourist reception structures such as hotels, tourist guesthouses, agro-tourism guesthouses, Bihor county and the localities with the most tourists 2021-2022

Types of tourist reception structures	Localities	Years		2022-2021	% of total 2022
		Year 2021	Year 2022		
		UM: Number of persons			
Hotels	TOTAL	316.436	406.458	90.022	
-	ORADEA	143.245	203.078	59.833	50
-	BUDUREASA	2.773	2.783	10	
-	SANMARTIN	155.099	181.645	26.546	45
Tourist Guesthouse	TOTAL	9.457	7.480	-1.977	
-	MUNICIPIUL ORADEA	4.421	3.965	-456	53
-	SANMARTIN	1.030	478	-552	6
Agro-tourism guesthouses	TOTAL	60.070	78.717	18.647	
-	BRATCA	188	923	735	
-	BUDUREASA	:	905	905	
-	SANMARTIN	35.775	44.606	8.831	57
-	SUNCUIUS	576	1.263	687	
-	VADU CRISULUI	321	406	85	

Source: Own representation after National Statistics Institute, 2023 [12]

Regarding the positioning of Bihor County as part of the North-West Region, it owns 28.36% of the total of hotels, 14.50% of the total of tourist guesthouses, respectively 23.35% of the total of agro-tourism guesthouses. (Table 2)

The North-West Development Region (Northern Transylvania) is one of the eight development regions in Romania and is composed of six counties: Bihor, Bistrița-Năsăud, Cluj, Maramureș, Satu Mare and Sălaj [11].

Table 2.
Accommodation per housing facility in 2021-2023 NW Region and Bihor comparison

Types of tourist reception structures	Region County	Years			2023 - 2021	% Bihor county out of total 2023
		Year 2021	Year 2022	Year 2023		
		Number	Number	Number		
Total	NORTH-WEST Region	1732	1952	2119	387	
-	Bihor	336	472	495	159	23,36
Hotels	NORTH-WEST Region	189	191	201	12	
-	Bihor	51	54	57	6	28,36
Tourist Guesthouse	NORTH-WEST Region	228	198	200	-28	
-	Bihor	29	29	29	0	14,50
Agro-tourism guesthouses	NORTH-WEST Region	750	806	835	85	
-	Bihor	139	190	195	56	23,35

Source: Own processing after Own representation after National Statistics Institute, 2023 [12]

At the level of the North-West region, tourist arrivals in Bihor County in 2022 represented 32.06% of their total, and those who stayed in hotels represented 39.44% of the total of tourists staying in hotels. (Table 3)

Table 3.

Arrivals of tourists in tourist reception structures such as hotels, tourist guesthouses, agro-tourism guesthouses, North West Region and Bihor County

Types of tourist reception structures	North-West Region Bihor County	years			Bihor from NV Region 2022
		2021	2022	2022-2021	
		UM: Number persons			%
		Number persons	Number persons	Number persons	
Total	NORTH-WEST Region	1.363.239	1.762.158	398.919	32,06
-	Bihor	441.913	564.945	123.032	
Hotels	NORTH-WEST Region	798.039	1.030.484	232.445	39,44
-	Bihor	316.436	406.458	90.022	
Tourist Guesthouse	NORTH-WEST Region	110.442	128.825	18.383	5,81
-	Bihor	9.457	7.480	-1.977	
Agro-tourism guesthouses	NORTH-WEST Region	217.538	265.827	48.289	29,61
-	Bihor	60.070	78.717	18.647	

Source: Own representation after National Statistics Institute, 2023 [12]

It is noted that the tourist industry in Bihor County occupies an important role in the North West region, so it is important to analyze the behavior of tourists in this area and why they take into account when choosing a vacation. In this sense, the questionnaire applied to the 209 respondents (230 questionnaires, of which 209 valid) who were tourists in Bihor county during 2021-2023 highlighted the behavior of tourists both in the purchase decision and during the stay. The research was carried out online in period June-July 2023.

Table 4.

Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Name	Category	No	%
Age	35-45	48	22,97
	45-55	116	55,50
	More than 55	45	21,53
County of origin	București	86	41,15
	Cluj	38	18,18
	Brăila	8	3,83
	Argeș	10	4,78
	Constanța	17	8,13
	Brașov	50	23,92
Income of respondents family/month	6000 lei	18	8,61
	7000-8000 lei	29	13,88
	8000-10000 lei	73	34,93
	More than 10000 lei	89	42,58
Children in the family	Yes	112	53,59

Source: Own processing Questionnaire

Concerning the applied questionnaire, of the 209 respondents, most tourists, respectively 41.14%, come from Bucharest, followed by Brașov and Cluj. (Table 4) Also, 55% of respondents are between 45-55 years old. Regarding the income situation of the respondents per family per month, 42.58% have incomes greater than 10 000 lei, followed by 34.93% with incomes between 8 000-10 000 lei per month, and 8.61% have incomes of 6 000 lei per month. It is observed that both those with incomes of 6 000 lei per month and those with incomes greater than 10 000 lei per month chose Bihor county as their vacation

destination, considering that most respondents come from Bucharest. At the same time, 53.59% of the respondents have children in the family.

Regarding consumer behavior in the way of booking a vacation, 80.38% of respondents use online means and 3.35 do it through a travel agency. Of the 209 study participants, 61.24% had a 7-night stay and 21.53% of them had a 5-night stay. Oradea is the destination visited by 42.58% of respondents, followed by Băile Felix and Băile 1 Mai, which account for 50.72% of the total stays.

Table 5.

Duration of stay and location, booking method

	No of nights	No of respondents	%
Duration of stay	5 nights	45	21,53
	7 nights	128	61,24
	10 nights	36	17,22
Location	Oradea	89	42,58
	Băile Felix	81	38,76
	Băile 1 Mai	25	11,96
	Other localities	14	6,70
Modality of reservation	Online personal	168	80,38
	Phone	34	16,27
	Tourism agency	7	3,35

Source: Own processing Questionnaire

Consumer behavior remains one of the most researched areas in the marketing and tourism fields, with the terms ‘travel behaviour’ or ‘tourist behaviour’ typically used to describe this area of inquiry [8].

Online travel refers to an industry that provides consumers with travel information, products, and related services through the Internet, and tourists can share travel experience through the Internet [10].

Table 6.

The importance of reviews in making the decision to book

Answers	No..	%
I check reviews from at least the last year on several search platforms	174	83,25
I ask for reviews from everyone I know where applicable	29	13,88
I don't read reviews when I decide to book	6	2,87

Source: Own processing Questionnaire

Today's tourist is a very well-informed one most of the time, so when making the decision to book a holiday, 83.25% of the study respondents state that they check reviews from the last year from several sources and only a percentage of 2.87% do not read reviews when they decide to book.

The experience of other travelers can be extremely useful to detect possible problems related to the cleanliness, the location of the accommodation, the way the employees behave with the guests, the quality and diversity of the included meals, the noise level or any other aspect related to that accommodation [18].

In the multitude of accommodation offers, especially when a tourist evaluates a unit he has never been to and about which he has no references, the opinions posted by others are essential. No advertorial appearing in the most prestigious publications will carry as much weight as the opinions of other customers as they do [17].

Out of the total of 209 respondents, 8 of them (3.98%) answered that they faced problems during the stay, but that they were solved at the hotel reception, without the need for the intervention of the hotel management. We note that this percentage is slightly higher than that of tourists (+1.11%. respectively 3 more people) who do not read reviews when deciding to book.

Table 7.

The hotel where you want to stay in Bihor County in the future

Hotel	no. persons	%	Booking Note
Continental Forum Oradea ****	9	4,31	7,6
Double Tree by Hilton Oradea ****	16	7,66	8,7
The Elite Oradea's Legendary Hotel ****	3	1,44	8,3
Astoria Oradea ****	40	19,14	8,4
Hotel Internațional ****(Băile Felix)	4	1,91	8,6
Hotel Aventus **** (Băile Felix)	93	44,50	9,7
Lotus Therm Spa&Luxury Resort ***** (Băile Felix)	46	22,01	9,2

Source: Own processing Questionnaire, [3]

Through the applied questionnaire, it was desired to highlight a hotel in Bihor county as a future vacation destination for the 209 respondents, so the 4-star Aventus Hotel is the most desired vacation location, 44.50% of those who were part of this study they want to stay at this hotel. At the same time, this is the hotel with the highest rating on booking at the time the paper was prepared. The second hotel that is desired as a holiday destination is the Astoria Hotel, a 4-star hotel in the center of Oradea, a hotel that attracts with its position and the services offered with a rating of 8.4 on booking.

Hotel managers have to use creative and efficient methods to attract more tourists. Offer diversification, customized packages, bonuses, price flexibility, high quality services, an intensified virtual promotion (web-site, social media) could attract more visitors and improve hotels performance [4].

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the accommodation in the North-West Region and especially in Bihor county show us that we can identify some interesting trends and localities of interest.

We need to use the data in order to create custom based policies for each type of accommodation unit as well as each locality and region. By using the data, we can thus enhance the level of accommodation. Also we need to pay a lot of attention to the reviews of guests as they often are public and influence other potential accommodation guests.

It is important to use the past experiences of customers in order to better address the challenges of the future and also to improve the services provided. The experiences of other guests may provide a series of answers of what goes wrong.

The analysis of the income of incoming guests may also help in better establishing the optimal price range for the accommodation facilities.

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