

STATISTICAL COMPARISONS BETWEEN CITIES IN ROMANIA, REGARDING TOURIST ACCOMMODATION OFFERS

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Abstract: The tourist rental platform Booking.com was used as a source of statistical data on tourist offers. For four cities in Romania, randomly, scores were taken from guest reviews of accommodation units. The data were used to make direct comparisons between the four cities. The discussions were expressed regarding the size of the differences/closeness between them.

Key words: tourism, statistics, comparisons, Romania

INTRODUCTION

Direct or indirect comparisons between different locations in the field of tourism are a common aspect in literature. Comparisons are made by potential tourists when they want to plan their vacation, by the owners of some locations when they organize their activity or when they set their rates, by travel agencies that want to offer for customers an accurate picture of the locations, experts in analysis of marketing etc. There are studies that make comparisons according to different parameters. Comparisons between historical neighborhoods in Timișoara [15], tourists' emotions and feelings regarding SPA tourism in the northern area of Oltenia in Romania [19], comparisons between websites used to promote some cities in Romania [1], online accommodations by comparing two towns in Romania and Hungary. [3] Social media, the online platforms specialized in the field of tourism, currently allow fast and efficient comparative studies to be carried out. [2,14]

The aim of the study is to make direct comparisons with to use the scores obtained from the Booking.com platform regarding tourists' opinions on guesthouses. Moreover, was presented opinions about the differences encountered, based on other aspects or sources of information.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The statistical data were obtained by consulting the Booking.com [16] platform during October 2024, for guest houses in four cities in Romania: Timișoara, Cluj-Napoca, Iași and Constanța.

ANOVA and boxplot comparisons were used for statistical processing, with SAS Studio platform. [13]

RESEARCH RESULTS

The choice of the four Romanian cities was made based on their geographical location. Timișoara is located in the western region of Romania in the historical region of Banat, Cluj-Napoca in the northwestern part of Romania in the historical region of Transylvania, Iași is located in the historical region of Moldova, in the northeastern of Romania, and Constanța in Dobrogea in the region of southeast of Romania, on the shore of the Black Sea [17]. Furthermore, the choice was also made because these cities have a similar population size of over 300,000 people [15]. Analyzing the websites of the town halls of the 4 cities, it was observed that in Timișoara there is a Tourism Department, which has as its attributions the development of a tourism strategy at the local level, reports on the impact of tourism, informing tourists, sending promotional materials, training tourist

guides, digital platforms. [19] At the Cluj Napoca City Hall, there is the Community Relations and Tourism Service. [20] Its aim is to promote the city's tourism, increase the quality of tourist services, increase the number of tourists, diversify the tourist offer etc. The web page of the Iași City Hall contains a portal [18] that presents information about the memorial houses that can be visited in this city, about gardens, accommodation spaces, restaurants, theaters, etc. Moreover, there is a Tourist Development Projects Service. Regarding the web page of Constanța City Hall, there is a dedicated section, Discover Constanța, which contains multiple information on tourist attractions in the city. [14]

The statistical data taken from the Booking.com platform led to the statistical summary in Table 1. This table shows the values of the statistical indicators for all the cumulative data of the four cities. The highest average value has the scores offered for Staff, 9.12. The lowest values are those related to Facilities, which have an average value of 8.59. It is observed that all mean values are greater than 8.5.

Table 1.

Statistical summary for scores from guest reviews of accommodation units

| Category | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min. | Max. | Number of units | Mode | Mean CL Lower 95% | Mean CL Upper 95% | Coeff.of Variation (%) |
|-------------------|------|-----------|------|------|-----------------|------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1.Staff | 9.12 | 0.59 | 6.80 | 10 | 147 | 9.2 | 9.03 | 9.22 | 6.51 |
| 2.Facilities | 8.59 | 0.79 | 5.80 | 10 | 147 | 8.6 | 8.46 | 8.72 | 9.25 |
| 3.Cleanlines | 8.91 | 0.75 | 5.80 | 10 | 147 | 8.8 | 8.79 | 9.04 | 8.41 |
| 4.Comfort | 8.78 | 0.77 | 5.50 | 10 | 147 | 8.8 | 8.65 | 8.90 | 8.77 |
| 5.Value for money | 8.82 | 0.71 | 5.60 | 10 | 147 | 8.7 | 8.70 | 8.93 | 8.03 |
| 6.Location | 8.69 | 0.68 | 6.20 | 10 | 147 | 8.6 | 8.58 | 8.80 | 7.79 |
| 7.Free WiFi | 8.83 | 0.89 | 5.00 | 10 | 129 | 10 | 8.68 | 8.99 | 10.03 |

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

In order to make the comparisons, an analysis of the distribution of the data series was first performed. Figures 1a.-g. indicates that scores with extreme values, very high or very low, occur in a lower proportion. Average scores predominate. There is a shift to the right of the distribution, but this is to be expected, the extremely low scores are awarded less often, being considered sanctions and even exceptions. Following the shape of the distributions, they are similar to the Gaussian distribution.

For Staff, most scores are between 8.8 and 9.6. Approximately 15% have the maximum score, 10, for this criterion.

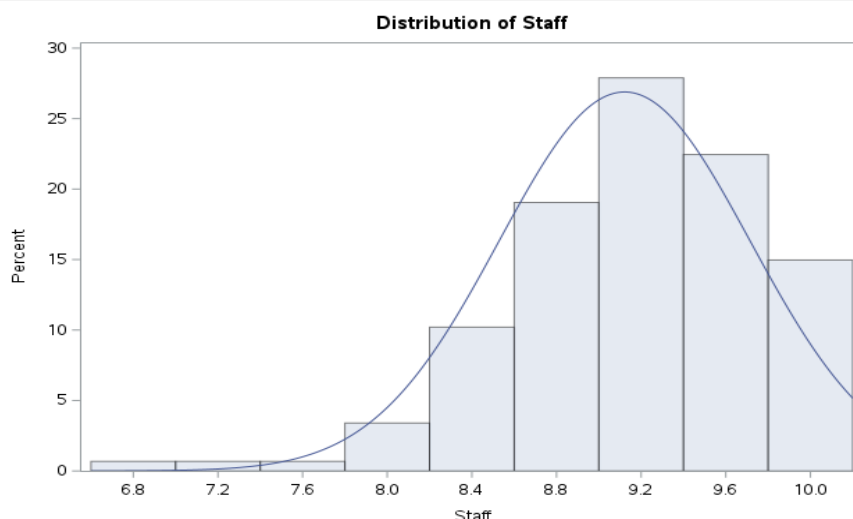


Figure 1. The histogram of customer scores for staff

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

For the Facilities criterion, most scores are in the 8.1-9.3 range. About 10% have an e-score around 9.9. This fact indicates lower values compared to the Staff criterion. The distribution of Facilities is slightly left-shifted compared to the Staff distribution. The aspects that lead to the description of the Facilities criterion are often related to the investments made, and customer requirements are sometimes more difficult to meet.

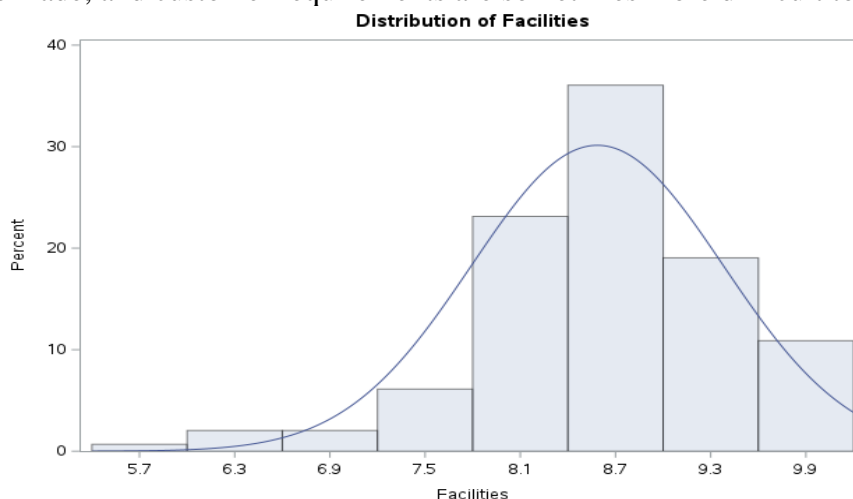


Figure 2. The histogram of customer scores for facilities

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

The Cleanlines distribution is similar in shape to the Staff distribution. Most scores are grouped in the 8.7-9.9 range. However, in boarding houses, staff are frequently directly or indirectly involved in cleaning activities. Direct observations indicate that in the last period of time, the image of many accommodation units has changed, precisely due to the high interest given to this aim. This fact implies the degree of appreciation of the customers.

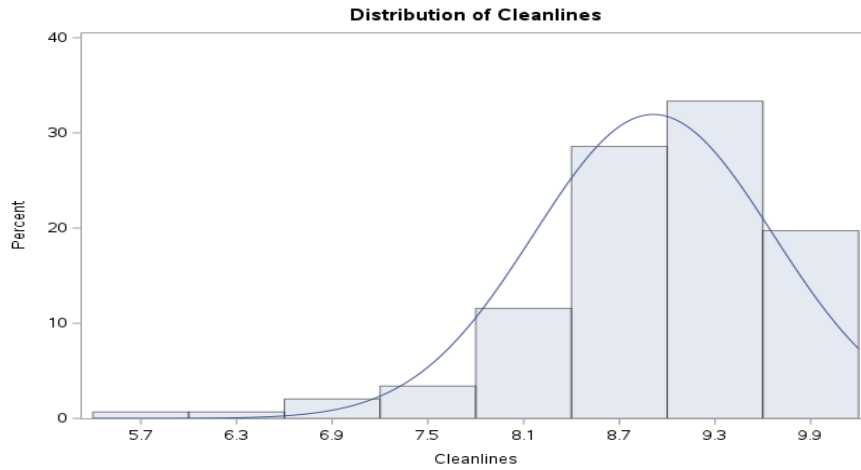


Figure 3. The histogram of customer scores for cleanliness

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

A similar distribution to Cleanliness is observed for the Comfort criterion. Here too, most scores are clustered in the 8.7-9.9 range.

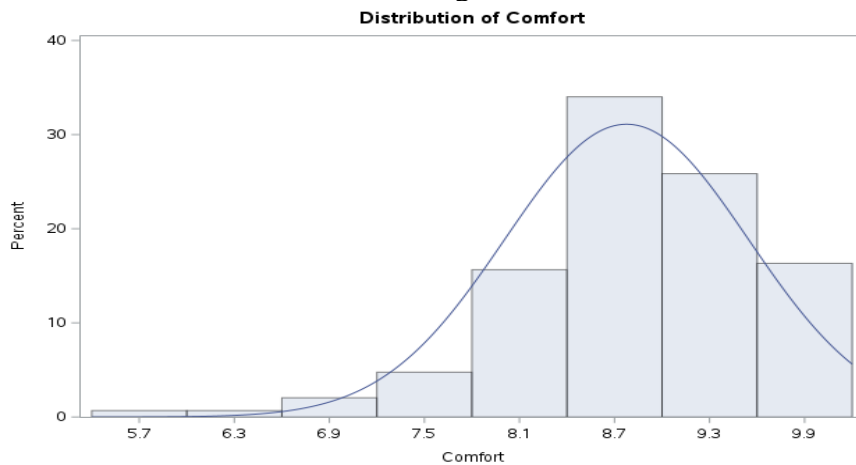


Figure 4. The histogram of customer scores for comfort

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

The Value for money distribution presents the most scores in the 8.7-9.3 range. Over 60% of reviews fall within this range.

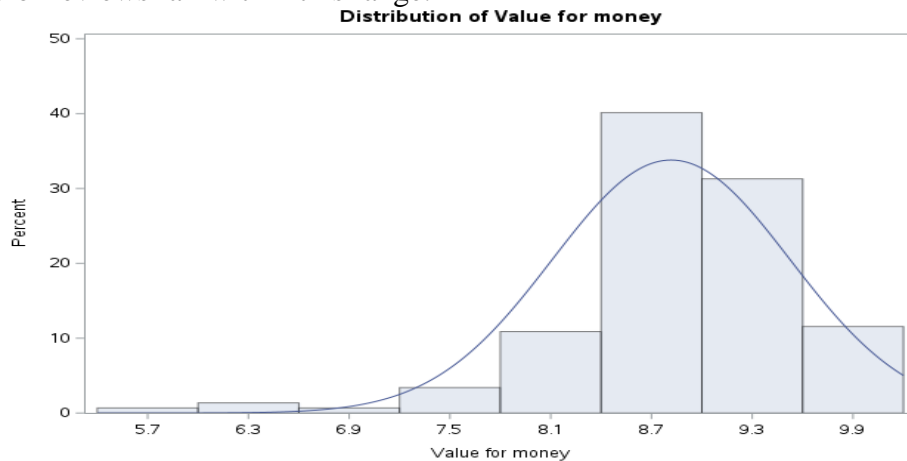


Figure 5. The histogram of customer scores for value for money

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

The Location criterion has a special character. It has to do with the location of the building, with access to the building, with the infrastructure. Many times, the score in the Location chapter is independent of the will of the owners. Most scores are in the 8-9.5 range. About 5% of the reviews have the maximum score, 10.

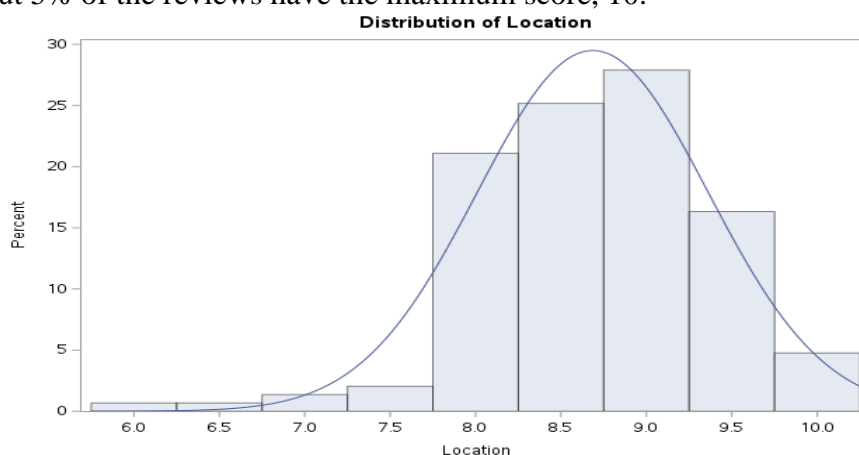


Figure 6. The histogram of customer scores for Location

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

The WiFi scores distribution is shifted to the right. This fact indicates the concern of administrators to ensure the Internet connection and and maintain it at a high quality.

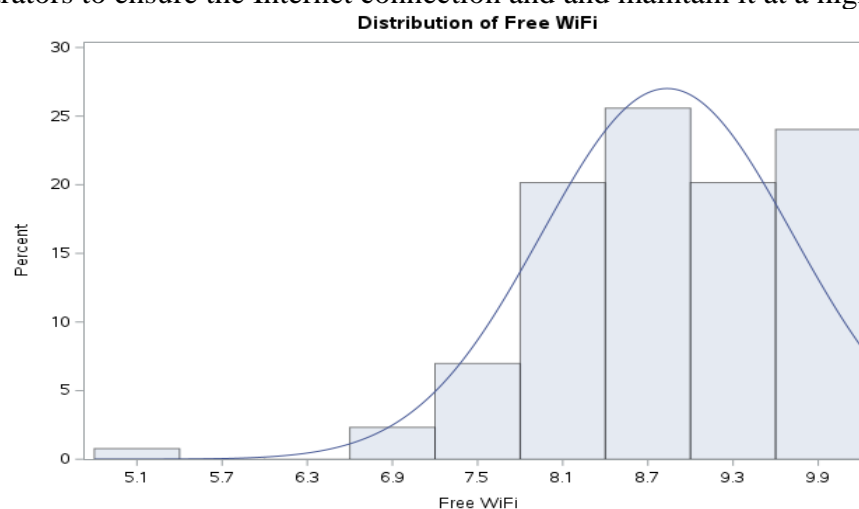


Figure 7. The histogram of customer scores for Free WiFi

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

In order to make comparisons, a statistical description of the data (Table 2) was continued, separately for the analyzed cities. There are known results that indicate differences even within the same city, at the neighborhood level.[15] The particular geographical, social and economic framework for each city studied in this paper can induce more important differences. It is expected to directly observe some differences between the scores, but conclusions emerge after performing the ANOVA test.

Table 2.
Statistical summary for scores from guest reviews of accommodation units,
distributed by cities

| City | Number of units | Category | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min | Max | Median | Mode | Coeff.of Variation (%) |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|------|-----------|-----|-----|--------|------|------------------------|
| Cluj-Napoca | 40 | 1.Staff | 9.12 | 0.49 | 8.2 | 10 | 9.2 | 9.3 | 5.34 |
| | | 2.Facilities | 8.56 | 0.64 | 6.9 | 10 | 8.6 | 8.9 | 7.43 |
| | | 3.Cleanlines | 8.90 | 0.62 | 7.1 | 10 | 9 | 8.8 | 6.93 |
| | | 4.Comfort | 8.72 | 0.62 | 7.1 | 9.8 | 8.8 | 8.8 | 7.11 |
| | | 5.Value for money | 8.80 | 0.54 | 7.7 | 10 | 8.8 | 9.2 | 6.11 |
| | | 6.Location | 8.76 | 0.57 | 7.6 | 9.8 | 8.85 | 9 | 6.51 |
| | | 7.Free WiFi | 8.58 | 0.98 | 5 | 10 | 8.7 | 8.8 | 11.42 |
| Constanța | 32 | 1.Staff | 9.29 | 0.58 | 8 | 10 | 9.25 | 10 | 6.24 |
| | | 2.Facilities | 8.85 | 0.78 | 7.2 | 10 | 8.85 | 10 | 8.82 |
| | | 3.Cleanlines | 9.12 | 0.72 | 7.5 | 10 | 9.05 | 8.8 | 7.95 |
| | | 4.Comfort | 9.05 | 0.74 | 7.5 | 10 | 9 | 10 | 8.17 |
| | | 5.Value for money | 9.03 | 0.63 | 7.7 | 10 | 9 | 8.7 | 7.00 |
| | | 6.Location | 9.00 | 0.66 | 7.8 | 10 | 8.95 | 8.4 | 7.29 |
| | | 7.Free WiFi | 8.96 | 0.84 | 7.3 | 10 | 8.9 | 10 | 9.39 |
| Iași | 35 | 1.Staff | 8.94 | 0.74 | 6.8 | 10 | 9.1 | 9.1 | 8.27 |
| | | 2.Facilities | 8.32 | 1.00 | 5.8 | 10 | 8.5 | 8.6 | 12.05 |
| | | 3.Cleanlines | 8.71 | 0.97 | 5.8 | 10 | 8.9 | 9.4 | 11.14 |
| | | 4.Comfort | 8.53 | 1.01 | 5.5 | 10 | 8.8 | 8.8 | 11.81 |
| | | 5.Value for money | 8.53 | 0.98 | 5.6 | 10 | 8.7 | 8.6 | 11.46 |
| | | 6.Location | 8.40 | 0.85 | 6.2 | 10 | 8.6 | 8.6 | 10.14 |
| | | 7.Free WiFi | 8.99 | 0.86 | 7.3 | 10 | 9.05 | 10 | 9.61 |
| Timișoara | 40 | 1.Staff | 9.15 | 0.53 | 7.9 | 10 | 9.15 | 9.8 | 5.80 |
| | | 2.Facilities | 8.63 | 0.69 | 7.1 | 10 | 8.5 | 8 | 7.96 |
| | | 3.Cleanlines | 8.95 | 0.64 | 7.2 | 10 | 8.9 | 8.7 | 7.16 |
| | | 4.Comfort | 8.83 | 0.63 | 7.2 | 10 | 8.8 | 8.4 | 7.10 |
| | | 5.Value for money | 8.93 | 0.56 | 7.4 | 10 | 8.9 | 8.5 | 6.28 |
| | | 6.Location | 8.61 | 0.50 | 8 | 9.7 | 8.55 | 8 | 5.77 |
| | | 7.Free WiFi | 8.88 | 0.80 | 7.1 | 10 | 9 | 10 | 9.03 |

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

It should be noted that most of the coefficients of variation have small values, which rarely exceed 12%. This indicates a homogeneity of scores. There is not much variation in scores as perceived by customers.

The scores for the Staff criterion are close in the 4 cities. The boxplot diagram in Figure 2 visually indicates this closeness. Minimum and maximum values and quartiles can be observed for each series. These allow direct comparisons between series.[4] The results in Table 3 for ANOVA indicate no statistically significant differences.

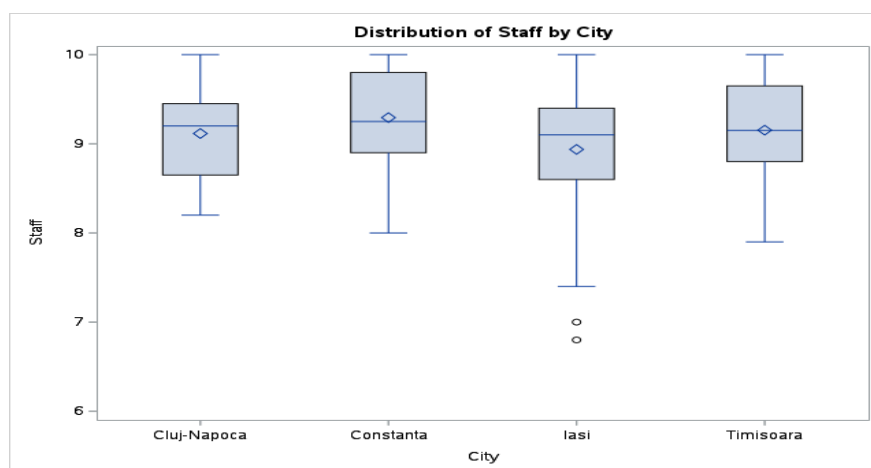


Figure 8. The boxplot diagram of customer scores for Staff, by cities

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

Table 3.

The ANOVA test results for comparisons for Staff, between cities

| Degree Freedom | Sum of Squares | Mean Square | F | p |
|----------------|----------------|-------------|------|-------|
| 3 | 2.17 | 0.72 | 2.11 | 0.101 |

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

The Facilities criterion (Figure 3, Table 4) shows slight differences. The p-value, $p=0.052$ is very slightly higher compared to the 5% significance threshold. Therefore, there is uncertainty in stating whether the observed differences are significant.

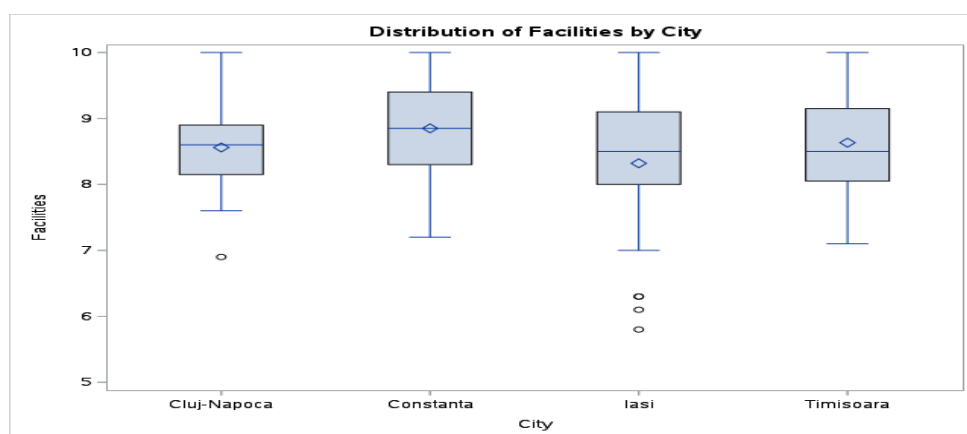


Figure 9. The boxplot diagram of customer scores for Facilities, by cities

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

Table 4.

The ANOVA test results for comparisons for Facilities, between cities

| Degree Freedom | Sum of Squares | Mean Square | F | p |
|----------------|----------------|-------------|------|-------|
| 3 | 4.82 | 1.60 | 2.63 | 0.052 |

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

Anyway, the comparative results led to the idea of presenting a hierarchy of average values for the 4 cities for the Facilities criterion (Table 5). Constanta is the city with the highest average value, 8.85 for this criterion.

Table 5.

Hierarchy of cities by average values for Value for Facilities

| City | Number of units | Facilities | |
|-------------|-----------------|------------|-----------|
| | | Mean | Std. Dev. |
| Constanta | 32 | 8.85 | 0.78 |
| Timișoara | 40 | 8.63 | 0.68 |
| Cluj-Napoca | 40 | 8.56 | 0.63 |
| Iași | 35 | 8.32 | 1.00 |

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

No significant differences are observed between cities in the Cleanlines criterion. The scores have close values (Figure 4, Table 6).

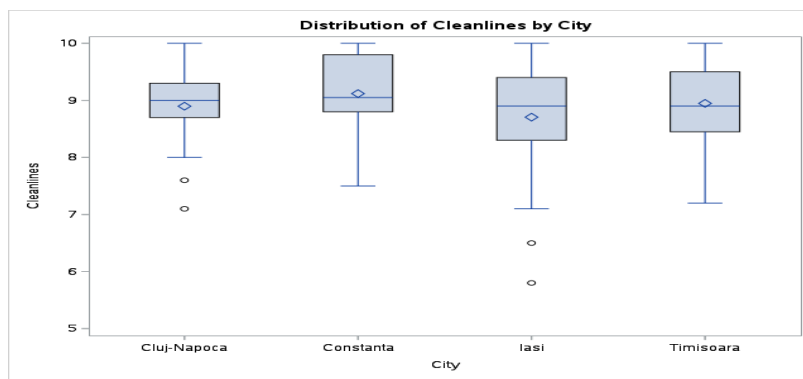


Figure 10. The boxplot diagram of customer scores for Cleanlines, by cities

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

The $p=0.150$ value above the 5% significance threshold does not indicate the rejection of the null hypothesis. The scores indicated by customers on the Clinelines criterion do not differ significantly in the 4 cities.

Table 6.

The ANOVA test results for comparisons for Cleanlines, between cities

| Degree Freedom | Sum of Squares | Mean Square | F | p |
|----------------|----------------|-------------|------|-------|
| 3 | 2.91 | 0.97 | 1.76 | 0.158 |

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

For the Comfort criterion, the differences are significant. The $p=0.045$ value for ANOVA confirms the rejection of the null hypothesis (Figure 5, Table 7).

Table 7.

The ANOVA test results for comparisons for Confort, between cities

| Degree Freedom | Sum of Squares | Mean Square | F | p |
|----------------|----------------|-------------|------|-------|
| 3 | 4.70 | 1.56 | 2.74 | 0.045 |

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

Analyzing the comparative boxplot diagram, it can be seen that certain lower outlier values appear in Iași. This fact shows that for the Comfort criterion there were also some reviews with a low score compared to the others. Very low scores can have multiple

causes, such as the administrators' failure to fulfill some aspects presented in the description of the property, unpleasant experiences that some guests had, or other subjective aspects.

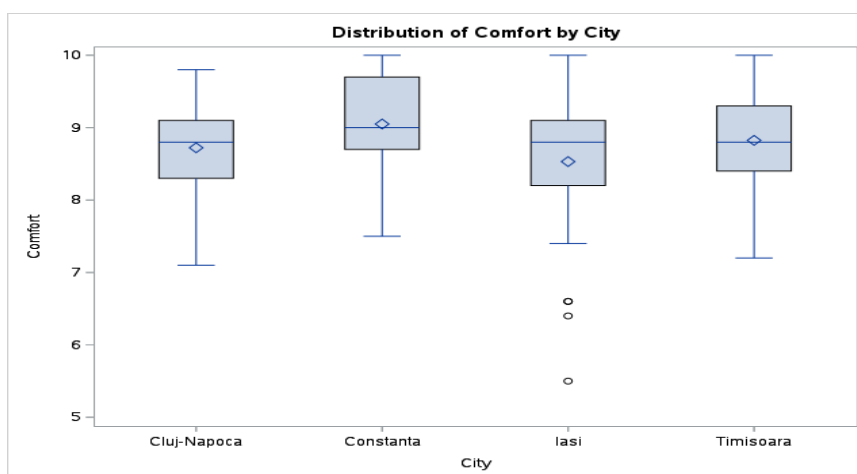


Figure 11. The boxplot diagram of customer scores for Comfort, by cities

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

The Comfort criteria scores in Constanța led to an average value of 9.05. Iasi has the lowest average score, of 8.53 (Figure 8). Tourism on the Black Sea coast can be an explanation of this fact. Hostel owners or managers may be motivated by the high number of tourists. The investments made to improve the comfort are likely to be followed by increased appreciation.

Table 8.

Hierarchy of cities by average values for Comfort

| City | Number of units | Comfort | |
|--------------------|-----------------|---------|-----------|
| | | Mean | Std. Dev. |
| Constanta | 32 | 9.05 | 0.74 |
| Timișoara | 40 | 8.83 | 0.63 |
| Cluj-Napoca | 40 | 8.72 | 0.62 |
| Iași | 35 | 8.53 | 1.01 |

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

Value for money, is an important indicator and indicates the opinion of guests regarding the quality of services in relation to the value of the price paid for the rental. The trend of increasing customer education implies an understanding of how to create their expectations. This presupposes a knowledge of the tourist market but also of carrying out a documentation and own comparative analysis. Moreover, the value for money analysis can also describe the competitiveness of the accommodation unit.[16]

And for this criterion, the comparative boxplot diagram in figure 6 indicates the presence of lower outlier values in Iași.

The p-value=0.019 from the ANOVA shows that there are significant differences when comparing the mean of value for money scores across the four cities in this study.

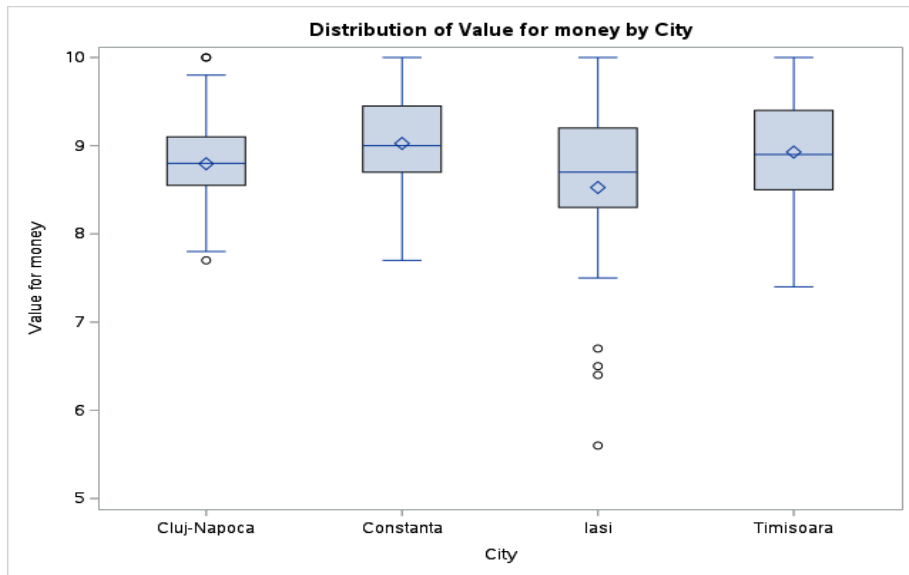


Figure 12. The boxplot diagram of customer scores for Value for money, by cities
 Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

Table 9.
 The ANOVA test results for comparisons for Value for money, between cities

| Degree Freedom | Sum of Squares | Mean Square | F | p |
|----------------|----------------|-------------|------|-------|
| 3 | 4.86 | 1.62 | 3.39 | 0.019 |

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

The highest average value for the Value for money criterion is found for the city of Constanta, 9.03. And in the other three cities the average exceeds 8.5. The lowest average value appears in Iasi (Table 10).

Table 10.
 Hierarchy of cities by average values for Value for money

| City | Number of units | Value for money | |
|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|
| | | Mean | Std. Dev. |
| Constanta | 32 | 9.03 | 0.63 |
| Timisoara | 40 | 8.93 | 0.56 |
| Cluj-Napoca | 40 | 8.80 | 0.54 |
| Iasi | 35 | 8.53 | 0.98 |

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

Location is an important indicator in the decision to choose an accommodation unit. Customer expectations can be strongly influenced by location. The Booking platform uses advanced verification methods of location. Specifically, accommodation unit owners can provide these details through several methods, video transmission, letter or video call.[11] Even in these conditions, unfulfilled expectations of tourists sometimes appear, observed due to the presence of very low scores.

The comparison of the mean scores for the Location criterion by ANOVA indicates significant differences between the studied cities. The value $p=0.002$ indicates this fact (Figure 7, Table 11).

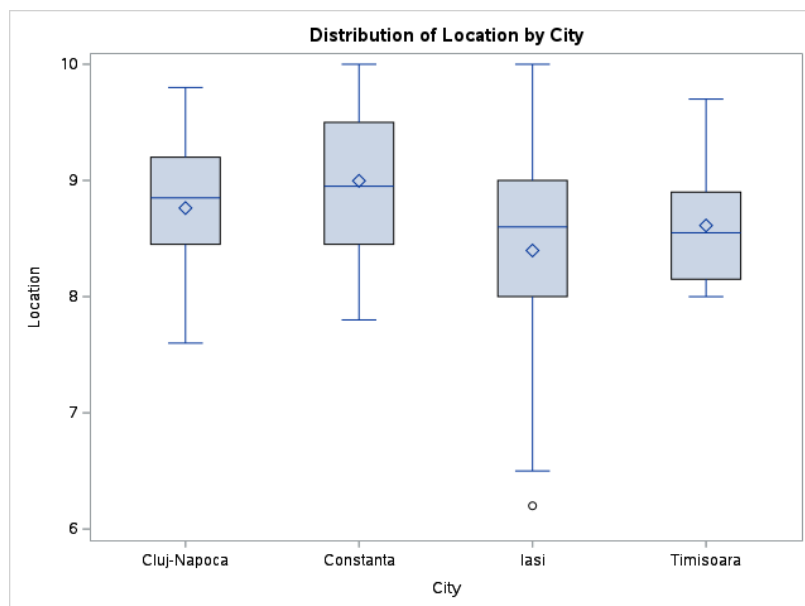


Figure 13. The boxplot diagram of customer scores for Location, by cities

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

Table 11.

The ANOVA test results for comparisons for Location, between cities

| Degree Freedom | Sum of Squares | Mean Square | F | p |
|----------------|----------------|-------------|------|-------|
| 3 | 6.46 | 2.15 | 5.11 | 0.002 |

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

The city with the highest average score value for Location is Constanta, 9.00. Timișoara has the lowest average score for this criterion, 8.61 (Table 12).

Table 12.

Hierarchy of cities by average values for Location

| City | Number of units | Location | |
|-------------|-----------------|----------|-----------|
| | | Mean | Std. Dev. |
| Constanta | 32 | 9.00 | 0.66 |
| Cluj-Napoca | 40 | 8.76 | 0.57 |
| Iași | 35 | 8.40 | 0.85 |
| Timișoara | 40 | 8.61 | 0.50 |

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

No significant differences between the cities were found when the average scores for the Free WiFi criterion were compared (Figure 8, Table 13). This fact is given by the high p-value from the ANOVA test, that exceeds the 5% significance threshold.

Table 13.

The ANOVA test results for between-city comparisons for Free WiFi

| Degree Freedom | Sum of Squares | Mean Square | F | p |
|----------------|----------------|-------------|------|------|
| 3 | 3.74 | 1.24 | 1.61 | 0.18 |

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

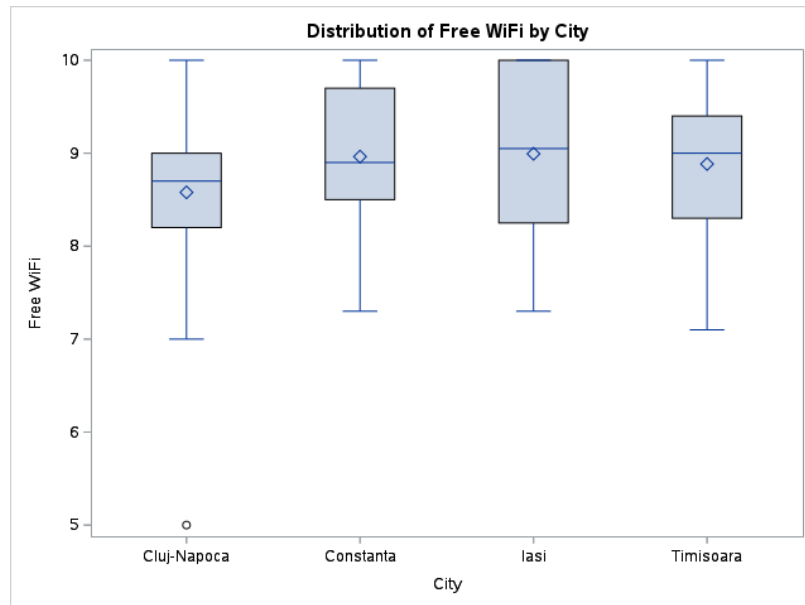


Figure 14. The boxplot diagram of customer scores for Free WiFi, by cities

Source: Own processing using SAS, of data from Booking.com [16]

The four cities studied have certain particularities regarding tourist demand. This can be influenced by endogenous factors. For example, the launch at the municipal level of new products, more complex than the original ones, the variety of the offer, the economic situation of the city, the business environment. In addition, other factors of a socio-economic nature can explain such differences: the ratio between working time and free time, inflationary phenomena, the size of the urban center, its development, the tourist attractions located in the respective area, the entertainment possibilities. These factors can be interconnected and even have a synergistic action. Thus, it is difficult to determine what the individual contribution of each factor is.[20] The studied cities also have different particularities regarding the tourism practiced. In Constanta, holiday tourism predominates. In Cluj Napoca there is business tourism, medical tourism, in Iași cultural tourism predominates. In Timișoara, we can find cultural and business tourism as well as transit tourism. Following the number of reviews, the number of available offers, there is an increase in demand for tourist services. This can also be explained by factors at the level of the individual, education through free time, the income level of the population and directly part of the income allocated for their own ways of spending holidays. [12,18]

CONCLUSIONS

The comparisons made between the 4 cities, regarding the presented tourists' reviews, indicated significant differences only for three criteria: comfort, value for money and location. For the other criteria, there are some differences between the scores indicated by tourists, but they are statistically insignificant. Even with the existence of some differences, the review scores are high. This shows that customer expectations are largely met. The quality of the staff, the facilities, the cleanliness and the WiFi access are consistent with the consumers' opinions at a constant level, regardless of the city.

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