

PREFERENCES OF CONSUMERS OF TOURIST SERVICES

CORA CRINA CRISTIANA¹, DRĂGHICI IONELA LOREDANA¹,
IVANIC ALEXANDRU², ORBOI MANUELA DORA¹,
CONSTANTINESCU SIMONA CRISTINA*¹

¹*University of Life Sciences „King Mihai I” from Timisoara,
Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism, Romania*

²*University of Life Sciences „King Mihai I” from Timisoara,
Faculty of Food Engineering, Romania*

*Corresponding author's e-mail: simona_constantinescu@usvt.ro

Abstract: *The touristic activity highlights its potential truth by attracting after itself pretensions impressed mainly in the space: geographically by setting up large regions to receive important flows of tourists; economic by valuing important natural, material and human resources alongside the creation of a new professional branch; socio-cultural through complex reactions that develop between tourists and locals, on the one hand, and between tourists and tourism service providers, on the other. More and more countries are starting to enjoy the benefits brought by tourism: new jobs are created; new unexploited resources are found; the balance of external payments is balanced; the infrastructure improves. In addition, through tourism, countries redefine their national identity, thus improving their international image.*

Key words: *touristic activity, natural, material and human resources, benefits brought by tourism*

INTRODUCTION

The quality of tourist products depends on the value and attractiveness of the tourist heritage, the technical performance of the tourist infrastructure, as well as the competence of the service provider staff. In addition, we must note the influence of the subjective factor in the assessment of the quality level of a tourist product by a client. Thus, the level of his satisfaction following tourist consumption depends on the degree of concordance between the effective components of the tourist offer during the trip or stay and the image that the tourist has formed regarding them. [1,7,10,11]

The qualitative level of tourist products can be analyzed from the point of view of natural characteristics (for example, the beauty of the landscapes encountered during the trip, the purity of the air and water, the altitude at which the tourist attractions are located, the climate, the season, the frequency and magnitude of avalanches, floods, earthquakes, etc.), technical (accessibility of tourist attractions, speed, degree of safety and comfort of tourist transport means, degree of wear and tear of tourist reception structures, signaling and lighting conditions, noise and vibrations accompanying tourist services, reception and production capacity of accommodation, transport, food, leisure equipment, architecture of cities and buildings), organizational (structure and way of carrying out the tourist circuit and programs: the time of beginning and ending of tourist services, the schedule of visits and leisure activities, the way of synchronizing services, the ratio between the duration of leisure and that of complementary services, the number, structure, kindness and solicitude of the staff on duty, available to tourists, opening and closing periods of resorts, degree of crowding of tourist destinations, duration of service provision). [3,4,9,13,20]

If we take into account the specifics of the tourist product (made up predominantly of tourist services), its quality depends largely on the professional ability of the service provider staff (their kindness, solicitude, punctuality, efficiency). [1,2,4,5,8,14]

Given the seasonal nature of tourism activity, ensuring a level of income corresponding to the professional qualification and working conditions will positively influence the permanence of the staff and, implicitly, the quality of the tourist product

created by them. Currently, there is a tendency to develop increasingly complex and personalized tourist products, requiring fewer but more qualified staff. [6,7,10,15,16,19]

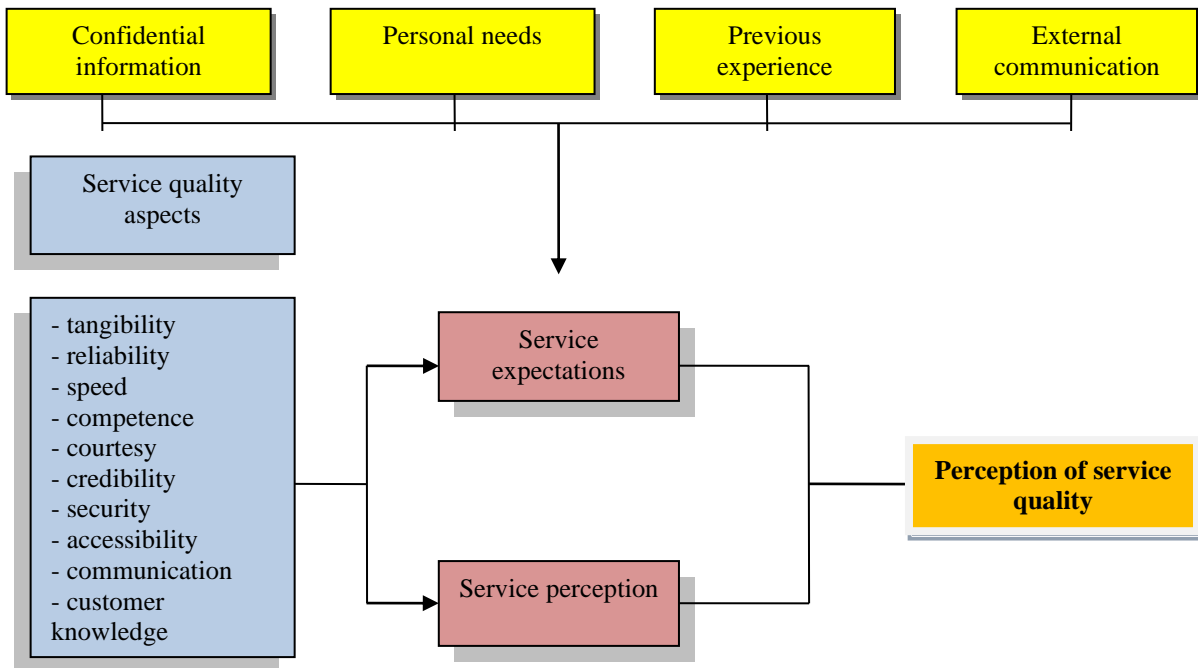


Figure 1. The process of evaluating the quality of service by the customer

Source: own creation after Cornel Someșan - *Marketingul serviciilor de afaceri*, Ed.Sincron, Cluj-Napoca, 1997, pag.53

The tourist experience determines a greater degree of "closeness" to the consumer, its components being best "absorbed" by the consumer by transforming them into sensations, and then into well-defined perceptions for the consumer, contributing to the expected or desired state of mind, thus emphasizing the emotional side of consumption. [5]

Taking into account the increased sophistication of consumer needs, tourist products must contain a significant number of "sensory points of contact" with the consumer, engaging all the senses, for a complex tourist experience. [12,17,18,20]

Satisfying consumer needs is a priority for any entity operating in the field of trade in goods or services, to which it refers, including companies that offer tourist products. The tourist product can be defined as a set of material goods and services capable of satisfying individual tourism needs from the moment of departure to the tourist destination until the return. The behavior of the consumer of tourist products represents the set of his acts, attitudes and decisions regarding the choice, purchase and consumption of tourist products and services, as well as his post-consumption reactions in the modern market is impossible, namely knowing the preferences and needs of their own customers. [2,7,9,11]

A correct understanding of consumers facilitates the providers of tourist products and provides certain opportunities: predicting their needs; identifying the most demanded products; improving relations with potential consumers; gaining consumer trust by understanding their needs; understanding the factors influencing the consumption of tourist products; developing an adequate marketing strategy and concrete elements of the most effective marketing mix. Consumer behavior can be influenced. Marketing can strongly influence the motivation and behavior of consumers. This is achieved provided that the proposed tourist product is truly a means of satisfying the needs of the consumer. At the same time, there should be no manipulation of consumer behavior. [1,13,14,17]

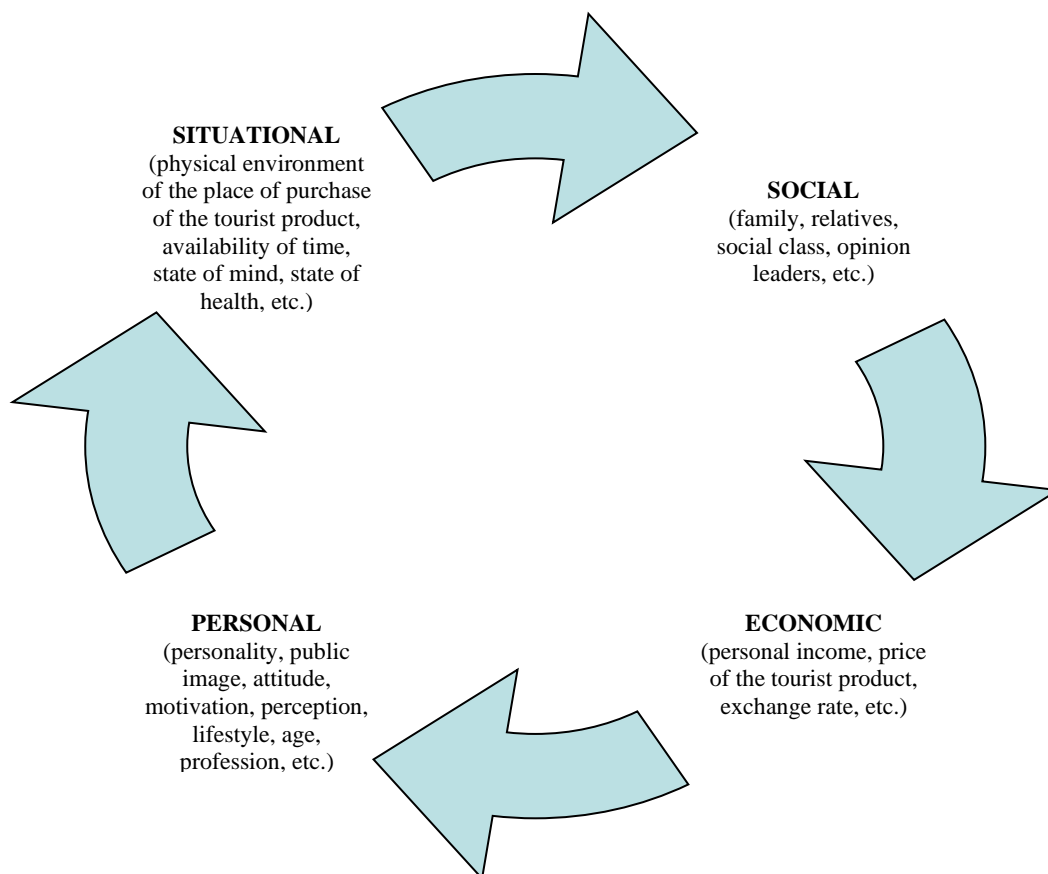


Figure 2. Factors influencing consumer behavior of tourism products

Source: own creation

In the specialized literature, the content of the concept of tourist consumption overlaps with that of tourist service consumption due to the complex composition of the tourist product, made up of the tourist attraction itself and the services through which it is capitalized. The tourist consumption process represents the result of the confrontation between tourist demand and supply materialized in time and space, thus: [19,20]

- before the actual travel to the tourist destination, but which is directly related to it (for example, purchasing sun cream before arriving at the seaside);
- at the time of travel to the destination (by transport);
- at the destination (accommodation, meals, etc.).

volume of consumption of tourist services

- equals the volume of tourism services production

consumption of tourist services

- has a seasonal character (determined by the seasonal nature of demand), conditioning the concentration in time (during holidays and vacations, at weekends, etc.)

consumul turistic este concentrat spațial

Figure 3. The peculiarities of tourism service consumption

Source: own creation

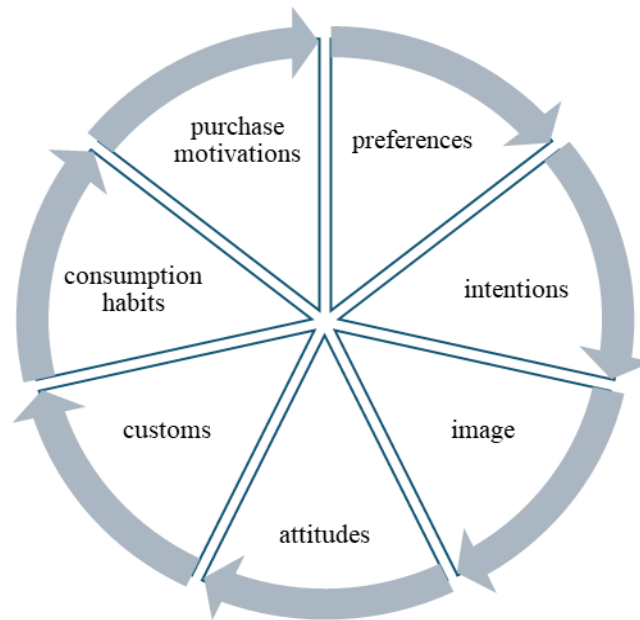


Figure 4. Dimensions of consumer behavior

Source: own creation

The explanation of consumer behavior is based on the sequence of acts that define the content of the decision-making process for purchasing services. [5,9,10]



Figure 5. Stages of the decision-making process for purchasing tourism services

Source: own creation

Knowing consumer behavior involves understanding how it manifests itself in each of the mentioned stages. In the first stage, the process by which the consumer chooses from the multitude of options offered is followed. In the second stage, the consumer's reactions are studied during the interactive process of providing the service. In the third stage, the reasons for the consumer's satisfaction or disappointment are identified. [2,7,12]

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Spending the holidays, an issue that concerns us all, for which many of us make efforts, either financially or in trying to find the options that suit us best, to choose the right destination or to calculate the budget that we can allocate to spend our time in pleasant locations, at reasonable prices. To identify preferences in this regard, we resorted to the questionnaire method applied to the inhabitants of the town of Lugo, a questionnaire in which 1000 respondents took part, in March 2024.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Tourism holds a relatively important place in society and in people's lives, constituting, for many of them, a way of relaxing after a year of work and for many it

represents the possibility of knowledge, of learning. For our locality, where the questionnaires were applied, we observe that over 50% of those interviewed consider tourism to be important.

It is possible that those who do not attach great importance to travel are part of the category of people of a certain age or of those who do not want to leave the comfort of their home.

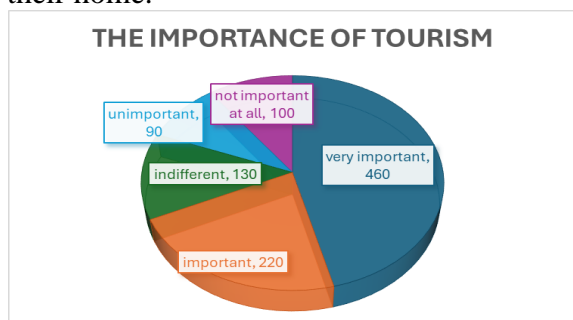


Figure 6. The importance of tourism for residents

Source: data interpretation after processing the questionnaire

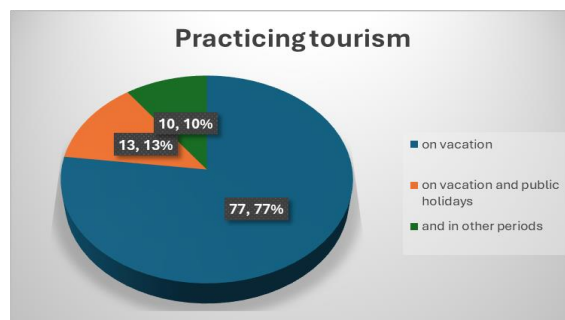


Figure 7. Periods in which tourism is practiced

Most people travel during the holidays. However, there are people who also travel on public holidays. Fewer people can afford or spend time traveling at other times of the year, such as weekends.

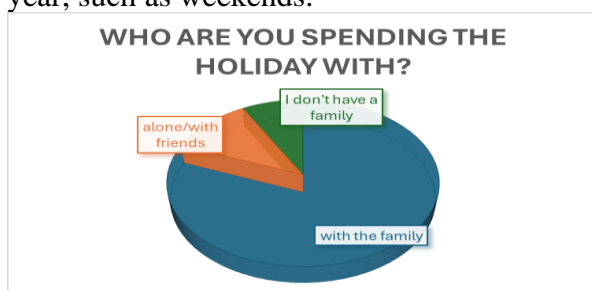


Figure 8. The way to spend the holiday

Source: data interpretation after processing the questionnaire

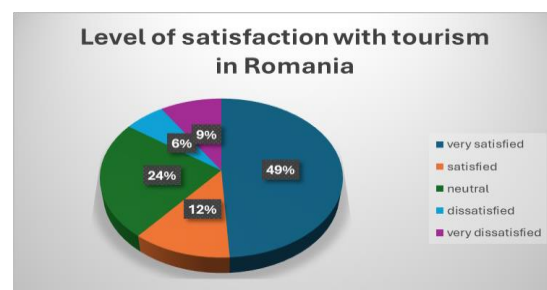


Figure 9 - Tourism in Romania – the level of satisfaction of the interviewees

Most people spend their holidays with their family members. There are few who do not spend their holidays with their family, and there was also a category of respondents, small in percentage, who declared that they did not have a family.

Many people have declared themselves satisfied with tourism in our country. However, there are also people who believe that tourism in our country still leaves a lot to be desired and there is still a lot to learn and solve.

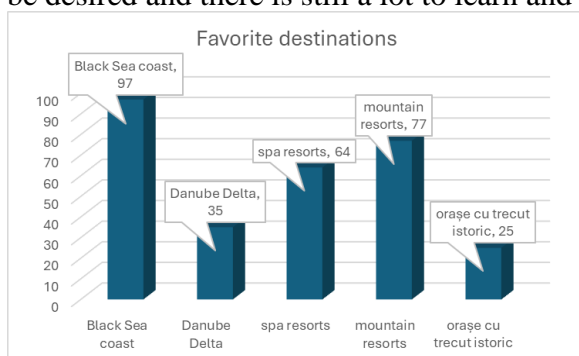


Figure 10. Favorite destinations

Source: data interpretation after processing the questionnaire

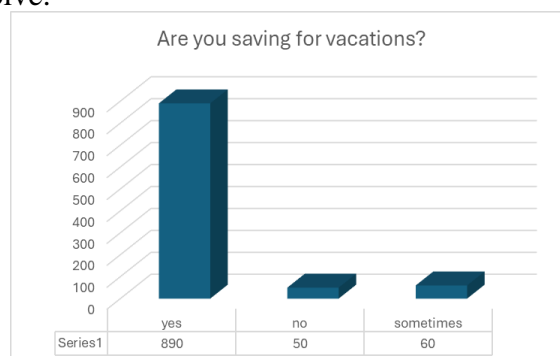


Figure 11. Vacations and savings

Asked to choose which of the destinations in our country they prefer for tourism, most of those interviewed chose the Romanian seaside, followed by mountain resorts, Danube Delta spa resorts. Few opted to spend their holidays in cities with a historical past in our country.

For most, spending holidays or vacations involves financial effort and requires certain savings throughout the year.

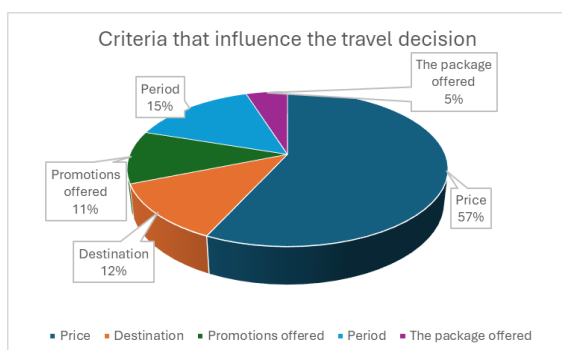


Figure 12. Criteria that influence the travel decision

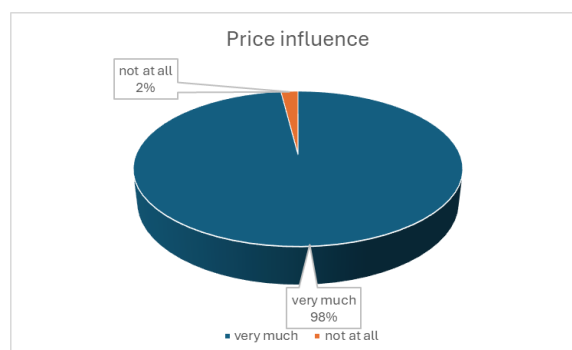


Figure 13. The influence of fares on travel decisions

Source: data interpretation after processing the questionnaire

The main criterion that influences the travel decision remains its price/fare, followed by the period in which the vacation can be taken, the destination chosen for the trip, the promotions identified and the package offered. Taking into account this aspect, namely that price is the one that most influences the travel decision, we wanted to find out to what extent it has an influence on the trip, as can be seen above.

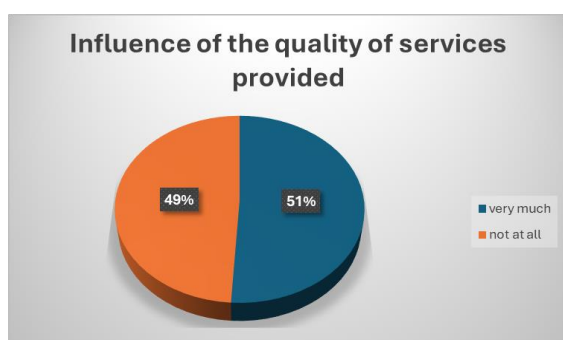


Figure 14. Measuring the influence of service quality

Source: data interpretation after processing the questionnaire

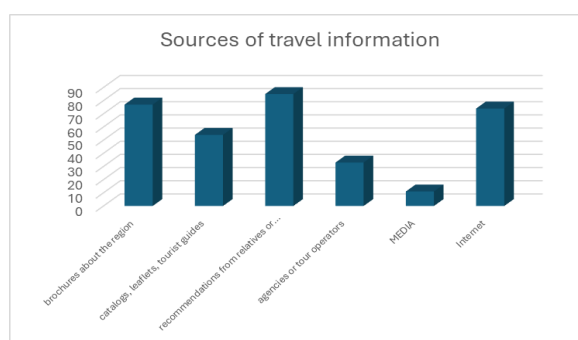


Figure 15. Information sources

We cannot say that much attention is paid to the quality of services offered during the trip, a fact highlighted above (figure 14), where we notice almost a balance between those who are influenced by the quality of services offered and those who are not influenced by this aspect.

The main source of information for choosing a trip remains family and friends, then certain brochures about the region you want to visit.



Figure 16. Sources for purchasing travel packages

Source: data interpretation after processing the questionnaire

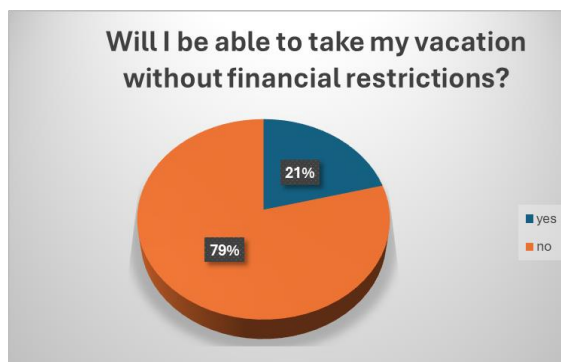


Figure 17. Possibility of traveling without financial restrictions

The most important source of purchasing travel packages remains the travel agency, and in terms of financial restrictions, it can be noted that most people are unable to travel without certain restrictions, without special efforts.

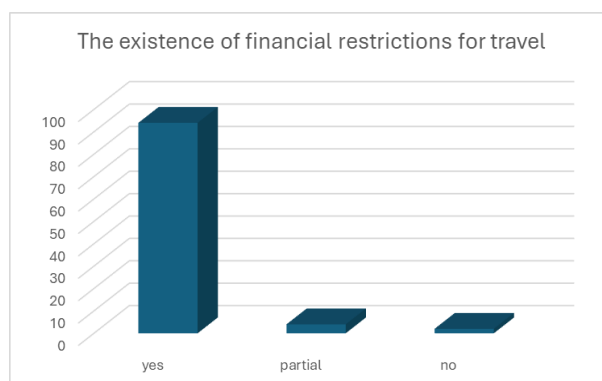


Figure 18. The existence of financial restrictions for travel

Source: data interpretation after processing the questionnaire

The last questions of the applied questionnaire made direct reference strictly to the people interviewed, wanting to identify them only by gender and age category.

CONCLUSIONS

The decision to purchase tourist services is generally made after intensive preliminary preparation. At the same time, the decision is influenced by a multitude of factors, which must be considered and whose knowledge becomes, most of the time, necessary. In many cases, not only the self-proclaimed or actual consumers of tourist services, but also many other people from the environment of those interested are participants in the decision-making process. Each participant fulfills his specific role in making the decision for this act of purchase. Here we can talk about an initiator, namely the one who is a family member or friend, a colleague, an agent of a travel agency, then we talk about an instigator, who can be the spouse, the best friend, the sales agent of the agency, then the decision-maker – who, in some cases, can also be a collective and the last one is the buyer or consumer of tourist services.

If service consumers have multiple choices for what they want, experiencing an abundance of the economy, their behavior will be important for the studies of marketing specialists. In addition to the fact that, currently, the consumer represents a kind of extremely complex and complicated social and psychological subsystem, he can become a

true king, being increasingly educated, as skeptical as possible, perhaps even cynical towards some attempts at persuasion exercised through certain means, strategies, techniques, much more intelligent in the context of new transformations in the economy. Those who believe that they do not have to take care of their customers, as it was once believed that you only must manufacture the product at the lowest price, will not be able to survive in the current economy. The center of everyone's concerns must be the anticipation of market requirements and knowledge of them to be able to adapt all activities to a more rational and efficient distribution of services.

Although all tourists have some common characteristics, the diversity of older tourists is much greater, having a different travel motivation than other types. It is perfectly normal for people from different generations to act differently, think differently, their behaviors to be different, just as the requirements, needs, preferences and points of view may be different. In this situation, it is normal to identify the most common requirements and, especially, the most important ones, along with the motivations and limitations of consumers.

The main limitations or obstacles that tourists, especially those from rural areas, face when deciding to travel are financial ones. It is necessary to develop tourism products and service packages with more affordable rates, perhaps even out of season, to allow these members of society to actively engage in tourism. This would also have a positive effect on tourism service providers, because in certain seasons they do not have as many guests, which is why they are forced to lay off staff or, in some cases, even close.

REFERENCES

- [1]. **BĂLTĂREȚU, ANDREEA MIHAELA**, 2016, *Economia industriei turistice*, Editura Universitară, București.
- [2]. **BULIN DANIELA**, 2017, *Turismul axă prioritară de creștere economică durabilă a României*, Editura Pro Universitaria, București
- [3]. **CĂTOIU I.** (coord.), 2003, *Cercetări de marketing*, Editura Uranus, București
- [4]. **COTLOP F.**, 2000, *Managementul marketingului*, Editura Teora
- [5]. **ENEA CONSTANȚA**, 2019, *Economia turismului, partea III*, Editura Sitech, Craiova
- [6]. **ERDELI I.**, 2006, *Potențialul turistic al României*, Editura Univers România
- [7]. **GABOR MANUELA ROZALIA, OLTEAN FLAVIA DANA**, 2015 *Produce inovative in turismul intern și internațional*, Editura C.H. Beck, București
- [8]. **GHERASIM D., GHERASIM T.**, 2004, *Marketing turistic*, Editura Economică, București
- [9]. **HAPENCIUC C.V.**, 2003, *Cercetare statistică în turism*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București
- [10]. **IONICĂ MARIA**, 2004, *Strategii de dezvoltare a sectorului terțiar*, Editura Uranus, București.
- [11]. **KOTLER PH.**, 2004, *Principiile marketingului*, Editura Teora, București, Ediția a II-a
- [12]. **MARTIN SIMONA CRISTINA**, 2014, *Serviciile – o provocare a economiei de piață*, Timișoara, Ed. Eurostampa
- [13]. **MĂLĂESCU SIMONA**, 2011, *Cultură și civilizație, Turism cultural, Îndrumător de lucrări practice*, Editura Risoprint, Cluj-Napoca
- [14]. **NEACȘU N., BĂLTĂREȚU ANDREEA, NEACȘU MONICA, DRĂGHILĂ MARCELA**, 2016, *Resurse și destinații turistice în România*, Editura Universitară, București

- [15]. **SIMEANU CRISTINA**, 2017, Geografia turismului și resurse turistice-îndrumător de lucrări practice, Editura „Ion Ionescu de la Brad”, Iași
- [16]. **STĂNCIULESCU GABRIELA, OLIMPIA STATE**, 2018, Tehnica operațiunilor de turism intern și internațional, Editura C.H. Beck, București.
- [17]. **STĂNCIULESCU G., LEE T.**, 2011, Tourism challenges for new enlarged Europe, București: ASE Publishing House
- [18]. ***Liberalizing International Transaction in Services, UNCATAD and The World Bank of Geneva 1994
- [19]. ***www.bibliotecadigitală.ase.ro
- [20]. ***www.capital.ro