

STUDY REGARDING THE BEHAVIOR OF RURAL MOUNTAIN TOURIST IN THE ROMANIAN CARPATHIANS

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Abstract

United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines the tourist as being an overnight stay visitor or a same-day visitor who makes inbound, outbound or domestic tourism. It also defines tourism as being a phenomenon, an economic, social and cultural phenomenon that involves the movement of people to places or countries, somewhere outside their usual environment, the main reason being represented by businesses or personal purposes. Studying the tourist behavior is a fascinating journey around world human behavior. With this study, we wanted to determine whether the personality factors predict or not the tourists behavior. We were able to confirm this theory by classifying almost two hundred people in eight big types of tourists.

Key words: United Nation World Tourism Organization, inbound, outbound, domestic tourism, tourists behavior

INTRODUCTION

United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) says that “a visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a tourist (or overnight visitor), if his/her trip includes an overnight stay, or as a same-day visitor (or excursionist)” [11]. It also defines the concept of tourism saying that “tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes” [11]. The tourism demand has seen a solid growth in the last decades due to the economic, social, political and technological changes [10].

Romania has a great variety of cultural historical values. Ethnography, folklore, folk art, historical vestiges and traditions, all of them build a harmonious natural setting combined with a varied and picturesque landscape background. All these things lead us to the concept of the rural tourism. The most common interpretation of this type of tourism, belongs to J.W. Kloeze who stated that rural tourism is a concept that includes all tourism activities which are developed in a rural environment [5]. Vlasenko O.V.

affirmed in one of his papers that the rural tourism includes “a complex of agri-tourist services, such as observation and care of pets and plants, riding a horse, organic farm food using agricultural products locally achieved and crafts, acquisition of souvenirs, etc” [12]. Gvarliani T. E. and Borodin A.N. mentioned that rural tourism represents a “group of functional types of tourist activity which can be carried out in the rural areas and includes the activity of the persons who are outside their usual environment, who travel and stay in this area for a holiday and for other purposes” [3].

Appeared and developed on the most varied forms of relief, the Romanian rural settlements have preserved and still preserve, to a large extent, the ancient traditions and customs, the local folklore and ethnographic elements and crafts which can be utilized in touristic products and promoted through a viable strategy of organization and development of rural tourism. Rural tourism includes a wide range of accommodation, events, festivities, sports, other entertainment and leisure activities, all in a typical rural setting.

The Carpathian Mountains (Map 1), belongs to the central mountain system in Europe. The

Carpathians stretch between the Vienna Basin (that separates them from the Alpien chain) and the Timok corridor (that separates them from the Stara Planina, in the Balkan Peninsula) and form an arch with a maximum width of 130 kilometres and length of 1,500 kilometres [13]. This mountain region it is considered to be one of the most significant and richest area in Europe. The Carpathians represents the “home” for almost 30% of the European flora and as well to the Europe’s substantial populations of wolves, lynx, and brown bears and for rare bird species. Distinct from the natural diversity that can be seen here, the semi-natural habitats such as meadows and mountain pastures are a great cultural and ecological importance. World Wild Life (WWF) includes in the Carpathian area in the “Global 2020” list all the worldwide eco-regions, for exceptional levels of biodiversity.



Map 1. Carpathian Mountains in Europe
Source: [1].

In Romania, the Carpathian Mountains (Map 2) stretch for more than 900 kilometres, in the shape of an arch that isolates Transylvania with its beauties from the rest of the country. In Romania, the Carpathian chain is split into three big and important groups: Eastern Carpathians, Southern Carpathians and Western Carpathians. Each of these groups has distinct landscapes, being developed on different types of rocks such as karstic, glacial, structural and volcanic.

The rural space in Romania is being called “Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic”, because the country has the Carpathians as a component of the relief forms, the Danube river as a hydrographic network, and the opening to the

Black Sea, implicitly to the Planetary Ocean, which makes it Pontic.



Map 2. Carpathians Mountain Area in Romania
Source: [6].

The Carpathian chain provides important ecosystem services and goods such as forest products, fresh water, food, etc. which can be capitalized in rural tourism. Actually, the rural tourism in the Carpathians includes in its offer the mountain unbelievable landscapes, the unpolluted environments and picturesque ambiances.

One of the most important services – rural tourism includes “all forms of tourism in the rural area. It includes, at the same time, outdoor tourists activities but also activities that allows tourists to discover the nature, the cultural environment and also the gastronomy”[2]. If we compare with other forms of tourism, the rural tourism stands out for its variety and originality, being based also on the potential of the rural space, on the specific products to the place and on the people. This form of tourism is the result of the modern tourist behaviour, who likes to travel and visit original places that will make him discover all the beauty of the nature, avoiding in the same time all the crowds that are being formed on the dedicated tourism regions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main purpose of our research was to understand if the personality factors predict in a way or another the tourist's behaviour. For this we used as methodology the step by step approach.

Step 1 – we started to make different comparisons using the dynamics (2014 and 2019) to see which was the flow of tourists. To determine the dynamics, it was used the formula: Dynamics = Total Number of Tourists Arrivals in 2014/Total Number of Tourists Arrivals in 2019 x 100.

Step 2 – we applied a questionnaire to a group of almost 212 participants, to identify their accommodation preferences, their accommodation reservation form preferences, and also the preferred timeframe for their travel.

Step 3 – with SPSS data analysis software we were able to generate different information that helped us to understand some behaviours, based on some performed actions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To understand the behaviour of the tourists who choose mountain tourism, it was analyzed the dynamic of the tourists' number in the Romanian Carpathians between 2014 and 2019 (Fig. 1). This analysis makes us understand that our tourists' preference is rural mountain tourism.

An upward trend can be seen for the rural mountain tourism. A form of tourism which could be chosen by the ones who try to run away from the big crowded cities, from all the closed spaces which could be found there and from all the artificial food that city life offers sometimes – almost always.

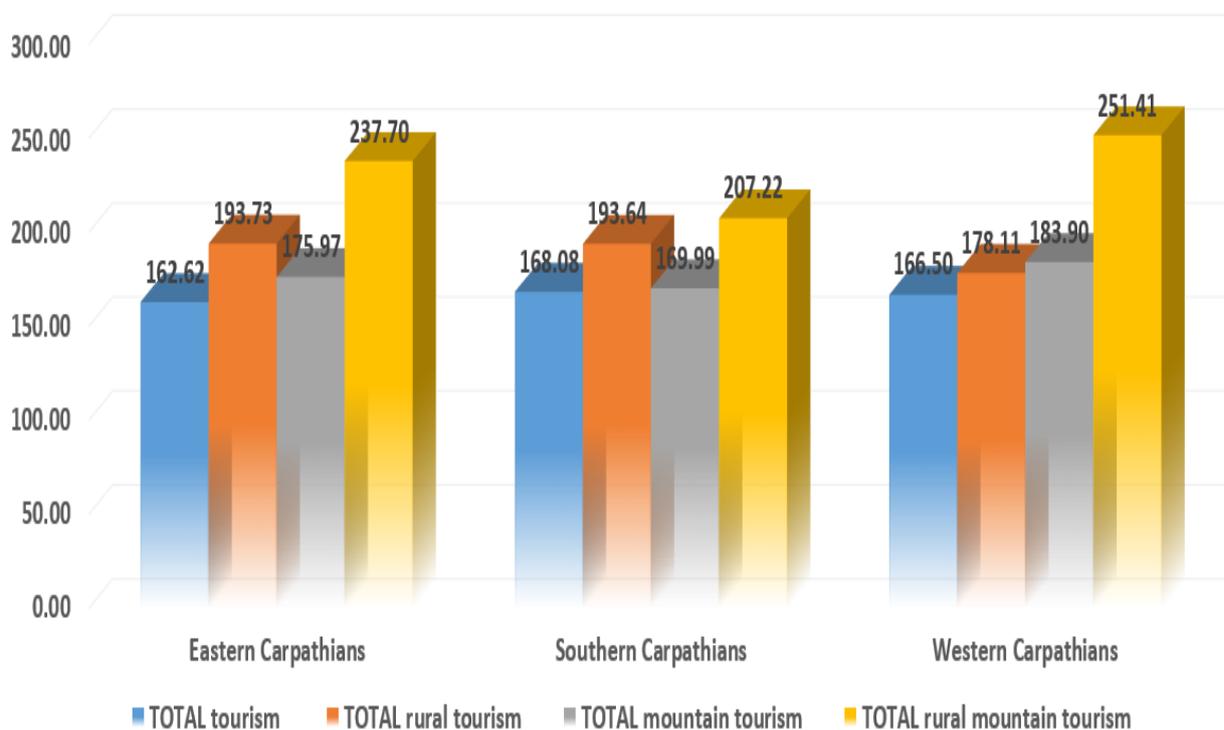


Fig. 1. The dynamic of the accommodation structures number between 2014-2019 in the Romanian Carpathians
 Source: Own calculation.

An increase of 137.70% can be seen in the Eastern Carpathians. This part is being well known for all its natural passes-by that made possible the mobility on both sides of the Carpathians since the ancient times. Another increase of 107.22% can be seen in the Southern Carpathians, also called Romanian Alps, where the highest peaks in Romania can be found. The highest increase can be seen in

the Western Carpathians, where it reaches out of 151.41%. CNN included the Western Carpathians within the list of the 17 tourist destinations which defines Europe. We could see here different types of tourists, and if we could classify them based on the hierarchy that Robert Lanquar did 25 years ago [7], we could say that the tourists are from the nomad-tourists category. The nomad tourists

seek direct contact with nature and local population, with motivations such as daily escape and adventure, religious and artistic or artisanal travel.

Another important thing which could define the tourists behaviour could be the form of accommodation they choose (Table 1).

Table 1. Preferred accommodation structures by tourists

Preferred Accommodation Structures	No. of Tourists	Percentage
Hotel/Motel	86	40.6
Pensions, Cottages, Villas	110	51.9
Camping	16	7.5
Total	212	100

Source: Own calculation.

It was noticed that many people choose to stay at pensions, cottages and villas, and they also like camping. Plog identified in 1974 two psychological dimensions which differentiate the tourists into psychocentric and allocentric tourists. While psychocentric tourists have concerns that regard their own person, being afraid of the outside world, considering that they cannot control it, allocentric tourists are curious and very concerned of the outside world, independent and looking for new experiences and destinations [9]. This being said, it was noticed that the 40.6% of the tourists who choose hotels or motels, and the 51.9% of the tourists who choose different types of rural accommodations are psychocentric tourists. They look for standardized tourist products, scheduled and organized trips, preferring accommodations that offer them conditions similar to their home. They like to book their reservation in advance to be sure that everything is planned, and that availability is found. They like common activities accepted by the majority. From the total number of the campers, 7.5% of the tourists could be considered allocentric tourists. The ones who are adventurous preferring to explore to attain their own goals

and destinations which are not reachable on the map, people in search of new experiences in new destinations are able to accept also modest conditions.

Nickerson and Ellis, in 1999, combined these two dimensions psychocentric – allocentric with individual psychological features introverted and extroverted [8]. The analysis presented in Table 2 allows us to understand how many of the total number of tourists can be considered introverted and how many extroverted in this study.

Table 2. Accommodation Reservation Forms used by tourists

Accommodation Reservation Form	No. of Tourists	Percentage
I usually decide when I reach the destination	26	12.3
I prefer camping	11	5.2
Phone reservation	31	14.6
Online reservation	84	39.6
Travel agency reservation	15	28.3
Total	167	100

Source: Own calculation.

Silent, reserved, attentive, relying mainly on their own knowledge, never in a hurry and studious, we may classify our tourists who choose to make their reservations by phone, 14.6%, or online, 39.6%, as being introverted tourists. Great amateurs for fun, not being concerned about their safety, spontaneous, loving to try new experiences, to meet other people, being able to easily create connections, 12.3% of our tourists decide their accommodation while they reach the destination: 5.2% prefer to camp and 28.3% choose to be helped by a travel agency. They could be considered as being “our introverts” tourists.

In 2001, by combing again these two dimensions, psychocentric – allocentric and extrovert – introvert, Mervyn Jackson, Gerard White and Marie Gronn White identified four types of interdependent personalities (Fig. 2): the explorer, the adventurer, the guided and the groupic.

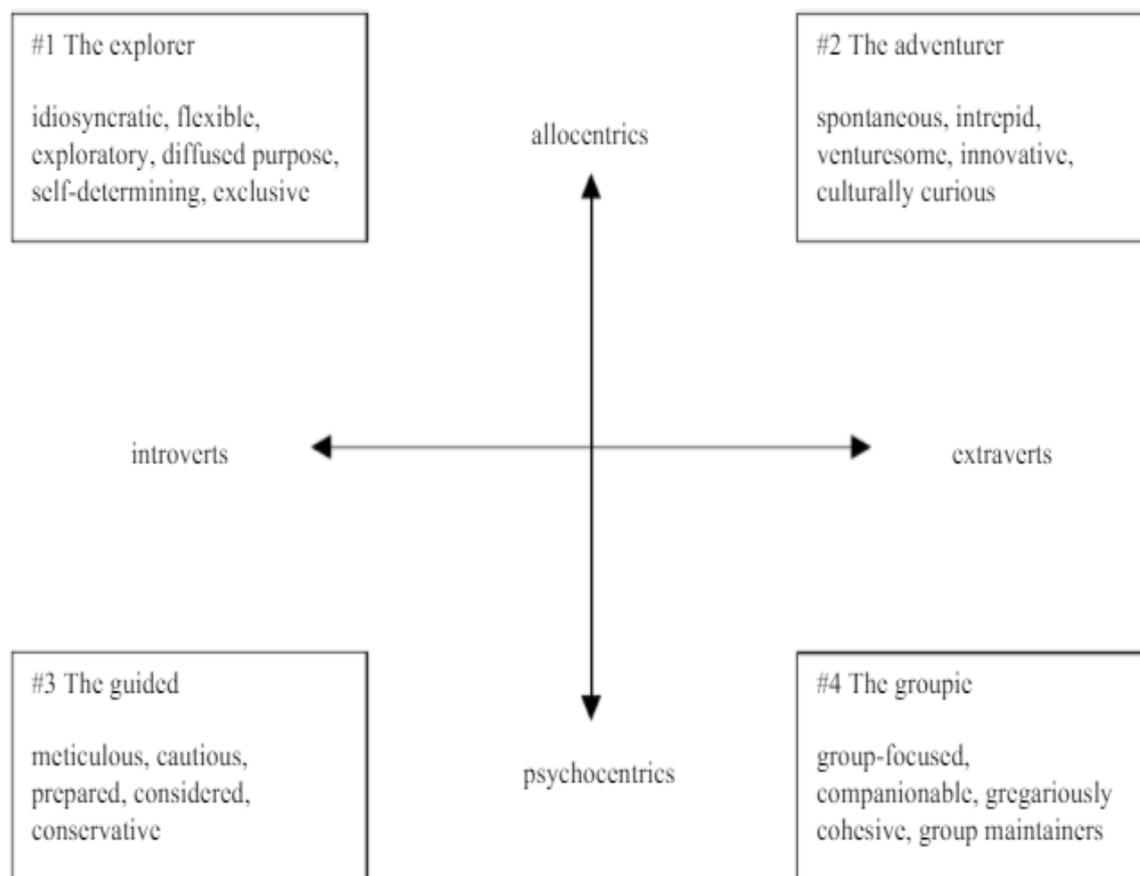


Fig. 2. Name and proposed personality indicators for four interdependent personality type
 Source: [4].

We can also classify our tourists based on these criteria if we look at the analysis presented in Table 3, where it is shown the tourists' preferred period for travelling.

Table 3. Preferred Period for travelling

Preferred Period to Travel	No. of Tourists	Percentage
Each time I feel the need to escape my busy life	96	45.3
Usually for holidays	21	9.9
Usually on summertime	80	37.7
Usually on wintertime	15	7.1
Total	212	100

Source: Own calculation.

About 45.3% of the tourists are being part of the adventurer type. Spontaneous, enterprising, innovative, curious, they travel each time to escape of their busy life, with friends maybe, but they are not bothered to meet new people on the road and even if the travel was not planned. They simply need an escape.

About 37.7% of the tourists belongs to the explorer type. They usually travel on the mountain side in the summertime, when most of the people are in search of beaches. Idiosyncratic, flexible, they organize themselves their trip, they cannot be controlled, they avoid crowds, establish their own schedule, chose known hosts, and keep discretion over the destinations.

About 7.1% of the tourists who travel usually in wintertime is considered as being a part of the guided type tourists. Meticulous, cautious, prepared, conservative, they often chose their usual favourite places, destinations, wanting to forget the current problems of the daily life, searching for new relationships.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on this analysis, there were identified several types of tourists. It is easy to affirm now that tourists' travel is closely related to

their behavior. Allocentrics, psychocentrics, extroverts, introverts, explorers, adventurers, guided or groupies, there is place for everyone in the Romanian Carpathians. Tourists behavior implies all the internal and external factors concerned with what the tourists want, need, their ideas, their experiences, their activities. During the travel planning process, tourists make different decisions such as booking the travel, looking for the different places that they want to see, searching for places where to eat and drink, to socialize and so on. All these decisions define tourists' behaviors. The attitude has a direct impact on the chosen experience on environment, people and destination.

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