

PRELIMINARIES ON THE AGRITOURISM TOURIST'S TYPOLOGY IN ROMANIA. CASE STUDY *SATUL BANULUI GUESTHOUSE*, PRAHOVA COUNTY

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Abstract

Touristic and agritouristic guesthouses in Romania own authentic resources that represent elements of maximum attraction, and Satul Banului Guesthouse is representative for promoting the authentic vernacular Romanian, Muntenia style in the touristic offer. The study aims to identify the rough guide criteria by which tourists select guesthouses and how much it is appreciated, according to multiple socio-demographic categories, the local national authenticity through services and other opportunities. The data were collected through an original questionnaire which includes 33 subjects, customers of Satul Banului Guesthouse, with the following demographic structure: 51.5% men and 48.5% women, ages between 31-50 years are predominant, and 66.7% of the respondents have university degrees. The results indicated that: the proximity to the home is not a significant indicator; tourists between 31-50 years choose a good quality/price offer; especially male tourists choose a guesthouse appreciating Romanian authenticity (56.67%); participation in outdoor activities is strongly segregated, and cultural tours is especially important for women.

Key words: Romanian rural tourism, tourist typology, case study Satul Banului Guesthouse, vernacular, authenticity

INTRODUCTION

Touristic and agritouristic guesthouses in Romania own authentic resources that represent elements of maximum attraction [1, 2, 3].

Specialization of guesthouses is a new challenge for rural tourism [5, 9] and what is important is the preservation of the authenticity [6, 8].

Satul Banului Guesthouse is self-characterized as a project for offline life, is representative for promoting the authentic vernacular Muntenia - Southern Romania - style in the touristic offer, in terms of location, architecture, interior decoration, gastronomy, cultural services and outdoor activities [7].

The name of *Satul Banului* comes from "sat" meaning "village" in Romanian language and "ban" meaning "governor". This name was inspired by southern Romanian region Oltenia, where *ban* is the title of the governor delegated by the ruler – so *Satul Banului* may have the meaning of a village which belong

(as property or just from a valuable administrative point of view) to the governor, and this meaning is deeply connected with the vernacular features of this guesthouse.

Additionally the option for the case study at this guesthouse, we mention that it also recommends itself through multiple opportunities to involve customers in various activities such as hike/travel/explore/live and play in nature with "toys for all: stones, sand, hay, and wood", without plastic slides and the "famous" trampoline [13].

More than 20 tourist attractions with outstanding cultural and natural heritage value, located at distances between 3 and 55 km from Satul Banului Guesthouse, are presented to interested customers (among which we exemplify former palaces and mansions: Cantacuzino's Aristocrat Palace, the so called *Little Trianon* from Floresti, Bellu's Mansion, Pană Filipescu's Mansion, Drăghici Cantacuzino's Palace; Filipeștii de Pădure Church; memorial houses/museums such as those of exceptional Romanian

personalities: Nicolae Iorga, Ion Luca Caragiale, Nicolae Grigorescu, Iulia Haşdeu; Upper Peasant School; shelter for wisents).

It is well known from tourism marketing that tourists' behavior is determined by a set of variables. Taking into account the criteria for tourists segmentation from different points of view: socio-economic [11], psychological [4, 12], and the combination of these dimensions [10], at the moment tourist products needs to meet the safety and standardization criteria, but also to bring together the elements of authenticity and specificity at the same time.

In terms of rural tourism and especially agritourism, tourists want to relax in a natural setting, in contardiction with the stress of big cities and at the same time they want to discover as many specific elements related to the culture heritage of the area (traditional ethnography and folklore) from the respective destination.

Under these conditions, during a vacation we can see the emphasis is not only on relaxation, but also on the cultural enrichment of the tourist, his involvement in various activities specific to the respective tourist destination.

As we didn't find in the rural tourism specialized literature relevant information for the typology of the client of agritouristic guesthouses in Romania, our study aims to identify some of the main criteria by which tourists select the tourist guesthouse and how much it is appreciated, according to multiple socio-demographic categories, the local national authenticity through services and other opportunities offered.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For data collection, we developed a questionnaire with the socio-demographic indicators of age, occupation, residentship, gender, level of education and other variables necessary to identify the rough guide criteria by which tourists select (such) a guesthouse, respectively

1. if the client is traveling alone or in a group (family/friends),
2. criteria to justify the option for a guesthouse with a Romanian vernacular profile,

3. the type of services which is preferred by the customer (standard services or services that comply with quality standards, additionally reflecting the specific Romanian hospitality),

4. the proximity to home,

5. the quality/price criteria,

6. the preference for outdoor activities,

7. the preference for visiting natural and cultural objectives in the area.

The items are predominantly closed-ended, with multiple answers.

As general observations, while developing the instrument, the necessary measures to ensure validity and fidelity were taken into account (the conceptual framework and the relationship between concept - variable - item; multiple successive draft versions and verification tests); also the text for the covering letter was developed to ensure the fulfillment of the criteria imposed by the efficiency and the ethics of the research.

The sample for the case study consists of 33 subjects. Regarding its representativeness, we mention that the respondents present the common socio-demographic background found at Satul Banului Guesthouse.

Data collection period utilized in this work: Oct 1 – Dec 31, 2023.

Method of administration: self-administered, paper & pencil.

We recorded the data using the SPSS program, with which we also performed descriptive statistics and correlation tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Regarding age, we found the following structure: 63.6% of the respondents fall into the age category 31-50 years, respectively the mature age group, professionally active and with family, with increased propensity for communication, receptivity, energy and responsibility relative to requests from the internal and external environment, 18.2% of respondents belong to the 18-30 age group, 12.1% are tourists aged 51-65 and 6.1% are children under 18 (Fig 1).

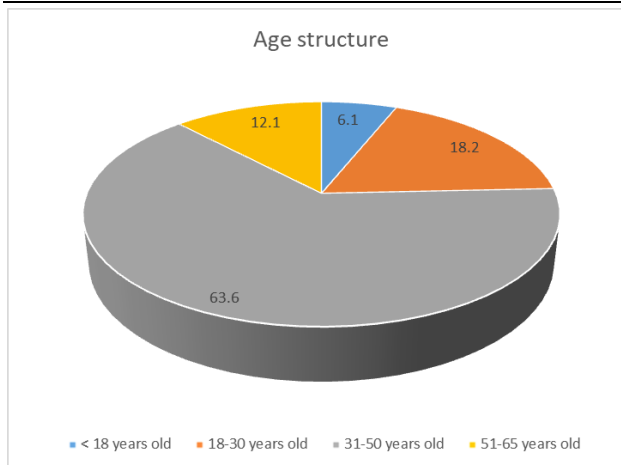


Fig. 1. Age structure
 Source: own processing.

From the occupational perspective, 78.8% of respondents are employed, 9.1% are entrepreneurs, 6.1% are pupils and 6.1% are students (Fig 2).

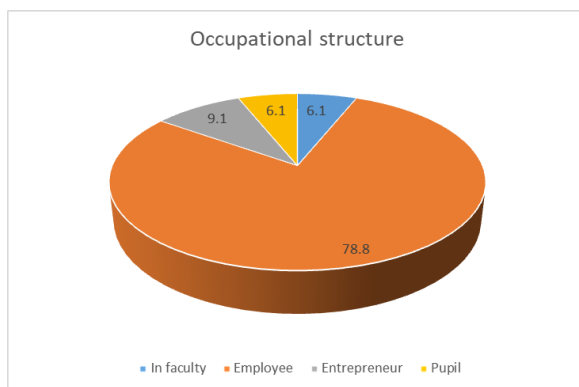


Fig. 2. Occupational structure
 Source: own processing.

We notice a balanced distribution of respondents according to the "gender" variable: 51.5% of the respondents are men and 48.5% are women (Fig. 3).

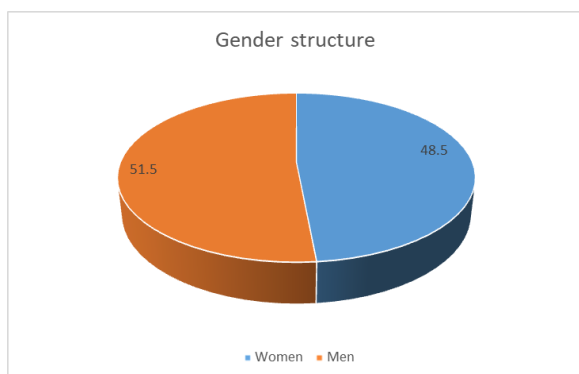


Fig. 3. Gender structure
 Source: own processing.

In terms of education level, the majority indicates a (very) educated sample (66.7% of respondents have university studies, 9.1% master's studies and 3% other post-graduate studies), 18.2% of respondents have high school studies and 3% have graduated from secondary school (Fig. 4).

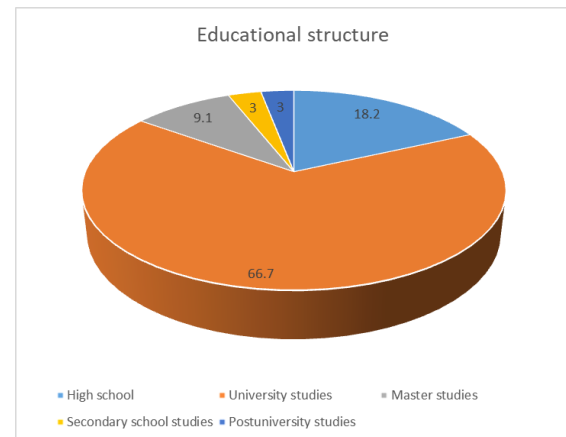


Fig. 4. Education level structure
 Source: own processing.

From the perspective of the residency (Fig. 5) we notice that 72.7% of the respondents come from the urban environment, which indicates the need for regeneration in the middle of nature and still a need to keep in touch with the vernacular roots, while 27.3% of the tourists come from the rural environment.

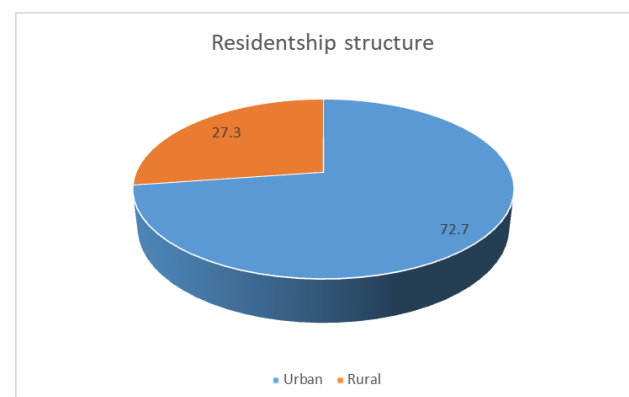


Fig. 5. Residency structure
 Source: own processing.

The option for this guesthouse concerning the rural residents could be argued by the extremely diverse palette of services offered, which go far beyond the common activities of a peasant household where the adults in the family, professionally busy and probably

additionally busy with household chores (so busy at least as much as there are the city dwellers), currently have little leisure left to spend with their family, little time for relaxation (active and passive) in nature.

Are the tourists accompanied during their travel and stay at the guesthouse? Tourists prefer to travel and stay with their family (87.9%), respectively with friends (12.1%) (Fig. 6).

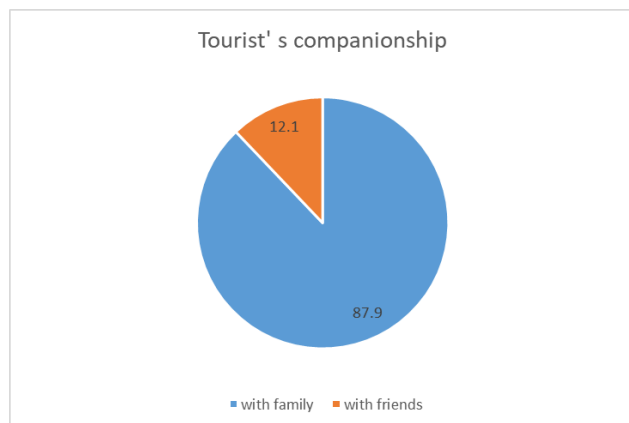


Fig. 6. Tourist's companionship
 Source: own processing.

Data analysis according to the guesthouse selection criteria:

-the accommodation unit's proximity to home is not a significant indicator for 90.9% of the subjects (Fig. 7);

-an advantageous quality/price ratio is preferred for tourists aged between 30-50 years (Fig. 8);

-services representative for Romanian vernacular authenticity are sought/appreciated especially by male tourists (56.67%), but also 43.33% female tourists value them (Fig 9);

-participation in outdoor activities is important for the categories of employees and students, especially for employees (75%), but within the category of employees there is also a large percentage (80%) for which the aforementioned criterion is not relevant (Fig. 10).

Moreover, 76% of tourists aged between 30 and 50 do not choose the guesthouse according to this criteria (Fig. 11);

-visiting cultural and natural tourist attractions of the area is targeted by women tourists (58.82%), while the majority of male tourists

(62.50%) do not show interest in this aspect (Fig. 12);

-the vast majority of Satul Banului Guesthouse's clients (90.91%) prefer tourist services that reflect the Romanian vernacular authenticity over the standard services offered in tourism, which may indicate a growing demand for elements of regional authenticity to be included in the offer of agritouristic guesthouses which exploits the zonal ethnographic potential (Fig. 13).

And/or we can also interpret (somewhat idealistically) the percentage in favor of some clients aware of the fact that "a people that does not know its history is like a child that does not know its parents" as the Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga used to say.

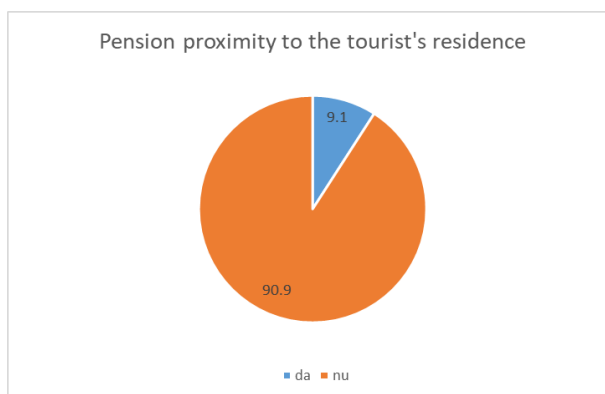


Fig. 7. Selection of the guesthouse according to proximity to the tourist's residence
 Source: own processing.

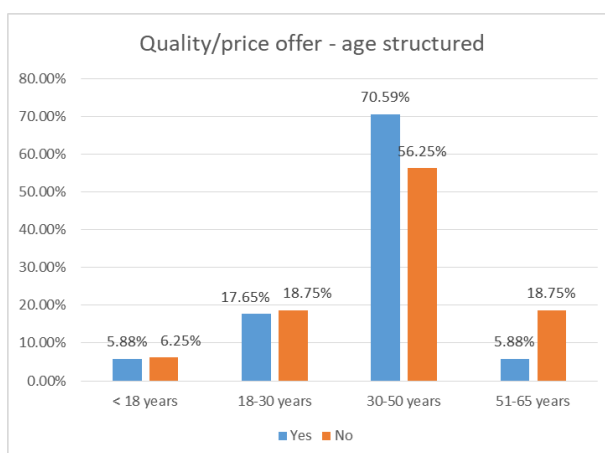


Fig. 8. Selection of the guesthouse by the age structured quality-price offer
 Source: own processing.

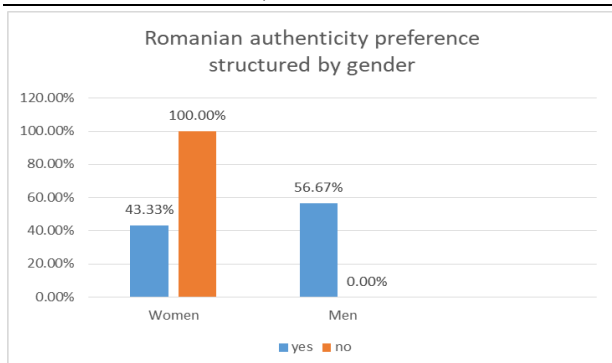


Fig. 9. Appreciation for Romanian authenticity services by gender
 Source: own processing.

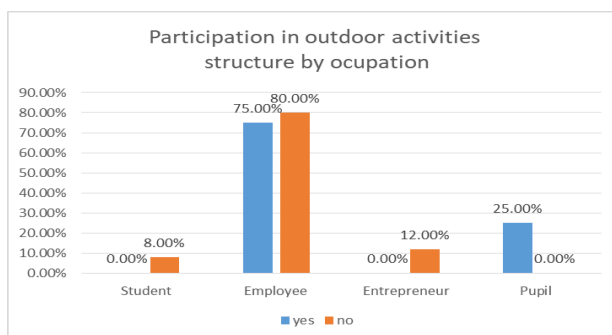


Fig. 10. Participation in outdoor activities by occupational category
 Source: own processing.

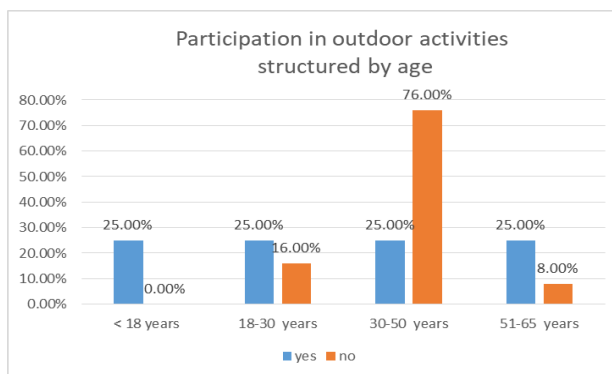


Fig. 11. Participation in outdoor activities by age
 Source: own processing.

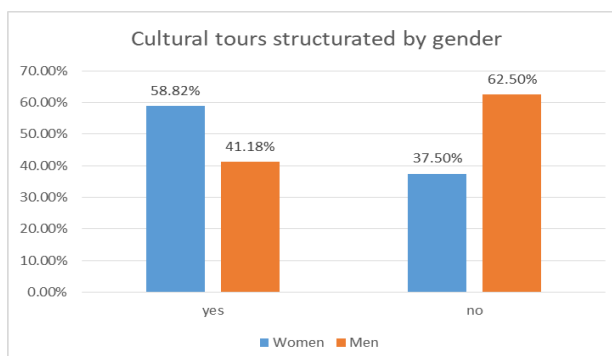


Fig. 12. Visits to natural and cultural touristic targets by gender category
 Source: own processing.

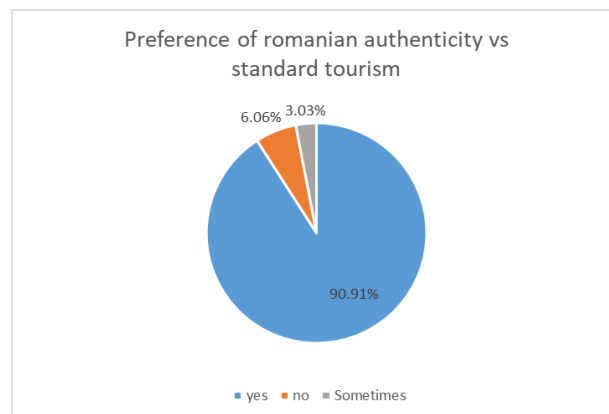


Fig. 13. Preference for touristic services with authentic Romanian specificity
 Source: own processing.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on this research, the main conclusions are:

- Promoting the authentic regional countryside represents a huge potential for the development of touristic and agritouristic guesthouses in Romania. Satul Banului guesthouse is representative for its special offer that reflects and promotes the authentic vernacular of Muntenia and Romania style.

- According the age structure of the pension's tourists, the highest percentage of 63.6% belongs to the 31-50 age group, respectively the professionally and socially involved age group, with a well-defined cultural level. A percentage of 18.2% of respondents are young, aged between 18 and 30, and 6.1% are children under 18. The elderly who visit the guesthouse represent 12.1% and are between 51-65 years old.

- The level of education of the respondents indicates tourists with university studies (66.7%) and postgraduate studies (12%), so with a high level of education, which makes them appreciate the true value, the authenticity of objects and services from this Muntenia guesthouse.

- The Romanian authenticity, as criteria for choosing the guesthouse, is found both in the case of male tourists (56.67%) and female tourists (43.33%).

- Regarding the option for outdoor activities, an aspect in which Satul Banului Guesthouse excels, offering opportunities and means

(various hikes - including cultural destinations, horse riding, bike rides, carriage/carriage rides, off-road, enduro, visit to the blacksmith, visit to the varnish shop, picking mushrooms) the answers are segregated probably by the level of stress/fatigue, the state of health etc. so some tourists prefer a more sedentary style, while others are actively involved in the outdoor activities suggested by the guesthouse management.

-Visiting tourist attractions of the area is a criterion for choosing a guesthouse, especially for women tourists (58.82%), while male tourists are less attracted to this activity (62.50%).

-A very high percentage of tourists express their preference for the authentic Muntenia - south of Romania experience promoted by Satul Banului Guesthouse over the standard services offered by classic tourism. This indicates the extremely high demand for the exploitation of authentic regional resources through rural tourism.

-Rural tourism is seen overall as a way of preserving the natural and human qualities of a destination combined with cultural tourism, it contributes both to education and to increase the quality of life for those who practice these forms of tourism.

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