



THE 6TH EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
**EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
REALITIES AND PERSPECTIVES**

Analysis of Students Travel Preferences – Which Identity?

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Abstract: The main purpose of this paper is to show and share the results of the research that were made in order to improve the situation and importance of tourism among students and also to offer to the academic society and not only, the results of this achievement. Was chose the our country: Romania and I studied the case. I had to consider the financial crisis in the hope that the results would contribute to minimize it. I got qualitative data through personal interviews to my students from the Faculty of Management Marketing in Economic Business from Ramnicu Valcea. All the theoretical and practical views focus on making a rigorous inventory of all that means tourism, a field that grows each second and expands. The results of this research have proved it. Tourism is existing and viable for them, with important benefits for present and future opportunities. The paper highlights the importance of tourism activity, and gives evidence about the rapid evolution of the tourism industry.

Keywords: Development; economic crises; preferences; Romanian tourism; tourism

1. Introduction

The main purpose of this article is to discuss a very recent subject: the current economic crisis and its impact on tourism. If we take into account the fact that tourism in Romania has become a more and more complex business, especially in the past few years, it is interesting to notice how it will unfold on the background of the actual economic and financial crisis, which has begun to show its effects throughout the country. This study intends to investigate the touristic preferences among the students of the Faculty of Business Marketing and Management, University “Constantin Brîncoveanu”, Vîlcea.

Briefly, tourism may be defined as a socio-economic phenomenon, specific for modern civilization, strongly anchored in social life and, therefore, easily impacted by its evolution. Available on a large scale and adapted to society’s needs, tourism stands alone by its unique dynamic nature. Besides, given its appeal to all social categories and his complex structure, tourism engages large scale human and material resources and has an important influence on global economy, on society’s evolution and also on national and international relations. Global economic crisis gets from bad to worse and Romania is fully suffering the effects of this form of recession, without getting a viable solution from the financial analysts yet. These effects spread towards mostly all branches of commercial activities and the purpose of this study is to analyze their impact on the touristic preferences of the targeted lot of students.

2. Conceptual Approach

Tourism is first of all perceived as “a cumulus of means of recreation and other activities destined for spending one’s free time in a pleasant way”. It involves travelling to a place different from the one of residence and it encompasses all the activities undertaken during that travel. Thus, tourism is defined as a complex activity, which can cover a wide range of fields, with a significant economic involvement and which finds itself at the crossroads of multiple industries and services.

Tourism is a complex business that continues to grow: economically speaking it represents the synthesis of a wide range of services; psychologically and socially it constitutes as a better method to organize one’s free time.

Tourism is defined as “a complex and multifunctional branch of the national economy covering a rich offering of goods and services destined to those who travel away from their usual environment for a period of time under a year and whose main purpose doesn’t imply a financial gain from the place of their visit (Stanciulescu, 2003, p.5).”

According to the new definition given by the Global Tourism Organization (OMT), tourism encloses “all activities done during holidays and travels to a destination other than the place of residence and for a period of time of less than 12 months (one year) in the purpose of business, free time or other” (Iordache, 2008, p. 8).

Natural and anthropic tourism potential – the first one represents the basic package that encloses all resources made available by the natural characteristics of a given space, while the second is the sum of all leisure activities created by man during the evolution of local community (Iordache 2008, p. 9).

Tourist attraction – a tourist attraction of a given destination, which usually constitutes the main reason why travellers come to see the place.

Holiday resort – an urban or rural area with developed touristic services based on local available resources.

Holiday complex – an urban or rural area (or part of it) with specifically developed touristic purposes.

Crisis – a time of hardships (economic, political or social in nature); a period of tensions, confusion and trials (mostly decisive ones), which come to life in society. Critical loss (of goods, time, jobs, etc).

Economic crisis – a time defined by a crucial decay of global commercial activities.

Statistic selection represents a study taken on a lot of the population, which is representative for the rest and is thereby called a case study (Grigorescu, 2010, p. 65).

Investigation is a statistical analysis with a definite structure, which involves gathering information, especially from the targeted lot of people, following the issue of specific questionnaires and compiling data from the case study.

It seems that tourism was a practice since ancient times; however, given the fact that it’s difficult to set a specific date of its first steps due to lack of historical data, we cannot say precisely when it distinguished itself from other similar activities.

As commercial activity, tourism is very hard to pin into specific limits; like all human action, it is subject to a complex analysis related to the numerous fields involved: economy, geography, psychology and sociology. The first human inclination towards travelling was mentioned in the writings of Strabon, a geographer from ancient times. As a concept, tourism reflects a the human need

to visit different places and attractions throughout the world, for personal reasons; travelling involves both the act of getting from one point to another as well as short-term dwelling in beforehand chosen places as a destination for passing free time (Snack, 2003, p. 18).

Generally speaking, what mainly influences the choice of a tourist destination is the natural factor: geographical position, scenery, flora, fauna and climate; also the general aspects of past and present human existence and activities: language, mentality, level of hospitality, customs, folklore, culture (religion, art science), politics, economy; the human factor as well: locals attitude towards tourists, quality of service, local authorities approach and police behavior etc.; resources like: transport, accommodation, food, sports, entertainment, flow of information, etc.

3. Problem Statement

Due to its complex nature, tourism is often considered a stepping stone for the economic development of a country; that is if we take into account its practical applications in industry, transports, construction, etc. At country or regional level, the impact that tourism might have has to be analyzed in relation to its connection to the main objectives of the overall economic system; that way we can measure its influence on the economic growth, financial stability and unemployment.

From an economy’s perspective, tourism brings its contribution to achieving a more balanced flow of income and reduces the growing tendency of the national inflation rate. Tourism increases consumption of goods and the bigger that becomes the more balanced will the money flow get (Pantelescu, 2008, p. 29).

One of the first contributions of tourism industry to the economic growth is perfectly illustrated in the generation of PIB. According to World Travel and Tourism Council’s estimations (WTTC), tourism industry is expected to have a 9,3% contribution to PIB in 2010 and a 9,7% one in 2020.

However, this contribution to PIB generation may vary from one area to another, depending on the local economic level but also on the degree of tourism industry participation in the respective economy.

Table 1. Tourism input to PIB in 2010 versus 2020

	<i>PIB 2010</i>		<i>PIB 2020</i>	
	Mld \$	%	Mld \$	%
Country	2,464.775		2,383.133	
Us	1,375.9		2,485.7	
China	499,9		1,948.9	
Japan	459,3		594,8	
France	284,6		379,9	
Germany	273,4		377,1	
Spain	237,9		341,1	
UK	231,1		393,3	
Italy	217,1		292,5	
Canada	136,1		-	
Australia	123,1		-	

Source: www.wttc.org

Future investments in tourism are approximated to reach 2,464.775 billion USD in 2010 and 2,383.133 billion by 2020. They represent an important macroeconomic factor for the global economic

development and, in our case, for the local tourism evolution; they are particularly highlighted in the analysis of the investments made by the main developed countries in the world.

4. Analysis of Touristic Preferences in the Times of Crisis

The main purpose of this study is to analyze how much our students travel now, what were their preferred destinations before and how will they change because of the current economic crisis. As a case study we've included the students in their 1st, 2nd and 3rd years - from the Economy and Commerce in Tourism and Services branch – given that they've already gained some knowledge about tourism and they're able to express an opinion about it. This study was completed between 2.12.2010 and 9.12.2010 and performed on a lot of 155 students, chosen randomly.

The main detail taken into consideration was that all students are to be chosen from the Economy and Commerce in Tourism and Services branch. The result was that: 97.41% actually travel, which confirms the first hypothesis: that at least 97% from the questioned lot do travel (see table no.2)

Table 2. Students that travel

	Answer	ABSOLUTE	RELATIVE (%)
1 st year students	Yes	35	94.59%
	No	2	5.4%
	Total	37	
2 nd year students	Yes	80	97.5%
	No	2	2.43%
	Total	82	
3 rd year students	Yes	36	100%
	No	-	-
	Total	36	
Total	Total	155	
	Yes	151	97.41%
	No	4	2.58%

Source: Data gathered by the author

Reasons why some of the interviewed students do not travel

The relatively low percentage of the students who don't actually travel, not even once per year, is rather due to lack of time than to a reluctance towards this form of tourism. Unfortunately, almost 60 % of the students who don't travel gave as main reason the lack of spare time. However, 31% of them reveal a sad truth about our country: even if these students work the year-round, they still cannot afford to travel, not even if it's meant to improve their general well-being and state of mind (see table no 3).

Table 3. Reason why students don't travel

	Answer	Absolute	Relative (%)
1 st year students	I don't have time	27	73%
	I can't afford it	9	24.3%
	I am not interested in travelling	1	2.7%
	Total	37	
1 st year students	I don't have time	43	52.43%
	I can't afford it	27	33%
	I am not interested in	2	2.43%

	travelling		
	<i>Total</i>	82	
3 rd year students	I don't have time	22	61.11%
	I can't afford it	11	30.55%
	I am not interested in travelling	-	-
	<i>Total</i>	36	
TOTAL	<i>Total</i>	155	
	I don't have time	92	60%
	I can't afford it	47	30.32%
	I am not interested in travelling	3	2%

Source: data gathered by the author

Student's preferences towards various forms of tourism

In order to better observe what influences student's choice when it comes to a specific offer, we decided to bring more light on their current preferences. Among those who travel, 63% prefer to choose a semi-organized travel and 51% prefer to make their own travel arrangements; they don't require the services of a travel agency and they make their own itinerary, they choose their own accommodation as well as what they want to see. The small percentage that remains is made of people who prefer a fully organized travel, who want to take no risks as far as travelling details are concerned, but their numbers is growing (see table no. 4)

Table 4. Students' preferences towards various forms of tourism

	<i>Answer</i>	<i>Absolute</i>	<i>Relative (%)</i>
1 st year students	Organized	4	10.81%
	Semi-organized	14	37.83%
	Individual	19	51.35%
	<i>Total</i>	37	
2 nd year students	Organized	32	39%
	Semi-organized	29	35.36%
	Individual	21	25.60%
	<i>Total</i>	82	
3 rd year students	Organized	5	13.88%
	Semi-organized	20	55.55%
	Individual	11	30.55%
	<i>Total</i>	36	
TOTAL	<i>Total</i>	155	
	Organized	41	26.45%
	Semi-organized	63	40.46%
	Individual	51	33%

Source: data gathered by the author

Reason for travelling

The tendency to get away from the daily routine is highlighted by the fact that 68% of the interviewed students want to travel in order to relax, to regain their forces, both physically and psychologically, therefore for entertainment. Travelling to see one's relatives or friends is also considered, as it represents a cheaper way to travel, given the fact that most accommodation and meals are provided (see table no. 5).

Table 5. Reasons for travelling

	Answer	Absolute	Relative (%)
<i>1st year students</i>	Entertainment, relaxation, holiday	21	56.75%
	Visiting relatives and friends	4	10.81%
	Business and other job related reasons	3	11.11%
	Medical purposes	2	5.40%
	Pilgrimage	2	5.40%
	<i>Total</i>	37	
<i>2nd year students</i>	Entertainment, relaxation, holiday	57	70%
	Visiting relatives and friends	13	16%
	Business and other job related reasons	6	7.31%
	Medical purposes	1	1.215
	Pilgrimage	5	6.09%
	<i>Total</i>	82	
<i>3rd year students</i>	Entertainment, relaxation, holiday	24	66.66%
	Visiting relatives and friends	9	25%
	Business and other job related reasons	1	2.77%
	Medical purposes	-	-
	Pilgrimage	2	5.55%
	<i>Total</i>	36	
TOTAL	Entertainment, relaxation, holiday	102	68%
	Visiting relatives and friends	26	17.33%
	Business and other job related reasons	10	6.66%
	Medical purposes	3	2%
	Pilgrimage	9	6&%
	<i>Total</i>	150	

Source: data gathered by the author

Travelling duration

In order to sketch a more precise profile of the travelling student we analyzed their preferences towards how much they like to spend travelling. Therefore, we noticed that most students tend to travel for a medium period of time: 49% of the interviewed ones don't spend more than 3-5 days away from home. Then we have the 25% of those who usually travel for less than 3 days (table no. 6).

Table 6. Travelling preferences depending on days

	Answer	Absolute	Relative (%)
<i>1st year students</i>	under 3 days	3	81.08%
	3-5 days	10	27%
	5-7 days	15	40.54%
	7-10 days	4	10.81%
	above 10 days	5	13.51%
	<i>Total</i>	37	
<i>2nd year students</i>	under 3 days	18	22%
	3-5 days	43	52.43%
	5-7 days	9	11%
	7-10 days	5	6.09%
	above 10 days	7	8.53%
	<i>Total</i>	82	
<i>3rd year students</i>	under 3 days	15	41.66%
	3-5 days	18	38.88%
	5-7 days	1	2.77%
	7-10 days	-	-

	above 10 days	2	5.55%
	<i>Total</i>	36	
TOTAL	<i>Total</i>	146	
	under 3 days	36	24.65%
	3-5 days	71	48.63%
	5-7 days	25	17.12%
	7-10 days	14	10%

Source: data gathered by the author

Accommodation

Most students – 40% – prefer pensions, which shows a preference towards average accommodation, the kind that offers comfort but at reasonable prices. Then we have 26.45% of the students who prefer mountain chalets, for reasons similar to the previous ones. Therefore, we can conclude that the majority prefers quite picturesque destinations. Even if all-inclusive offers are abundant on the market, only 17% of the interviewed students actually choose a 3 star hotel (see table no. 7).

Table 7. Accommodation

	Answer	Absolute	Relative (%)
1 st year students	hostel	-	-
	motel	5	13.51%
	pension	15	40.54%
	mountain chalet	4	10.81%
	hotel 2*	2	5.40%
	hotel 3*	7	18.91%
	hotel 4-5*	4	10.81%
	<i>Total</i>	37	
2 nd year students	hostel	1	1.21%
	motel	-	-
	pension	34	41.46%
	mountain chalet	29	35.36%
	hotel 2*	4	5%
	hotel 3*	9	11%
	hotel 4-5*	5	6.09%
	<i>Total</i>	82	
3 rd year students	hostel	1	2.77%
	motel	-	-
	pension	12	33.33%
	mountain chalet	8	22.22%
	hotel 2*	2	5.55%
	hotel 3*	10	27.77%
	hotel 4-5*	3	8.33%
	<i>Total</i>	36	
TOTAL	<i>Total</i>	155	
	hostel	2	1.29%
	motel	5	3.22%
	pension	61	40%
	mountain chalet	41	26.45%
	hotel 2*	8	5.16%
	hotel 3*	26	17%
	hotel 4-5*	12	8%

Source: data gathered by the author

Transportation

There is a preference towards travelling in comfort; among all the students questioned, 68% prefer to travel in their own car, because it has a lot of advantages: they can choose the itinerary, they can stop

anywhere and anytime on the road and it's more comfortable than any other means of transport. Next second best transportation is by coach, but we have a low percentage of students who prefer that - 19.35%. That's mostly due to the fact that our case study is made of students who prefer their own car when travelling (see table no. 8)

Table 8. Transportation preferred

	Answers	Absolute	Relative (%)
1 st year students	plain	2	5.40%
	train	2	5.40%
	Personal car	27	73%
	coach	7	19%
	<i>Total</i>	37	
2 nd year students	plain	6	7.31%
	train	6	7.31%
	Personal car	57	70%
	coach	13	16%
	<i>Total</i>	82	
3 rd year students	plain	3	8.33%
	train	1	2.77%
	Personal car	22	61.11%
	coach	10	27.77%
	<i>Total</i>	36	
TOTAL	<i>Total</i>	155	
	plain	11	7%
	train	9	6%
	Personal car	105	68%
	coach	30	19.35%

Source: data gathered by the author

The effects of the economic crisis on our students' preferences

The economic crisis has affected most of the interviewed students, therefore their preferences changed. During the questionnaire, I've noticed their reactions towards the fact that they can no longer afford the same destinations and they also need to shorten their travelling (see table 9).

Table 9. Economic crisis' impact on students' income

	Answer	Absolute	Relative (%)
1 st year students	Yes	32	86.5%
	No	5	13.51%
	<i>Total</i>	37	
2 nd year students	Yes	76	93%
	No	6	7%
	<i>Total</i>	82	
3 rd year students	Yes	31	86.11%
	No	5	13.88%
	<i>Total</i>	36	
TOTAL	<i>Total</i>	155	
	Yes	139	88%
	No	16	10.32%

Source: data gathered by the author

Table 10. Change of destination preferences

	Answer	Absolute	Relative (%)
1 st year students	Yes	32	84.21%
	No	6	15.78%
	<i>Total</i>	38	
2 nd year students	Yes	58	71%
	No	24	30%
	<i>Total</i>	82	
3 rd year students	Yes	25	70%
	No	11	30%
	<i>Total</i>	36	
TOTAL	<i>Total</i>	155	
	Yes	114	73.54%
	No	41	26.45%

Source: data gathered by the author

Future tendencies towards form of tourism chosen

In the following, we've analyzed the trend of changes for those who'll change their preferences because of the economic crisis - a percentage of 73.54% students (according to table 10). Therefore, 39% shall make their own travelling arrangements; while only 29% will still choose organized travel (see table no. 11).

Table 11. Form of tourism chosen for the future

	Answer	Absolute	Relative(%)
1 st year students	Organized	12	32.43%
	Semi-organized	7	19%
	Individual	18	48.64%
	<i>Total</i>	37	
2 nd year students	Organized	17	21%
	Semi-organized	31	38%
	Individual	34	41.46%
	<i>Total</i>	82	
3 rd year students	Organized	15	41.66%
	Semi-organized	13	36.11%
	Individual	8	22.22%
	<i>Total</i>	36	
TOTAL	<i>Total</i>	155	
	Organized	44	29%
	Semi-organized	51	33%
	Individual	60	39%

Source: data gathered by the author

Future tendencies towards travelling duration

We can notice a difference with regards to a holiday's duration as well: most students, 43%, shall take 5 to 7 days holidays and the rest only 3 to 5 days holidays. On the whole, there is a tendency to decrease the number of days spent for one's holiday (see Table no. 12).

Table 12. Future travelling duration

	Answer	Absolute	Relative (%)
1 st year students	Less than 3 days	3	8.10%
	3-5 days	5	13.51%
	5-7 days	21	56.75%
	7-10 days	3	8.10%
	above 10 days	5	13.51%
	<i>TOTAL</i>	37	
2 nd year students	Less than 3 days	14	17.07%
	3-5 days	24	30%
	5-7 days	34	41.46%
	7-10 days	5	6.09%
	above 10 days	5	6.09%
	<i>TOTAL</i>	82	
3 rd year students	Less than 3 days	5	13.88%
	3-5 days	16	44.44%
	5-7 days	11	30.55%
	7-10 days	2	5.55%
	above 10 days	2	5.55%
	<i>TOTAL</i>	36	
TOTAL	<i>TOTAL</i>	155	
	Less than 3 days	22	14.19%
	3-5 days	45	29%
	5-7 days	66	43%
	7-10 days	10	6.45%
	above 10 days	12	8%

Source: data gathered by the author

Future preferences in accommodation

Future preference in accommodation tend to be unchanged; students still prefer holiday homes, due to the picturesque appearance, comfort and the fact that when travelling in large groups they can rent the whole house for themselves. Therefore, 44% shall choose a holiday home, followed by those who'd prefer a 3 star accommodation (see table no. 13).

Table 13. Future preference in accommodation

	Answer	Absolute	Relative (%)
1 st year students	hostel	-	-
	motel	1	2.7%
	Holiday home	12	32.43%
	Mountain chalet	5	13.51%
	hotel 2*	6	16.21%
	hotel 3*	11	30%
	hotel 4-5*	2	5.4%
	<i>TOTAL</i>	37	
2 nd year students	hostel	-	-
	motel	-	-
	Holiday home	44	54%
	Mountain chalet	17	21%
	hotel 2*	2	2.43%
	hotel 3*	11	13.41%
	hotel 4-5*	8	10%
	<i>TOTAL</i>	82	
3 rd year students	hostel	1	2.77%
	motel	-	-
	Holiday home	12	33.33%
	Mountain chalet	6	16.66%
	hotel 2*	-	-
	hotel 3*	8	22.22%

	hotel 4-5*	9	25%
	<i>TOTAL</i>	36	
TOTAL	<i>TOTAL</i>	155	
	hostel	1	0.64%
	motel	1	0.64%
	Holiday home	68	44%
	Mountain chalet	28	18.06%
	hotel 2*	8	5.16%
	hotel 3*	30	19.35%
	hotel 4-5*	19	12.25%

Source: data gathered by the author

Money wise destination

Even when the number of days chosen for a holiday increases, some students stick to the same form of accommodation or maybe add a star to it; they also tend to keep to the old travel arrangements, but adapted to their current financial possibilities. However, 73% of the interviewed students went for more dramatic options like choosing a more money wise destination (see table 14).

Table 14. Money wise destinations

	Answer	Absolute	Relative (%)
1 st year students	Yes	23	62.16%
	No	14	38%
	<i>Total</i>	37	
2 nd year students	Yes	62	76%
	No	20	24%
	<i>Total</i>	82	
3 rd year students	Yes	28	77.80%
	No	8	22.22%
	<i>Total</i>	36	
TOTAL	<i>Total</i>	155	
	Yes	113	73%
	No	42	27%

Source: data gathered by the author

Forms of tourism

Despite the economic crisis, 80% of the students still afford both types of travelling: in the country and abroad. This might be regarded as an opportunity in Romania. There is however a low percentage of them who go for local tourism (see table 15)

Table 15. Local/Abroad

	Answer	Absolute	Relative (%)
1 st year students	Only abroad	-	-
	Both local and abroad	36	97.3%
	Only local	1	2.7%
	None	-	-
	<i>TOTAL</i>	37	
2 nd year students	Only abroad	2	2.43%
	Both local and abroad	59	72%
	Only local	21	25.6%
	None	-	-
	<i>TOTAL</i>	82	
3 rd year students	Only abroad	1	2.77%

	Both local and abroad	28	77.80%
	Only local	7	19.44%
	None	-	-
	<i>TOTAL</i>	36	
TOTAL	TOTAL	155	
	Only abroad	3	2%
	Both local and abroad	123	80%
	Only local	29	19%

Source: data gathered by the author

Local tourism

33.10% of the interviewed students, who chose the local tourism, usually go for the mountain resorts, followed by those who prefer the sea resorts or other - 26.89%, (see table 16).

Table 16. Local tourism

	Answer	Absolute	Relative (%)
1 st year students	SPAs	4	10.81%
	Sea resorts	8	21.62%
	Mountain resorts	11	30%
	Bucharest and other cities	5	13.51%
	Other	9	24.32%
	<i>TOTAL</i>	37	
2 nd year students	SPAs	2	2.44%
	Sea resorts	19	23.17%
	Mountain resorts	29	35.36%
	Bucharest and other cities	4	5%
	Other	18	22%
	<i>TOTAL</i>	82	
3 rd year students	SPAs	1	2.77%
	Sea resorts	12	33.33%
	Mountain resorts	8	22.22%
	Bucharest and other cities	3	8.33%
	Other	12	33.33%
	<i>TOTAL</i>	36	
TOTAL	<i>TOTAL</i>	145	
	SPAs	7	5%
	Sea resorts	39	26.89%
	Mountain resorts	48	33.10%
	Bucharest and other cities	12	8.27%
	Other	39	26.89%

Source: data gathered by the author

In order to get close to a complete view of the Romanian tourists' profile, especially students, while facing the economic changes that affect their range of choices; we analyzed and reviewed specific data like age, occupation, sex and origins.

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