

**BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY CLUJ-NAPOCA**  
**FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**  
**Doctoral School of Economics and Business Administration**

## **CONSUMER PROFILE IN RURAL TOURISM**

Abstract of the PhD Thesis

**Scientific Coordinator**

Univ. Prof. Gheorghe Alexandru CATANĂ PhD

**PhD Candidate**

Iuliana POP

Cluj-Napoca

2013

## **Abstract Table of Contents**

Thesis Table of contents.....	1
Key-elements.....	3
Introduction .....	4
Chapter 1. Rural areas in Romania and Hungary .....	7
Chapter 2. The typology of tourists in rural area.....	10
Chapter 3. Consumer profile in rural tourism .....	11
Chapter 4. Methodology of the study .....	15
Chapter 5. Research results .....	19
Chapter 6. Discussions and conclusions.....	24
Bibliography .....	30

## Thesis Table of contents

<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>LIST OF ANNEXES</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>PART ONE – THEORETICAL BACKGROUND</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 – RURAL SPACE IN ROMANIA AND HUNGARY</b>	<b>13</b>
1.1 Rural tourism – conceptual delimitations	13
1.2 Rural tourism in developed countries	21
1.2.1 The experience of Poland and Bulgaria	21
1.2.2 Rural tourism in Germany and Austria	22
1.2.3 Rural tourism in Italy and Spain.....	23
1.2.4 The experience of France	24
1.3 An approach on Romania’s rural tourism	26
1.3.1 A short historical approach and present stage	26
1.3.2 Rural destinations – The Apuseni Mountains	28
1.4 An approach on Hungary’s rural tourism	33
1.4.1 A short historical approach and present stage	33
1.4.2 Rural destinations – The Hungarian Great Plain	36
1.5. Roural tourism activity in Romania and Hungary	41
<b>CHAPTER 2 – THE TOURIST TYPOLOGY IN RURAL AREAS</b>	<b>46</b>
2.1. Tourist, type and typology. Conceptual delimitations	46
2.2. Tourist typology – a market segmentation method in rural tourism	50
2.2.1. Cohen’s tourist typologies	54
2.2.2. Plog and Urry’s tourist typologies	56
2.2.3. Cloke&Perkins and MacCannel’s tourist typologies	59
2.3 An overview of tourist typology in rural areas – a link to the study of the consumer profile....	62
2.3.1 Tourist typology in rural areas	62
<b>CHAPTER 3 – CONSUMER PROFILE IN RURAL TOURISM</b>	<b>67</b>
3.1 The profile and the behaviour of the consumer in rural tourism – conceptual delimitations	67
3.2 Delimitations regarding the consumer profile in rural tourism	72
3.3 Outlining the consumer profile in rural tourism	78
3.3.1 Demographical factors with impact on consumer’s profile	78
3.3.2 Behavioural factors with impact on consumer’s profile	80

<b>PART TWO – MATHERIAL AND METHOD. OWN RESEARCHES.....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4 – RESEARCH PARADIGM AND METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>86</b>
4.1 Research paradigm .....	87
4.2 Research methodology .....	89
4.2.1 Defining the research problem and objectives .....	90
4.2.2 Conceptual framework .....	93
4.2.3 Data collection instrument .....	101
4.2.4 Determinind the sampling method .....	109
4.2.5 Statistical elements used.....	111
<b>CHAPTER 5 –RESEARCH RESULTS.....</b>	<b>112</b>
5.1 Testing the research hypotheses .....	112
5.1.1 Hypothesis nr.1 - Tourist destination will vary according to a number of cultural, geographical and social factors .....	112
5.1.2 Hypothesis nr.2 – The profile of tourists who visit a Romania rural location differs significantly from that of the tourists who visit the Hungarian countryside .....	121
5.1.3 Hypothesis nr.3 – Income is a key factor in identifying the differences between the two groups of tourists in the two rural areas.....	129
5.1.4 Hypothesis nr.4 – Romanian tourists in rural areas distinguish themselves from the Hungarian tourists in rural areas regarding the degree of satisfaction at the end of the trip .....	134
5.2 Cluster analysis results – outlining the consumer profile in rural tourism .....	141
5.2.1 Groups of tourists in the Apuseni area .....	142
5.2.2 Groups of tourists in the Great Hungarian Plain area .....	147
5.2.3 Comparative analyzes of groups .....	150
5.3 Results obtaind after performing the logistic regression analysis .....	153
<b>CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>162</b>
6.1. Shaping the consumer profile, regarding the two rural areas considered for research .....	162
6.2. Considerations .....	167
6.3. Contributions .....	170
6.4. Practical implications .....	172
6.5. Limitations and future research directions .....	173
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>ANNEXE .....</b>	<b>1</b>

## **Key-elements**

Rural tourism, rural area, rural space, rural tourism activities, hospitality, typology, influence factors, consumer profile in rural tourism

## **Introduction**

Rural tourism is a vast domain in which the tourist or the consumer of tourism is the main actor, personality that lies in the middle of all the activities, being basically indispensable in this process. In this context, knowing the tourist, with all the issues involved in this process, becomes a key element.

Referring to the process of discovering the tourist, some specialists indicate three types of statistical measurement - volume, value and profile (Burkart & Medlik, 1981; Cooper, et.al., 2006). Statistical measurement based on volume refers to elements such as the number of overnight stays, trips, average duration of visit, etc. The one related to value deals with items such as holiday budget, the amount of money spent per day per person, the amount of money allocated for lodging, dining, transportation, etc. Last but not least, the statistical measurement that deals with profile measure, as opposed to the other two cases, both tourist-related items, as a person and personality and elements related to the details of the holiday itself. Considering this aspect, the term profile is one according to the context, because it shows that every individual, as a tourist, differs from all other (Bowen & Clarke, 2009, p. 7).

There are a lot of misconceptions, beliefs, more or less true regarding the tourist. The first misconception states that the majority of tourists are in fact international tourists. This is false because many tourists travel within the borders of the country of residence. Another idea says that being a tourist, necessarily involves travelling for relaxation. This is partially true because a tourist can be an adventure tourist or travelling for medical, religious or educational purposes. On the other hand, some say that being a tourist means contacting a tour operator that will handle all details and purchase the vacation packages. This aspect is only partially true because those people traveling independently and those who plan themselves their vacations fall into the category of tourists (Bowen & Clarke, 2009, p. 3).

According to another misconception, being a tourist means travelling for the summer vacation, once a year. As mentioned before, this is only partially true because tourists may find themselves, in certain countries, for the second, third or the seventh time, in the same year. Moreover, some tourists prefer shorter vacations that take only a few days, and they plan these vacations several times per year. Weekend vacations are another example that supports this idea, moving away from the traditional concept of summer vacation (Bowen & Clarke, 2009, p. 4).

Given the complexity of the human phenomenon, of the person who is travelling and taking into account the many misconceptions, it is necessary that the tourist, the consumer of

tourism, to be analysed in detail. In the light of those discussed above the consumer of rural tourism can be regarded just like any other type of tourist.

Knowing all the elements that form its profile, the factors that influence the behaviour of tourists in rural areas, constitute the main motivation that underpins this scientific papers. Review of the literature in the field of rural tourism consumer has led to the identification of a common aspect taken into account by the majority of researchers-identifying the push and pull factors that shape the tourist profile. Whether we discuss motivations and expectations of tourists who choose these destinations (Kidd, 1995; Swarbrooke, 1999; Bashar & Ahmad, 2010; Demir, 2010; Mureşan, 2011; Roman, 2012), or attributes of rural tourist destinations (Ispas, 2007; Royo-Vela, 2009; Untaru, 2010), studies have analyzed this type of profile, offering, at the same time, directions for future research.

The fact that, after reading most studies in the field of rural tourism and rural tourist profile, we came to the conclusion that there are very few studies focusing strictly on the profile, the majority being directed towards consumer behavior, we decided to have a different approach. As a result of these findings, we decided to focus our research on one part of rural tourism consumer behavior. Moreover, we intend to run the research on two rural areas of neighboring countries. Even if these rural areas are characterised by different landforms, mountains and plains, precisely this aspect seemed interesting to be approached. Areas differ, also, in terms of culture, each of them having different concepts that put an emphasis on distinct elements.

Novelty of the present work refers, on one hand, to undertaking a less developed topic that deals with the profile of rural consumers. On the other hand, considering a double research that aims two rural areas in two countries-The Apuseni Mountains (Romania) and The Great Plain (Hungary) and identifying the consumer's profile represents an attempt to contribute to the literature in the field of rural tourism.

Regardless the rural area or the country, tourist profile tends to be build on a series of common elements. These include the desire to escape from the city and integrate with the rural life, relaxation, silence, willingness to spend free time with family or with any other person accompanying, in natural surroundings and last but not least, the desire for discovering the culture of the countryside, with all that this entails.

With regard to the rural areas of Romania's territory, there are a lot of elements called benefits that bring a significant contribution to rural tourism. It is assumed that tourists who chooses Romanian rural areas based their decision upon the premise that they will meet tradition in well-preserved form. Romanian folklore and the Romanian villages are special elements that

contribute to the development of a certain typology of tourists. As a result, the tourist visiting these places is supposed to be eager to know the Romanian traditions, to participate actively in the life of the village, just like any other member of the community. Moreover, the tourist wishes to explore the environment in its natural form, to enjoy the scenery and get to know new places.

As regarding rural areas in Hungary, this is also the case with a number of specific factors, present only in those places. It is assumed that tourists in these parts fall into the profile of those eager to know the traditional Hungarian cuisine, culture, wine, farms and horses but also those who choose rural tourism for the thermal baths. Festivals that are organised in the Hungarian Plain maintain old traditions and revive, for tourists, the past life. On these occasions, tourists in rural areas can meet Hungarian culture and can take part in various events specific to those areas.

In close relation to the importance of the identified problem, *the main objective of this study is building a profile of the consumer of rural tourism linked with two rural areas in Romania and Hungary*. What we want in fact to determine, refer to factors that shape the profile of this type of consumer, linked with two different rural areas in terms of destination and facilities.

Secondary objectives stemming from the main objective will refer to the following:

1. to identify elements that outline differences when it comes to choosing a rural destination;
2. to determine the types of tourists in the two rural areas;
3. outlining the profile of the consumer of rural tourism;
4. to identify and analyse the differences related to profile, reported to the two areas.

Once drawn, the study objectives have guided us throughout the scientific approach in data collection, analysis and presentation of results. Our own working pattern consisted of identifying types of tourists in the chosen rural areas by framing them in a series of established groups, and then shaping the rural tourism consumer profile. Through this scientific approach, the results can be used by several actors in rural tourism market, such as suppliers of tourism services, various organizations in the field, but also by the rural tourism consumers. The results obtained could supplement the studies about the rural tourism services within the context in which this type of services is becoming more and more interesting to deal with worldwide.



## **Chapter 1. Rural areas in Romania and Hungary**

This chapter presents the general elements relating to rural tourism, rural areas, hospitality, and key concepts which operate throughout the paper. Then, the countries with a long tradition in practicing rural tourism are presented, by identifying specific elements and defining characteristics of this domain of interest. As a result of general presentations, chapter one address the topic of rural tourism in Romania and Hungary, by a sneak peek in history and then by presenting the actual stage of development. In order to outline the rural space in the two countries, the last part of the chapter presents the activity developed.

Conceptual approaches of rural tourism are manifold. The level of development of this form of tourism is different from one region to another. Practicing rural tourism has become essential in many regions of the world (Pender & Sharpley, 2005, p. 187). Without perceiving this trend, many tourists who choose to spend their holidays in the countryside, say that this experience gives them something totally unique compared to what they have in every day life. In other words, the experience of the country brings tourists something new, something that the city does not have and therefore cannot provide (Lesley & Hall, 2003, p. 14).

There are conceptual approaches, unanimously accepted by all actors in this field but there also are sets of less conventional definitions, focusing on specific features applicable to certain areas in which rural tourism is being practiced. In the first chapter, we managed to present both classic and less traditional definitions, the latter serving predominantly the rural tourist phenomenon in those two areas chosen to be addressed in the analysis that underpins this work. If the first definition questioned (Nistoreanu, 2003, p. 160) brings to the fore the activities that can be carried out in the rural areas, a second conceptual approach considered making the switch from conventional to unconventional definitions, as we have previously called them. Therefore, the second definition admits the idea that rural tourism can be seen as a "concentrated form of tourism in rural areas, featuring a functional structure of accommodation and other heterogeneous services" (Stănciulescu, 2002, p. 180). Another definition is the one that presents, in our opinion, in the most suitable way, the idea of traditional and cultural exchange, being the most accurate definition. According to it, rural tourism is a form of tourism in which the village's culture plays an important role (source: European Commission-Quality rural tourism and marketing, March 1995).

Taking elements from all the definitions discussed so far, we can say that rural tourism is viewed as an exchange of culture, habits, ideas, etc., that takes place in the countryside, an exchange that has a particular impact on both the tourists and the inhabitants of the area. In this way, rural tourism can allow the consumer a unique experience of life.

It is important to draw a link between the concepts of rural tourism and hospitality, because both create an assembly (Kotler et.al. 2006, p. 112). So, being more than a simple concept, rural tourism manages to encompass different shades of specialized terms (Swarbrooke, 2007, Nistoreanu & Ghereș, 2010). Even if the term of hospitality itself, seems to be quite obsolete (Nistoreanu & Tanase, 2010, p. 115), it is brought into question by specialists in rural tourism. In the present paper, the concept of hospitality is not qualified in terms of the industry with the same name, but in terms of behaviour towards tourists, this way representing an element of connection between the activity of rural tourism and the consumer.

The second part of the chapter deals with presentation of various approaches to rural tourism in countries such as Bulgaria, Poland, France, Germany, Austria, Italy and Spain. Due to the fact that research that underlies this doctoral thesis has considered two countries where rural tourism is at a middle level of development, we considered it necessary to present situations in which rural tourism is practiced at a high level of development.

The third part of the chapter is aimed at rural tourism in Romania and Hungary. Therefore, historical developments in this area are presented, emphasizing key moments. As regarding Romania, the chapter presents the tourist destination Apuseni Mountains, by emphasizing the Romanian village. The Romanian village may be the main reason why tourists are choosing a specific rural destination. Whether we are talking about Arieșeni, Gârda, Șuncuiuș or any other villages in the Apuseni Mountains, the beauty and simplicity of the people welcome tourists who reach these areas. It is known that the Romanian village is quite well preserved, being, at the same time, the place where inhabitants consider etnofolklore. The Romanian village preserves, most of the Romanian customs and old traditions. Romanian rural gastronomy can be considered one of the defining elements of the Romanian village, on one hand, and a component of rural tourism, on the other hand. The tourist will be influenced by the food that will be served, regardless of the location he choose. Equally true is the fact that rural gastronomy is a factor that can attract tourists to a certain area (Dimitris et. al., 2006, pp. 769-779). As mentioned in the previous chapters, traditional Romanian dishes gives tourists the idea of clean nature, animals, fruit and vegetables purchased directly from the gardens.

The beauty of the landscapes, the wilderness, the hospitality of the people but also the traditions, attract tourists to rural areas in Romania. They choose these places to go as far away from town, in the heart of nature, where they can sit in silence.

Moving to rural areas in the Hungary, a key-element is mentioned-the thermal spa tourism. Even though the Hungarian Plain thermal resorts are very well developed, farmhouses and houses of residents around the resorts seem to be an alternative. Most of the times, in addition to the accommodation, the owner offer to take tourists in various excursions around the surrounding areas. This way, tourists can visit traditional Hungarian villages, ruins of castles, wine-producing areas, etc. Hosts are those who offer to cook for tourists and all the dishes are, most of the times, traditional cuisine. Even if the interiors of the houses and guesthouses offering rooms to rent are entirely in an authentic style, tourists choose to stay there because they can observe the everyday life of the hosts. Revived traditions, traditional food and treatment baths attract tourists to rural areas in Hungary. Here, the culture of wine or the festivals organized add an extra touch of authenticity to rural tourism.

The last part of chapter one presents the rural tourism activity in Romania and Hungary. With the help of tourist traffic indicators, demand and supply indicators, the first chapter ends by outlining a clear view of the rural areas of the two countries considered for research.

Whether we are talking about rural areas in Romania, Hungary or any other country in Europe or in the world, when it comes to choices made, one hopes to experience different feelings. This may refer to the unique countryside, with all that this implies-surroundings, anthropogenic and natural resources, climate, etc, or it may refer to cultural exchange. As discussed in this chapter, tourists who chooses a rural area to spend the holidays, have certain expectations, behave in a certain way and collect information in a way that helps them to understand the environment with which they came in contact. Thus the question arises-what exactly is the tourist looking for in a rural area?

## **Chapter 2. The typology of tourists in rural area**

Similarly to the first chapter, the second chapter deals with the concepts of tourists, types and typology. In a synthesized way, a definition of tourist is offered by the World Tourism Organization (1993) which says that the tourist is "any person who is located in another country or another place, located in its country of residence other than that corresponding to his home and that the main reason of visit is other than that of carrying out a paid activity".

A first step towards the study of rural tourism consumers is to define a typology of these tourists. But first it is necessary to define the concept of "type". The definition addressed is that which is found in the DEX Dictionary (online version), and refers to "(1, 2)-1. Object that represents the base model which produces other objects of the same type 2. Individual, copy, object, phenomenon that meets certain representative features, essential for an entire group of individuals, objects, specimens, etc of the same kind ". The explanation given to this concept indicates, further, the term used in the case of the theory which studies the types.

In tourism, the study of typology has become an important tool because it contributes effectively to analyse the existing situations, recognition of the negative and positive effects of tourism, to creating alternatives but also to the improvement of policies aimed at economic growth through tourism (Coccosis & Constantoglou, 2006, p. 7). Tourists in rural areas are different and have different visions of their holiday. Rural tourist market with tourists, considered as individuals who participate in the process of marketing, needs segmentation, an instrument that permits the grouping of tourists into segments that include individuals similar to each other, and different from those included in the other groups. As market segmentation technique, the cluster analysis aims at establishing certain types of consumers similar to each other, within the group, and as distinct as possible from one group to another (Catană, 2003). What is interesting and unique to this technique, among others (especially classical ones, such as AID-Automatic Interaction Detection) refers to the fact that the variables included are examined all at once rather than one at a time. Grouping of individuals stops as soon as individuals or groups no longer allow combination (Catană, 2003). The different typologies in which tourists can be grouped vary depending on their background, life styles, values and interests, expectations and other elements pertaining to the environment from which they

originate (demographic, economic, situational etc.). In fact, designing typologies of tourists is the result of the segmentation phenomenon in the tourist market.

Tourists have been employed in various typologies since before the Second World War, at the time when this operation was based on social status and material condition. After the war, however, things have evolved and, along with Plog's (1964) allocentric and psychocentric tourists, ideas about typologies changed, too.

In the following time, tourists were employed in various types depending on the age and income-related items. The promoter of these typologies was Cohen (1972) who divided tourists into the following categories: tourists who practice mass tourism, tourists who practice individual tourism, "explorers" and tourists "who let themselves driven away". One year later, MacCannell supports another form of tourist approach based on authenticity, on the quest for authentic and divides tourists according to this element. From here until Smith's and Eadington (1992) typologies there were many other approaches. The latter, however, have talked about eco-tourists, referring to a category of tourists who prefer vacations in rural areas.

Therefore, there is an interest in employment of tourists in rural areas to a particular typology. A first reason is that rural tourism, as a form of manifestation, earns increasingly more appreciation. Another reason relates to the fact that this type of tourist requires special attention because it is characterized by specific features, which are closely linked with those of the countryside. As a result, employment of rural tourist in a typology is a step towards shaping a consumer profile of rural tourism.

### **Chapter 3. Consumer profile in rural tourism**

The third chapter adopts a more specific approach, and deals with issues related to rural tourism consumer profile. We started from the idea of presenting a general understanding about the concept of the consumer's profile and then we chose to point out the differences between the concepts of consumer profile and consumer behavior.

With regard to consumer behavior, regardless of the form of practice, this concept refers to "all activities, decisions on the use of its revenues for the purchase and consumption of tourism products or for forfeiture from those acts, or in favor of other products/services,

whether for saving" (Bucur-Sabo, 2006, p. 84, Pizam & Mansfeld, 2009, p. 11). Just as in the case of studying consumer behavior, when it comes to the consumer of rural tourism, this study must take into account the field of psychology as the tourist is influenced not only by internal stimuli but also a multitude of external stimuli that pass through its psyche (Fratu et. Al., 2009).

Studies in the field (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999; Niculescu & Răboanțu, 2005) refer to the statements, attitudes and decisions regarding the choice of tourists, and consumption of goods and services of interest. Also in their research, the focus is on the post-consumption reactions of consumers.

With the ultimate goal to draw a clear line between the two concepts, in the first part of chapter three we have chosen to focus our attention on some specific elements of consumer profile of rural tourism, elements that are part of this research. Consumer profile of rural tourism is constructed on the basis of geographical, demographic and behavioral characteristics. A fourth category of features, the psychographics, outlines rather consumer behavior of rural tourism than a profile (Othman & Jamal, 2011, p. 13-15). The study of psychographics enabled researchers to observe various aspects of consumer behaviour, in fact, the variables relating to personality, values, attitudes and interests. These variables are known as AIO (Activity, Interest, Opinion). Addressing this dimension (psychographic) helps shape a specific behavior of the consumer, taking into account all the variables listed above (Hsu et.al., 2002). On the basis of these psychographic characteristics various theories for marketing and tourism have developed.

The third chapter presents the current state of knowledge in the field of consumer profile of rural tourism, by presenting the works of reference. Even though the literature has many works and researches conducted on the consumer behavior in tourism, few are those that deal with the theme of rural tourism and tourists in rural areas. However, there were some works taken as points of reference. These include an article that puts into question the consumer's travel profile achieved through a case study conducted among students in Bucharest who were on holiday in Maramureș and Bukovina areas (Ispas, 2007). Although the case study referred to religious tourism, the results can be considered to be important because, often, sights are located in rural areas. Case study started from the premise that, in addition to this form of tourism, others will be taken into account, not to mention the fact that children get bored quickly and they need to consume energy in different ways. Therefore, in addition to

sightseeing, there were also organized excursions, hiking, contests etc. Thus, travel packages designed aimed mountain, cultural and rural tourism. The time taken into consideration was the summer holiday, more precisely a week, and the students were all housed in the same unit. From here, they went into different excursions that have targeted, in addition to religious and cultural attractions, historical sites, etc.

Another article written on the topic of mountain tourism and which ends with the presentation of a profile of the rural tourist, puts the matter in terms of motivation and expectations of tourists (Roman, 2012). Therefore, students on holiday are identified, coming to these areas in organized groups, in order to recreate, to participate in various activities. Their expectations are put into practice by the existence of the possibility to fish or ride and accommodation conditions must be acceptable. Another category of tourists are persons employed, coming on the weekend for vacation or for a longer period. They are aimed at easing, the practice of those activities that you can not do in the city, and the conditions of accommodation must be of a high quality. Another category is that of retirees, who choose this location to relax and expect for the same conditions of accommodation of high quality. There is also a category of tourists with large financial opportunities, who choose these areas in order to know the local culture and traditions, being ready to live authentically. They want unique experiences and request a high quality of service. Conclusion regarding the consumer profile of rural tourism in mountain areas refer to these persons as being in search of authentic experiences, willing to meet locals and to "blend" with nature (Roman, 2012, p. 141).

Were also identified doctoral thesis which, through research undertaken, propose profiles of tourists in rural areas. Such a profile, proposed after undertaking an analysis of the quality of services in the Tarnava Mare, is based on a number of features such as: demographic data, origin of tourists, reason for the visit or budget. This profile is strictly linked to the quality of the services in the area chosen for the study, which identified a number of specific features that any future development of rural tourism in the area should consider (tourists are generally mature individuals, between 33 and 42 years, families with children who are travelling with their own car, who already have established expectations regarding the visited area), the majority of tourists being at the first visit, motivated by knowledge, traditions, culture, etc. (Mureşan, 2011).

Taking into account the references discussed above, but also scientific opinions supporting the idea that consumer profile is formed by the influence of geographical, demographic and

behavioural factors (Hsu et.al., 2002; Benjamin, 2007; Othman & Jamal, 2011, p. 13-15), in this chapter we focused on the presentation of those categories of factors contained in the research that underlies the present thesis, namely demographic factors and behavioural factors. If the set of demographic factors, we have concluded that the variables "family" and "family life cycle" exercise influence on decisions relating to a holiday in the countryside. Also, an important issue that has been brought into question in chapter three, relates to the fact that demographic elements work together with other factors and manage to influence the behaviour of tourists in rural areas.

A second category mentions the behavioural factors. Within them, we put emphasis on analysing consumer needs. During literature review, we managed to identify a pyramid of needs of tourists in rural areas. It was adapted after ETEM Model (Evolving Tourists Expectation Model) that belongs to the authors Miththapala & Jayawardena (2013). An interesting aspect about this pyramid refers to the fact that most of the tourists in rural areas fall on the 3rd level since they depart from the urge to get into a genuine rural place, where to receive services that put accent on traditions, but, once they obtain it, if their expectations are not fully met, they feel satisfied with what they find there (Pesonen et. al., 2011, p. 32-49). However, there is a part for tourists who know exactly what they are looking for, what they expect from a trip to rural areas and are willing to pay more to be sure that once they get there, they will receive those services required.

Over time, a number of researchers have tried to find an answer to the question - Why tourists are traveling in rural areas? (Dann, 1977; Krippendorf, 1987; Peters, 2009). It was concluded that the overall benefits of these areas would be the top tourist motivations (Park & Yoon, 2009, pp. 99-104). Leisen (2001, p. 49-56) and Kemperman & Timmermans (2006, p. 221-230) indicate, in studies undertaken, the benefits of rural areas. Such a benefit would be the possibility offered to tourists to explore new places of culture, to participate in specific activities and to find corners of nature that amaze by the beauty and the wild (Cai & Li, 2009, p. 751-761).



## **Chapter 4. Methodology of the study**

In chapter four, which is focused on research methodology, we have described the stages in pursuit of empirical research. We started with the presentation of the conceptual framework, the paradigm of research and methodology. In the first part of the chapter we presented the issue and the purpose of the research and then we proceeded with the presentation of the research method.

In order to be able to identify the research problem and in order not to risk a too complex or unclear statement, it is necessary to know the true dimensions of the situation. Moreover, understanding the essence of the problem is an important aspect (Pop, 2004, p. 61). It was necessary to approach the relevant studies in order to identify the current state of knowledge. Most studies focused at the behavior of the consumer of rural tourism and aimed at identifying behavioural models, the emphasis falling on the process of the selection of destination. Even though there are many tourist typologies, few are those that have focused on tourists in rural areas. Furthermore, a profile of the consumer, could not be identified in the approached studies.

Regarding the second aspect, the understanding of the essence of the research problem lies in the approach, in addition to the visible and clear elements, of those that make up "the invisible" side. Knowing the consumer profile in rural tourism is needed a necessity, mainly due to the need to implement the changes that occur in an accelerated mode in rural tourism sector. However, achieving such a profile can serve each actor of the rural tourism market.

As a result, insufficient knowledge relating to rural tourism consumer profile may entail a number of difficulties facing the practice of this form of tourism. These shortcomings can be a negative impact on both the supply and demand for rural tourism in a particular area. If to take into account the two areas covered in this study, the countryside of the Apuseni Mountains in Romania and the Hungarian Great Plain, it will be interesting to analyze how such a profile outlines, taking into account the main factors of influence. We have focused on demographic characteristics and behavioral ones, which can be found during the research, but also on destination attributes and facilities, items which, in the case of the areas chosen for discussion, will highlight a range of differences that can influence the shaping of consumer profile of rural tourism.

Considering the identified research problem, the main purpose of this study is to determine the factors that shape the consumer profile of rural tourism. The main objective, which is derived from the identified purpose, is to build up a profile of the consumer of rural tourism, linked to two rural areas of Romania and Hungary.

After drawing the objectives, assumptions were made that were later verified during data analysis approach.

Table number 1 – Hypotheses of the research

H1	Tourist destination will vary according to a number of cultural, geographical and social factors
H2	The profile of tourists who visit a Romania rural location differs significantly from that of the tourists who visit the Hungarian countryside
H3	Income is a key factor in identifying the differences between the two groups of tourists in the two rural areas
H4	Romanian tourists in rural areas distinguish themselves from the Hungarian tourists in rural areas regarding the degree of satisfaction at the end of the trip

Source – personal approach of the author

The empirical research consisted of two main stages, two phases that helped collect data for analysis. The first stage consisted in carrying out qualitative research with a view to familiarising with the concepts of rural tourism and rural tourism consumer. This type of research was an exploratory one and the instrument used was a group interview. Data obtained was used to conduct the second stage which, unlike the first, was characterized by objectivism. The research undertaken in stage two was a quantitative one and data was obtained through a questionnaire.

The main objective of the qualitative study was to collect data needed for the construction of the questionnaire used to collect quantitative data. This study was undertaken in order to familiarize with the concepts of rural tourism, tourism in rural areas, rural areas, etc.

As regards the quantitative study, the objective was to collect data that were used for statistical analyses, with the ultimate aim to outline a profile of consumers of rural tourism. We chose the survey method which fits with the established paradigm (positive) and the instrument used was a questionnaire. In explaining the logic of construction we followed the explanation given by Bernard S. Phillips (1971, p. 90) that begins with the first criterion of ranking questions-time. In this context, tourists who participated in the survey were put in a position to first answer questions about the past (which were based on issues related to the

planning of the holiday), then the questions about the present (related to the chosen location and tourist accommodation) and then questions aimed at the future (concerning the intention to return to the countryside, to choose the same accommodation unit, recommending the rural area and unit, etc.). A second criterion relates to the complexity of the questions. As a result, the questionnaire consisted in three parts, the first containing general information, the second, more detailed information and the last section consisted of general profile data. The third criterion is that of testing hypotheses. It should be noted that in the construction of the assumptions we have been taken into account a previous study, a tool from which we considered a number of elements. It's about a number of parameters that are part of a scale called Mountain Destination Image Scale, tested in a study conducted by three authors, which was implemented on a mountain area (Silva, Lages, Abrantes, 2009, p. 92). Even though their research was not implemented in a rural area, we considered it important to take these parameters and embedding them in our survey, in order to be a starting point for shaping consumer profile of rural tourism.

With regard to the sample size, the target population was represented by tourists who were vacationing in rural areas included in research, at the time of data collection. We targeted two criteria-age and nationality. Thus, tourists of all ages were questioned but not under 18 years old. No upper limit of age was considered because we wanted the sample to be as diverse and comprise individuals from all categories over 18 years.

The method chosen for the formation of the sample is an empirical one or non-probabilistic because we did not have at our disposal a sampling frame from which we could extract profiles. Considering the fact that in order to be able to distinguish various typologies of tourists in the rural areas chosen and then to be able to build their profiles, we needed to interview people encountered randomly in the locations already established through research plans, we opted for a less conventional method, named sampling by convenience.

To determine the sample size we took into account the time and financial resources, as well as samples of previously completed studies, taken as a reference point within the literature.

Table number 2 – Sample size

Untaru, 2011 (a study undertaken in Romania, on tourists in Braşov, in order to build a behavioural model)	385 subjects
Mureşan, 2011 (a study about the quality of services in Târnava Mare, which also provides a profile of the tourists in that particular area)	1200 questionnaires, 527 non-valide, 412 valide
Sekaran & Bougie, 2010 (studies made on several samples in order to indicate a proper number of subjects)	500 subjects

Source – personal approach of the author

As a result, we have established a number of 800 questionnaires, all being returned because they were administered directly. As a result of validation we could use a number of 615 questionnaires.

Throughout the analysis of quantitative data gathered using the questionnaire the SPSS version 17 statistical program was used. The SPSS program was used with the purpose of processing quantitative data, which were organized in databases necessary for conducting the analysis. Three databases were created, the first database with data collected in Romania, the second with the data collected in Hungary and a common base that sums up the other two.

For data analysis, three types of statistical investigations were used:

- ‡ *Testing the statistical hypothesis* –the link between variables was tested using Pearson correlation test and Spearman test, which test the existence and intensity of the correlation between observed data of two categories of variables whose values are normally distributed; in order to identify influence factors, we used the T-test and ANOVA
- ‡ *Cluster tests* - we used the variables included in the hypothesis that were already tested and the ultimate goal of these analyses is to outline the groups of tourists both in Romania and Hungary, which, in fact, outlines the types of tourists who spend their holidays in rural areas.
- ‡ *Logistic regression analysis* - we tested the influence of six independent variables over a given group membership, i.e., the group of tourists from the Apuseni Mountains (from Romania) and the group of tourists from Hungarian rural areas

## Chapter 5. Research results

This chapter presents in-depth analyses carried out and the results obtained, and was structured in three parts: statistical hypothesis testing, performance and Cluster analysis and logistic regression.

*Statistical hypothesis testing* was achieved by using the T-test and ANOVA, and the existence of the link between the variables tested was checked using correlation coefficients of Pearson and Spearman. It was concluded that the first two have been partially validated. Therefore, the tourist destination is not influenced by cultural, geographical or social factors. Another hypothesis which has not been validated was the one relating to the behaviour of tourists. We came to the result that behavioral elements taken into consideration do not result in significant differences between the groups.

Assumption number three and number four could be validated. In other words we managed to demonstrate that income is an essential element of differentiation among the groups. Also another element of differentiation is the degree of satisfaction recorded at the end of the trip which proves that there are significant differences between the two groups of tourists.

*In the case of Cluster analysis*, we took into account the variables included in the statistical hypothesis testing. The specifics of this method is based on the idea that it is desirable to detect classes naturally, a way in which variables are placed and there is no specific order in the data structure. Classes must be discovered, they are not just statistically provided (Banfield & Raftery, 1993; Baudry et al., 2010; Bensmail & Meulman, 2003; Biernacki, Celeux & Govaert, 2000; Buiga, 2011; Raftery & Fraley, 1998, 2002, 2005; Raftery & Dean, 2006; Zhong & Ghosh, 2003).

In both samples (tourists from rural areas in Romania and tourists from rural areas in Hungary), analysis stopped at a number of five clusters. Comparing cases in each cluster from phase to phase, one can observe how groups become more similar as the number of clusters increases, as the distribution of tourists is not very scattered.

On the basis of the variables identified as significant for both groups of tourists (age, occupation, and amount of money for one day) a series of conclusions can be mentioned:

- ‡ the "retiree" group in rural areas of Hungary includes fewer tourists (a total of 37 people) than the "retiree" group in rural areas in Romania (50 persons); people of the "retiree" group in rural areas in Hungary allocated more money for one day than those on Romanian territory;
- ‡ the "intellectuals" group in rural areas of the Hungarian Plain includes 59 people, with little more than the group with the same name formed in rural areas in the Apuseni mountains, comprising 53 tourists; "intellectuals" in Hungary allocated for one day an amount of money much higher ( 250 lei) while the "intellectuals" of Romania shall grant an amount between 150-200 lei;
- ‡ the "young workers" group of the Hungarian rural areas does have any similarities with any group of Romanian territory since in the latter case, the age group differ significantly (26 years old versus 47);
- ‡ the "workers" group in rural areas from Hungary is composed, in fact, in two groups, the only difference between the two being the age (35/46); It differs from the "workers" group in romanian rural areas in particular because of the amount of money allocated for a day trip ( 200 lei from 150-200 lei, allocated by the tourists from Romania);
- ‡ the "entrepreneurs" group and "tourists with no activity" from Romania have no counterpart in the case of tourists in Hungarian rural areas.

*The logistic regression analysis*, had, as dependent variable "Apuseni tourist"/"tourists in the Hungarian Great Plain" (binary variable coded as 0 and 1-0 being attributed to the tourists in the first sample, namely that of tourists from the Apuseni mountains, while a value of 1 is assigned to the tourists in the second sample, namely that of tourists from the Hungarian Plain). Independent variables were the following:

Table number 3 – Independent variables used

X1	Number of trips in one year
X2	Distance from home
X3	Cathegories of locations chosen
X4	The frequency of choosing the same location
X5	The amount of money for one day
X6	The accommodation unit chosen

Source – personal approach of the author

We pursued testing the independent variables influence on beinh part of one group or the other. In this way, we can see the intention of factors (from X 1 to X 6) to explain the likelihood of occurrence of the event (in this case the event is defined by membership of a group of tourists). In other words, we wanted to test whether there are differences in the behavior of tourists from Romania and those in Hungary, so that we intended to estimate and to understand the differences between the two groups of tourists.

We built a unique sample by combining the two databases (resulting in 615 cases). We also introduced a new variable (sample membership) in order to be able to distinguish between the subjects of the two samples. The software used provides a descriptive primary table that indicates the number of cases included in the analysis, so that it appears that no case was excluded.

Table number 4 – Distribution of cases

Unweighted Cases <sup>a</sup>		N	Percent
Selected Cases	Included in Analysis	615	100.0
	Missing Cases	0	.0
	Total	615	100.0
Unselected Cases		0	.0
Total		615	100.0

a. If weight is in effect, see classification table for the total number of cases.

Source – personal approach of the author

The final results are presented in the second phase of the analysis, time when all six variables are used. The output from SPSS, which relates to the general complex model, indicates that it (the model with six predictors) predicts the independent variable better than a simple model

with a single explanatory variable. The Omnibus test becomes important for testing the significance level, so that if Chi Square is significant, the chosen model is valid, thus confirming continuing the analysis. In the present case we have values for Sig 0.00, therefore the model is valid.

Table number 5 – The Omnibus Test –

	Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1 Step	209.718	6	.000
Block	209.718	6	.000
Model	209.718	6	.000

Source – personal approach of the author

The results of the model show the percent of variance of the dependent variable explained by the combination of independent variables, the system thus generating two indicators-Cox and Snell R Square & Nagelkerke R Square. The most important aspect is that the first value displayed in the table, the corresponding 5.52-2 Log likelihood, be less than the amount recorded in the first phase of the analysis (the one that included only the constant), which has been confirmed:  $642.487 < 852.205$ .

Table number 6 - Results of the model

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	642.487 <sup>a</sup>	.289	.385

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 5 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

Source – personal approach of the author

Toward the end of the analysis, we had an output that indicates the percentage of cases correctly predicted, using all the predictors included in the analysis (in this case 6 factors). It appears, therefore, that in the first category we have a percentage of 77.5% of subjects correctly employed, and in the second category a 44.3% share of the overall amount of 74.5%. There is a major improvement over the simple model, which takes into account only the constant and where we had a rate of approx. 50%.



Table number 7 – Classification table

**Classification Table<sup>a</sup>**

Observed			Predicted		
			Data bases		Percentage Correct
			Romanians	Hungarians	
Step 1	baza de date	Tourists from rural area in Romania	244	71	77.5
		Tourists form rural areas in Hungary	86	214	71.3
Overall Percentage					74.5

a. The cut value is .500

Source – personal approach of the author

One can observe how the complex model included all the original proposed factors so that the last SPSS output includes all six explanatory variables. The first step is to analyse the significant factors included. Therefore, we have three factors that influence the membership of the group, namely, the location chosen, the amount of money allocated for a day and the type of accommodation chosen. These three factors are the ones that shape the two groups of tourists, differentiation within them being identified in the case of the location chosen, the amount of money for one day and the accommodation unit.

Table number 8 – The effect of independent variables

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 <sup>a</sup>	Nr of trips	-.107	.150	.509	1	.476	.899
	Distance	.070	.125	.316	1	.574	1.073
	Location	-.613	.107	32.973	1	.000	.542
	Freq.area	.216	.134	2.605	1	.107	1.241
	Money_1_say	1.373	.129	112.638	1	.000	3.945
	accom_unit	-.236	.108	4.744	1	.029	.790
	Constant	-2.334	.615	14.394	1	.000	.097

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: nr\_călătorii, distanța, locația, frecv. zona, banii zi, unitate\_cazare.

Source – personal approach of the author

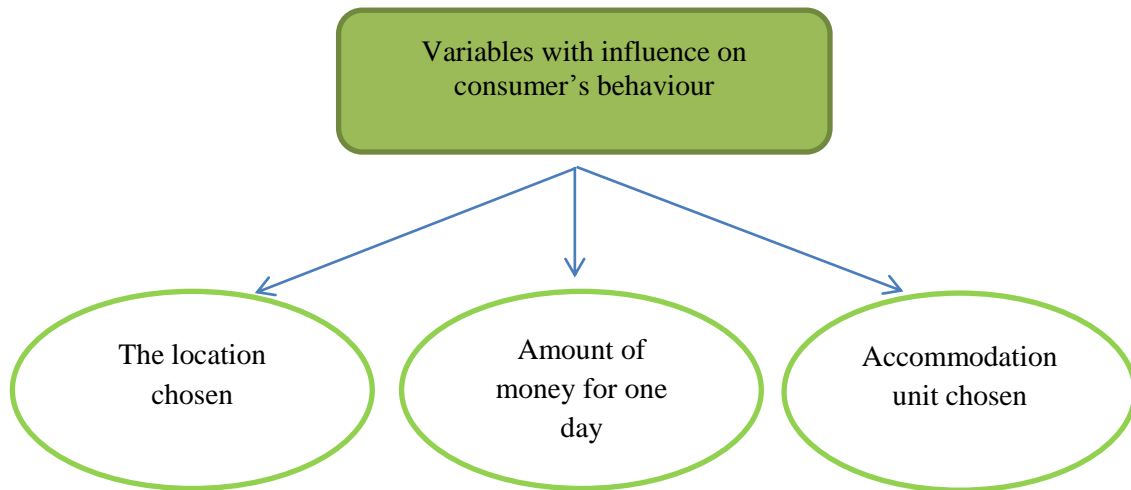


Figure number 1 – Variables with impact on the behaviour of tourists in rural areas

Source – personal approach of the author

From all six independent variables taken into account, only the three represented in the figure above have been shown to exert an influence in terms of shaping the two groups of tourists (tourists in rural areas from Romania and the tourists in rural areas from Hungary). These three variables, hereinafter referred to as factors of influence, were used alongside the variables identified as having the role of differentiation in the Cluster analyses, to shape consumer profile.

## **Chapter 6. Discussions and conclusions**

This chapter contains the essence of all the analysis carried out and presents a profile of the consumer of rural tourism, reported to the two areas studied. Whereas the results of the tests carried out have highlighted the special significance of the variable-amount of money for one day-within the binary regression analysis, emphasis was put on that aspect. We also took into account the other two variables with meaning and influence-the chosen location and the chosen accommodation unit.

As a result, we obtained the following combinations of independent variables:

1. Independent variables analysed, where the amount of money allocated for one day of vacation is divided into *two categories*: between 100-150 lei/day, between 150-200 lei/day (the amount of money allocated for one day, chosen location, accommodation unit, age and occupation)
2. Independent variables analysed, where the amount of money allocated for a day trip includes *one category*: between 200-250 lei per day (the amount of money for one day, chosen location, accommodation unit, age and occupation)

The dependent variables that taken into account in order to test the significance of the links between different combinations formed between the independent variables were: monthly income, nationality, accompanying persons, by reason for taking the trip, the intention to revisit the rural area, the number of trips made in one year, the distance from home, frequency of choosing the same locations, elements with influence in choosing the rural area (rest, cultural and historical attractions, traditions and customs, wildlife and authenticity), the elements that influence the decision regarding the chosen rural area (own experience, articles from newspapers and magazines, friends advice, websites/ presentation videos on the internet), planning of the trip, the accommodation unit (the importance given to the parking space, cost of meals and accommodation and the variety of menus), auxiliary ways of spending time and means of transport.

All in all, these combinations of independent variables with influence on the dependent variables, resulted in three variables that shape the profile of rural tourism consumer, regardless the rural area studied-the amount of money for one day, the chosen location and the chosen accommodations. Therefore, two types of tourists are outlined:

- ‡ tourists in rural areas who are willing to spend *more money for a day's stay* (between 150-250 lei/day), choose spa areas and stay at guesthouses;
- ‡ tourists in rural areas who are willing to spend *less money for a day's stay* (between 100-200 lei/day), choose mountain areas and stay at guesthouses.

We can admit the fact that tourists from the first category, those who spend more in one day, are those identified in the sample from the rural areas of the Hungarian Plain, the latter having a greater financial availability, while tourists from the Apuseni rural areas spend less for a

day's stay. The profile of rural consumers is included in the following table by identifying the main differences of behavior and related aspects that characterize the identified segments.

Table number 9 – The identified consumer's profile

<p><i>Tourists in rural areas who are willing to spend <b>more money for a day's stay</b> (between 150-250 lei/day), choose spa areas and stay at guesthouses</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- are aged between 25-69</li> <li>-are people with higher education (the average age of 25 years), workers, entrepreneurs and retirees</li> <li>- have a monthly family income between 2101-4600 lei</li> <li>-are Romanians</li> <li>-go on holiday with family or friends but also with work colleagues (especially younger ones)</li> <li>-the main purpose for taking the trip is recreation, all showing a desire to return to that rural area</li> <li>-the older ones consider traditions and customs of the area, an important element, while the young emphasize wildlife when they choose a particular rural area</li> <li>-the young take into account the advice of friends, others the official sites, and the older, rely on their own experience, when choosing a rural destination</li> <li>- they plan their vacation by themselves</li> <li>-the focus is on the variety of menus (especially older individuals) and the cost of the accommodation and meals</li> <li>-they prefer trips and picnics and come with their personal cars</li> </ul>
<p><i>Tourists in rural areas who are willing to spend <b>less money for a day's stay</b> (between 100-200 lei/day), choose mountain areas and stay at guesthouses</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- are aged between 25-69</li> <li>- are people with higher education (those with the average age 69), workers or retirees</li> <li>-they take a maximum of two trips per year, at a maximum distance of 300 km from home</li> <li>-younger people consider authenticity an important element when choosing a rural destination, while others prefer historical and cultural attractions, and the older prefer traditions, habits and leisure</li> <li>-they take into account the advice of his friends (especially young people) and their own experience</li> <li>-plan the vacation by themselves</li> <li>-focus on the existence of a parking area at the accommodation unit chosen but also on the variety of the menus, the older ones being sensitive to both accommodation and dining services</li> <li>-prefer trips and use their personal car</li> </ul>

Source – personal approach of the author

Within this paper we intend to outline a consumer profile reported to the two areas, one situated in Romania and the other located in Hungary. For this purpose we have developed a series of hypothesis that were meant to identify the main differences between groups. In other words, we determined the main factors that shape the consumer's profile, reported to the two areas. In general, the hypothesis were confirmed. After testing the hypotheses, we have

established a direct and significant link between the variables "income" and "degree of satisfaction at the end of the trip" and membership of one of the groups-tourists in the rural areas from Hungary and tourists from the rural areas in Romania.

Further, we have confirmed, following the application of Cluster analysis, that the variables "age", "occupation" and "the amount of money for one day" have a certain impact in shaping the groups of tourists. Through this finding we can confirm the results of similar studies on segmentation-based clusters (Dasgupta, 2011; McDonald & Dunbar, 2012) which took into account more variables, grouped the individuals and then have created profiles by identifying different aspects between groups. Similarly, we have grouped the individuals in five groups, both in the case of the Apuseni mountains and the Hungarian Great Plain. In order to shape the profile, we needed the results obtained with the help of logistic regression analysis. These results indicated three variables, the "chosen location", "the amount of money for one day" and "accommodation chosen", as the influence factors of differentiation.

Taking into account the results of all analysis carried out, we noticed the effect of one particular variable „ the amount of money for one day", as being the factor that shapes the consumer's profile.

In terms of theory, our arguments have been confirmed, thus demonstrating that the consumer profile is drawn up on the basis of several influence factors of differentiation. We join the efforts begun by specialists Kidd (1995), Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) and Royo-Vela (2009), who identified various profiles of tourists who prefer rural areas, but also those taken by Roman (2012) who identified a profile of the tourists in mountain areas. We intend to enrich literature in the field of rural tourism by using the identified profile, reported to the two rural areas.

In terms of methodology, the results of the study have shown that the main factor of influence in shaping the profile, is a variable that could not be identified in any of the studies mentioned before. This variable is the "*sum of money for one day.*"

*The research underlying this doctoral thesis plans, through the results obtained, to meet some of the problems encountered in the rural tourism sector in the two countries, and not only. Knowing the consumer profile can be useful to owners of guesthouses (housing and food services) including both firms already operating in the market of tourism, larger firms that hold accommodation and food units in rural areas but also to those who offer accommodation*

in private houses. The latter represent a temptation for tourists who choose rural areas because tourists regard this as an opportunity to stay overnight and taste the traditional cuisine. Owners of such units can learn more about guests preferences in terms of accommodation, their expectations and their needs. Even if tourism in rural areas is often associated with country tourism or farm tourism, this does not mean a low level of service offered at the guest house units. Moreover, tourists want accommodation in appropriate that also maintain authenticity. This is important for guesthouse owners who can have an idea of how to set the location. Dining is another important aspect for tourists who choose rural areas. Tourists desire traditional menus and wish to taste typical dishes of the area. Knowledge of these aspects helps owners of guesthouses in planning the lodging, the auxiliary activities and serving meals, with the ultimate goal of serving the needs and wishes of tourists who choose rural areas.

The usefulness of knowing this type of profile is supported by the fact that this information can serve the authorities or organisations involved in projects on the development of rural tourism. The results obtained can be considered in the development of strategies aimed in revitalize rural tourism. Having a clear idea of the factors that shape the consumer profile, in other words, by knowing who is the tourist who chooses rural areas, various training courses for owners of guesthouses could be considered. They will receive advise in the development of new business in rural areas (for example, residents in the area who want to receive tourists in their own homes) or considering new guesthouses. Thus, those directly involved in this business can more easily discover all the opportunities. Moreover, rural areas will have the chance to develop through integrating the tourist offer. Tourists will also have multiple options. The community can also benefit from these actions undertaken by increasing incomes (especially in the case of establishments in the homes of locals). They will be able to serve traditional meals and the food will be prepared with natural ingredients obtained directly from their own gardens. The overall image of the rural area in question will be enhanced significantly since, along with these activities, actions to promote the area will be undertaken.

Another segment that can benefit from the results of this research is the segment of tour operators. They will have a clear image on demand in rural areas and thus will be able to think about the offer. As it was demonstrated, tourists in rural areas have a number of different needs from tourists who travel to other areas. The tour operators will know how to approach this aspect in order to successfully meet the demand in this sector.

This study presents certain *limitations* with regard to the results obtained, which give *directions for future research*. The present study took into account the consumer profile, without including the service providers. *In order to have a clearer image, a research considering service providers, in the two rural areas from Romania and Hungary, becomes necessary*. The goal of this research will be to analyze the current state of development, to highlight the strengths and weaknesses, to identify opportunities and threats, and to propose future directions of development, all based on the rural tourism consumer profile.

Based on the results obtained from the research mentioned before, a practical guide for service providers, containing useful information about the effective management of the structure but also about ways to attract and retain tourists, will be implemented. A second guide will be developed for tourists in rural areas, which will contain information about the countryside, about the accommodation choices, dining, recreational activities, tourist attractions etc.

Considering two different areas in terms of landscape, has represented both a challenge and a limit to the research. Even if the two areas have different landscapes, the results obtained indicated that the differences in profile were recorded on other components and not necessarily those of the geographical location. *However, future researches regarding rural areas with similar landscape, becomes a priority both because of the need to expand the research territory and extension of the sample boundaries*.

The two rural areas chosen for the implementation of the research, the Apuseni Mountains and the Hungarian Plain, represents a starting point for the expansion of consumer profile analysis to a higher level, and even to other countries in Europe. *Considering the fact that the two countries chosen present an average level of tourism development in rural areas, we believe that, for further research we will consider more developed countries, with a tradition in practicing rural tourism*.

As regarding the factors taken into account in shaping consumer profile, professionals in the field mention the importance of geographical, demographic and behavioural factors (Hsu et.al., 2002; Benjamin, 2007; Othman & Jamal, 2011, p. 13-15). The fact that the present research took into account only two out of the three categories, namely the demographic and behavioural factors, represents one of the identified limits. *We intend, therefore, to include*

*geographical factors in future research and to consider a more complex questionnaire in the process of gathering data.*

Also studying the psychographic dimension is a point of interest for future research. In this way we will be able to analyze consumer behavior of rural tourism, viewed as a complex and multidimensional process. We join the ideas expressed by the majority of specialists in the field of consumer behavior (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999; Niculescu & Răboșu, 2005; Othman & Jamal, 2011, p. 13-15; Fratu et.al, 2011) who believe that the multidimensional approach is necessary. *This way, we will be able to create and test a behavioural model for the consumer of rural tourism would be useful.*

Last but not least, another limit to the research refers to aspects regarding methodology. Phenomena studied were addressed in a cross fashion, which limited the angle of viewing the research problem. As a result, future studies may consider dynamic methods that allow observation of consumers on specific periods of time. *In this way, we will be able to focus on the identification of differences arising from the implementation of the questionnaire at different intervals, and to observe the attitudes of rural tourism consumers.*

## **Bibliography**

1. Banfield, J.D., Adrian E. Raftery, (1993), Model-Based Gaussian and Non-Gaussian Clustering, *Biometrics*, Vol. 48, No.3, pp.803-821
2. Bashar, M., Ahmad, P.(2010), An Analysis of Push and Pull Travel Motivations of Foreign Tourists to Jordan, *International Journal of Business and Management*, Toronto: Vol. 5, Iss. 12, disponibil la <http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/57936035/analysis-push-pull-travel-motivations-foreign-tourists-jordan>, accesat la data de 05 Februarie 2013
3. Baudry, J. P., Raftery A., Celeux, G., Kenneth, Lo, Gottardo, R.,(2010), Combining Mixture Components for Clustering, *Journal of Computational and Graphical Statistics*, Vol. 19, No.2, pp.332-353
4. Bensmail, H., Meulman, J.J., (2003), Model-Based Clustering with Noise: Bayesian Inference and Estimation, *Journal of Classification*, Vol. 20, pp.49-76
5. Biernacki, C., Celeux G., Govaert G., (2000), Assessing a Mixture Model for Clustering with Integrated Completed Likelihood, *IEEE Transactions on Pattern Analysis and Machine Intelligence*, Vol. 22, pp.719-725
6. Bowen, D., Clarke, J. (2009), *Contemporary Tourist Behaviour: Yourself and Others as Tourists*, CABI International
7. Bucur-Sabo, M.,(2006), *Marketing Turistic*, editura Irecson, București
8. Buiga, A., (2001), *Metodologia de Sondaj și Analiza Datelor în Studiile de Piață*, Presa Universitară Clujeană
9. Cai, L., Li, M. (2009), Distance-Segmented Rural Tourists, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 26, No.8, pp.751-761



10. Catană, Gh. A., (2003), Marketing. Filozofia Succesului în Afaceri, editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca
11. Coccossis, H., Constantoglou, M.E., (2006), The Use of Typologies in Tourism Planning: Problems and Conflicts, 46th Congress of the European Regional Science Association, University of Thessaly-Department of Planning and Regional Development, pp. 7-22, disponibil la <http://www.sre.wu-wien.ac.at/ersa/ersaconfs/ersa06/papers/712.pdf>, accesa la data de 12 Iunie 2013
12. Cohen, E. (1972), Toward a Sociology of International Tourism, *Social Research*, Vol.39, pp. 164-189
13. Cooper, D. R., Schindle, P. S., (2006), *Marketing Research*, McGraw-Hill, New York
14. Dann, G. (1977), Anomie, Ego-Enhancement and Tourism, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 4, pp. 184-94
15. Dasgupta, D. (2011), *Tourism Marketing*, Pearson Edition
16. Demir, S., (2010), Relationship between Stages of Consumer Behaviour Model: A Study on Turkish Tourists, *European Journal of Tourism Research*, Dobrich, Vol. 3
17. Dimitris, S; Efthalia, D.; Petrou, A, (2006), Rural Tourism and Tourists Expenditures for Local Food Products, *Regional Studies*, Vol. 40.7, accesat la data de 5 Martie 2012
18. Fraley, C., Raftery, A., (2002), Model-Based Clustering, Discriminant Analysis, and Density Estimation, *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, Vol. 97, No.458, pp. 611-631
19. Fratu, D.,(2011), Factors of influence and changes in the tourism consumer behaviour, *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov*, Vol. 4 (53), No. 1 ,Series V: Economic Sciences, accesat la data de 5 Martie 2012
20. Hsu, C.H.C., Kang, S.K., & Wolfe, K. (2002). Psychographic and Demographic Profiles of Niche Market Leisure Travelers, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, Vol. 26, No.1, pp. 3-22
21. Ispas, A. (2007), Definirea Profilului Consumatorului de Turism. Studiu de Caz în Rândul Elevilor, lucrare prezentată în cadrul Olimpiadei Naţionale de Turism de la Petroşani
22. Jayawardena, C., Miththapala, S., (2013), Understanding the Evolving Tourist Expectation Model – The Key to Making Sri Lankan Hotels more Customer-Focused, disponibil la <http://www.eturbonews.com/34792/key-making-sri-lankan-hotels-more-customer-focused>, accesa la data de 12 Iunie 2013
23. Kemperman, A., Timmermans, H. (2006), Preferences, Benefits and Park visits: a latent class segmentation analysis, *Tourism Analysis*, Vol. 11, No. 4, pp. 221-230
24. Kidd, J.N., (1995), *Farm Tourism in Victoria*, Victoria University of Technology, Melbourne
25. Kotler, Ph., Bowen, J.T., Makens, J.C., (2006), *Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism*, Prentice Hall, England
26. Krippendorf, J. (1987), *The Holiday Makers*, London: Heinemann
27. Leisen, B., (2001), Image Segmentation: the case of a tourism destination, *The Journal of Services Marketing- J SERV MARK*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 49-66
28. Lesley, R., Hall, D. (2003), *Rural Tourism and Recreation: principles to practice*, CABI Publishing
29. McDonald, M., Dunbar, I. (2012), *Market Segmentation: How to Do It and How to Profit from It*, 4th Edition, John Wiley&Sons, UK
30. Mureşan, C., (2011), *Analiza Calităţii Serviciilor Turistice Rurale în Regiunea Târnava Mare*, Teză de Doctorat, USAMV, Cluj-Napoca
31. Niculescu, G., Răbonţu, C. I., (2005), *Marketing turistic*, Editura Academica Brâncuşi, Târgu-Jiu, 2005

32. Nistoreanu, P, Ghereș, M., (2010), Managementul Durabil al Comunităților Rurale și Turismul, Editura ASE, București
33. Nistoreanu, B., Tănase, M., Nistoreanu, O., (2010), O Abordare Holistică a Ospitalității, Turismul rural românesc în contextul dezvoltării durabile, Vol. 19, Editura Tehnopress, Iași
34. Othman, N., Jamal, S.,(2011), An Investigation into the Psihographics of Visitors to Homestay Malaysia, Research Management Institute, University Teknologia Mara, Malayisa
35. Park, D-B., Yoon Y-S. (2009), Segmentation by Motivation in Rural Tourism: A Korean Aase Study, Tourism Management, Elsevier Publications, Vol. 30, No.(1), pp.99-108
36. Pender, L., Sharpley, R. (2005), The Management of Tourism, Sage Publications
37. Pesonen, J., Komppula, R., (2011), Rural Wellbeing Tourism – Motivations and Expectations, Journal of Vacation Marketing, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 303-314
38. Pop, D., Marius, (2004), Cercetări de Marketing, editura Alma Mater, Cluj-Napoca
39. Raftery, A. E., Dean, N., (2006), Variable Selection for Model-Based Clustering, Journal of the American Statistical Association, Vol. 101, No.473, pp.168-178
40. Roman, L., (2012), Researches on the Concept of Agrotourism and its Role in Developing Mountain Areas, Analele Universității din Oradea, Ecotoxicologie, fascicula Zootehnie și tehnologii de Industrie Alimentară, editura Universității din Oradea, vol. 11/A, anul 11, pp.141-146, disponibilă la [http://protmed.uoradea.ro/facultate/anale/ecotox\\_zooteh\\_ind\\_alim/2012A/imapa/26.ROMAN%20LUCIAN.pdf](http://protmed.uoradea.ro/facultate/anale/ecotox_zooteh_ind_alim/2012A/imapa/26.ROMAN%20LUCIAN.pdf), accesat la data de 05 Februarie 2013
41. Royo-Vela, M.,(2009), Rural-Cultural Excursion Econceptualization: A Local Tourism Marketing Management Model Based on Tourist Destination Image Measurment, Tourism Management, Vol. 3, Issue 3, June, disponibil la <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0261517708001210>, accesat la data de 13 Februarie 2013
42. Silva, C., Lages, C., Abrantes, J., (2009), Push Motivations for Tourism Mountain Destinations, Marketing innovations for sustainable destinations, Goodfellow Publishing, Oxford
43. Smith, W.R., (1956), Product Differentiation and Market Segmentation as Alternative Marketing Strategies, Journal of Marketing, Vol. 21, pp.3-8, disponibil la <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1247695>, accesat la data de 25 Iunie 2013
44. Smith, V. L., Eadington, W. (eds.), (1992), Tourism Alternatives: Potentials and Problems in the Development of Tourism, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia
45. Stănciulescu, G. – coord. (2002), Lexicon de Termeni Turistici, editura Oscar Print, București
46. Swarbrooke, J., Horner, S. (1999), The Development and Management of Visitor Attractions, 2nd Edition, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford
47. Untaru, E., (2010), Determining a Representative Behaviour Pattern of Brașov Consumers of Products and Travel Services, International Conference on Business Excellence, ICBE
48. Zhong, S., Ghosh, J., (2003), A Unied Framework for Model-based Clustering, Journal of Machine Learning Research, Vol 4, pp.1001-1037