

## TOURIST MOTIVATION FOR RURAL DESTINATIONS

Angela BOTEZATU

Agrarian State University of Moldova, 42, Mircești, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, Phone/Fax:  
+ (373 22) 31-22-39, E-mail: botezatuangelacfb@gmail.com

**Corresponding author:** botezatuangelacfb@gmail.com

### Abstract

*City daily overexertion impels tourists wish to travel. Rural tourism behavior is determined by a set of motivational factors that makes him appreciate favorable tourist destinations. In order to analyze and assess the opinions and attitudes of tourists in rural areas we realized a market survey, the results being presented in the article below. Future trends, the growth rate of market depend largely on the wishes and intentions of goods or services consumers. This study involves the engagement of a number of 658 respondents, which were interviewed to determine the basic motivations in choosing countryside. The working methods used were analysis, synthesis and questionnaire survey as a research method. Results refer to the following: about 59 percent, spend up to 10% of annual income for vacations and travel, for rural tourism this amount is much lower; the association of the term „rural tourism” in the local tourist mind, oscillates among „a villa” in rural areas or „active vacation” (biking, hiking, riding, swimming or hunting); customer loyalty is one of the goals of marketing activities undertaken in hostels or other travel service providers. In conclusion, we mention that the variety of motivational factors in choosing tourist destinations in rural areas drive this type of tourism.*

**Key words:** countryside holidays, respondent, rural tourism, sample, tourist motivation

### INTRODUCTION

The expansion of the tourism phenomenon in rural areas in the second half of the last century is primarily due to rural recovery and development, and secondly to an alternative form of tourism compared to mass or traditional tourism.

The whole, rural tourism includes a wide range of ways of accommodation, events, celebrations, sports, other entertainment and enjoyable party activities of leisure, all unfolded in a typical rural environment.

In the acception of the World Tourism Organization and many European organizations, rural tourism is “*a form of tourism that includes any tourist activity in rural areas organized and led by the local population, exploiting local tourism resources (natural, cultural-historical, human) and facilities, tourist structures, including hostels and agro tourism farms.*”

Why rural tourism? If we start with this question, we find more responses from supporters of this type of tourism while experts have determined the following features:

- Closeness to nature;
- The absence of the multitude;
- Quietness;
- A “not mechanized” environment;
- Sense of continuity and stability, experience of living and enduring history;
- Possibility to know closely places and people of those places;
- Direct contact with local authorities, with the concerns and specific activity of the area;
- Proper knowledge of local business;
- The chance of community integration during the stay. [4]

Most tourism motivations may substantially differ in their interpretations and explanations resulting travel models. The most frequently combined reasons appear for individual or group travels. For example, for rural tourism Moldovans hospitality, the retrieval customs and traditions, habitual stress escape, natural sightseeing etc, would be some *integrated reasons* for rural tourist areas.

The tourist motivation determines the psychological dimension of rural tourism. [4] This includes a set of needs, impulses, intentions, valences and specific personal tendencies and being influenced by

geographical environment factors, the attitudes towards it and towards himself, the consciously aim as a response to respond to these needs. [5]

The famous Jost Krippendorf's list (1987), considered one of the pioneers of sustainable tourism, in his book *The Holiday Makers*, are listed 20 reasons, which we'll present below: 1) the attraction of the landscape; 2) the quality of meal; 3) general atmosphere; 4) curiosities of the region; 5) the environment quality towards health; 6) rest and relaxation; 7) itinerary; 8) the accommodation conditions; 9) great price; 10) language problems; 11) sympathetic contact with the indigenous population; 12) cultural attractions, 13) state of the roads; 14) day or night entertainments; 15) arrival and reception; 16) local folklore; 17) the possibilities to practice sports activities; 18) travel planning and formalities; 19) shopping opportunities; 20) other hobbies/ interests or entertainments.

In order to determine attitudes and reviews of Moldovan tourists opposite to „countryside holidays”, towards defining the directions of development of this branch and the overriding motivation for this type of tourism, from March to June 2013, we have developed a study of the reasons for tourism in rural areas, the results of which will be presented below.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

We consider research as one exploratory study that will allow us to establish future research directions, some general conclusions and recommendations. [7]

The study was trained a number of 658 respondents of different ages. For its relevance we selected people with different occupations: skilled workers, business professionals, students, private entrepreneurs, teachers, we separately analysed the responses of a certain category - civil clerks whose sedentariness (office work), make them to choose trips out in the bosom of nature.

The largest share were the people aged from 21 to 30 years old. Their active rest is typical, although the age is one of essential criterion to create the tourist offer.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The escape to the countryside vacations and travel of Moldovans abroad have gained considerable intensity in the last years, however, the share of annual income for tourism is one as insignificant one upon the whole. Approximately 386 respondents or about 59 percent, spend up to 10% of annual income for vacations and travel, for rural tourism this amount is much lower, 23 percent grant to those services between 11-20% and only 2% of respondents spend more than 40 percent for holidays, vacations, recreation.

Reading the psychologist's opinion Claire Lucques (1962), who considers the tourism as „*unnecessary expense and distress, the result of the trend towards waste and ruination of material wealth to meet pleasure, that cannot restore the individuals emotional balance*”, then, the presented figures above may be justified, however, the escape in nature may remind to people how to really live.

Rural tourism as a phenomenon has appeared in our country recently, after 2000, therefore, we still cannot talk about creating a tourism product in rural area, as proposed offers have more seasonal, sporadic and disorganized feature. The association of the term „rural tourism” in the local tourist mind, oscillates among „*a villa*” in rural areas or „*active vacation*” (biking, hiking, riding, swimming or hunting). (Fig. 1)

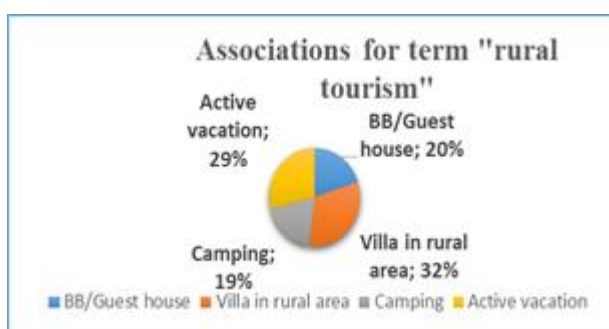


Fig.1. The opinions of respondents across the association „rural tourism” term with other notions

The consumer behaviour for specific products or services has to be often formed, in the way that consumers are suggested services and destinations they need. Of course, the „rest in

the country” is hardly the townspeople passion, the rejection being „supplied” by the lack of professionalism and the small number of those skilled in management and organization of tourism activities in rural areas. In the framework of a study, performed in Romania, the respondents have noticed some gaps including: language problems, road conditions, possibilities of practicing sport's activities etc., which are typical for domestic tourism. The passion of tourists for holidays in the countryside has been scaled in perimeter „very passionate-not passionate”, so 386 of the 658 respondents said they were *very keen and passionate* (59%) those „*indifferent*” representing 14 %.

As mentioned above the main reasons for rural tourism, played by specialists, thus the respondents were asked „*What motivates you to choose the rural tourism?*” offering five possible answers. Their options were more focused on leisure, recreation and escape to nature, options justified by Graburn theoretical model based on „inversions” of travel.[2] It explains the tendency of tourists to seek temporary something else than usually. The concern is reflected in the increasing of the relaxation time, antithetical with working time.



Fig.2. Motivations in choosing rural tourism destinations

The features of tourist product or of tourist package involve their communication to potential customers. Promotion as a specific form of communication, although, it seems relatively simple, requires special skills. Firstly, promotion must be of a permanent

spect, must address to potential and current clients, even more it concerns the objectives of informing nature on the natural and anthropogenic resources area, their recovery from a high level; attracting the target customers; improving the company image; creating a unique image; the harmonious development of local economic activity.

A content tourist will always share this opinions and impressions to others, so perhaps the main source of information for vacations in the countryside is the recommendation of friends or colleagues. More than half of respondents (54.7%) trust their recommendations. The list is followed by the Internet (32.9%) - considering that most of the respondents were office workers and students - personal experience, travel agencies, promotional materials, trade and fairs, tourist information offices, having a relatively small share.

Customer loyalty is one of the goals of marketing activities undertaken in hostels or other travel service providers, but in order to prosper it must be imposed and maintained certain standards of quality, which unfortunately do not exist in the local tourism structures in rural areas. Some statistics and studies in the field, show that 67% of dissatisfied customers do not come back again to the site and 96% of those dissatisfied never make complaints on the spot. [6]

If referring to the tourist way of booking for holidays in the countryside, then the preferences of respondents were largely shared between „*direct contact with landlord,*” and „*without prior reservation*”, which shows the disorganized nature of this activity, the statistical data being missing or incomplete.

Table 1. Distribution of tourists' preferences for booking holidays in the countryside

| Choice variants                    | Number of responses | Share, % |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|----------|
| Direct contact with landlord/owner | 244                 | 37       |
| By travel agency                   | 155                 | 23       |
| Online booking                     | 65                  | 9        |
| Without prior reservation          | 200                 | 31       |
| Total                              | 664                 | 100      |

Although, the Internet as a source of tourist information is in the respondents' preferences, cult of „*online reservations*” is not formed yet. Some respondents mentioned several answers, depending on the situation.

For the 2-5 days stay and more, in rural space tourists need accommodation. Whether it is a BB (Bed & Breakfast) or villa, camping or rooms for renting family houses, the tourist should have minimum comfort. About 70 % of respondents said that comfort and convenience can be enjoyed in the rural area. In their opinion this aspect would be: silence (a considerable number of respondents); cleaning; fresh air; safety food; amusement etc.

In the list of enumerations were found hospitality, infrastructure, convenience and comfort of nature as conditions in rural areas.

Regarding the most important factor in choosing accommodations, was mentioned again quiet and recreation, attractive nature, the comfort of accommodation and nearby cultural and sports attractions. Finally, as an important element in choosing accommodations were mentioned „price level”, with a share of 14.6%. Meanwhile, Moldovans state that are willing to spend per day maximum up to 500 MDL for a holiday in the countryside, in the context of the rural boarding prices for day/tourist with 3 meals included are about 570 MDL (35 Euro), without additional services (boating, carriage or sleigh etc.).

If, until recently, rural areas did not provide conditions of recreational activities for tourists, at the same time with changes in consumer behaviour such services and due to increasing demands for services in rural areas are increasingly opting for an active holiday in the countryside. Hiking, fishing, equitation, hunting or visiting cultural and historical sites and landscapes are included in active recreation in the countryside. In the top 1-5 of the favourite activities during tourist rural stays, respondents gave first place visiting cultural and historical sites and admiring landscapes, the second and the third place being awarded respectively, to hiking and fishing.

Holidays in the countryside can be cut and scattered during the year, depending on the season, national and religious traditional

holidays, and so fall in the average duration of 3-5 days. This is the opinion of respondents surveyed who consider the optimal duration of staying in rural areas in Moldova 3-4 days (34%).

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, we mention that the variety of motivational factors in choosing tourist destinations in rural areas drive this type of tourism. “Mini vacations” in rural areas are very appreciated by tourists. Tourism development in rural areas should be supported by the state, local authorities, local creativity and initiative and not at least by tourists themselves. Creating a brand of “*holidays in the country*” would promote tourist destinations “*in the shadow*” of the Republic of Moldova.

The perspectives of the development of rural tourism in our opinion concern:

- Creation and promotion of rural tourism itineraries;
- Design and substantiation of a local rural tourism product;
- Adopting a legislative framework for rural tourism;
- Creation of public-private partnerships in this area;
- Establishment of quality standards for rural tourism.

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