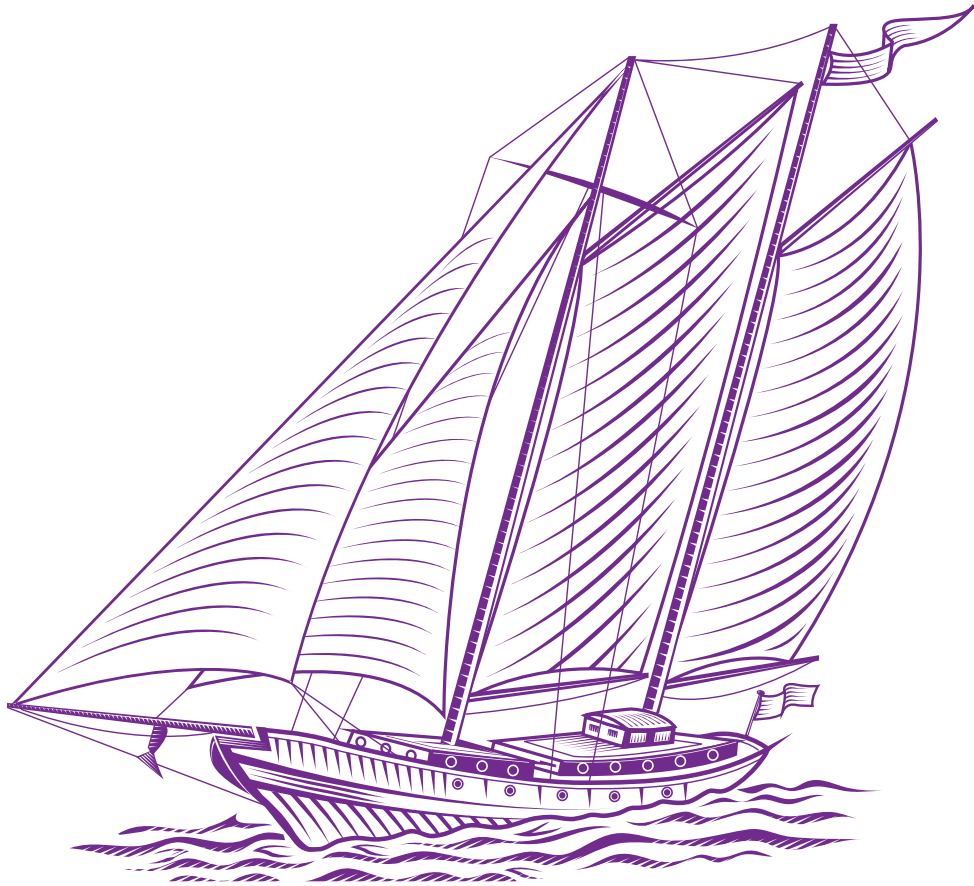




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**The current issue contains a collection of papers
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DIMENSIONS OF CULINARY TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY IN GOLDEN TRIANGLE OF INDIA

REKHA MAITRA¹, TARUN BANSAL², ANSTED IYPE JOSEPH³

ABSTRACT. Purpose: Delhi, Agra and Jaipur form the golden triangle of India. This tourist triangle is designed to up-sell in the market with lucrative offers. “Palace on Wheels” is a luxury train that runs on this route and is targeted for foreign clientele with its extravagance segment.

These three destinations have their significance due to the presence of historical monuments and UNESCO world heritage sites i.e., Qutub Minar, India Gate, Tajmahal, and many more. These places also offer an enormous variety of food and beverage with warm hospitality to relieve the tired tourists. The gourmet dishes of Golden Triangle are a must to try as it dates to the traditional cooking combined with a spicy aroma and soothing beverages.

The paper is structured to judge the culinary facet and warm hospitality of the Golden Triangle. The main objective is to find out the impact of traditional food in attracting travellers. It will also identify the food trail experiences in enhancing a niche segment of buyers for culinary tourism.

Design/methodology/approach: The research is exploratory and draws on food and beverage culinary experience delivery in the Golden Triangle. The exploratory research will judge the effectiveness of food tours and the warm hospitality extended to food tourists.

Findings: The research will examine how Culinary Tourism and Hospitality in the Golden Triangle of India can form a niche segment of food and beverage buyers. How it enhances the customer experience with hospitable conduct. The study will highlight the benefits of culinary tourism and hospitality.

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Practical implications: The paper recommends the concepts of food and beverage culinary tourism experience for creating a niche segment of buyers as well as attracting potential buyers with its approach. The research will synthesize the factors to improve customer interest in taking food and beverage tourism.

Originality/value: The research sought to address the advantages of curating food and beverage tourists in the golden triangle of India. It will also address how food and beverage tours can influence culinary tourism.

Keywords: Culinary tourism, hospitality, traditional food, secret recipes, niche segment.

JEL Classification: L83, Z31

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Introduction

India, a melange of customs, history, and vivid geographies is a conscious journey by itself. Snow-capped Himalayan peaks to stretches of coastline, natural greenery to spiritual depths, and a kaleidoscope of cultural hues, all of these elements describe the amalgamation of culture with which India captures the hearts of every visitor. India's tourism sector is among the nation's biggest service industries. This sector's primary objectives are to grow and encourage tourism, sustain India's attractiveness as a tourist destination, and enhance and expand existing tourism items. The travel and tourism sector holds tactical significance in the Indian economy by making provision of several socio-economic benefits. Jobs, revenue, and foreign exchange, as well as the enhancement of other sectors i.e. agriculture, building, and arts and crafts.

The tourism industry in India is one of the country's most important service industries. The role of food in attracting tourists is becoming more apparent as India is promoted as a tourist destination. India's culinary tourism potential is immense. The Incredible Tiffin" project, launched by the Cuisine India Society in Delhi aims to raise global awareness of India's cuisine's richness and diversity. The Golden Triangle of India has only

been discussed on a mass scale in terms of heritage. Due to the wide variety of cuisines and dishes available, the Golden Triangle (Delhi-Agra-Jaipur) has a strong grip on culinary tourism. The idea of exploring the Golden Triangle as a culinary circuit could be beneficial to India's economy. Modern tourists are hungry to visit authentic destinations, and food is one of the best ways to learn about a place's culture and history.

Food Tourism

The Incredible Tiffin campaign, launched in May 2012 aims to foster global awareness of the richness and diversity of India's cuisine (Duttgupta, 2013). Cuisine is an eternal part of tourism. The food cannot be neglected as whoever is travelling will be consuming the same. It provides an opportunity to promote our hidden culinary treasure as the cultural heritage of Delhi. Regional foods have tremendous health benefits and tourists are looking forward to trying new food. It gives scope for developing Culinary Tourism in Delhi, which will lead to economic development (Rathor & Parkash, 2019). According to UNWTO Report, Vol. 4 'Global Report on Food Tourism (2012) "Billions of tourists return to familiar destinations to enjoy tried and tested recipes or travel further in search of Nouvelle cuisine".

Literature Review

Gastronomic tourism is a rapidly evolving field within the wider tourism, hospitality, marketing, regional development, and education fields. Gastronomic tourism is indeed very experiential, given its sensorial aspects and particularly concerning broader notions of taste (Kesimoglu, 2015). Three evolutionary phases of gastronomic tourism experiences have been documented (Richards, 2015). The first generation was based on the production of themed experiences for consumers. The second generation of gastronomic experiences was centred on co-creation, while in the third generation there is greater recognition of gastronomic experiences being situated in the development of communities and food (Richards, 2015; Pratt, Suntikul & Agyeiwaah, 2020). This implies a greater Integration of gastronomic tourism into local systems, sustainability, and regional development. Yet, there is much confusion for concepts such as food,

culinary and gastronomic tourism. As Hall (2020, p.285) suggests, “they are related but different”, with gastronomic and culinary tourism dealing more with high-end restaurants and haute-cuisine. Gastronomy focuses on elements of food, flavour, culture, history, and environment (Baldwin, 2018), while culinary examine the study of food preparation, execution, flavour development, and techniques. Where in both look at food land-derived techniques, culinary is more technical while gastronomy tends to be more philosophical in nature (Baldwin, 2018). Eating is a unique tourist activity that gratifies all the senses (Kivela & Crotts, 2006). The sensory appeal of local food has been topical in the tourism and hospitality literature (Kim & Given that local food has a diverse value, including local, ethnic, and national traditions, as well as history, customs, culture, and eating habits beyond gastronomic and dietary values (Choe & Kim, 2018; Hall et al., 2003), Tourism emphasize the experiential value and the holistic nature of food experiences and their ability to bond people through food (Boswijk, Thijssen, & Peelen, 2007). Beyond the experiential aspects, gastronomic tourism has socio-cultural implications on society, place, and identity (Kesimoglu, 2015). In particular, the nexus of religious requirements and gastronomic tourism experiences is an area of significant omission in the literature (Hall & Prayag, 2019). Eves, 2012). Gastronomic tourism has thus emerged as a significant component of consumers’ lived experiences, regardless of country of origin, shaping decision-making processes, dining choices, and holiday destinations (Dixit, 2020; Ellis, Park, Kim, & Yeoman, 2018; Henderson, 2009; Robinson, Getz, & Dolinar, 2018). The modern traveller considers significantly diverse experiential attainments while visiting any destination.

Culinary tourism has a successful record of being a prominent product for tourists in various countries. According to Williams (2014) “The pursuit of memorable, authentic food & beverage experiences while travelling locally, regionally or globally.” The global food and beverage market is likely to grow to \$570 Billion by 2025. Food tourism is an important segment of contemporary tourism.

UNWTO ‘Global Report on Food Tourism (2012) emphasized that the destinations famous for food are revisited by billions of food tourists for enjoying tried and tested recipes. They prefer travelling to explore new dishes, spices, ingredients, which becomes a part of tourism experience”.

According to World Tourism Organization UNWTO (2012), Food tourism has gained increasing attention over the past years. With food so deeply connected to its origin, this focus allows destinations to market themselves as truly unique, appealing to those travellers who look to feel part of their destinations through flavours.

According to the World Food Travel Association (WFTA), food tourism is the pursuit and enjoyment of unique and memorable food and drink experiences, both far and near.

Reynolds (2004) asserts that food plays an essential role in travel experiences like other elements of tourism i.e., transportation, accommodation, activities, and attractions etc.

Food has been recognized as an effective promotional and positioning tool of a destination (Hjalager & Richards, 2002). Similarly, with increasing interest in local cuisine, more destinations are focusing on food as their core tourism product.

Tourists are attracted by local cuisine as they are inspired by the culture of the host, heritage and traditional practices of the local community. (Dixit, 2019) Eating is a unique tourist activity that gratifies all the senses. (Kivela, 2006)

Culinary tourism and experience catered with local food, cooking sessions, visit the local market, local farms and food exposition and food fests are eagerly purchased by buyers. (Dixit, 2019)

Materials and Methods

The objective is to find out the impact of traditional food in attracting travellers. It will also identify the food trail experiences in enhancing a niche segment of buyers for culinary tourism.

The study aims to understand the significance of the Northern Golden Triangle of India, which includes Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur, as a gastronomic tourism circuit and how it can support the tourism industry.

Exploratory research was carried out to judge the choices of customers. The study was also supported by a thorough review of government policies as well as data on visitor arrivals. Secondary data was obtained from chapters and research journals about food culture and food choices. Secondary information was also gathered from corporate and government studies, journals, books, and websites.

Results and Discussion

Golden Triangle

The Golden Triangle of India forms an important tourist circuit. There are two golden triangles in India, one is the Golden Triangle of North comprising of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur and the 2nd one is the Golden Triangle of South comprising of Bangalore, Mysore and Ooty in Karnataka. State-wise Chennai, Mahabalipuram and Kanchipuram also form the golden triangle of Tamilnadu with heritage seeped cities and in Odisha, it consists of culturally rich cities Puri, Konark and Bhubaneshwar (Sengar, 2018).

The golden triangle of North covers the 3 important destinations to form the triangular shape on a map. These beautiful locations are frequently visited by domestic as well as international tourists, as the historical monuments located in these places are the epitome of our cultural heritage. These monuments i.e., the Taj Mahal in Agra are also recognized as UNESCO world heritage sites. North India Golden Triangle was rated as the world's 21st most popular tourist destination by a survey (Sengar, 2018).

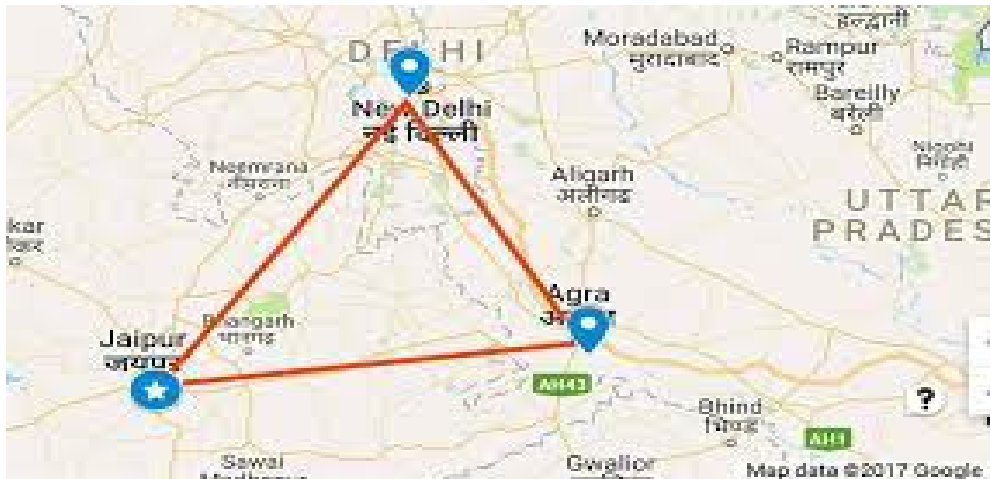


Image 1: Golden Triangle representing Delhi, Agra and Jaipur (Clegg, 2018)

Culinary Tourism and Hospitality in the Golden Triangle of India

Agra

The Taj Mahal in Agra is a famous monument built by Shah Jahan is the most visited monument of India and is also known as the 7th wonder of the world. The Taj Mahal was visited by 5.6 million domestic visitors in the financial year 2019 and foreign tourist footfall of nearly 794 thousand in the fiscal year 2018. Tourists travelling to Agra are mesmerized by the range of foods available in Agra City (Statista, 2019).

- Petha is a visual illustration of the city's sweet tooth. Agra is a world-renowned destination known for "Agra Ke Pethe." It's a delicacy made of sugar syrup and white pumpkin.
- Dal moth is a tongue-teasing Agra savoury that can be eaten on its own or with petha. It is a dry food made with fried lentils (dal), nuts, and raisins that's spicy.
- Bedai is a breakfast dish. It's a spicy kachori with a puffy structure usually accompanied by a spicy aloo sabzi and Dahi. The dish's spicy and tangy flavour adds a joyful kick to the mornings. This breakfast combo is available everywhere in Agra, from restaurants to roadside stands.
- Kesar Jalebi – Jalebi with Rabri is one of the best desserts, and it is revered in every way on the streets. To balance out the nectarous Jalebi, it's served with Rabri, which is made by simmering milk until it thickens.
- Bhalla – Bhalla is a popular Agra street food that is served on a single plate. Bhalla is fried mashed potatoes with chickpea curry, chutney, dahi, and spices on the side.
- Milk Products – Agra is also known for its milk products. Thickened milk in Kulhad with malai on top is Agra's drink of choice. Lassi, Dahi, and Makhan are all prominent in this Uttar Pradesh area.

Agra is rich in historical landmarks, but it is a desirable destination due to the city's delicacies. It is a gourmet hotspot for its delectable Mughal-influenced food and sweets.

Food tourism in Agra consists of Breakfast, Dinner, Private Tour, Transport by private, air-conditioned car. All sightseeing with private local guides, Fuel surcharge, Bottles of mineral water during journeys with Personal care and attention.

Delhi

Delhi is a hub of Culinary Tourism with a spectacular experience of an array of food items. Various food stalls located in Chandni Chowk are famous for different types of Parathas (Semi fried Indian bread), Lassi (Buttermilk) Kababs, Chole bhature, Falooda Ice cream, Samosa's Butter Chicken, Kachori, Chaat Jalebis, Kulfi and other savoury preparation. Delhi offers an amalgamation of Punjabi, Mughlai, Tibetan and Chinese cuisines.

The different types of food famous in the capital city – Delhi is

- Mughlai Cuisine - The Mughal influence can be seen in the food and eating habits of the Delhi region. Mughlai cuisines are best prepared in Delhi. Kebabs, one of the most well-known Mughlai cuisines are well-known among tourists.
- Butter Chicken – Butter Chicken is one of the country's most popular dishes. The butter, tomato, and chicken juices that were part of the sauce were mistakenly tossed with tandoori chicken pieces, resulting in the development of this amazing dish.
- Paranthas – Plain parathas to stuffed parathas with potatoes, cauliflower, eggs, radish etc. are all part of the traditional Indian breakfast. In Chandni Chowk, the Paranthas Wali Gali is packed with stalls selling the best parathas in the world.
- Street Food – The word "chaat" is used to describe street foods. Delhi offers a wide range of street foods, and Chandni Chowk is regarded as Delhi's "Street Food Capital." Chaats are very common in Old Delhi's narrow streets. Chhole Bhatura, Dahi Papdi Chaat, Gol Gappa, Aloo Tikkis, and Samosas are the top five favourite street foods in Delhi.

Delhi was the capital of the Mughal Emperor, that's why it is known as the birthplace of Mughal cuisine. Delhi cuisine has an aroma of spices that is balanced with exotic spices i.e Nutmeg, Mace and Saffron. Delhi offers a delectable taste of vegetarian and non-vegetarian food. Paneer, Mushroom and Corn are the main dishes, Aura of Delhi is always energizing and is a source of unending excitement. It is said Delhi never sleeps and Delhiites are considered to be foodies.

Jaipur

Jaipur is also known as a Pink City as it was painted pink to welcome Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert. Heritage Walking Tour of Jaipur City offers the local experience of food and is inclusive of Bottled water, Lunch/ Dinner, Food tasting, Light refreshments and snacks with a Professional driver/guide and Transport by private vehicle. At times Cooking classes are also extended in Jaipur with all Transport & Meals. Tourists are taken for Private Market Tour & Vegetarian Cooking Class & Meal in a Local Jaipur Home. Some of the food tours also extend Private Interactive Online Cooking Classes with a Local Host in Jaipur.

Traditional, authentic food items which are a part of the Rajasthani Cuisine in Jaipur:

- Dal Baati Churma – While Dal, Baati, and Churma are three distinct dishes, they are often served together. This combination creates Rajasthan's most popular dish, This is known as Rajasthan's signature dish, is available in Jaipur for a very reasonable price.
- Pyaz Ki Kachori – Pyaaz Ki Kachori is a delicious combination of crispness, crunch, and spice. In Jaipur, this is the best breakfast choice.
- Gatte Ki Sabzi – Gatte ki sabzi is made up of Gattas (gram flour pieces) that are mixed into a typical yogurt curry. Cooked in pure ghee, this dish has a delicious flavour.
- Kalakand – "Kalakand is a traditional Rajasthani dessert made with reduced milk and sugar and topped with silver leaf."
- Mirchi Bada –, This chilli cutlet, is a spicy Rajasthani snack. made with green chillies filled with potatoes and a besan or gram flour coating on top. served with tamarind chutney.
- Ghewar –This popular Rajasthani sweet is associated with the Teej Festival. It's a cake-like confection made of all-purpose flour soaked in sugar syrup.
- Mawa Kachori This delicious dessert is Jaipur's most popular food. This Mawa Kachori exemplifies Rajasthan's opulence and royalty. It's a rounded pastry packed with Mawa along with lots of nuts that makes a fantastic holiday sweet dish.
- Chokhani Kheer – This traditional dessert is typically prepared from Milk to add sweetness to commemorate a happy occasion.

Observations

In our exploratory study on North India Golden Triangle, it was discovered that the tourists have a positive perception of the city's cuisine. Delhi offers tasty and culturally diverse cuisine. The majority of tourists in Delhi are Food Neophiliacs or people who are open to trying new foods, dishes, or cuisines while on vacation. They have a favourable impression of Delhi's cuisine, and tourists can visit Delhi especially for culinary tourism. A country's cuisine can also serve as a platform for its ethnic or national identity on a larger scale. Dal Bati Churma from Jaipur and Agra's popular sweet Petha are excellent representations of Indian culture and history. Jaipur's Ghewar or Rajasthani thali can act as a medium to experience the culture of Jaipur and gain insights into the various culinary traditions and authentic food. Similarly, the Mughlai cuisine in Agra depicts the vast history of this city and acts as an additional attraction for tourists. The Golden Triangle of India (Delhi-Agra-Jaipur) has to date only been explored in terms of heritage on a mass scale. The three cities have a stronghold on culinary tourism due to their vast varieties of cuisines and dishes. All three cities have a strong potential to not only attract foreign tourists but also receive an increased domestic tourist footfall. The concept of the Golden Triangle being explored as a culinary circuit is new but can yield satisfactory economic benefits to India. Proper safety measures, which follow the COVID-19 protocol need to be implemented to enhance the promotion of food tourism through the Delhi-Agra-Jaipur circuit with accurate strategies for marketing this niche in place.

Conclusion

Food holds a greater significance in the tourism industry. Culinary tourism is a rising niche undertaken by several foreign tourists who visit India as well as domestic tourists travelling within the country. The Golden Triangle is an ideal circuit to introduce India's culture and historical significance to tourists. Additionally, attaching the food element to this circuit can result in economic benefits for the country and also would place India as an ideal tourism destination in the global tourism market. Every year the golden triangle receives a huge number of international

as well as domestic tourists, so developing it as a culinary circuit along with the existing cultural and heritage tourism aspects can work wonders for not only the three cities but will also benefit the people employed throughout the journey. Modern tourists have a hunger for exploring authentic destinations and receive in-depth knowledge of the city's culture, and food is one of the best options to explore the culture, traditions, and history of a destination.

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NEW APPROACHES TO VALUE CREATION IN THE TOURISM SECTOR - THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

CARMEN NASTASE¹, DANIELA MUSCAL (AVASILOAEI)²

ABSTRACT. The circular economy is an alternative economic model to the current linear economy. The main feature of the circular economy is to preserve the value of resources. The circular economy generates indisputable environmental benefits, social benefits and added value for companies, aspects necessary to guarantee resource sustainability and ecological diversity in a globalized, complex and often unpredictable global context. Despite the fact that tourism plays an important role in the economic development of tourist regions and in the integration of these economies in the process of globalization, it puts great pressure on natural resources and the environment. Tourism activity generates environmental impacts and economic impacts. The aim of this paper is to analyze the future tendencies of tourism, how the circular economy can create value for the tourism sector and the steps to be followed to create a sustainable model. The society we live in has exhausted the resources needed to meet the future needs of an increasingly affected planet. Tourism is a sector sensitive environmentally, because while exploiting resources for its economic development, compromising their future growth. For this reason, it is very important to adopt tourism practices that promote respect for the planet - Earth, because we destroy our home and today we are already living the consequences and the circular economy is born of the real need to save the planet we live on. Change is the key to a sustainable model. Today there are endless opportunities, we need to rethink our current system and open up to new perspectives through innovation and creativity.

Keywords: Circular economy, Sustainable tourism, Resources, Tourism

JEL classification: Z32, L83, Q01, Q56

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INTRODUCTION

Imminent population growth, combined with the rate at which natural resources are exploited today, will generate a demand that cannot be met (Wubbolts, 2014). Resources are becoming more expensive and more difficult to exploit. In addition, we question the amount of garbage generated by our current lifestyle.

The classical linear economy scheme, according to which the successive stages of extraction, processing, production, use and disposal of products and materials are developed, is not sustainable indefinitely, aggravated by the fact that, during the process, waste comes and by-products capable of being brought back into the production circuit or in the natural cycle, but which, on the other hand, are ignored and destined for disposal by incineration, destruction or storage in landfills. This situation leads to the need to identify priorities for strengthening a more competitive, responsible and sustainable economy, guided by a framework in which innovation is essential for progress and for ensuring the well-being of humanity.

The circular economy is the antithesis of the linear model. It is, conceptually, a “holistic”, “restorative” and “regenerative” model. It allows products, components and materials to maintain their value and usefulness permanently throughout the production and use cycle. It generates indisputable environmental benefits, social benefits and added value for companies, aspects needed to ensure resource sustainability and ecological diversity in a globalized, complex and often unpredictable global context.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The circular economy creates long-term prosperity but requires the involvement of all the elements that make up the economy and that are interconnected. Companies, consumers and governments must work together for a common goal: “to implement a fair, social, collaborative and sustainable economy” (Tejerina, 2017).

Marcet et al (2018), believe that the term circular economy is used to define an economic model that aims to maintain materials, products and components in circular processes, in which they can be reintegrated into the chain. Value once their useful life is over, ensuring that the materials lose the lowest possible value.

Although the concept of circular economy is not new but unfortunately it cannot be traced back to a specific year or author because it has deep-rooted origins. The circular economy has not always been given the same meaning but is explicitly linked to sustainable development. The circular economy is a model designed to replace the linear economy, built on the sequence: take resources from nature, manufacture, use or consume and throw away. Due to the negative impact on waste on the environment (accumulated in landfills), as well as the progressive deficit and rising cost of resources, this model is already unsustainable. The basics of the circular economy are highlighted in Figure 1.

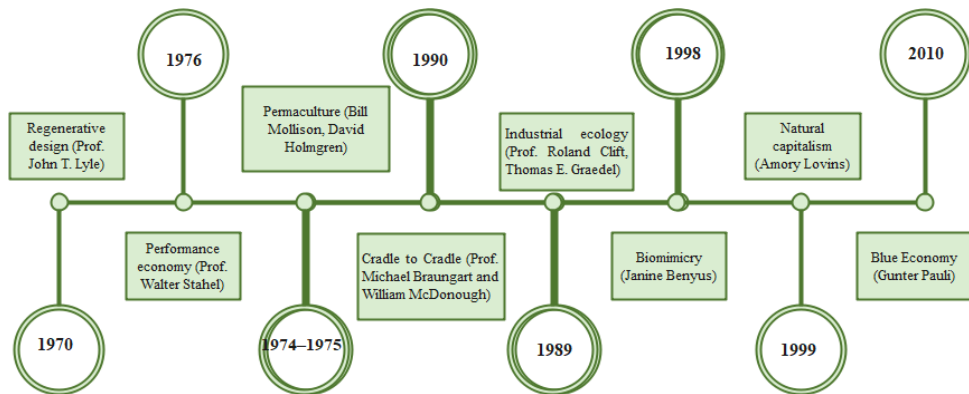


Figure 1. The evolution of the concept of circular economy over time

Source: Own elaboration with information from Ellen MacArthur Foundation, (2015), *DELIVERING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY – A TOOLKIT FOR POLICYMAKERS*, https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/assets/downloads/government/EllenMacArthurFoundation_Policymakers-Toolkit.pdf

Walter R. Stahel, a Swiss architect, is one of the great thinkers of the sustainable trends behind the circular economy. In 1976, together with Genevieve Reday, he presented a report at the European Commission in Brussels entitled *The Potential for Energy Replacement*, which sets out the first approaches to the circular economy or the Loop economy and the Cradle to Cradle concept, which years later, in 2002, it was expanded by McDonough and Braungart (2002).

The concept of biomimicry or biomimetics was popularized by Janine M. Benyus, an expert in natural sciences and natural resource management. Benyus explains biomimicry as "a new discipline that studies the best ideas of nature to mimic these patterns and processes of solving human problems."

It was not until the 1960s, with the first ecological movements and the publication of the book "The Silent Spring", that the negative impact of industries on the planet began to become relevant, due to the non-discriminatory exploitation of resources, mono-cultures and excessive use of toxic substances in the environment. This revival, added to the first publication of the concept of "sustainable development" in the "Brundtland Report", marked a new stage in the importance of caring for current natural resources to ensure the quality of life of future generations. This concept is general, ambiguous, and imperfect, but ultimately marked a valuable starting point globally. Thus, throughout the twentieth century and until today, several economists have tried to find the best way to bridge the gap between environmental care and the theory of neoclassical economics, which made it possible to formulate a "green economy", to mitigate the impact on the environment and make efficient use of resources, although it insists on infinite and expansive growth. This proposal does not solve the basic problems, as it was oriented towards the internalization of costs and promoted the "polluter pays" principle but did not promote systematic changes in business culture from improving sources of process contamination and product design.



Figure 2. Linear economy VS Circular economy

Source: MacArthur Foundation, (2015), *DELIVERING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY – A TOOLKIT FOR POLICYMAKERS*, https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/assets/downloads/government/EllenMacArthurFoundation_Policymakers-Toolkit.pdf

The United Nations Environment Programme (2011) defines the circular economy as “an economy that reduces resource consumption, waste generation, reuses and recycles waste during production, distribution and consumption processes”. While the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, together

with other organizations (2020), proposed the following definition: companies. This involves the gradual decoupling of economic activity from the consumption of finite resources and the design of waste from the system. Based on a transition to renewable energy sources, the circular model builds economic, natural and social capital.

The definition given by the United Nations Environment (2011) focuses on waste generation, reuse and potential recycling of waste while the definition given by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation together with other organizations (2020) emphasizes the need to transform production processes into the same time to generate positive benefits for society as a whole.

Blomsma & Brennan (2017), define the circular economy as a general term that covers all activities that reduce, reuse and recycle materials in the processes of production, distribution and consumption. Most definitions have the same essential notions as “reduce”, “reuse” or “recycle”.

Singha & Ordoñez (2016), define the concept of social economy as an economic strategy that suggests innovative ways to transform the current predominantly linear consumption system into a circular one, while achieving economic sustainability with much needed material savings.

Most researchers have come to the conclusion that the circular economy has made important contributions over time. In the paper published by Korhonen et al. (2018), it was found that there are limitations and challenges in practicing the circular economy. The European Commission presented its action plan for a circular economy in Europe in December 2015. This plan aims to indicate the various measures (up to a total of 54) on the basis of which the European Commission considers it necessary to act in the next 5 years to advance in the circular economy. The measures affect:

- at different stages of the product life cycle (design and production, consumption, waste management and use of waste resources by reintroducing them into the economy), and
- five areas that the Commission considers a priority (plastics, food waste, critical raw materials, construction and demolition and biomass and organic products).

The plan also includes a horizontal section on innovation and investment and a timetable for the 54 measures.

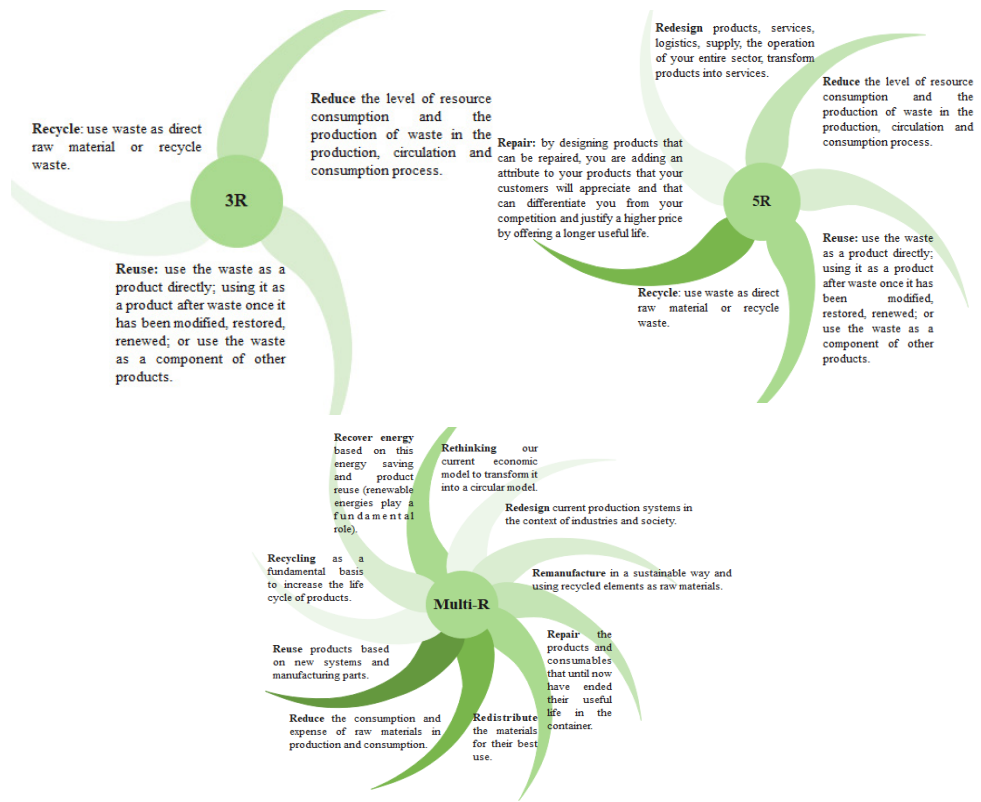


Figure 3. The evolution of R principles

Source: Own elaboration with information from Gaztelumendi I, Tarí A., (2019), *Informe sobre economía circular aplicada al turismo*, available at <https://www.segittur.es/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Informe-sobre-economi%CC%81a-circular-aplicada-al-turismo-ok.pdf>.

The circular economy aims to improve the use of resources and energy, protect the environment and promote economic development, initially through the principles of the 3Rs. These principles (3Rs) were extended to 5Rs and eventually to Multi R. The MultiR concept was promoted by the Foundation for the Circular Economy. Today, the circular economy has emerged as a three-pronged tool, understanding economics, ecology and society as interdependent elements as part of the same system.

Table 1. Advantages of the circular economy

Economic advantages of the circular strategy	Environmental advantages of the circular economy	Business advantages of the circular economy	Advantages of the circular economy for society and for citizens
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic growth - Net raw material cost savings - Value creation - Employment creation - Innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk prevention and balanced management of natural resources - Reduction of Carbon Dioxide emissions - Reduction in the consumption of raw materials - Improved productivity and soil quality - Reduction of negative externalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in productivity and competitiveness - Generation of benefits - Reduced volatility and increased security of supplies - Generation of demand for new business services - Encouragement of greater interaction with customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in disposable income - Increase in quality and decrease in the price of products and services - Reduction of obsolescence - Improvements in prevention, safety and environmental health

Source: Own elaboration with information from Gaztelumendi I., Tarí A., (2019), *Informe sobre economía circular aplicada al turismo*, available at: <https://www.segittur.es/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Informe-sobre-economi%CC%81a-circular-aplicada-al-turismo-ok.pdf>

In other words, the circular economy is presented as a very useful mechanism not only for achieving a more economically prosperous society and an ecologically more sustainable planet, but we can also achieve a fairer society and more dedicated to consumption, which not only helps us to preserve nature, but is also more respectful of the rights of workers and citizens.

2. METHODS

In carrying out this paper, the method of data collection - document analysis - statistical data analysis was chosen. As know, the National Institute of Statistics is the most important source of statistics for Romania. In this paper we used statistical data from the National Institute of Statistics, World Economic Forum and UNWTO - World Tourism Organization.

We will analyze: Indices of arrivals of foreign visitors in Romania and Indices of departures of Romanian visitors abroad and Competitiveness index in the field of tourism in Romania (international opening, how

important is tourism in Romania, Information and communication technology, human resources and labor market, health, security, business environment, price competitiveness, environmental sustainability, air transport infrastructure, land infrastructure, tourism services infrastructure, natural resources, cultural resources). The aim of this paper is to analyze the future tendencies of tourism, how the circular economy can create value for the tourism sector and the steps to be followed to create a sustainable model. This analysis is necessary for the creation of a new tourist model that will offer Romania a competitive advantage by increasing the tourist competitiveness and ranking Romania in a better position.

3. RESULTS

Tourism around the world faces new challenges whether we are talking about the covid pandemic or growing and more pronounced problems such as climate change, over-exploitation of natural resources or the destruction of ecosystems.

According to the World Economic Forum, Romania in 2019 scored 4.0 from 7. In 2015 and in 2017 the score was 3.8, Romania had a score of 3.8. Romania ranks 56th in the tourism competitiveness indicator, out of the 140 countries analyzed in 2019 by the World Economic Forum. In 2015 it was on the 66th place in the tourism competitiveness indicator, out of the 141 countries analyzed and in 2017 on the 68th place out of the 136 countries analyzed.

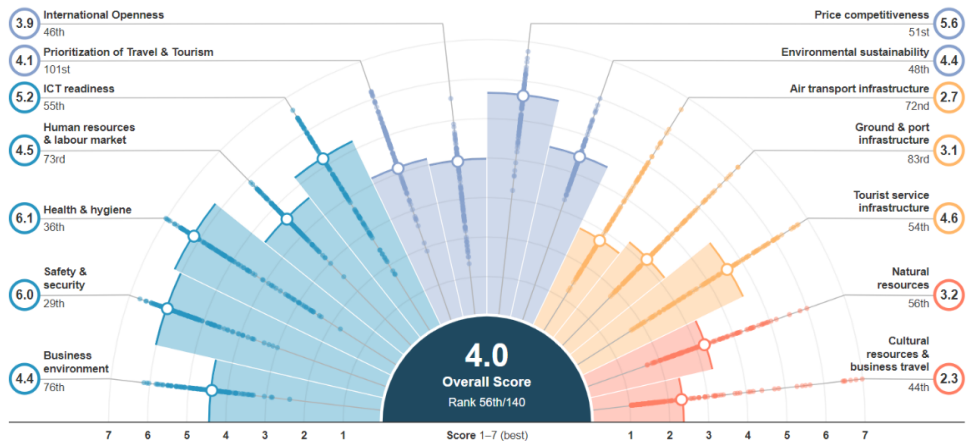


Figure 4. Romania Performance Overview 2019
Source: World Economic Forum

Only 2,760,100 foreign tourists come to Romania, spending an average of \$ 501.5 each. In Romania, the tourism industry represents US \$ 2,527.1 million, which means 1.5% of GDP.

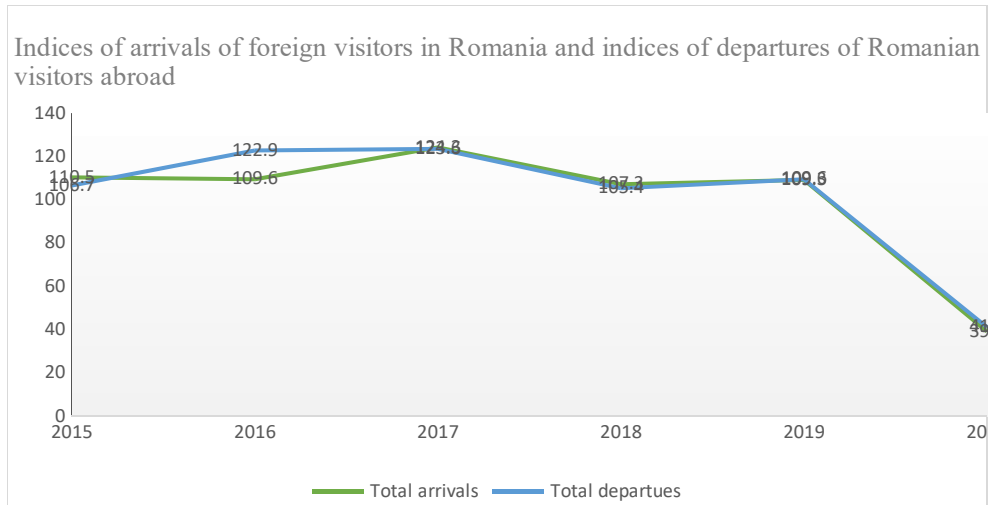


Figure 5. Indices of arrivals of foreign visitors in Romania and indices of departures of Romanian visitors abroad
Source: National Institute of Statistics (INSSE)

The general index is calculated from several component indices. For example, in terms of road quality, we are in 83rd place out of the 140 countries considered. More precisely, Romania has a very low score on the infrastructure sub-indicator: 2.7 air infrastructure, respectively 3.1 ground and port infrastructure. In terms of ease of finding qualified employees, we are in 73rd place. In terms of the number of jobs in this industry, 222,500 employee jobs represent 2.6% of the total. We are also ranked 101st in the priority given by the Government to tourism, although tourism was one of the traditional ways of GDP growth in Romania, at least in the statements of many politicians. Moreover, we are ranked 73rd in the world in terms of marketing and branding efficiency in attracting tourists to Romania. So, the money invested in fairs, country brandings, led us to attract as many tourists as possible.

In 2019, the number of tourists arriving in accommodation units reached a record, so that about 13.3 million tourists stayed in hotels and guesthouses in the country, being the highest level recorded in the

last ten years. However, the Romanian tourism industry has been significantly affected by the pandemic crisis, and this can be seen from the latest data from Statistics showing the situation for the whole of 2020. Thus, the number of tourists arriving last year was only 6.3 million.

Table 2. Turism inbound – Romania

Romania	Arrivals (milion)	Receipts (USD bn)	Receipts per arrival (USD)	Tourism as % of Exports
2015	2.2	1.8	823	3%
2016	2.5	2.0	819	3%
2017	2.8	3.1	1.110	4%
2018	2.8	3.4	1.216	4%
2019	2.7	3.6	1.332	4%
2020	-	1.4	-	2%

Source: Own elaboration with information from UNWTO

According to data from UNWTO - World Tourism Organization, the year 2020 was a challenge for tourism in Romania and beyond.

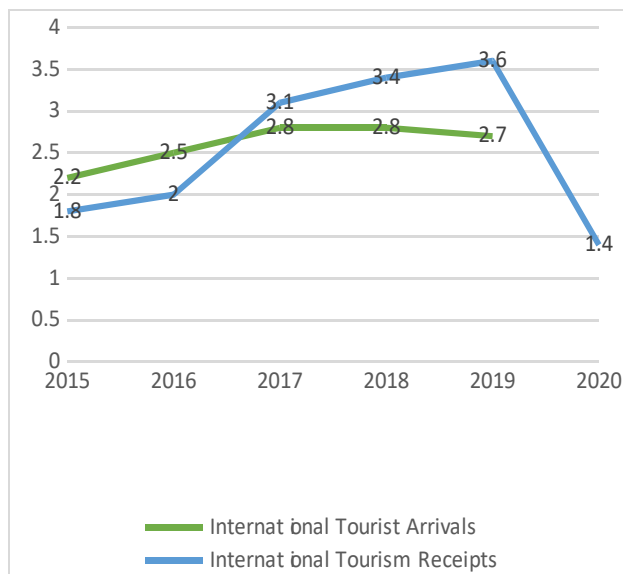


Figure 6. Change over previous year (%)

Source: Own elaboration with information from UNWTO

In 2020, internal tourism receipts at 1.4 although in 2019 it was 3.6. The departures of Romanian visitors abroad, registered at the border points, were in 2020 of 9510.1 thousand, decreasing by 58.8% compared to 2019. The means of road and air transport were the most used for departures abroad, representing 71.0% and 28.3% of the total number of departures, respectively. The index of net use of accommodation in 2020 was 22.9% of total tourist accommodation structures, decreasing by 11.3 percentage points compared to 2019.

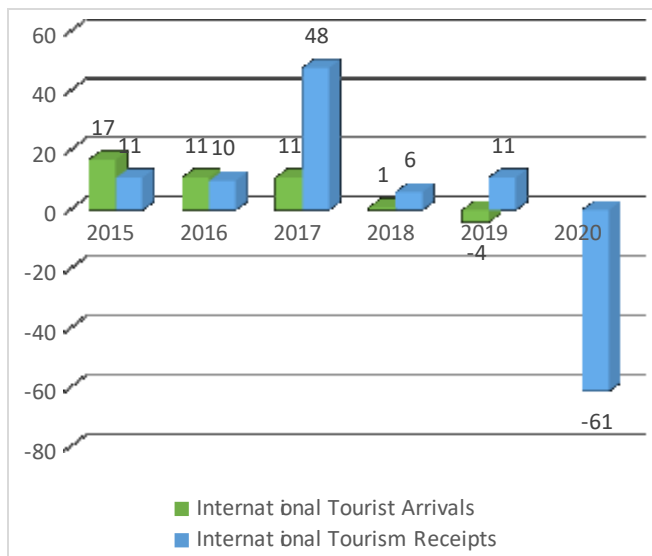


Figure 7. International Tourism (absolute values)

Source: Own elaboration with information from UNWTO

In the first seven months of 2020, the arrivals registered in the tourist reception structures amounted to 3.066 million, decreasing by 57.8% compared to the period January 1 - July 31, 2019.

Romanian tourists accounted for 96.7% of the total number of arrivals in 2020, while foreign tourists accounted for 3.3%. Regarding the arrivals of foreign tourists in the tourist reception structures, the largest share was held by those in Europe (88.7%) the vast majority being from countries belonging to the European Union.

The effects of the pandemic on Romanian tourism can be seen in statistics. According to the National Institute of Statistics, arrivals registered in tourist reception structures decreased by 44.4% in July 2020 compared to July 2019, to 917,800 arrivals.

Tourism is a strategic sector, an integration tool and a key engine for socio-economic recovery.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Tourism is one of the industries most affected by the crisis caused by COVID-19. The impact of the situation has radically changed all the activities of the sector, from the preferences of tourists to the offer of services.

Motivations and needs are constantly evolving, and consumption is increasingly conscious, appealing to social and environmental issues, that is, sustainable tourism where the consumer demands from the countries and tourism providers they hire, a strong commitment to the environment they visit.

To conclude this paper, we see that the circular economy is not only necessary to address the environmental conflicts presented to us by the linear economy of infinite waste generation but is also very important as a tool for resolving political conflicts if used. Correctly, the improvement in the macroeconomic number must be accompanied by inclusive policies that allow the working middle class to have more purchasing power, the circular economy could save Romania a lot of money, companies significantly reduce costs and therefore wages and employment opportunities of young people would improve. Basically, I see this opportunity as a key for Romania to know how to use this economy intelligently.

COVID-19 has changed our economic and social landscape. The pandemic has exposed many fragilities in our economies, deepening existing inequalities and making more visible the situation of those in vulnerable situations. At the same time, it forces us to rethink the systems that support the economy, stimulus packages should focus on finding a way back to normal. There is a growing demand for an ecological recovery and for turning the crisis into an opportunity to build more inclusive economies. The World Economic Forum (WEF), for example, highlights the unique opportunity presented for the “Great Reset” of our economies and societies.

This is a major concern for developing economies as they undertake recovery. Tourism, driven by the public and private sectors, is not only an essential source of foreign exchange, but has the potential to serve as a development “tool” to strengthen supply chains, improve the productivity of local businesses, create jobs and generate income. This activity generates for local communities and how sustainable tourism creates economic value while preserving culture and natural assets.

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FROM INHABITANT TO ATTENDEE IN THE EVENTFUL CITY OF CLUJ-NAPOCA: AN EXPLORATORY AND DESCRIPTIVE APPROACH

MARIUS BOTA¹, LAVINIA LAMUREAN²

ABSTRACT. Worldwide the events industry is a developing one. It can be pointed out that it is directly connected to the development of communities in each destination. Events are well-known as an ageless concept, as being a part and of high importance in our footprint as humans. Cluj-Napoca, known as events destination, became a qualitative source of entertainment with options ranging from cultural festivals, gastronomic fairs, business meetings, self-development seminars, community gatherings to sports and athletic demonstrations.

It displays a top-class portfolio of events, a range of all sizes and content, from the local traditional fairs, emblematic festivals such as TIFF Festival and Electric Castle, to a major entertainment source that is Untold Festival. Moreover, every event has its own authenticity and content, making it almost impossible for its participants to not find one in Cluj-Napoca with options ranging from all kinds of events.

The purpose of our study was to identify and analyze the motivating and inhibiting factors for the residents, in attending events from Cluj-Napoca market, as well as the development of a profile of them as consumers. A secondary data analysis was used to explore the field of events. In 2020 for two months, a survey was conducted for data collection. A short questionnaire was implemented through a correspondence interview. The retained sample was 258 residents from Cluj-Napoca. Only a part of the collected data was used in the present study.

Keywords: events, destination, events industry, profile of the event attendee

JEL classification: L83, M31

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Introduction and brief review of literature

The industry of events is one of the most representative and symbolic industries of the 21st century having a worldwide importance among people, by offering them the greatest ways of spending their leisure time and, a possibility to create constant interaction and a point of active social gatherings between personas. How can one understand such prominent industry that is rapidly growing and expanding at a global level? By looking upon its core as a real phenomenon recognized worldwide for its status as a service used and integrated by all cultures and societies. Events are powered by their attendees to satisfy the needs of other participants.

The industry of events includes the interested parts, the ever-growing number of participants, from one event to another, rewarding this area of interest as a lead employer (Kose et al, 2011, mentioned in Cerruti & Piva, 2015). Theocharis (2008) is the author placing an emphasis upon this industry as one of the most renowned industrial branches hiring on a global level. The follow of this path will “major the economic sector due to its positive impacts” (Theocharis, 2008, mentioned in Cerutti & Piva, 2015). When events were launched a thousand years ago, their roots as an industry, began with the first ancient civilizations. Page & Connell are the events industry specialists known for placing human-events bond in Routledge Handbook of Events; events are known from the very beginning for their importance in the development of every society (Page & Connell, 2012). Having shown a great and permanent significance in the development of the human nature, events have created a mutual relationship that in our study has been described by these authors; from the very beginning, humans were determined to fulfill their need of social contextualization and entertainment, while searching for a liberating feeling that was missing from their daily lives

and later found it through participating in events. The mutual relationship started when people felt the need to belong in such gatherings, later called events, as a way of getting apart from the daily activities, while events, in exchange, wouldn't have been powered unless the present energy of their participants for a proper and complete development. Moreover, the need of leisure and that of entertainment has been confirmed by every culture, from past and until the present day; time spent away for a couple of moments, in a brand-new location, where there is shared creativity and the possibility to understand the solemn process (Turner, 1982, mentioned in Quinn, 2009).

One of the most familiar specialists with the industry of events is Donald Getz and as a way of defining this culture, the author recalls the entertaining manifestations as everlasting and immortal. As an event expert, Getz (2011) believes that the most common way of defining manifestations is by looking at their place of happening and their temporality (Getz, 2011, mentioned by Cerutti & Piva, 2015). However, the emphasis expands with authors such as Bladen et al. (2012) having named events in their book entitled *Events Management* for the conscious participation offered by the participating personas; events are seen as a meeting that does not last long enough but brings together conscious groups of individuals (Bladen et al., 2012).

An extra point of view that focuses on the action of participating in events, has been stated by Carter (2007): "the starting point of action for the industry is the energy of its participants, with events becoming a location open to anyone who might be attracted to a universal characteristic that makes them to stand out" (Carter, 2007, mentioned in Cerutti & Piva, 2015). In contrast to the previous descriptions, there were others whom we have found important in their way of thinking about events, especially after how these sources of entertainment take place, what makes them stand out from the crowd and their cause of birth; a destination of togetherness for the desired audience and a path to a single appeal "for ourselves and for our nature, events are the pulp of action" (Bowdin et al., 2012). Furthermore, Getz (2005) recalls the mutual relationship between us as participants and events, for the uniqueness that is present in a mosaic of themes, diversity of symbols and characteristics from one event to another "Each event is not like any other and that is

because of the way it is planned, its location and ultimately, for its audience” (Getz, 2005, as mentioned in Bowdin et al., 2012).

Best known for its position among the most searched Transylvanian destinations, Cluj-Napoca is a city popular for its settlement on the map and for the achievements received as a hub incorporating the arts of all time. Viewed nationally, the city of Cluj-Napoca is highly rewarded for its artistic activity and superior qualifications (Voicu & Dragomir, 2017, mentioned in Zbranca, 2017). With a constant expansion, the market of events in Cluj-Napoca gains popularity through the organization of manifestations that are nationally and internationally rewarding for its host, for their level and composure.

The city has received the EYC (European Youth Capital) distinction for its past activity in 2015, in comparison to other cities in the competition, and has managed to win, step-by-step, the name of the Romanian entertainment capital and of the most memorable destination for events organized on the Romanian territory. Moreover, the destination of Cluj receives a distinction that is of vital importance for its popularity worldwide; ranked as the 7th place in competition of the European Youth Capital (Cosma et al., 2016). Later leading to the city of Cluj-Napoca entering the competition for the European Capital of Culture in the year of 2021 (Tomiuc, 2016); the events industry demonstrating and accentuating the whole cultural and festive process for the city of Cluj-Napoca. Zbranca (2017) nominates and matches the sector of events as following: the one placing events under the distinction of capital of arts, in music and cinematographic shows (Zbranca, 2017). The city of Cluj-Napoca is the synonym of change and growth, searching the novelty factor in every present element as a way of appliance for the needs and demands of the consumer of events in Cluj-Napoca.

Its potential to easily adapt has managed to offer Cluj-Napoca, throughout its development, the chance of becoming a pliable and highly flexible location, being classified as a city of opportunities and possibilities. Therefore, the events of Cluj-Napoca are not only seen for their novelty factor on the Romanian market, but for the ability to provide memorable experiences, unmatched feelings, or elements with every passing edition. The way events of Cluj-Napoca are adapting every year has been possible through the development that is encouraged in this destination, being

transformed into a result of ever-going metamorphosis; the evaluation has been pointed out due to the availability of industrial buildings and for the manufacturing activity in its past, to its exchange into an appealing destination for academic prosperity, for the growth of the business branch, and for cultural services (Popescu et al., 2018).

Other specialty authors have declared their perspective towards the launching position of the destination of Cluj-Napoca, as a transit location that has moved until its conversion as an economic district for the entrepreneurship environment (Cosma & Negrusa, 2008). A backup, secondary proof demonstrating the following statement has been offered by the academic history of the city, where the Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca and the adherence of students eager to start their undergraduate and postgraduate studies in this destination, has determined the city of Cluj-Napoca to offer an expanding portfolio of multicultural experiences (Universitatea Babes-Bolyai, 2020). This academic movement has also been accentuated by Tomiuc (2016); the undergraduate and postgraduate segment enrolled in the city of Cluj-Napoca represent 20% of the entertaining energy required by the location to create a dynamic in terms of search, engagement, and active participation for these events (Tomiuc, 2016).

Some of the events organized in Cluj-Napoca have managed to conquer the spotlight, either for their dimension, in relation to the events industry measurement scale, either for their unique and creative content or as awarded events. Therefore, the four artistic Cluj-Napoca events that have turned into industry symbols and masterpieces are: Untold Festival; Electric Castle Festival; TIFF (Transylvania International Film Festival); Jazz in the Park.

The need that has been recognized from the starting point of events in the course of human history, began with exclusive purposes. Participants and their needs were viewed from a general perspective, that of their belonging community. As reunions they served as a location where each member of the community was participating to share and reach a familiar, universal goal "Events are dated in history since the very beginning, when the civilizations were gathering due to a single focus, that of common interests and a shared purpose" (Cucu, 2017). The specific needs and aspirations, as for each individual person, have determined the change from a specific level into a common good, offering

an ordinary open-access path to all the members of the community. Donald Getz (2012) is the one naming the previous needs with the help of the term organic that symbolizes a universal nature “the organic needs are the ones rivered by wants and aspirations of the whole community, informal in their nature, with every member being requested upon for help for the sole purpose, as it was requested and expected from them” (Getz, 2012, in Page & Connell, 2012).

An observation that was hard to pass is that of certain historical periods, where civilizations were not encouraged to manage and behave on their own, to adopt decisions for their personal goodwill. Such argument has been observed and supported by proof coming from the research of experts; the needs of the people to connect with each other, to socialize, have always been a constant, persistent ever-going demand and no matter the change that has been bought to the industry of events, the interpersonal connection has remained the same. Situated in the middle of the pyramid of needs, a concept developed and initiated by its author, Abraham Maslow, is that of the demand for social aspects, the craving for connection towards groups of friends and towards family (Abraham Maslow, 1943, as adapted by Bladen et al., 2012). Every single branch and industry are all having their breaking point powered by the creativity of the human beings. Events, as named by Bowdin et al. (2012) are “core references” for a man’s life (Bowdin et al., 2012).

The current availability at a global level is given by a portfolio of events that is continuously developing and diversifying. The appearance of certain factors, of some causes and most likely, of the occurring effects, has led to the creation and initialization of a proper system specific to the industry of events, under two major criteria: dimension and content. The emphasis of these factors can be also directed towards the demand: among the factors determining the demand are, as mentioned by the specialists of the industry, the need of interaction on a social basis and that of leisure expenditure (Prentice and Andersen, 2003, as mentioned by Quinn, 2009). However, other experts bind this request to that of consumption of a full experiential package (Getz, 2008, as mentioned by Quinn, 2009). The impact of the local events is felt especially by the residents, the local consumers of experiences, of the demanded services as a veritable source of tangible and intangible benefits. Ultimately, the locals are the decisive factors when questioning the organization of an

event; the individuals will eventually create a bond; a binding emotion towards the event; marking the place of action with a personal impression or feeling; creating self-esteem for the community; creating a sense of involvement and reciprocity; the locals become the area's economy supporters, involving the community in every sport and cultural manifestation; the constant search to adapt to the factors such as inclusion and diversity (Bowdin et al.,2012).

The locals are the one preserving the cultural authenticity, while the events are creating the request of active interaction between the host community and a way of understanding the local traditions and customs. From the knowledge about the local history, to visually scanning the contact of the cultural area, traditions, and the rite of ceremonial, to what is defined in terms of fundraising events that are held by charity organizations (Mackeller, 2017). With a profound success and an emphasis on regional celebration, the local councils and institutions are supporting the integration of events in their plans as densely as possible. Van Niekerk (2017) is the one highlighting the immense potential of a small dimension event, mentioning that it will cover the impact of those organized in large scale; this being the exact reason for skipping the recognition that comes from the benefits of a smaller manifestation (Van Niekerk, 2017).

Many of the experts in events have managed to describe their view towards the profile of participating consumer. Some offered vital fragments of data that are essential in constructing the demographic avatar for these participants. Primarily, when they start participating in events they create their own personal statement, later understood by the specialists, as the access to a dominant and universal gathering of personas. When we want to know who our consumers are, we must also get familiar with characteristics that describe their demographic and social background, and respectively their exterior persona. Moreover, the focus should also be placed upon the location of the consumers (Tkaczynski & Rundle-Tiele, 2011, mentioned in Lee and Kyle, 2014). Already declared as the starting point for every event, participants are the power needed by every manifestation to function properly and adequately on the market (Getz, 2007, in Mackeller, 2017). When constructing the avatar of certain consumers, the emphasis must not only be placed upon variables on visual aspects describing the exterior

of the attendees or their current geography, familiar to any of the viewers (Dolničar, 2004; Moscardo, Philip & Morrison, 2001 in Lee & Kyle, 2014). The extensive research must come from the selection of data describing the thoughts and feelings of the participants as well and on how they behave (Tkaczynski & Rundle-Tiele, 2011, in Lee & Kyle, 2014). Both the psychology of action and the external data add-up and allow the complete construction of the energy describing the avatar for the consumer of events (Mackeller, 2017).

DiMaggio et al. (1978) describes the active pass as a patron in the events industry as an ever-going cycle of entertainment; once showing a strong interest in the performance of arts, the individual will develop a codependency towards all possibilities of expression (DiMaggio et al., 1978, as seen in Oakes, 2010). The active participation is placed, under psychological understanding, in the research of Lee & Kyle (2014); reaching a commitment state towards an event market, will result in attendance out of loyalty, in favor of other host destinations, while the gain of an optimistic experience plays as a catalyst between the parts, the consumer becoming synonym to the event and its host (Lee and Kyle, 2014). The chemistry formula of an active participation is described in the studies as a force of energy combined with the involvement of assets, time, money, interest, and comprehension (Iso-Ahola, 1983; Stebbins, 2001; Getz, 2007 in Mackeller, 2017) a mixture composing the social profile of the active consumer in events. What divides the two parts is that one enhances its profile based on opportunities, while the other is restricted to little or no interaction (Mackeller, 2017).

Viewed on the map that represents the experiential economy, a concept launched and supported by its authors Pine and Gilmore, later found in Berridge's *Events Design and Experience*, the event consumer is one that emerges in different typologies of the industry based on their frequency and on their level of engagement. Therefore, one can found itself in a completely new dimension from one event or category of event to another. In providing the map of experience, the authors of the concept have offered precise and concrete instructions to be followed by further researchers. Considered the host of all possible interactive dimensions, the map provides a two-sided perspective towards how one can be integrated in the experience of an event (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, as mentioned by Berridge, 2011). Thus, in the perspective of our

Cluj-Napoca segment of consumers, the map applies integrally on both axis; on the horizontal line, the authors are describing the status of participation, as seen as well in our study, either for active or passive personas. However, our study focused on the history and the frequency, while the experiential economy is reflecting aspects such as the degree of interaction based on the typology of the event. Therefore, one can be passive when attending a museum event, that provides a visual and audio experience for the consumer or active if participating in a baseball match as one of the main players. On the other hand, viewing the map on its vertical availability, we have found that the participant is nurturing a cognitive and emotional relationship to the event background and area, and that the engagement is in fact the creation of one's match to the event environment (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, as mentioned by Berridge, 2011). The customer of Cluj-Napoca, for example, is a participant interactive on every degree and level of experience towards the industry's events; an experience can be an act of absorption, where we place our thoughts and feelings to the rhythm offered by a jazz festival or the possibility to be immersive in the game, where we are often attracted by attending a tennis tournament.

Ultimately, the map is not complete if for the 4 Es of the research and are provided by authors Pine and Gilmore as "areas of interest that are highly transmissible to the events consumer, representing a harmonious integration of authentic individual happenings" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, stated by Berridge, 2011). The 4Es are the educational background; the environment sector; the visual of the aesthetics; the escapist experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, stated by Berridge, 2011). To top it all off, it has been demonstrated by years of research that the context of experience manifests differently not only from one person to another but based on the category of the manifestation and on the level of emotional and thoughtful involvement.

Material and method

The purpose of our study was to identify and analyze the motivating and inhibiting factors for the residents, in attending events from Cluj-Napoca market, to describe their image, and more exactly their profile as events consumers living in this area of interest. The focus has also been placed on the development of a profile as consumers

through individual characteristics. For this paper it has conducted an exploratory and descriptive research, where the secondary data analysis was used to explore the field of events.

To identify and analyze the motivating and inhibiting factors for the residents, in attending events from the Cluj-Napoca market, as well as the development of a profile as branch consumers, a quantitative research was chosen. As stated by Robson, the following method is a frequent recommendation for when undertaking a research plan in the industry of tourism, and recently noticed as a top choice for the organizing industry of events as well (Robson, 2008, mentioned in Page & Connell, 2012). The depth of the research is that of quantitative data, understood from a descriptive point of view, followed by the decode of the information with the use of the investigation method and through the correspondence technique interview as choices used to completely build and contrast the profile of the Cluj-Napoca event consumer. Recurring methodological choices have allowed this research, to completely identify the resemblances and oppositions coming from the consumers' preferential actions, as well as the idea that the consumer of events is participating in contrast with its current lifestyle.

Moreover, in a short period of time the research has allowed the collection of all the required data, the use of flexible choices from the respondents and the management of a representative sample of consumers from the targeted market. Therefore, in the completion of the research, the integrated tool was the questionnaire, shared and completed by the residents of Cluj-Napoca as an online form found on social platforms, specifically on Facebook and on groups of events for the destination such as "Evenimente Cluj", "Cluj Events" and "Where in Cluj Events". The questionnaire has also been shared on a more individual level, straightforward to the residents of the destination participating in the events taking place. The platform that has allowed us to create the survey is Google Forms, while the completion period was throughout an interval of three weeks from 23rd of March 2020 until 13th of April 2020.

Results and Discussions

In the last decade, the segment of events participation rate from our country has been profoundly highlighted, especially in the city of Cluj-Napoca, where the destination has turned into the host of the most

important events on the Romanian market. Therefore, starting from this principle, the need for knowledge in regards of the consumption behavior has placed our research in this nucleus of interest, where events are kept up to date and most likely to be searched by their participants. In Cluj-Napoca and in the surrounding area, the industry of events is the one attracting, from one passing year to another, an intensive categorization that keeps on expanding; precisely, the reason for what determines the researchers to discover the reveal of such phenomenon.

Our first result is the statement of participation to events taking place in Cluj-Napoca, as approved by more than half of the attendees in the research. The usability of the question was that of breaking the ice between the researchers and the participants in the study, while allowing the pin down of the base characteristics of the attending crowd. The results point out that our participant owns an active frequency from the very beginning of the research.

Table 1. The percentage of active and passive users of events in Cluj-Napoca and, precisely their score frequency.

Participation in the events of Cluj-Napoca	Score frequency
Active	76%
Passive	24%
Total	100%

Source: Authors' calculations.

A positive outcome is shown from the start of the study (Table 1), where we have 196 results representing 76% of the respondents from the total residents that present an active frequency in events organized in the destination of Cluj-Napoca. The opposite comes from 24% of the data, where 61 display a status of non-participants, for their passive, selective frequency. Our concern when applying the question was to understand how the participating frequency in the past will determine their foreseeable behavior towards events, respectively how long does it take to be considered active in participation in the destination of Cluj-Napoca.

As seen in Table 2, most of the respondents (91%) have a good or a very good degree of satisfaction from participating in events in this destination. Not every participant has a definite opinion towards events, therefore, maintains a neutral position; in this case were 18 of the participants (7%).

Table 2. The degree of satisfaction of past events in the city of Cluj-Napoca.

Answer preference	Frequency of answer	Relative frequency
Very good	132	51%
Good	104	40%
Neutral	18	7%
Dissatisfied	4	2%
Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
Total answers	258	100%

Source: Authors' calculations

When asked about negative outcomes 4 of the residents declared using their statements that they had a dissatisfied experience towards events taking place in this destination.

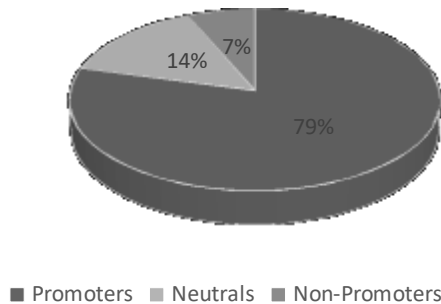


Figure 1. The percentage of users demonstrating the act of promotion as well as passives and non-promoters of events from the market of Cluj-Napoca.

Source: Authors' calculations.

By adding a NPS (Net Promoter Score) question in the following research led to a much easier way of comprehension regarding the degree of satisfaction obtained by the consumers of events in Cluj-Napoca, through the perspective of the probability needed to recommend an event in this destination to other persons. To identify the rate of recommendation for this segment of consumers, the rating bar includes a scale from 1 to 10, with the corresponding answers divided in the different categories: the promoters; neutrals and the non-promoters. The first category is related to the highest scores, 9 and 10, a case where 204 of the participants in the study were registered. According to Figure 1, the second category is represented by the neutrals, where 37 of the respondents were found (14%) due to their score of 7 and 8.

The lowest percentage is held by the category of non-promoters, for 17 of the attendees in the study (7%) as they graded their rate of recommendation in between a score of 1 to 6.

Therefore, as specified by the NPS equation, we have the percentage ratio describing the difference between the promoters and the non-promoters, since the score of the neutrals is null in this report:

$$NPS = \left(\frac{204 - 17}{258} \right) * 100 = 72,48\%; \text{ where:}$$

- 204-the number of promoters with a score of 9 and 10.
- 17- the number of non-promoters grading their probability of recommendation between a score of 1 to 6.
- 258-the total of respondents in the study.

Source: Author's calculations as adapted from the NPS equation.

Thus, the pure rate of recommendation, respectively the net score has indicated a favorable outcome for the studied segment.

As we have obtained a positive outcome, it can be declared that the consumer of events in the city of Cluj-Napoca is promoting this category of entertainment in proportion of 72.48%.

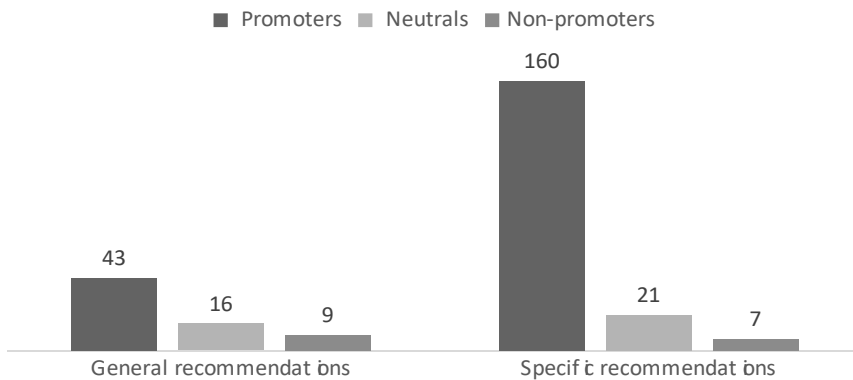


Figure 2. The distribution of answers as understood according to the three levels of recommendation, as well as by the side in which they belong (active-neutral or passive consumer).

Source: Authors' calculations.

To better understand the resume in terms of recommendations coming from the consumer of events in Cluj-Napoca, it has been opted for an unstructured, open-ended question, better allowing the respondents to name and match an event held in this destination to the chosen score. Hence, we have decided to keep the three categories as seen in the previous question, the only add-in is a filter that divides according to their choice of action, respectively the side they have picked, either for a general perspective or for a more personal specific choice of event. Two invalid questions were found in this part of the research, from a total of 258 answers. The three categories we are referring to are the promoters, the neutrals and ultimately, the non-promoters (Figure 2).

First, the promoters where are to fit most of the representative suggestions made by our segment of consumers, a context that demonstrates the score of recommendation previously discussed and analyzed, of 72,48%. The consumer of events in Cluj-Napoca is a promoter, being classified due to the peak levels in the score bar of 9 and 10, where 160 of the suggestions were specific, on a more personal level, while 43 were a general impression. Depending on their specific preferences, the events most likely to be promoted are Untold Festival, Jazz in the Park, TIFF, Street Food Festival and Electric Castle; the emphasis is placed upon the organizing process that these events have, of the participating public, the content and thematic, as well as on the spectacle and on the creative display. Among the 160 specific recommendations, the respondents opt for promoting events that do not display a similar degree of notoriety, but whom are sharing the same weight of importance in the portfolio of events taking place in Cluj-Napoca: TedX; the feminine leadership conference The Woman; FedCup; Discoteca 80. Among the 43 of the general recommendations, we have observed a favorable pattern of choice in regards of the infrastructure of the Cluj-Napoca events, with one of the answers demonstrating the exact argument demonstrated above: Even the events that did not display an extraordinary description, have turned out to be memorable and veritable experiences. Therefore, are valued the most illustrative characteristics for the destination of Cluj-Napoca: exceptional organization; superior quality services; diversity and authentic experiences hosted by the local and international guides.

The passive category captures a somewhat neutrality towards the process of recommendations, dividing the process in two different perspectives of the respondents. Specific to score levels 7 and 8, among the recommendations made by our segment, we learn that events are seen as a praised opportunity and that the frequency of participation is satisfactory; the respondents are influenced by positive or negative factors, deciding upon their participating status, respectively to provide or not a recommendation. The resume of the 16 general perspectives has shown our study the depth offered by one of the answers: The events taking place in Cluj-Napoca have the tendency to be more qualitative than quantitative. Therefore, by this level of recommendation, the views upon events are more and more subjective, meaning that only some of these manifestations will be promoted and therefore, described for their positive qualities.

The non-promoters are composed of 16 recommendations, which constitute the motivation to decline the participation and furthermore, to not promote an event taking place in Cluj-Napoca. Specific to the scores situated between 1-6. Out of 7 specific answers, it was declared that by acknowledging past experiences in a negative matter while participating in an event, one unleashes a subjective context upon the event. Also, the 9 results that are general refer to the lack of recommendation, where the respondents declare that by having a low frequency in the events taking place, they will not recommend it to others.

Table 3. The category of the public found in events of Cluj-Napoca and the frequency in which the consumer of Cluj matches the most.

The category of the public	The frequency of every public	Relative frequency
Crowd of people	92	36%
Searching for new experiences	86	33%
Local attendees	57	22%
Random attendees	18	7%
Media personas (TV; radio; online)	5	2%
Total	258	100%

Source: Author's calculations.

Our next question has fulfilled the role of emphasizing the hypotheses in which the consumer of events in Cluj-Napoca is found, precisely the required level to process the experience provided by such entertainment category.

According to our data, the consumer of events from Cluj-Napoca prefers the experience coming from a social hub spread by crowds of participants as a choice made by 92 of the respondents in the study (36%). Table 3 shows another perspective of our targeted segment of consumers, as searchers of new experiences, where the points of novelty and diversity are becoming the key factors for 86 of the participants in the study (33%). A third point of view comes from matching our segment of consumers with the local crowd; this category is profoundly bounded to our consumers due to the level of community integration in the city of Cluj-Napoca; stated by 57 of the residents (22%).

The least frequented categories are that of random participants (7%) where we have 18 of our research attendees and indirect attendees (2%) with a low rate of participation. Hence, this question had the purpose to highlight the level of participation as declared by the consumer of events in Cluj-Napoca. The consumer of Cluj-Napoca places an importance upon becoming part of the crowd of people and through the gathering of novelty through various experiences; it characterizes other data such as the age gap from 21 to 30 years old, as stated based on the research questionnaire.

Table 4. Events typologies as seen in the portfolio of Cluj-Napoca and precisely, the frequency of each of the preference.

The event typology	The frequency of each preference
Arts and entertainment	207
Cultural	183
Educational	96
Local	87
Sports Events	83
Business	68
Gastronomic	7
Political	6
Musicals	3
Religious	2
Personal	1
Social	1

Source: Author’s calculations.

Including this question has allowed us to become familiar with the choices our segment of consumer makes when participating in the events of Cluj-Napoca, while opting for the most common typologies of events found in the destination's portfolio as described in Table 4. The top choice for the residents is confirmed by 207 answers (80.2%) for arts or entertainment type of events. The cultural branch obtains 183 residents (70.9%) of Cluj-Napoca declaring their statement for the given preference. Thirdly, 96 residents (37.2%) of Cluj-Napoca prefer educational gatherings as they offer a chance to improve and growth for careers and personal achievements. As the segment of consumers is known for its bond with the local community, so are events organized in this manner (33.7%) for 87 of the respondents. While, on the same page are also sports events, sharing the same attention and importance from 83 of the participants in the study (32.2%).

The business sector of events shared by the acronym MICE display their own space in the market of events, tends to be acknowledged as of the principal choices for Cluj-Napoca, as stated by 68 attendees (26.4%). A not so frequented typology is given by charity manifestations, where we have 48 residents and a weight of 18.6% in the total score. The last typology to be frequented is that of gastronomic events, as freshly arrived events on the market; only 7 of the participants were attracted by the existence of such events (3.2%).

Table 5. The frequency of action made by the respondents towards informational channels for the industry of events in Cluj-Napoca.

Informational channel	Frequency of the answer
Social Media	236
Word-of-mouth	187
Online Press	147
Brochures and Posters	99
Website of the event	95
TV screenings	56
Radio	51
Press Release	43
Publications	31
Gossip Magazines	16
Telephone contact	1

Source: Author's calculations.

A profile for the consumer is not complete if we have not included where the participants of Cluj-Napoca look for their data regarding the industry. Knowing what sources are the most appealing for the latest buzz, what channels are suitable given the characteristics, our profile is seen in a more profound explanation that ties the exterior image to that of behavioral choices. Table 5 declares the first path of promotion that is appealing through the existence of social media apps; 91,5% opt for social media channels for new entries about events. When we gather around friends and family, we have the tendency to further recommend; this being a successful promotion tool for our consumers as declared in 72.5% of the answers and 187 attendees. Another preference is dictated by the presence of the online news that are pointed out to 57% of the participants in the study; a choice that will offer events an extended promotion. What is visible in the city and on the streets of Cluj-Napoca, such as posters and brochures, are an intriguing way of promotion for 99 of the participants (38.4%). The online presence is not only divided by social media and the news branch, but by the existence and proper presentation of the website of the events, where we have 36.8% answers in this manner.

In contrast with the peak choices, 56 participants (21.7%) find TV ads appealing, while no more than 19.8% still pay attention the promotion while listening to the radio. Paper-based newspaper does not register a good score either, frequented by only 43 participants in the research. Ultimately, our respondents search for data about events in academic sources and publications, but only 12% from the total answers and, believe that gossip magazines can source useful information about upcoming events (6.2%). Integrating this question offered us the possibility to declare the energy of the young segment obtained in the data, while seeing their choices about where they search for events organized in Cluj-Napoca. By understanding the reasons for participation in events and by evaluating the importance provided by these manifestations, has led us to understand the role and the essential criteria, repeatedly frequented for a start and completion of a behavioral participating process for the events of Cluj-Napoca. Including a total of 14 general criteria (Table 6), objective in their nature, upon which the consumption behavior regarding events can be perceived.

Table 6. The weighted average representative of each criterion evaluated by the Cluj consumer of events.

Criteria	Very Important	Important	Indifference	Not important	Least important	Weighted average
1. Knowledge and personal development	131	94	28	5	0	1.360
2. The build of social networks	103	89	55	7	4	1.085
3. Entertainment	176	69	9	4	0	1.616
4. New experiences	193	53	10	2	0	1.694
5. Curiosity	140	97	19	2	0	1.453
6. Novelty	152	81	20	4	1	1.469
7. Professional obligation	60	34	80	49	35	0.136
8. Past experiences	108	103	37	9	1	1.194
9. Location of the event	131	75	39	9	4	1.240
10. Program and Line-up	156	83	12	5	2	1.496
11. Cost of participation	121	101	22	9	5	1.256
12. Season	109	66	59	13	11	0.965
13. Time	118	92	35	8	5	1.202
14. Distance	109	85	45	13	6	1.078

Source: Author's Calculations.

The previous table hosts the most important criterion rated by our segment of participants, all playing a role in the decision-making process for future events in Cluj-Napoca. By having the possibility to select the importance of each answer and criteria, not only that they conferred us an insight regarding the difficulty of their decision and behavioral process, but towards real factors that played as a magnet or served as a decline in their participating decision. First, we have the new experiences of the location; the criterion is decisive for the residents as they search for superior quality and brand-new opportunities to step aside from their daily lives. This is where most of the positive answers

are, at the peak of the list, considered of vital importance, with 193 answers and of a great significance for 53 answers of the participants. Our list then continues with the entertaining content; due to the fact there are no two events alike on the market, the focus is placed upon diversity and innovativeness, on the creation of content that determines the event to stand out from the crowded portfolio of availability on the market. Here are 176 statements for very important, 69 residents that see this criterion as of great importance and, 9 answers for whom the content is an indifferent factor. The third factor is program and line-up; the events market of Cluj-Napoca is a platform for the launch of various sources of creativity and therefore, as a place where this industry can manifest in all shapes, sizes and with the most unique program and content. It can be of high importance for 156 answers, needed in their decision process for 83 respondents or as a neutral consideration for 12 participants.

We have seen the most decisive criteria for their process of participation, however there are others that share the same meaning or percentage that is balanced in the overall process. For example, novelty is the essential criterion for 152 residents, 81 meaningful considerations and no more than 20 participants who are indifferent to the presence of this factor. An interesting aspect is the presence of curiosity in events; when we determine the behavioral process for participation, we are searching for stimuli, one of them being the act of being curious. Our score for the criterion is declared as following: essential for 140 residents, important for 97 attendees in the study and neutral to 19 personas of the overall data. Where the event is held or what its cost of participation can be are two of the most decisive criteria looked upon before the participation. As attendees, we search not only for events that are near us or of free entrance, but for experiences that are far and wide in their geographical locations or that require the spending of a certain amount or fee to book our place at the event.

Moreover, when we search for events, we are looking for veritable and profitable sources for our personal growth and knowledge. Most of events nowadays focus not only on the creative process, but on the educational side of every potential manifestation; for example, events are gatherings of personas willing to open to new ideas, to share their emotions and cognitive perspectives to others and to that of the event, meaning that they will learn on their own as well as from the other

participants. Furthermore, when the event takes place is another essential presence on our priority list. Most of the events are held or started prior to the end of a working day; a great percentage of participants not only in our study, but as a general fact, come from such environment and might require the finish of their daily work shift before participation.

Ultimately, the decay in importance is later registered in factors such as distance and season, the two sharing the same level of vital importance for 109 respondents. Our study has captured the same two reasons when the respondents were asked to further describe events prior to their targeted scores and after the analysis of the data. For the distance factor, residents focused upon the infrastructure to and from the location of the event, on the lack of transportation to the site. If considered a must, others place a great importance on it; 85 residents have stated so, while there have been 45 indifferent statements and to sum up, 13 residents for whom distance is not relevant. For the seasonality, a non-controllable factor thoroughly analyzed in our study, most of the respondents are influenced by the weather and that of certain conditions specific to the changing seasons. Despite the weather predictions, they might not always match the forecast that was made and therefore, determine the fate of an event taking place.

Least but not last, as it is a new opportunity launched on the market prior to the business sector, events have been offering us a chance to interact and network to other peers and personalities from all industries. For this one, our study has built an important characteristic for the consumer, that is not only declared by Abraham Maslow in his pyramid, but in our data as well: the social focus and inclusion in the circles of familiars and friends. Moreover, while some of us are of active nature towards events, a part of the segmented data is passive and might participate on an exclusive level. Past experiences can not only show us the history and the frequency that we have as participants, as it was focused upon our study, but the two sides of actives and passives towards past manifestations; there are 108 very important statements, 103 important considerations, 37 neutral opinions in the data and no more than 91 answers declaring the lack of relevance for the factor. To top it all, the focus on the data analysis from this table has shown us that professional obeisance comes from the fact that most of the respondents won't participate in a leisure activity if sent by the working environment or will show indifference to this criterion.

Our segment of consumers has also had the chance to explain their vision towards events in this destination, in two separate open-ended questions that focused on positive and negative outcomes. The considerations of the respondents were then filtered using a qualitative method, resulting into seven main categories of positive aspects that will influence their participation. They are focusing on the planning of the event, on their ambiance, quality, safety, opportunities we receive through participation, diversity, and influence of the social groups. Here we had 7 invalid answers. Our starting point begins with the **diversity** component, where we can fit 54 answers. As they were so many explanations, one of them captures the whole meaning of this category, short and clear: There is an event out there for any type of person. The destination is abundant and has a complex portfolio for every preference and attendee, and the focus is placed upon traits such as thematic, novelty always present to that a rejuvenating edition of every event. One can manifest the real spirit of sport competitions or the act of good and kindness by participating in charity events.

The second category is the **opportunities** arising. Our consumer here perceives an event opportunity as an activity for self-learning; 44 of our consumers accept the benefits pursued through the participation opportunity offered by events in this destination as they sprout the goodwill of their personas and later, improve the quality of the Cluj-Napoca community. The third is the way we understand the **organizational** process of events. This is where the study captures interesting opinions, most of them referring to the quality demand being met accordingly. Suggestive in their nature, consumers offer their suggestions for the organizational process for an event, to complete such demand starting from the proper and societal needs. An event is acknowledged and appreciated even more if is considered the solution towards the personal and community needs and problems and, ultimately a source of development for the values stated by the two parts.

The events of Cluj-Napoca are a symbol of **quality**. According to our data, there have been 25 declarations stating the quality of Cluj-Napoca events as the reason for their attendance. The exchanged value is a perception of our consumer that is completed upon the presence of superior quality in events, in the organizational process and in their entertainment content. While some described the planning, what they

might learn, the content or the satisfaction they receive from one event, others placed their vision upon the **ambiance**. Ambiance despite its intangible nature, is still an important characteristic in an event; 15 of our answers describe the importance of the available mood for an event. The mood is powered by the presence of an event's attendees, through its location and content.

While some might participate on their own will, there are individuals highly dependent and **influenced** by their social dominants. The social circle of friends and family represent the most important motivation to participate in any of Cluj-Napoca's events, an argument that was sustained by 36 of the answers; fourteen of the respondents motivate the importance of leisure time spent as efficiently as possible, representing the much-needed break from daily chores and life. However, if one is pushed forward to participate by their social circle, others might be influenced by their professionals; three answers mentioned so in our research.

The last category events can benefit from are the **safety** measures. Three of our respondents offer suggestive modifications to be applied, regarding the age limit found in an event. While others might have contributed to the sustainability of this aspect, have declared a sufficient statement with their choices made above; twenty participants in our research have stated so.

A perception is not complete if for negative aspects as well. With the use of an open-ended question, our study has captured the most disturbing aspects for participating in the events of this destination. To eliminate the subtle subjectivity from the data, our statements were divided into controllable and non-modifying factors. Twenty-six of our answers were declared invalid. When we refer to what is **controllable**, we describe an event context that can receive a boost of development or a slight modification for their foreseeable editions. The overall data gave us an insight for 168 participating residents in the study, having described the following pain points:

Planning an event requires the existence of an overall cost, a program, a site for manifestation and that of logistics; they serve as main criteria for our analyzed resident from Cluj-Napoca. For some the age limit is not a problem, however there were residents opting towards this aspect; as a recommendation, some events might be better organized if

they select their age groups accordingly. There has also been the mention of limited ticketing and the level of audience that can enter an event; not a statement made by chance, but a declaration supported by 107 participants in the study, whom event organizers might risk losing if solutions towards the problems are not rapidly applied.

Infrastructural availability refers to the management of the site, on the road traffic, the existence of parking lots and ultimately to the arrangements of an event. As a cultural capital, the city and the surrounding areas might be found often congested by the stated aspects. The residents have also focused on the lack of possibility to travel back and forth to an event. One has described the situation as: The lack of available buses and transportation from other Cluj County settlements such as Sannicoara, Dezmir, Floresti and Apahida. And lastly, there were 27 perspectives that accentuate the lack of a road infrastructure adequate for the events taking place in Cluj-Napoca.

If not **transparent** enough, an event will lead to the deprivation of needs and wishes for the consumer, the way they should have been met. In addition, this is often the cause of events organized for commercial or material purposes; a statement supported by 16 of the total 258 answers. Along with the appraisal of needs and transparency, when an event is declared as one for **commercial** existence it means that in a certain period it has suffered from loss of authenticity; 18 attendees believe in an event becoming commercial in its festival's nature: theme, public, displayed content from one edition to another.

Non-modifying aspects, however, lack the possibility of direct management, transforming our consumer into passive or even exclusive participants. There were 64 threatened individuals by these factors available on the internal and external markets. The weather condition is foremost and commonly the principal factor, especially when events are held outdoors or open-air; 13 of the respondents deny any chance of participation if the weather conditions are not favorable or at least stable.

The second aspect is **health and safety**, a context that has risen due to the pandemic launched with the new Coronavirus Covid-19; 34 of the statements will result to the absolute absence on the verge of infection, or in the case of overcrowding that will eventually lead to the appearance of panic attacks, claustrophobia, or anxiety for the respondents. Withal, for 21 of the attendees in the study, the lack of safety measures

available pre-, during and after the ending of an event, can represent the sufficient motivation to decline the active frequency at an event in Cluj-Napoca.

A glance at the information coming from Figure 3 has shown us once again, that in order to become an active individual in events, one needs to display enough energy and enthusiasm, that in our case is specific to ages between 21-30 years old. Plus, the data offers insight about the constancy of different levels of participation. The apogee is held by a frequency of attending to more than 5 events per year; declared by 89 (34%) of our Cluj-Napoca citizens. However, active can also mean to be present in an interval of 3 to 5 events per year, in the opinion of 80 participants (31%).

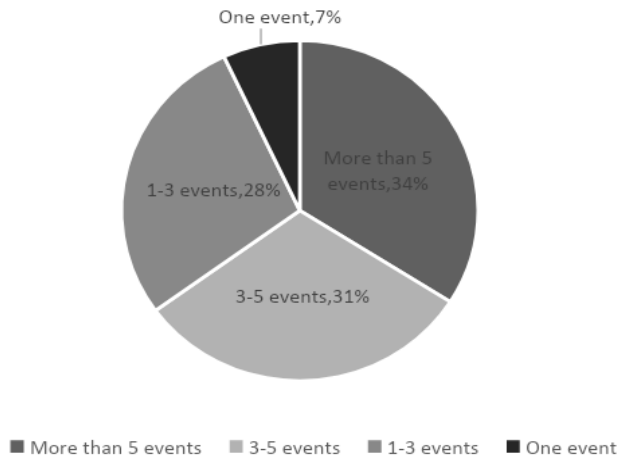


Figure 3. The share of every level considered necessarily for an active entitlement for residents in the industry of events in Cluj-Napoca.

Source: Authors' calculations.

Nonetheless, an approximate answer to the first two is the neutral attending, for when the attendees' participation ranges from 1 to 3 events in a single year; 71 persons are to be situated inside this category, as a 28% from the total answers. Ultimately, residents of Cluj-Napoca are not all passive, but there have been registered some answers stating the presence of non-attendees to a single event per year; here we have 18 answers and a weight of 7% from the total responses.

Table 7. The amount spent per event on different budgeting levels as stated by the researched consumers.

Budgeting per event	Frequency of answers	Relative Frequency
€50-100	80	31%
€20-50	65	25%
<€20	52	20%
€100-150	30	12%
€150-200	20	8%
>€200	11	4%
Total	258	100%

Source: Authors' calculations.

Knowing their preferences and how active they are seen in these manifestations required us to pursue another interesting aspect for the segment: the budget for a single participation, that will either encourage or discourage their attendance in the events held in Cluj-Napoca (Table 7). An event can be entry free and still manage to push its attendees to spend more on the location of the manifestation, on a variety of tangible and intangible goods or services for a certain amount; by spending money on extras inside the side, the attendee's entire perception towards the events can be modified. The first preponderant choice is that of a budget from €50-100 for 31% of the answers. Table hosts a second option for a usual participation budget of €20-50 as stated by 25% of the answers in the study. Individuals can, however, spend an insignificant amount for an event: below a budget of €20 per event, declared by 20% of the participants in the research. Since one can spend less for a single event, our respondents have also confirmed the opposite, where the budget goes beyond the precedent answers: 30 participants (12%) spend €100 to €150 per sole participation. The last choices are the most expensive budgets, where 8% of the Cluj-Napoca have a budget €150 to €200 per attending, respectively a budget that goes beyond €200 for a participation in the statement of 4% participants.

Therefore, in accordance with Table 8 our profile is composed of a majority of 70% females and 30% males. The young energy of the image is recognized through the following demographics. By the age gap, where most of the respondents are young persons between 21 to 30 years old (74.4%). High school students and university undergraduates under 20 years of age represent 10.1% from the overall results. Adults take up a segment of 9.7% as 31-40 years old, while an insignificant number of 10 participants (3.9%) have reached the age of 41-50 years old.

Table 8. Demographic characteristics of the respondents in our research.

Demographics characteristics of the respondents	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
Respondent's gender		
Female	181	70%
Male	77	30%
Respondent's age		
Under 20	26	10.1%
21 - 30	192	74.4%
31 - 40	25	9.7%
41 - 50	10	3.9%
51 - 65	4	1.6%
More than 65	1	0.4%
Respondents' income		
<€250	79	31%
€251 - 360	38	15%
€360 - 500	30	12%
€501 - 600	36	14%
€601 - 800	40	15%
>€800	35	13%
Respondent's level of education		
Basic studies	7	3%
High school	107	41%
Post-secondary	4	2%
University studies	103	40%
Post university studies	37	14%
Respondents' marital status		
Single	123	48%
In a relationship	104	40%
In a relationship/married without children	19	7%
In a relationship/ married having children	12	5%

Source: Adapted after Lamurean & Bota (2021)

Seniors are a small percentage in the overall participants, by providing an attendance of 1.6% for a 51–65-year gap and 0.4% for individuals exceeding the age of 65. On an educational level, the highest peak in studies demonstrates the young adult as dominating in the profile, having finished either high school studies (41%) as current undergraduates and students or by having a bachelor's degree (40%) and are in current employment or entrepreneurship. Moreover, 37 of the respondents provide

a further education by doing post-university studies (14%). The lowest level is reached by individuals having basic studies (3%) or a post-secondary education (2%).

By looking at their marital status, the consumer is based on mostly singles as provided by 123 results (48%) or is currently in a relationship (40%). Married individuals without children have provided a presence of 7%, while those participating with their kids represent a low percentage (5%). Ultimately, the most frequented income levels match the other demographics: students have a budget of under €250 (31%) if their single focus is on their further education. However, they can also represent students in current employment with a budget of €251-360 (15%) or are undergraduates taking a step ahead in their career, providing an income of €350-500 (12%) to that of €501-600 (14%). The highest levels of income might demonstrate an entrepreneurship initiative, of individuals participating in the events with an income of 601-800 (15%) or over €800 (13%).

Conclusions

Economically, the cities that are highly developed are the ones with the most fertile soil for the growth of the market of events. Cluj-Napoca has been considered such an example. Their fertility as destinations comes from the ideation process in abundance, traditions, and customs representative of the local areas, having declared a certain behavioral pattern for social prospects and of a well routed tourism structure (Sava & Badulescu, 2018). Because Cluj-Napoca has managed to build its own portfolio of events, apart from the national catalog, events have offered the city a real essence, a goodwill among foreign destinations for entertainment.

At present times, the city of Cluj-Napoca is the host of one of the most frequented, in dimension and content, musical events of Romania, Untold Festival. The category of the festival is that of major events in size, representing both a symbol for the city, as well as an important decisive factor for foreign peers and local or national consumers of arts. Nonetheless, Cluj-Napoca is the home of other important festivals and events, many of them being distinctive through their awards and nominalizations in various categories.

In conclusion to our profile and of the researched traits found along the process, the avatar of the participant in events from this destination has been declared based on decoded information and on a petitioned research tool. At the end of the research, the profile has been described on the account of a persona of mostly women, aged in the interval of 21-30 years old. Because of their age, they have been providing enough evidence to state a certain amount of data about other characteristics as well, such as their level of studies and their current employment status. Statements that have not only shown the energy of their age in the decisive process, but of a segmented data of consumers that have the following occupations:

- they are either in current studies, work a job or display a living through entrepreneurship. Following the same pattern, our consumers define their avatar through a certain degree of studies, having finished: high school, for those in current studies; undergraduates and further, postgraduate levels, representative for participants working a job or making a living with their own entrepreneurial business.

The description than continues with the existence of the usual earnings of the participants, obtained through the lens of how educated they are and what job they are currently having. Most of the residents earn below 250 euro, a category fit for students; 600-800 euro or 251-360 for working residents or individual entrepreneurs. Since most of them are of young age their marital status is that of single participants, suitable for attendees in current development of their education and career potential. If the individuals won't fit in the first category, that is because they have a declared relationship with someone else, with the possibility of further commitment.

What makes them distinct is not only the repetitive basis upon which they participate, but because they declare themselves as a thrill-seekers of new experiences and due to their presence in the public crowd but are also an excellent advisors and promoters in terms of events in Cluj-Napoca, given the advantageous trait of promotion of 72,48%.

The criteria considered to be of high importance when participating in an event in Cluj-Napoca is that of knowledge and personal growth, the building of social networks, entertainment, curiosity, novelty and freshness, the site of the event, new experiences provided, past experiences, content of the event, cost per event participation, distance,

seasonality, and time. However, the participant status of the targeted group does not change in accordance with their professional liability. To sum up, when building the preferential portfolio, an individual participating in events opts for the most available types of the most popular events in Cluj-Napoca: starting with artistic and entertainment manifestations, followed closely by the cultural branch, gatherings with educational purposes, local meetings. Not all the data sources are appealing to them when finding out news about events, but the sources from the online environment, contemporary and in a continuous update, where we have social media platforms, recommendations through word-of-mouth and least but not last, online news, serve as a source of veritable data for events taking place in Cluj-Napoca.

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PERSPECTIVES AND STRATEGIES OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM FOR A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the importance of religious tourism in sustainable development and to find effective strategies through marketing optics and methodology. The issue of religious tourism is a topical one and not without controversy. Romanian tourism is currently facing many problems, such as: reduced turnover, very frequent changes in the legal framework, very rigid labor market, a deficient infrastructure in quantity and quality, repeated changes in the behavior of economic agents and population, an unfavorable economic environment. To achieve this goal, qualitative research was conducted among tourism producers, intermediaries and tourists in the Neamț region - one of the most important tourist areas in Romania and also an important region with religious and rural tourism destinations. The results showed that there is a special concern regarding religious tourism and could contribute to the local development of the area.

Keywords: religion; religious tourism; development; sustainability; local resources

JEL classification: M3, Z12

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Introduction

In Romania, religion returned to the attention of researchers from other fields than the theological in the years after 1989. If we were to quote the great demographer (Trebici, 1998) then it would be best to

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emphasize the following: "The variable religion is increasingly requested as an explanatory variable in the theories and models proposed by social psychology, sociology, and differential demography. It should not be missing from economic theories either, if we think of the classic study of the German economist and sociologist Max Weber (1856-1920), entitled Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism, which highlights the relationship between economics and religion. Tourism has many positive effects and directly and indirectly influences the economic development of areas with tourist objectives. Tourism can also contribute to the development of areas that are not rich in economic resources, but with natural and anthropoid resources. According to the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), tourism will follow four major development trends by 2030:

- development of old religious objectives / from the perspective of marketing policies;
- the development of new religious tourist attractions in which modern technologies play an important role;
- modernization of the current classical elements of the religious tourist potential;
- implementation of policies specific to the development of the existing potential;
- greater involvement of religious institutions.

The complexity of tourism processes determined by the influence of many factors of economic, social, psychological, administrative, requires an approach to the systemic vision based on interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary treatment, highlighting the interrelationship between religious tourism and sustainable development. The diversity regarding the types of tourism, the existence of many factors with negative influence on the development of tourism in the mentioned area such as: infrastructure, specific training of staff with responsibilities in tourism, promotion of tourism products and services, requires a research based on scientific criteria and methods that take into account the specifics of the field.

Literature Review - *The Importance of Religion Tourism in the development of Neamț area*

With the integration into the European Union, European researchers have tried to highlight the strong impact that cultural tourism can have in

the new united Europe as well as the extraordinary benefits that this form of tourism can bring. We mention here the indispensable contributions of some European researchers, gathered under the direct guidance and care of Greg Richards (in *Cultural attractions and European Tourism*). In this paper are collected 13 studies, with a special value, real landmarks in the process of integration and circulation of Romanian tourism in Europe. Also, another direction of research goes towards the identification and analysis of the great pilgrimage centers of Europe and the world (Cohen, 1992).

However, in terms of religious tourism as a distinct element and as a separate branch in research, the contributions of specialists are increasingly diverse and numerous. It seems that the studies we have gone through, try a lot to highlight the extent of religious tourism and the possibilities of developing this type of tourism for certain geographical or cultural areas. We mention here the impressive collection of studies reunited under his coordination, entitled *Religious tourism and pilgrimage festivals management: an international perspective* (Raj & Morpeth, 2001). The studies included in this volume, which also reflect a globalizing spirit, offer different models, suggest ideas and, to a large extent, offer perspectives for researching the problem. The subject is treated in the same way in the volume signed by Dallen & Daniel (2006), which also contains a series of studies, organized by field, studies that offer a historical-philosophical (Nolan & Nolan, 1992) perspective of what we call today religious tourism (Dallen & Daniel, 2006). Another volume is one that can provide a necessary opening to the bases and beginnings of the development of this type of tourism (McKelvie, 2006).

One of the "leading" volumes in such research is the one signed by Collins-Kreiner & Kliot (2005), namely the work *Christian Tourism to the Holy Land* offers an image of religious tourism in the Holy Land, an important landmark in regard of religious tourism in other Christian countries. Crispin Spaine, under the auspices of "Leicester University Press", published in 2000 the volume *Godly things: museums, objects, and religion*, which tends to offer a new perspective on what religious objects mean as elements of attractiveness for people (Collins-Kreiner & Kliot, 2005).

Various hypotheses have also been launched in the analysis of religious tourism (Swatos & Tomasi, 2002), in order to establish similarities or differences in terms of pilgrimage as a purely religious act or tourist action. It should be noted that the pilgrimage contributes to sustainable development, in that very few such activities are not entirely devoid of

economic purposes (Rinschede, 1992), (Stavrou, 2000). Considering that, besides the strictly religious motivation, the pilgrim also visits other objectives in the area, buys souvenirs, books, etc., thus participating in the economic activity (Fleischer, 2000).

In this field, in the last years some articles appeared in *Amfiteatrul economic*. Such approaches were probably hindered by the various reluctances that are still observed today between religious authority and secular approaches in the field (Sousa, 1993). Unfortunately, it is believed that such a contribution would somewhat change the view of what is seen today as a pilgrimage. But an economic point of view is valid, as long as phenomena occur in which significant financial capital is mixed. An important study that makes a synthetic and pragmatic discussion about religious tourism, with a broader inclination towards the realities of the Romanian space, is signed by two researchers of the University of Oradea (Bădulescu & Ban, 2005). This initiative was doubled by an article published in the magazine "Capital", which offers a certain vision on the problem, but not very comprehensive, being more of a look that aims to popularize religious tourism.

A number of local researchers understood the importance of studying this topic and started from religious aspects to interpret the realities from an economic point of view. It is worth mentioning here a study carried out by Țîrca, Stănciulescu, Chiș and Băncilă in which they question the abbots of monasteries in order to identify those aspects that make people come to a monastery (Chis et al., 2006).

Also, many researchers have focused on deepening the problems of religious tourism by trying interesting and innovative approaches to the analysis of this phenomenon. Even if some, especially those in our country, have a less direct and sharp attitude, researchers from other areas with different mentalities are, or seem, more pragmatic in saying things "by name". Thus, other contributions of Romanian researchers can be supplemented with studies of researchers from external scientific fields to outline an objectively viewed reality, *sine ira et studio* (according to the famous Latin principle). Of course we ask ourselves the questions: "Is it necessary for marketing to be integrated as a policy in religious organizations in Romania in the perspective of sustainable development?"; "Was marketing applied in the religious field knowingly?"; "What obstacles has this field encountered internationally, what obstacles does it face in Romania and what solutions can be found?"; "What are the

peculiarities of marketing in the field of religious tourism?"; "How can religious tourism, through its resources, contribute to the coagulation of a comprehensive plan for sustainable regional development" (Strâmbu, 2008).

Of course, the list of contributions in the field of marketing and religious tourism can continue because, as I said, many researchers have turned their attention in this direction. The authors support the application of marketing principles and strategies in the field of religious tourism in order to obtain the best results. Although the Church has begun to support - it is true that tacitly - marketing in religious tourism by setting up "pilgrimage centers", through collaborations with various tourism distribution companies, with airlines, the results are not commensurate.

Robin Grier, based on his hypotheses (Weber, 1993), demonstrates a direct link between Protestantism, on the one hand, and economic growth, on the other. Sabina Alkire warns about the negative impact the religious institution and religious leaders have when they oppose development.

Weber's hypotheses were re-evaluated by Barro & McCleary in a study conducted at a level of 59 countries with a different religious preponderance, emphasizing, on the one hand, the direct link between people's faith and economic growth and, on the other hand, the inverse link between the involvement of the Church as an organization and sustainable economic growth (Barro & McCleary, 2003).

Analysis of the tourist market in Neamț

Tourist flows in Neamț County

The degree of development reached by the religious tourism from Neamț County is given by the intensity of the tourist circulation having as objectives the resources of the church potential.

There are several obstacles in assessing the related tourist flows. The first is given by the lack of a rigorous matrix to quantify the eminently religious flow. In the statistical base of tourism in Romania, the tourist data generated by the visits motivated by the religious tourism component are included in the same with the trips for medical and other reasons. Then, the flows of visitors generated by religious tourism are difficult to assess due to the interference with cultural tourism, in which visiting religious sites is a component of the cultural tourism offer. Also, visits to religious sights can be short, only a few hours, and this transit tourism does not have stay data that can be quantified.

In the case of monastic tourism, the information of the tourist flow comes from the monasteries, where the tourist records are based on the number of tickets at the entrance and those at the museum. In Neamț County, the monastery complexes Neamț, Văratec, Agapia, Secu, Sihăstria, Sihla, Horaița, Petru-Vodă are also considered centers with artistic and cultural orientation, which determines their inclusion in the tourist flow generated by cultural tourism.

Another major problem of religious tourism in Neamț County is the seasonality. Although the influx of practitioners is closely related to the feasts of religious buildings, feasts distributed throughout the year, and religious holidays over the year we find that the tourist frequency has a peak in early spring, in the context of Easter and the warm period of the year.

The monasteries of Văratec, Agapia, Neamț, Secu, Sihăstria, Petru Voda attract, at the weekend and in the hot season, a large number of tourists, accommodated in the neighboring rural localities. Instead, the tourist competition from the neighboring regions (Suceava, Iași) influences the tourist circulation, which suffers during the Easter or winter holidays, when the receiving basin of religious tourism becomes mainly Bucovina.

The graph below (Figure No. 1) show the number of religiously motivated trips after the calendar month of departure, the duration of the trip and the main accommodation in 2019, according to statistical data on the website of the Regional Statistics Office Neamț (Guriță 2013, Guriță 2015 a, b & c).

Research of religious tourism in Neamț area, method and analysis

Research methods and techniques: SWOT analysis and questionnaire-based survey. SWOT analysis is needed to highlight the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks facing the region in question, from a heritage perspective.

The specific objectives of the research were:

1) Identification of marketing techniques appropriate to the specifics of tourism activities based on the results of research conducted last year (2020).

2) Researching the tourist potential in the Neamț area in correlation with the influencing factors.

3) Identifying solutions to ensure the future development of tourism in the Neamt area.

4) Analysis of the role of the knowledge-based society in the development of religious tourism in the North-East Region of Romania.

5) Making the information obtained from the research available to the decision-making bodies in the field.

The SWOT analysis of the potential of the North-East tourist area highlights the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats:

Table 1. SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Religious cultural tourism potential	Religious cultural tourism potential
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • favorable geographical location in the heart of Moldova • a large number of places of cultural significance, sacred (religious), cultural and historical monuments • a territorial concentration of monasteries and hermitages with national recognition • hiking trails around Orthodox monasteries • the existence of museum collections of religious art • the existence of libraries with a rich and old book fund • miracle-working icons • calendar of feasts and commemorations • memorial houses in the vicinity of the monastic ensemble • the tomb of Veronica Micle - Văratec • workshops near monasteries • the church paintings of the painter Nicolae Grigorescu • the spiritual imprint left by famous clergymen - Father Cleopa, Father Iustin Pârvu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • degradation of religious worship objectives • visiting program for a much more restrictive public • lack of specialized guidance • Insufficient financial investments for the preservation of religious heritage • most collections that enjoy religious cultural recognition are located in large cities • the collections from the rural area do not enjoy a great recognition, although in the patrimony they have special objects as value (see Agapia, Neamț etc.) • buildings in rural areas (villages and not monasteries) that house such collections are in a high degree of degradation • poor experience in organizing such events makes the combination of religious and secular not always welcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in the region there is a close link between the religious dimension and the ethnofolkloric dimension. Thus in the area there is an ethnographic and folklore treasure of great originality formed by traditional fairs and folklore manifestations throughout the year; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • neither the religious nor the secular attraction is highlighted, not respecting the minimum space necessary for each event;

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in the region there is a close link between the religious dimension and the ethnofolkloric dimension. Thus in the area there is an ethnographic and folklore treasure of great originality formed by traditional fairs and folklore manifestations throughout the year; 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if from a conceptual point of view we can speak of a close link between religious tourism and pilgrimage, from an operational point of view, this aspect is left in the subsidiary and unexploited as a specific resource; • an excessive secularization of the ethnofolkloric manifestations is tried, which distorts the original character of the manifestation, their removal from the cultural heritage of the localities;

Source: Author processing based on research data

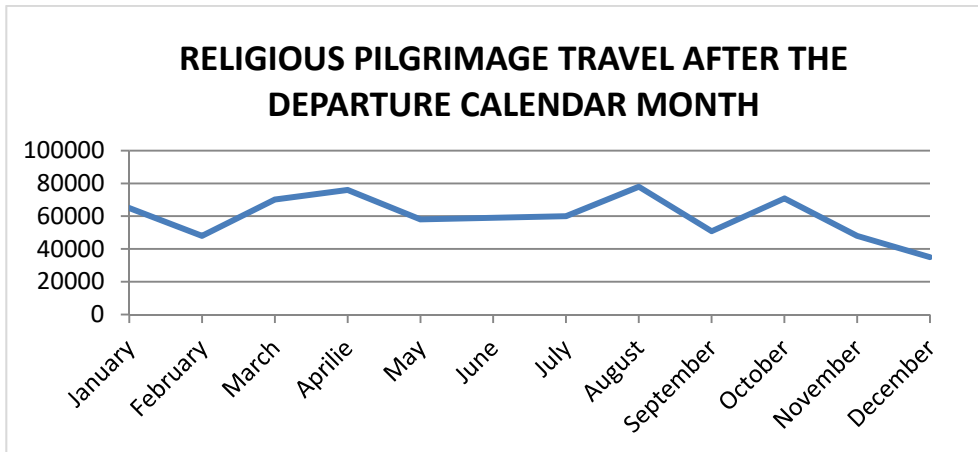


Figure 1. Travels for religious pilgrimage after the calendar month of departure.

Source: Author's processing based on data provided by the National Statistics Institute (NIS)

Results and discussions

In Romania, monasteries and churches register a large number of believer's visits on weekends and during important religious events (church feasts or remembrance of the holy faces who protected the place of worship).

Throughout the year, the distribution of the number of tourists is fluctuating, with peaks of increase in the number of trips in April, the Easter holiday, but also in October, where the feast of St. Parascheva registered in 2020 a record number of people who worshiped the relics

– 100,000 believers. Notable in the warm season in August when the trips of many groups of domestic or foreign visitors are recorded.

The analysis of the number of trips shows the need to support religious tourism in the cold season by designing integrated tourist products or tourist packages that are interesting to use in the off-season.

Findings regarding religious tourism in Neamț County

In conducting this study, we used the questionnaire-based survey to delimit certain aspects of religious tourism in Neamț County by:

- the tourist's vision on the manifestation of religious tourism
- identifying the specific motivations of the religious tourism demand
- the requirements of the consumer of services of religious tourism
- quality standards in religious tourism

A total of 189 direct questionnaires were completed, in the vicinity of the places of worship in Neamț County – Neamț Monastery, Văratec, Agapia, Secu and Petru Vodă - of which following filter questions, only 138 valid answers were validated and recorded.

The degree of uniqueness of a tourist attraction contributes significantly to the decision of a tourist to visit it. The attractive attributes of a place of worship impose it in the tourist's attention: the architectural elements, the movable and immovable heritage, the uniqueness of the landscape in which it is located, the fame of the founder and of the personalities who linked their names to this place, historical, cultural and religious nature that are hosted by it or the complementary religious/cultural attractions. Accessibility becomes an attractive criterion in the context in which it reveals the quality and diversity of access and accommodation and catering infrastructure - own and neighboring.

The attractive potential of the previously analyzed religious objectives can be capitalized by setting up museums or exhibitions inside religious buildings that do not now have such facilities. It is a useful way to provide attractive and additional information to potential visitors about the peculiarities of the building, about the historical figures that marked its existence. An efficient and professional tourist experience will aim to equip these museums with audio guides in international languages, but also to provide specialized guides, with skills and knowledge in the field, to meet the desire to inform visitors.

The miraculous icons as found in a number of monasteries in the area are of great interest to tourists and pilgrims.

We aimed and managed to validate the following hypotheses as presented in Table 2:

Table 2. The results of the questionnaire: validated hypotheses

1. The interviewed persons will visit Neamț County for religious tourism purposes.
2. The profile of the tourist is outlined by the following characteristics: predominantly female, elderly (over 65 years old), from rural areas, with average incomes.
3. Most tourists use the car when traveling to the tourist destination, they stay at boardinghouses for a stay of 1-3 days.
4. The motivations underlying the choice of a religious destination are of a spiritual, religious nature, to the detriment of the reasons related to the cultural manifestation of religious tourism.
5. In the case of monasteries and religious tourism, the spiritual-religious aspects have a special importance and a greater role than the economic part of the tourism activity.

Conclusions

The scientific approach presented in this paper can be summarized in the following conclusions:

- ✓ in the area of Neamț County there are opportunities and a remarkable attractive potential for the development of competitive religious tourism;
- ✓ the spatial distribution of the religious tourist objectives from Neamț County highlights a concentration of them in the area of Vânători-Neamț National Park;
- ✓ the infrastructure in the area requires a series of modernization and adaptation measures to satisfy the current tourist movement;
- ✓ identification of visitors' requirements for meeting a standard of tourist services (tourist motivations, infrastructure, accommodation, meals).

Tourists come to Neamț County on the one hand, to relate to the divinity, to manifest their faith, and on the other hand to know the history of the place and cultural contact. The combination of the two dimensions – religious and cultural – must be capitalized in the directions of tourism development of the area.

Analyzing the needs of consumers, it is encouraged to practice cultural-religious tourism by visiting museums within monastic ensembles, visiting memorial houses near Sihăstria and Agapia, but also supplementing with tourist routes along the historical cultural objectives in German cities.

The aim is for the Neamț County to consolidate as a tourist destination by diversifying the tourist product policy. Competitive tourist packages and routes, targeted at the age segments of tourists and accessible throughout the year must be designed to increase the flow of tourists and extend the average length of stay of tourists in the tourist destination.

In organizing the promotion activity, it is useful to apply the product strategy - selling church objects, visiting museums and church exhibitions, designing packages and tourist routes, organizing accommodation and meals in well-arranged places during a pandemic. The focus has been shifted from sustainability to the pandemic (Barbier & Burgess, 2020). the premises of the monastic ensembles - with an adequate price and distributed on a clientele market that is of interest.

Religious tourism will be in continuous growth, ascent and diversification if it is aimed at: meeting the tourist motivations of various segments of tourists; capitalizing on the desire for knowledge, the cultural component, the desire for social or spiritual interaction; the manifestation of a sustainable tourism that would protect the integrity of religious spaces and that would bring benefits to the local and church community.

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC ON FINANCIAL EDUCATION

NICOLETA GIANINA BOSTAN (MOTOAȘCĂ)¹

ABSTRACT. Pandemic situation has changed the way we work, learn and shop. Digital finance has helped individuals and companies to meet challenges. The forecasts for the impact of COVID 19 on the world economy are pessimistic. The latest revision of the International Monetary Fund shows a deeper recession than the initial estimates for 2020 and a slower recovery in 2021. Some industries were completely blocked, others were significantly declining. The impact of the restrictions imposed by the epidemiological situation were negative in industries like the automotive industry, airlines, travel agencies, tour operators, hotels, restaurants, entertainment and construction. There were also industries whose activity had an increase due to the pandemic like courier, transport and health services. The need to maintain social distance has pushed forward digital solutions for payments and banking services. People have been taken out of their comfort zone when it comes to managing personal finances. The discrepancies between poor and rich countries became more evident during this pandemic. Lack of activity, limited opportunities to spend money and uncertainty have increased saving behavior. According to Eurostat, the saving rate of households in the euro area increased by 16.6% in the second quarter of 2020 compared to the first, but the investment rate decreased by one percent.

Speaking of the crisis in general and the financial crisis in particular, it has been shown that it has significantly changed the financial behavior of individuals. This paper aims to analyze how financial education led to different financial behavior during the crisis and the exclusions circumstances that may occur.

Keywords: Covid-19, financial education, personal finances.

JEL classification: I15, A29, D14.

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Introduction

Two years ago, a pandemic situation seemed more like a movie script; meantime, it has become our daily reality. Everyday life has changed radically around the world since the COVID-19 pandemic started. In an attempt to limit the number of casualties governments have adopted restrictions for the population, ordered the temporary or partial closure of activities that involve a high risk of spreading the coronavirus. Governments have moved the school online, encouraged teleworking and have imposed unprecedented health related measures. All these measures continue to be the subject of extensive debates on the necessity for measures taken against Covid-19, on how these measures affect human rights to privacy and freedom. At the same time, the fight against misinformation has become a necessity. Feelings of solidarity and tolerance were among the most visible human qualities during this period. Despite these controversies, one certainty is that the overall mortality rate, regardless of the causes, increased by 13 percent in the 27 countries of the European Union in 2020 compared to 2019 after a decrease of 1% in 2019 compared to 2018.

Observing Figure 1 we can see how the evolution compared to the previous year of the mortality rate in the countries of the European Union. One can notice how the least affected was Denmark where the mortality rate increased in 2020 by 3.1% after in 2019 there was a decrease of 2.3%. The country most affected from this point of view was Spain where the death rate increased by 20.8% in 2020 compared to 2019, although in the previous year there had been a decrease in the total number of deaths compared to 2018, of 2.1%. Measures of social distancing, health protection and health efforts have reduced the number of deaths. The UK and Sweden approached the pandemic in a more relaxed way in the initial phase, without imposing a lock-down, choosing to limit the economic effects of the restrictive measures but the increased number of infections and deaths convinced the authorities to change their strategy.

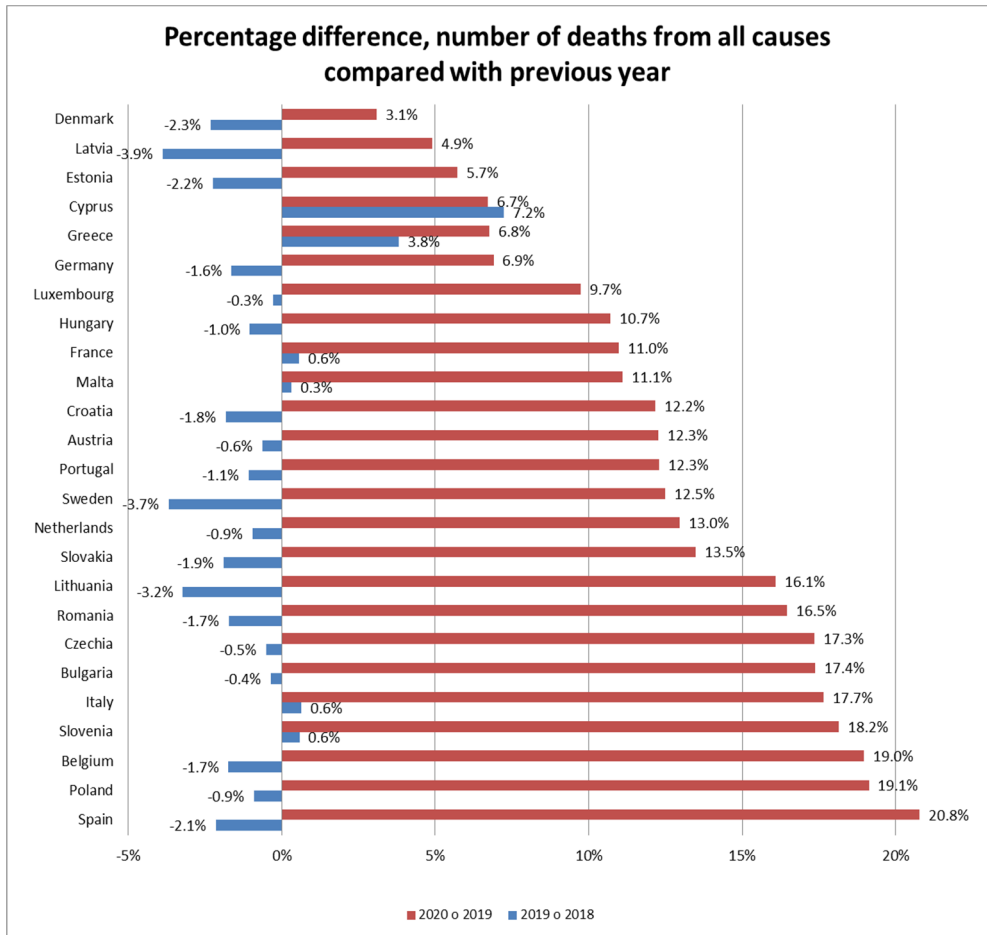


Figure 1. Percentage difference compared to the previous year of the number of deaths in European Union countries (2020 compared to 2019 and 2019 compared to 2018).

Source datasets: Deaths by week and sex. Eurostat [demo_r_mwk_ts].
 Extracted on 01.04.2021.

In recent years, life expectancy at birth has increased, but in 2020, according to data provided by Eurostat, life expectancy has fallen in 25 of the 27 EU countries. The standardized mortality rate is generally higher for men than for women as life expectancy is lower for males than females (Life expectancy by age and sex, Eurostat, 07 April 7, 2021). In Figure 2 it can be seen that the mortality rate increased in 2020 compared

to 2019 for both men and women in all European Union countries but it can be seen that the male mortality rate exceeded the female mortality rate in 16 of the 26 of countries analyzed. The biggest differences between the sexes are found in Latvia where the mortality rate for women exceed mortality for men by 7 p.p. and Romania where the mortality rate for men exceeds by 7 p.p. mortality rate for women, exactly the opposite.

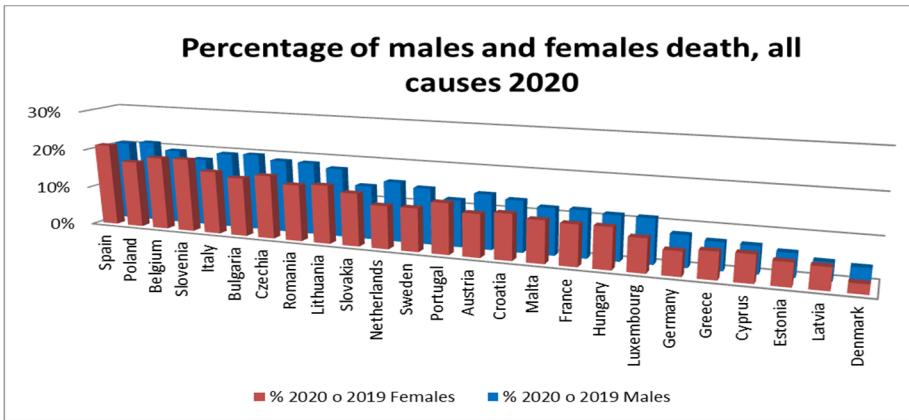


Figure 2. Mortality rate increase by gender, 2020 compared to 2019.

Source datasets: Deaths by week and sex. Eurostat[*demo_r_mwk_ts*].

Extracted on 01.04.2021

The coronavirus appears to undergo mutations that reverse long-term recovery projections and the support from governments ebbs away on a long term. A phone survey that was implemented in 34 countries shows that over 64 percent of households reported decreases in income, over 30 percent of children were unable to continue learning during school closures and 35.6 percent of respondents stopped working in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic. (Bundervoet et al, 2021). According to this study, women, young people and less-educated workers, were more likely to lose their jobs because of the pandemic. The pandemic seems to leave long lastig adverse effects on incomes. The COVID-19 pandemic is estimated to increase extreme poverty by between 88 million (baseline estimate) and 93 million (downside estimate) in 2020 and the projection for people in extreme poverty is to rise up between 143 and 163 million in 2021, due to pandemic situation (Lakner et al, 2021). It seems that our

society will undergo definitive changes after this crisis. The pandemic increased gaps between socioeconomic groups. Developing national systems to provide quick support in case of decreased income should be a priority (Bowen et al, 2020). Policies should focus particularly on the recovery of the poor and vulnerable and on their resilience to possible sudden shocks. (Hill and Narayan, 2020).

Objectives and Hypotheses

All the measures taken to limit the infection rate of the population came with a general economic cost. Governments have tried to financially support businesses affected by their decisions so that they do not go bankrupt and have taken a number of measures to provide non-reimbursable funds or facilitate the deferral of payments for a limited period of outstanding debts. In 2020, the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic led to a severe recession and the measures taken to protect the affected sectors had limited effects. As seen in the figures. 3, GDP had registered an economic growth of 3% in the EU in 2019 compared to the previous year, with a maximum growth of 9% in Bulgaria, Romania and Ireland.

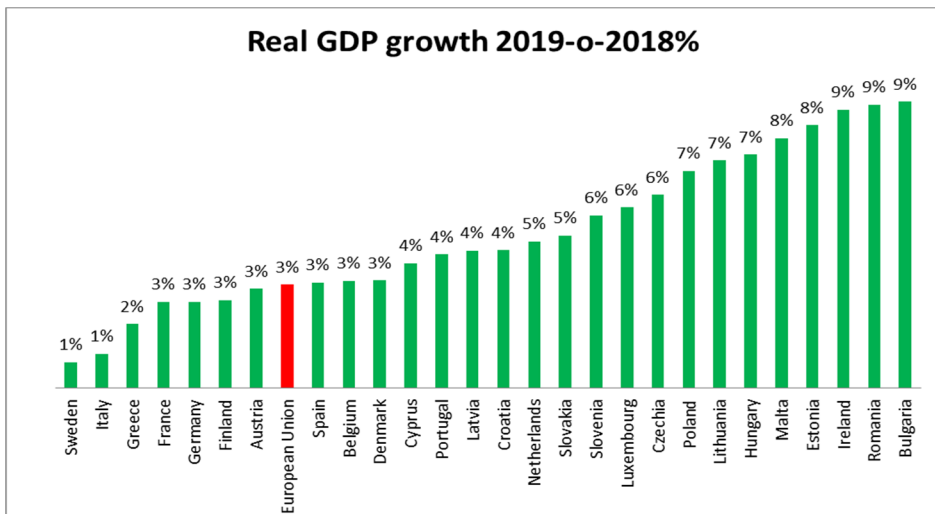


Figure 3. Real GDP, percentage growth, 2019 compared to 2018.

Source datasets: Data extracted on 05/04/2021 from Eurostat.

Gross domestic product at market prices NAMA_10_GDP

Most countries in the European Union have seen a decline in GDP in 2020. The detailed situation of the 27 countries in the European Union can be seen in Figure 4. Although trade has increased for Covid-19 related products (i.e. sterilizing products, some medical consumables and products, oxygen equipment, etc) and some of the people bought food and sanitary products in excess, other sectors experienced a strong contraction of activity.

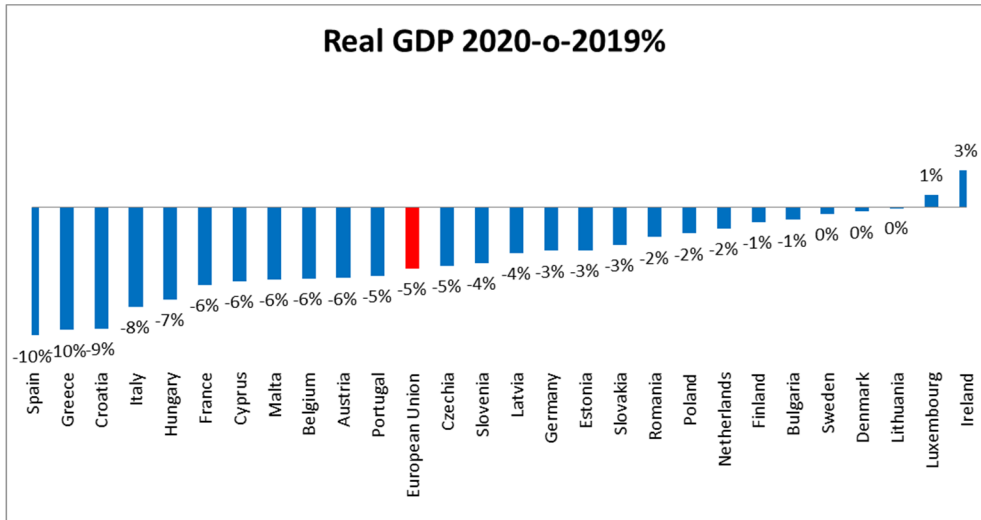


Figure 4. Real GDP, 2020 compared to 2019, percentage.
Source datasets: Data extracted on 05/04/2021 from Eurostat.
 Gross domestic product at market prices NAMA_10_GDP

Tourism, the cultural and entertainment industry, hospitality, transport and construction are among the economic sectors strongly affected by the restrictions that impose social distance. The countries whose economy is based on these industries have been among the most affected. Spain was one of the biggest market in tourist accommodation with more than 400 million nights spent in tourist accommodation in 2019, domestic (traveling inside their own country) and inbound international tourists (coming from other EU or non-EU countries). Also Spain had the second largest value added for the construction of buildings in 2018, after Germany and the largest workforce for the construction of buildings (source: Key figures on European business. Eurostat). Construction and tourism in 2020 it decreased significantly. So, we see in figure 4 an economic decline in Spain and Greece in 2020, real GDP

decreased by 10%. In 2019, Greece had the lowest rate of start-up companies among EU Members States. The share in the economy of the sectors that had growth during the pandemic is low in Greece and for this reason this growth did not have a significant impact in Greece. Telecommunications, computer, and information services contributed less than 5 % of all services exports, one of the lowest contribution in this field compared to the other EU countries. At the opposite, Ireland is one of the most industrialized economies in the world today. In Ireland large enterprises were responsible for 61.9% of value added in non- financial business in 2019. High investment rates among non-financial services were recorded in Ireland for food and beverage services (215 % in 2018). Ireland had the main share of telecommunications, computer, and information services exports from EU in 2019, industries that has been stimulated to grow rapidly in the pandemic due to rising demand. Thus, it can be seen that Ireland has managed to maintain its positive GDP growth trend, registering an economic growth of 3% in 2020 compared to 2019.

KPMG International published in November 2020 a consumer survey with more then 75.000 interviews. Two in five respondents were worried about their financial security in 2021 and 36% said that they prioritized savings. In the long run it seems inevitable that more consumers will suffer a negative impact.

The effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economic situation led to immediate changes in the business environment: closing businesses, changing delivery processes, accelerating digitization, adapting processes that required the physical presence of employees and customers, rapid implementation of a new way of interacting with employees and customers.

The financial sector was also affected by the situation generated by the Covid-19 pandemic and its role, in a first stage, was to manage the increased need for liquidity, to manage the moratorium on debt deferral and to further facilitate access to financial intermediation in conditions of restrictions on the movement of persons. In the second stage, the financial sector has the role of actively supporting the overcoming of the economic crisis generated by the pandemic by supporting the business environment. At the same time, it was observed that the pandemic had as an effect changes in the behavior of the household consumer. Some changes were short-term, with immediate effects, due to the feeling of insecurity, the lack of coherent and credible sources of information that would reach the entire population in a unified way. Thus, we witnessed

the purchase of excess food and sanitary products for long-term supplies, for fear of a subsequent shortage. The insecurity of incomes, the limitation of the freedom of movement resulted from the restrictions and the diminution of the offer in certain sectors led to the reduction of the consumption in general, with preponderance to the reduction of the consumption of services (culture, art, hospitality, entertainment, transport).

It can be seen in Figure 5 that an acceleration of saving behavior due to the pandemic was registered in other European countries in Q2 2020, with a maximum of 38.10% in Ireland and an increase of 8.7% in Greece, a country that in 2018 and 2019 recorded negative savings rates.

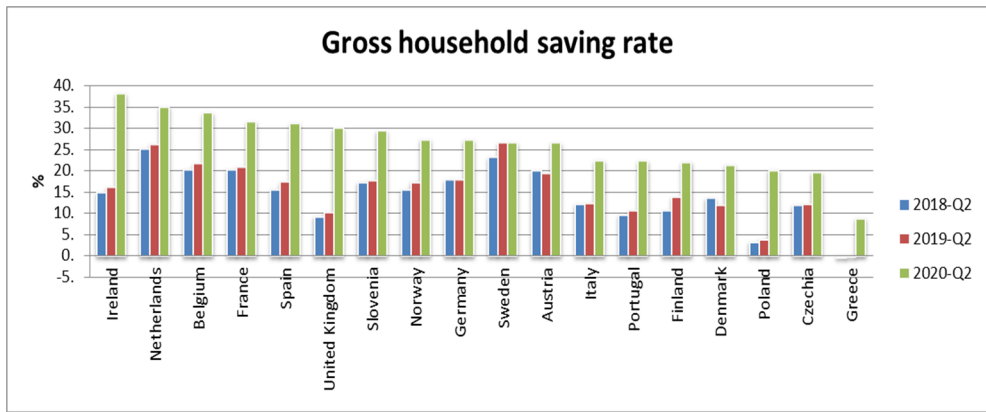


Figure 5. Impact of Covid-19 on household saving rate
Source datasets: Eurostat. National accounts indicator (ESA 2010).
 Key indicators [NASQ_10_KI]. Last update of data 12/02/2021.

In Romania, the balance of resources attracted by monetary financial institutions in the form of deposits in the household sector in January 2021 was 259,952 million Ron, 16% more than in January 2020. The increase came mainly from visible resources (+ 30.9%) and less in term deposits (+ 3.6%) (calculation based on NBR data, Monthly Bulletin, Jan 2021), while loans to the population increased to 150,083 million RON, up 4.7% compared to from January 2020, the increase coming from the increase of the balance of household loans by 10% while the balance of consumer loans decreased by 2.3%. The Romanian population spent less, the economies kept them at a high level of availability and liquidity, without using them in investments and borrowed less, mainly for real estate acquisitions.

Governments spent large percent of GDP on measures that have helped households and workers, at least in the short-term. Observing figure 6 we see that the confidence in national governments increased during the pandemic in most of EU countries, except Poland and Belgium according data collected from OECD.

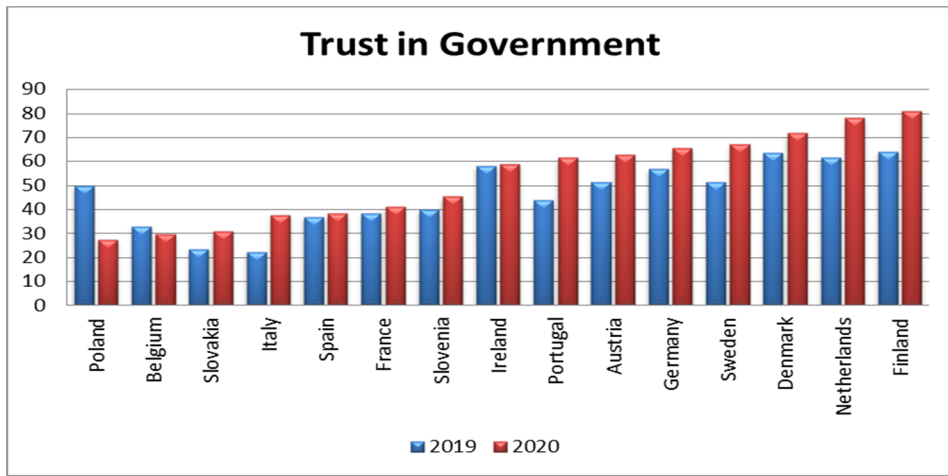


Figure 6. Trust in Government before and during COVID-19

Source datasets: OECD (2021), Trust in government (indicator).

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The current paper presents the result of a boarder research regarding opinions and perceptions of people regarding financial education during the pandemic. The main objectives of qualitative research were:

- (1) Finding people's opinions on the concept of financial education,
- (2) Identifying the attitude of individuals towards financial education,
- (3) Identify how saving and lending behavior has been influenced by the pandemic.

The hypotheses underlie the research conducted, are defined as follows:

- (1) Most participants have a positive attitude about the conduct of financial education programs,
- (2) Most participants were more careful about how they plan their revenue and expenditure budget since the beginning of the pandemic,
- (3) A part of the respondents are content with the current investments.

Methodology

The information in this research was obtained with the help of a qualitative focus group with a sample of ten subjects. This method is defined as a method of social research (Morgan, 1997) and involves the formation of a group of 8-10 people, selected on homogeneous criteria, invited to interact openly, spontaneously. The focus group was organized online, in the context of the social distance imposed by the pandemic, in a videoconferencing system. The chosen subjects were between the ages of 30 and 45, living in urban areas, with family, income and financial responsibilities. The condition for participation was to have experience as a customer of a bank, and to be employed. The jobs differ from one subject to another; the condition was to be graduates of higher education, to have similar experiences and similar involvement level in the focus group. The definition of the population was made by appealing to people in the close circle of acquaintances or their recommendations. The qualitative research took place in September 2020 and the duration of the discussion was around two hours. There was also a moderator who introduced the main topics and kept the discussion open. The participants freely expressed their opinions about what financial education provides, government and banks involvements, if pandemic influenced the financial targets set previously or has changed the way they used to spend money. Due to the large volume of raw data collected, an analysis was subsequently performed based on the recorded data.

Results and Discussions

The qualitative research was entitled “The opinions, perceptions, knowledge, behavior and attitude of adults in Brasov on financial education”. Some of the main results of vertical and horizontal content analysis can be found below.

The concept of financial education is perceived on two distinct levels:

1. Basic financial education. It includes personal budget planning, revenue management, and expense management. It results in making responsible purchasing decisions, reviewing one's own financial behavior depending on whether the proposed financial objectives have been achieved.

2. In-depth financial education. It is perceived as that education that facilitates the understanding and knowledge of financial terms specific to the economic language. This type, in more depth, offers the possibility to access financial products and services responsibly and with a reduced exposure to the risk of being misguided towards the purchase of a financial product not fit for the need and level of understanding of the individual.

The government and public institutions are expected to provide financial education through the education system. All participants agreed with the idea that financial education should be taught as a subject in the school curriculum, starting with kindergartens and the middle school and adapted to the level of understanding for each age category. The impact on the way children will behave in their relationship with money when they are adults was estimated to be stronger if the information is delivered on a project-based, thematic basis, with assistance from experienced specialists in the field. Delivering information only in the form of theoretical concepts would be, in the opinion of the participants, insufficient to generate changes in habits in relation to money. Financial education must be translated into a daily financial routine.

Regarding personal budget planning, although recognized by all participants as a necessity, only one participant stated that he does so consistently and perseveringly. The other participants acknowledged that they do not have a habit or consistency in planning and tracking how to use their monthly income, on distinct categories of expenses and savings.

The usefulness of delivering financial education in the digital environment, through an online platform was appreciated as low even for the segment that has digital skills. The population that does not have digital skills usually overlaps with the segment with the lowest level of financial knowledge and for which the acquisition of notions of financial education is an unconscious need. A method proposed by one of the participants and interpreted by others as successful was the organization of financial education programs by local governments, with the direct involvement of municipalities in organizing training programs for pensioners, disadvantaged (socially assisted) or for newlyweds. Another topic of debate was how banks are involved in financial education. The problem of lack of trust in banks has arisen; it would be manifested through a reluctance to participate in financial education courses organized by banks as they are also a provider of financial services. It has been mentioned that financial education should provide information so that

one should know how to react in the relationship with the bank or other financial institutions in order not to be fooled. It was considered that an independent actor should supervise the way in which the financial education actions are delivered by the banks in order to make sure that they respect the ethical principles and in order to prevent the risk of manifesting a conflict of interests.

The participants in the focus group have not participated in recent years in financial education courses and have heard of such courses only for a fee. They appreciated that financial education must be done from childhood in order to become a lifestyle.

Conclusions

The research has some limitations given by the dialogue carried through the video connection. This made it impossible to observe non-verbal behavior at the same parameters as in a face to face sessions. There was also a delay of answers given by the intervention mode in the online discussion and poor connection which led to less involvement in the discussion for two participants. One of the limits can be also given by the fact that some participants can be influenced by the answers of other subjects even if the moderator mentioned from the beginning that there are no wrong answers and the diversity of ideas and the contribution of each enriches the research results.

The research results supported the hypotheses that most participants have a positive attitude about the financial education programs and were more careful about how they spend their revenue since the beginning of the pandemic but they are not motivated enough to radically change their habits. This may mean that they are satisfied with the way they have made investments so far even if at a declarative level in a group they are more comfortable with the statement that they would have wanted a better financial situation. On the other hand, achieving a better financial situation comes with expectations from third parties: government, banks, employers, the education system and less from a concrete and persevering personal effort in this direction.

The OECD definition for Financial literacy is “knowledge and understanding of financial concepts and risks, and the skills, motivation and confidence to apply such knowledge and understanding in order to make effective decisions across a range of financial contexts, to improve

the financial well-being of individuals and society, and to enable participation in economic life." As this definition says financial literacy does not refer only to knowledge and understanding but also to the financial attitude and decision making about money that affects the well-being for the whole society. Financial education helps increase the financial literacy level of the people, reduce financial exclusion and increase de well-being. Digital delivery of financial education can improve access to it due to the elimination of the limitations given by place, time and pace of learning. The content can be personalized, intuitive and suitable for the audience. Typical elements of gamification allow errors and financial learning in a safe environment, allows financial decisions to be experienced in a secure environment, decisions that could be costly in real life. People can be motivated in a digital environment to develop healthy financial behaviors by setting personal goals and providing real-time feedback. Digital delivery of financial education allows better collection of data used to monitor the progress in financial education and to take the right decision to improve experience and results.

Digital and technological literacy is associated with higher financial literacy (OECD, Digital delivery of financial education: design and practice, 2021). An excessive digitalization of financial education delivery might increase inequality as long term excessive automation seems not be the best solution. We depend on the digital technologies for preventing a complete meltdown of the economy while many work from home but we should pay attention that the pandemic may exacerbate trends that were already underway towards too much automation (Acemoglu, 2021). This could mean that those with a higher level of financial literacy also have better digital skills and those with lower digital skills could be the disadvantaged categories who would need more financial education. This way the disparities deepen for the social groups that already have a reduced access to financial education and the exclusion phenomena goes deeper. This doesn't mean that if the financial education can't be done face to face it should be not done at all, it means that the process of digitalization inclusion should go further and faster. Delivery of financial education without human touch, only through websites and apps should not happen. In order to reverse widening inequality digitalization must be used wisely.

Pandemic pushed forward digital solutions for payments and banking services. People have been taken out of their comfort zone when it comes to managing personal finances. The discrepancies between those

who have access to digital devices and knowledge and those left out, between poor and rich became more obvious during this pandemic. It is now about access to school, work, finance, public services but also in business is about reaching to the clients for small businesses. Limiting access to services only through digital channels has intensified the phenomenon of exclusion. Governments and public sector are trying to fill this gap. Mobile network operators, fin tech and other non-bank institutions with good knowledge on digital interaction are interested to be involved. Digitalization also offers new opportunities. Digital enabled contact with other people meets the need for socialization and interaction. The educational resources were provided digitally when other means were not available. Financial education was delivered with the support of digital tools. OECD (2021), Digital delivery of financial education: design and practice study shows that National Financial Education Strategies have continued to be developed mainly in the digital environment. Financial education helps people to become financially literate.

National Strategies of Financial Education help governments decide how technology is used, how much digital delivery can be done and measure who benefits from it.

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