

BEHAVIORAL TENDENCIES OF ROMANIAN TOURISTS IN THE CONTEMPORARY ERA. A CLUSTER ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is an evolving phenomenon that integrates economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions, enabling a country's economic progress and cultural exchange. Also, how people behave when they travel and how they do it can represent useful information for both government agencies and the business environment. The purpose of this research is to observe the preferences of Romanian tourists regarding the trips they make on the national territory, considering the specifics and trends characteristic of the practices of each category they belong to. To fulfill the purpose of the research, the answers of 254 travelers from Romania with various levels of education, income and preferences were analyzed through a Two-Step Cluster. The results of the study showed that there are two distinct categories of travelers in Romania, young travelers, and mature travelers, who have both distinct and similar preferences regarding the way they travel, the type of tourist destinations and what are the expectations from a tourist unit. The implications of the study can be both theoretical and practical. From a theoretical point of view, a gap in the Romanian specialized literature regarding the behavior of travelers from Romania is filled, while the practical implications are represented by the information that can be considered valuable for the management of tourist services.

KEYWORDS: *demographic factors, romanian tourists, tourist behavior, two-step cluster analysis.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Today's tourists' behavior seems embedded in their contemporary lives, which are linked to culture, income, education, and other demographic factors (Pizam & Sussmann, 1995). The way a person travels, family traditions, but especially income and level of education determine where, how, and how much time people spend in other places for relaxation, treatment or other purposes.

In addition, the behavior of tourists has a considerable influence on the way tourism is practiced from the point of view of economic agents. Tourism has become a significant component of the economy both nationally and internationally in recent years and, as a result, tourism in Romania is considered to play a significant role in the country's development (Mazilu et al., 2023). To stimulate the economy, Romania must anticipate the behavior of tourists to satisfy their needs and desires. Especially since the field of tourism will represent almost 5% of the country's GDP by the end of 2024 (SRD, 2024). Practically, tourists are consumers (Saputra & Tirtawati, 2016) and their purchasing behavior is what keeps businesses in the field alive, identifying their trends being essential for management to adopt the appropriate strategies (Toha & Supriyanto, 2023). In this way, studying tourists' intentions and

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behaviors helps to outline their profiles, this representing a topic that is often addressed in research in our country such as those conducted by Popa et. al (2023) and Mircioiu and Ștefan (2023).

The purpose of these papers is to observe the preferences of Romanian tourists regarding the trips they make on the national territory, considering the specifics and trends characteristic of the practices of each category they belong to. Romanian researchers have so far been concerned with approaching the field of tourism through a cluster approach, mapping the geographical areas that have the potential to contribute to the development of rural tourism (Dona & Popa, 2013), considering the dimension of the tourism competitiveness of European countries Central and Eastern (Popescu et al., 2018), shaping the image of tourism at the intersection with the period of the Covid-19 pandemic (Roman et al., 2022) but less regarding the behavior of tourists. To fulfill the purpose of the research, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ1. What are the typical profiles of Romanian tourists according to their demographic characteristics?

RQ2. How do the typical profiles of Romanian tourists are reflected in travel preferences and behaviors?

The answers to the two scientific questions would allow tourist agencies to realize appropriate strategies for the development of tourism products and services in Romania in view of the increase in profitability expressed in the national economy. Thus, in the first part of the paper, a short review of the specialized literature is carried out, followed by the methodological approach of the paper which presupposed a Two-Step Cluster Analysis to group the respondents of the study into groups with similar characteristics in terms of demographic factors such as (gender, age, origin environment, county of residence, the last level of education completed and the monthly level of net income per family member) and subsequently, identifying the way in which they prefer to travel. The final section of the study presents the results and the final discussions based on them.

2. LITERATURE BACKGROUND

Tourism is considered a recreational activity and manifests itself in modern society as a social phenomenon (Merinero-Rodríguez & Pulido-Fernández, 2016). There have been several approaches over time, thus tourism has been analyzed in the field of psychology (Pearce & Packer, 2013), ecology and environment (Buckley, 2011), sociology (Dann & Cohen, 1991), and even economics (Song et al., 2012). The combination of all these scientific fields has allowed researchers to analyze the behavior of travelers such as how they travel, the purpose, the types of trips they take considering their changes over time. Therefore, all social changes such as higher life expectancy, higher education levels, higher incomes and infrastructure development have impacted on how modern tourism has developed and how it manifests itself today. According to Glover & Prideaux (2009), all these changes are considered influences from the external environment that have shaped tourism demand, influencing tourists' participation decisions. Also, tourists participate in tourist activities according to their power to satisfy their needs and desires. Tomić, Leković & Tadić (2019) highlight the existence of "pull" and "push" factors in the intention to choose a holiday destination and the recreational activities that can be carried out in a location. The "pull" factors are characterized by the attractiveness of a destination (especially the activities that are offered by the chosen destination), while the "push" factors are characterized by the intrinsic desires of tourists. Studies that have analyzed how travelers behave during the trip as well as during the planning stage, suggest that it is important for tourism managers to develop knowledge about existing consumer segments to align these behaviors with marketing and management strategies (Mykletun et al., 2001).

Kozak (2002) mentions that when people go on vacation, they most often eat outside the hotel and try the local gastronomy, visit historical and cultural places, participate in sports or health activities, and all these activities shape the overall experience regarding a tourist destination. But their participation in these types of activities is to the greatest extent of characteristics and typologies of

tourists. Market analysts frequently categorize consumers into generational or socio-economic cohorts to provide an overview of the market segment. A cohort analysis is beneficial in the tourism sector as distinct cohorts are drawn to varying visitor activities (Bojanic, 2011). Understanding these values is important for fulfilling the requirements, aspirations, and wishes of consumers and visitors (Nordin, 2005). The categorization of consumers into generational cohorts is predicated on the premise that they possess shared lifestyle attributes and a unified value system.

Studies such as that of Swarbrooke & Horner (2006) highlight the fact that demographic variables are often used to construct tourist segments. The authors infer the idea that most frequently the younger generation is looking for fun, while older people prefer relaxation and rest activities. In addition, people who have children are much more interested in ensuring that the children have specific activities for them and that they are happy. Therefore, the "Baby Boom" generation sees vacations as a way for them to preserve their health and escape from their daily routines. Recreational travel is an essential component of seniors' retirement life. Also, traveling is an activity that members of Generation X enjoy while members of Generation Y frequently use modern technology when choosing places to visit. This is why they are called the "next generation", having a relatively high discretionary income and traveling frequently (Leask et al., 2013). The process of choosing a tourist destination by members of Generation X is directly influenced by the younger group of consumers and tourists who are much more anchored in the online environment (Nordin, 2005).

Due to power relations among family members, different members of a household are usually jointly involved in travel decision-making with specific dynamics (Kozak, 2010). The preferences of the entire family in choosing a destination and participating in activities during a vacation are influenced by family size and composition. Smaller families without children are more likely to travel than larger families, which face more physical and financial obstacles (Bernini & Cracolici, 2015). Activities shared with family members can be either parallel or joint, depending on how much interactivity there is between them (Lehto et al., 2017). Parallel activities require little interaction between family members (hunting, visiting a museum, climbing), while joint activities require a lot of interaction.

However, demographic characteristics such as education can equally influence traveler preferences such as location and planned activities, given that those with higher education have a higher appetite for cultural and historical tourism (Batra, 2009). Even though seniors are just as oriented as young people for nature or coastal tourism.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to observe the preferences of Romanian tourists regarding the travels they make on the national territory, considering the specificities and trends characteristic of the practices of each category in which they belong.

As an initial stage, a questionnaire was designed that included questions with single, multiple, but also open responses to observe the way in which Romanians position themselves regarding the trips carried out in their country. The questions were aimed at finding out the frequency of travels, the type of tourism they usually practice, the form in which they make the trip, the way to get information about the tourist offer, the facilities they pay attention to and the level of expenses they are willing to spend on a tourist experience.

At the same time, a series of demographic questions were asked such as gender, age, origin environment, county of residence, the last level of education completed and the monthly level of net income per family member. After distributing the online form, the number of responses received reached the 254 thresholds between September 1 - October 10, 2024, which formed the basis of the following analysis, but one answer was eliminated since the respondent did not offer his consent to participate in the investigation. Table 1 shows the structure of the sample. It is observed that the majority of respondents are female, aged between 18-25 years, who come from the urban

environment, reside in the South-Muntenia and Burești-Ilfov region, have completed general and secondary studies, with a net monthly income per head of family between 2.000-4.000 RON.

Table 1. Sample structure

<i>Characteristics</i>		<i>Total respondents</i>	
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Gender	Female	159	62.8%
	Male	93	36.7%
	Do not want to mention	1	0.5%
Age range	18-25 years	118	46.6%
	26-35 years	39	15.4%
	36-45 years	29	11.5%
	46-55 years	50	19.8%
	Over 55 years	17	6.7%
Origin environment	Urban	207	81.8%
	Rural	46	18.2%
Macroregion of residence	North-East & South-East	44	17.4%
	Northwest & Center	19	7.5%
	South-Muntenia & Bucharest-Ilfov	172	68.0%
	South-West and West	18	7.1%
Education level	General and secondary studies	70	27.7%
	Bachelor studies	68	26.9%
	Master studies	56	22.1%
	Doctoral studies	59	23.3%
Monthly level of net income per family member	Under 2.000 Ron	24	9.5%
	2.000 - 4.000 Ron	77	30.4%
	4.000 - 6.000 Ron	68	26.9%
	Over 6.000 Ron	84	33.2%

Source: Authors' processing based on survey results

A preliminary cluster analysis was performed with the intention of delineating homogeneous groups of tourists according to their demographic characteristics. This type of analysis helps the easy segmentation of consumer preferences. This method of analysis is a key benchmark in grouping similar observations into sets and developing taxonomies and can be used successfully with both individuals and organizations (Breazu et al., 2023; Rubio-Andrés & Abril, 2024; Sgroi et al., 2024). Likewise, in their studies, both Popa and Ștefan (2015) and Gora et al. (2019) took an approach based on clusters, highlighting their advantage to serve to improve the state of an industry, field of activity or geographic region. As a result of our paper, two groups of Romanian tourists emerged according to demographic characteristics, which were later used in a series of Pearson Chi-square Tests, to highlight any association of cluster membership with tourists' behavior (McHugh, 2013). In analysis that include two binary variables, the Phi Coefficient is used to measure the strength of the association effect, instead of Cramer's V Coefficient (Sharpe, 2015). In performing the research analyses, the statistical support was provided by IBM SPSS Statistics (2019).

4. RESULTS ANALYSIS

4.1 Cluster analysis

Two-Step Cluster Analysis involves, as the name indicates, two stages, respectively: (1) preclustering, grouping the initial cases into preclusters to reduce the size of the matrix that includes the distances between all possible pairs of cases and (2) grouping the preclusters by the hierarchical method, a range of solutions being generated which later is reduced to the corresponding number of clusters. Afterwards, in the case of categorical variables such as those used in our analysis, the Chi-Square test is performed, its significant value indicating the validity of the final solution for each included variable. Where variables contain several items, it is recommended to test them

individually to see if there are significant differences between them based on the individual elements that compose them (Rundle-Thiele et al., 2015; Tkaczynski, 2017).

The Two-Step Cluster Analysis algorithm, presented by Table 2, was developed with the help of six starting variables (gender, age, environment of origin, macroregion of residence, educational level and income level), but after consulting the importance of the predictors which is indicated not to have low values (Tkaczynski, 2017), the most relevant variables were chosen, respectively: (1) the age range with the value of 1.0; (2) the educational level with the value of 0.8; (3) the level of net monthly income per family member with the value of 0.3. The other demographic variables did not have a primary role in obtaining the results, the variables with high predictive importance leading to an average silhouette value of 0.3, in our case, this indicating a fair cluster quality. An increased size of this indicator materializes in a good silhouette that designates a suitable grouping and helps to establish the optimal number of clusters (Shahapure & Nicholas, 2020).

Table 2. Cluster analysis framework methodology

Algorithm		Two-Steps
Inputs		3
Clusters		2
Cluster quality (Average silhouette)		0.3
Size of smallest cluster		110 (43.5%)
Size of largest cluster		143 (56.5%)
Ratio of sizes		1.3
Predictor importance	Age range	1.0
	Education level	0.8
	Monthly level of net income per family member	0.3

Source: Authors' processing using IBM SPSS Statistics (2019)

The results consist in the construction of two clusters of similar sizes, the first of which is made up of 110 cases (meaning 43.5% of their total), and in the formation of the second cluster taking part 143 cases, representing 56.5% of total. Therefore, the size ratio between the clusters reaches the value of 1.3.

Table 3 presents the main characteristics of the two clusters, according to the importance of the variables that participated in their construction. *Cluster 1* is made up almost entirely of people whose age is between 18 and 25 years old (99.1%). In terms of educational level, they have completed general, secondary (58.2%) and bachelor's (41.8) studies. Also, they have a net monthly income per family head of 2.000 - 4.000 RON (44.5%). An interesting aspect is the fact that there is a discordance in terms of income level as 24.5% earn between 4.000 - 6.000 Ron, while 20% are at the opposite pole, earning below 2.000 Ron.

Table 3. Particularities of the tourist clusters in Romania

Variables	Items	Total	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Pearson Chi-Square	Cramer's V Coefficient
Age range	18-25 years	46.6%	99.1%	6.3%	215.340***	0.923***
	26-35 years	15.4%	-	27.3%		
	36-45 years	11.5%	-	20.3%		
	46-55 years	19.8%	-	35.0%		
	Over 55 years	6.7%	0.9%	11.2%		
Education level	General and secondary studies	27.7%	58.2%	4.2%	170.118***	0.820***
	Bachelor studies	26.9%	41.8%	15.4%		
	Master studies	22.1%	-	39.2%		
	Doctoral studies	23.3%	-	41.3%		
Monthly level of net income per family member	Under 2.000 Ron	9.5%	20.0%	1.4%	64.934***	0.507***
	2.000-4.000 Ron	30.4%	44.5%	19.6%		
	4.000-6.000 Ron	26.9%	24.5%	28.7%		
	Over 6.000 Ron	33.2%	10.9%	50.3%		

Source: Authors' processing using IBM SPSS Statistics (2019)

Cluster 2 is one with more life experience than the first, comprising varied age categories, the most obvious being 35% of respondents aged 46 - 55, 27% aged 26 - 35 and 20.3% aged 36 - 45. In general, they are PhD (41.3%) and Master's (39.2%) graduates, and the net monthly income per family member exceeds 6.000 Ron in 50.3% of cases and being included by 4.000 - 6.000 in 28,7% of cases. The variables included in the analysis are nominal, for which the Pearson Chi Square and V Cramer tests were performed to validate the statistically significant association of the resulting clusters with the variables that determine them (Cilliers, 2018). Both the Pearson Chi-Square Coefficient and Cramer's V Coefficient show strong association between the tested variables (Laerd Statistics, 2018). We note, therefore, that both in the case of the age range ($\chi^2 = 215.340$; $\phi_c = 0.923$; $p < 0.001$), as well as in the educational level ($\chi^2 = 170.118$; $\phi_c = 0.820$; $p < 0.001$) and the net monthly income per head of family cases ($\chi^2 = 64.934$; $\phi_c = 0.507$; $p < 0.001$) there is a strong and significant association between them and the clusters in the formation of which they participate.

4.2 Analysis of romanian tourists' preferences

Regarding the frequency of travels made, tourists expressed their position for the option 2 - 3 times a year, both clusters having similar preference values, respectively 69.1% in the case of the young cluster and 67.8% for the cluster with more life experience, (Table 4). It seems, however, that cluster 2 tends to travel less often, reaching a percentage of 19.6% for the once a year or less option, while cluster 1 achieves a balance between the preference for this option and that of almost monthly (15.5%). Thereby, there is no significant association between the two groups and the frequency of trips ($\chi^2 = 0.979$; $\phi_c = 0.062$; $p > 0.05$).

Table 4. Tourists' preference for frequency of travel

Variable	Items	Preference percentage			Pearson Chi-Square	Cramer's V Coefficient
		Total	Cluster 1	Cluster 2		
Travel frequency	2-3 times a year	68.4%	69.1%	67.8%	0.979	0.062
	Once a year or less	17.8%	15.5%	19.6%		
	Monthly	13.8%	15.5%	12.6%		

Source: Authors' processing using IBM SPSS Statistics (2019)

The study conducted by Kinczel and Müller (2022), which made a comparison between Romania and Hungary in terms of leisure tourism habits, highlights the fact that the majority prefer to make between one and three trips of this type per year. At the same time, the duration of the trip is inversely proportional to its frequency in the idea that the longer a journey is (more than four nights), the more there is a tendency to make it less often, while a day trip is made more frequently.

The preference to practice a certain type of tourism is presented with the help of Table 5. For cluster 1, there is a general tendency to prefer tourism for nature (72.7%), coastal (66.4%) and leisure tourism (27.3%), while cluster 2 goes more towards culture tourism (41.3%) and the medical and wellness one (11.9%). Overall, the most targeted tourism category is that which includes natural attractions (67.2%), and the one for which the lowest level of interest has been shown is medical and wellness tourism (7.9%).

Table 5. Tourists' preference for tourism type

Tourism type	Preference percentage			Continuity Correction Coefficient	Phi Coefficient
	Total	Cluster 1	Cluster 2		
Nature tourism (ecotourism, rural, geotourism, zoo)	67.2%	72.7%	62.9%	2.277	-0.103
Coastal tourism	58.9%	66.4%	53.1%	3.957*	-0.133*
Culture tourism (cultural, food, wine, archaeological)	39.1%	36.4%	41.3%	0.437	0.050
Leisure tourism (cycling, leisure, sports, mountain)	26.1%	27.3%	25.2%	0.054	-0.024
Medical and wellness tourism	7.9%	2.7%	11.9%	5.964*	0.168**

Source: Authors' processing using IBM SPSS Statistics (2019)

The explanation for this can be that, in general, people try to detach themselves in nature when they have a little free time to stop feeling pressured by the multitude of professional work and people they must deal with in general. Likewise, in the case of medical and wellness tourism, it is not that it is not attractive but usually, people prefer wellness activities, not making them a tourism goal, they just simply target them during the trips they make, only in 1-2 days.

However, only in the case of coastal tourism ($\chi^2 = 3.957$; $\phi = -0.133$; $p < 0.05$) and medical and wellness tourism ($\chi^2 = 3.957$; $\phi = -0.133$; $p < 0.05$) there is a significant but small association with the two clusters.

Table 6 shows the form in which Romanian tourists prefer to travel. Despite the fact that there is only a significant difference between the two clusters and traveling with a group of friends ($\chi^2 = 7.866$; $\phi = -0.184$; $p < 0.01$), it can be seen that the tendency of cluster 1 is to share tourism experiences more with family (68.2%), group of friends (70.0%) and as a couple (38.2%), while cluster 2 prefers to travel individually (12.6%) and in organized groups (11.2%).

Table 6. Tourists' preference for travel form

Travel form	Preference percentage			Continuity Correction Coefficient	Phi Coefficient
	Total	Cluster 1	Cluster 2		
Family	65.6%	68.2%	63.6%	0.386	-0.047
Group of friends	59.7%	70.0%	51.7%	7.866**	-0.184**
Couple	37.5%	38.2%	37.1%	0.003	-0.011
Individual	12.3%	11.8%	12.6%	0.000	0.012
Organized groups	9.1%	6.4%	11.2%	1.216	0.083

Source: Authors' processing using IBM SPSS Statistics (2019)

A likely reason would be that when they are younger, people are often surrounded by many other people, having friends from both the school and the professional environment. They establish relationships of many kinds, and thus traveling is an opportunity to spend time with the close ones. In contrast, cluster two is represented by more mature people, that can leave to rest and have multiple visiting activities. Therefore, the most targeted form of travel among all respondents is with the family (65.6%), while the least common is the organized groups (9.1%).

The preference for the mode of finding out about the tourism offer of the study participants is outlined in Table 7. According to its data, even if there is no statistical significance in general, the most targeted source of information is the internet (90.1%), which is not surprising. Although the values are similar and there are no big differences between the groups, cluster 1 receives more information with the help of the internet (94.5%) and in the tourist units place (6.4%), while cluster 2 relies on recommendations from acquaintances (65.0%) and travel agencies (18.9%).

Table 7. Tourists' preference for information mode

Information mode	Preference percentage			Continuity Correction Coefficient	Phi Coefficient
	Total	Cluster 1	Cluster 2		
Internet	90.1%	94.5%	86.7%	3.449	-0.130*
Acquaintances recommendations	64.4%	63.6%	65.0%	0.010	0.014
Travel agencies	17.8%	16.4%	18.9%	0.125	0.033
Tourist units place	5.1%	6.4%	4.2%	0.237	-0.049

Source: Authors' processing using IBM SPSS Statistics (2019)

According to Table 8, Romanians are interested in several facilities of the tourism units they choose to visit. The association between the groups resulting from the cluster analysis and tourist facilities is proven in the following cases: (1) the existence of a parking space ($\chi^2 = 5.388$; $\phi = 0.155$; $p < 0.05$); (2) swimming pool ($\chi^2 = 6.164$; $\phi = -0.164$; $p < 0.05$); (3) family rooms ($\chi^2 = 8.940$; $\phi = 0.197$; $p < 0.01$); (4) barbecue area ($\chi^2 = 9.785$; $\phi = -0.206$; $p < 0.01$); (5) spa and wellness center ($\chi^2 = 7.054$; $\phi = 0.176$; $p < 0.01$); (6) 24-hour reception ($\chi^2 = 12.819$; $\phi = -0.235$; $p < 0.001$); (7) non-smoking rooms ($\chi^2 = 6.357$; $\phi = 0.169$; $p < 0.05$); (8) room service ($\chi^2 = 6.696$; $\phi = -0.176$; $p < 0.01$) and (9) children's play area ($\chi^2 = 6.139$; $\phi = 0.172$; $p < 0.05$).

Table 8. Tourists' preference for tourist units facilities

Facilities	Preference percentage			Continuity Correction Coefficient	Phi Coefficient
	Total	Cluster 1	Cluster 2		
Parking	70.8%	62.7%	76.9%	5.388*	0.155*
Green space and silence	66.8%	68.2%	65.7%	0.076	-0.026
Restaurant	62.1%	60.9%	62.9%	0.040	0.021
Free WiFi	54.5%	52.7%	55.9%	0.146	0.032
Pool	39.9%	49.1%	32.9%	6.164*	-0.164**
Family rooms	27.3%	17.3%	35.0%	8.940**	0.197**
Barbecue area	26.9%	37.3%	18.9%	9.785**	-0.206***
Spa and wellness center	26.1%	17.3%	32.9%	7.054**	0.176**
Reception open non-stop	20.2%	30.9%	11.9%	12.819***	-0.235***
Non-smoking rooms	16.2%	9.1%	21.7%	6.357*	0.169**
Pets allowed	14.2%	18.2%	11.2%	1.951	-0.099
Room service	10.3%	16.4%	5.6%	6.696**	-0.176**
Children's play area	6.7%	1.8%	10.5%	6.139*	0.172**
Facilities for disabled people	1.6%	1.8%	1.4%	0.000	-0.017

Source: Authors' processing using IBM SPSS Statistics (2019)

Of these, cluster 1 shows greater interest in the pool (49.1%) and barbecue space (37.3%), the non-stop reception program (30.9%) and room service (16.4%). For cluster 2, parking space (76.9%), family rooms (35.0%), spa and wellness center (32.9%), non-smoking rooms (21.7%) and children's playground (10.5%) are more important. Furthermore, despite the absence of statistical significance, there is a tendency to appreciate more green space and silence (68.2%), the permission to be accompanied by pets (18.2%) and facilities for disabled people (1.8%) in the case of the younger tourist group and the restaurant (62.9%) and free WiFi (55.9%) for the group of tourists with more life experience.

The choice of facilities was not surprising, but rather an expected one as the specificities of each group were highlighted with their help. Thus, younger people prefer activities such as swimming in

the pool and barbecues, while mature people appreciate the wellness facilities and spaces for activities with family and children.

Table 9 shows the preference of the two groups in allocating a certain level of money for the expenses involved in a tourist experience in their country. The association between the resulting groups and the financial level available to be distributed for tourist expenses, although not very strong, is a significant one ($\chi^2 = 11.187$; $\varphi_c = 0.210$; $p < 0.05$).

Table 9. Tourists' preference for spending level

Variable	Items	Preference percentage			Pearson Chi-Square	Cramer's V Coefficient
		Total	Cluster 1	Cluster 2		
Available spending level	1.000 - 2.000 Ron	44.3%	53.6%	37.1%	11.187*	0.210*
	2.000 - 4.000 Ron	36.8%	28.2%	43.4%		
	Over 4.000 Ron	11.5%	8.2%	14.0%		
	Under 1.000 Ron	7.5%	10.0%	5.6%		

Source: Authors' processing using IBM SPSS Statistics (2019)

Cluster 1 states its preference to choose a journey that involves a predominantly lower financial level, between 1.000 and 2.000 Ron (53.6%). However, there are quite a few who allocate less than 1.000 Ron to some tourist experiences (10%), but there is also a percentage of 36.8% of their total who prefer the 2.000 - 4.000 Ron option. During this time, a percentage of 43.4% of cluster 2 is willing to spend 2.000 - 4.000 Ron on a trip, 37.1% are followers of the range 1.000 - 2.000 Ron, and 14% would allocate more than 4.000 Ron. The explanation for these results may lie in the often-encountered direct proportional relationship between age and income, especially with the accumulation of work experience and climbing the career ladder. The study by Bugheanu and Străchinaru (2020) reinforces this idea, demonstrating the positive correlation between age and spending behavior. Therefore, getting older is accompanied by an increase in expenses. Overall, the most targeted range of expenses available to be allocated to a tourist activity is 1.000 - 2.000, most likely because it reflects a moderate amount that study participants can afford to use for this purpose, especially since most of the respondents have at least a net monthly income per family member, double than this (Table 1).

5. DISCUSSION

The research analyzed the preferences of Romanian tourists for trips made within the country, through demographic factors and factors that shape travel decisions. Thus, through the Cluster analysis carried out, two clusters were identified which are made up of groups of people who make distinct tourist trips in Romania according to several variables.

Thus, cluster 1 consists of a group of respondents from the urban environment, aged between 18-25 years, with an average level of education, with a monthly income between 2000-4000 lei. Thus, the people who fall into this cluster are much more oriented to travel on a low budget, on average 2-3 times a year, usually in nature or at the seaside and together with family or friends. Also, they are interested in tourist offers that are presented on the Internet. A study carried out by Boukas (2008) which included a presentation of tourists in Greece according to demographic characteristics, also indicated that the younger category of tourists, aged between 18-26 years with a well level of education, most often students or previous students, tend to travel independently or with 1-2 friends, and generally with lower incomes or on budget. Another research done by Birdir (2015) to identify who are the tourists who visit Istanbul in a year and to make a profile of the tourist, found that most

of them are young, aged between 20-35 and often travel with the family or with friends, and often get information about the trip from the Internet or from recommendations from friends, work colleagues or relatives. In this vein, this cluster with the same characteristics is also identified in other studies carried out in other countries.

In cluster 2 there are travelers from two age categories, 26-35 years and 46-55 years who have a higher level of education (doctorate or master's program) and who have a different spending behavior from the first cluster considering the fact that their income is over 6000 lei. They also prefer to travel at least 2-3 times a year, mostly preferring nature, or cultural tourism, together with their family, group of friends or as a couple. This category of travelers or "mature" travelers look for different facilities at the accommodation unit compared to cluster 1, including wellness activities, non-smoking rooms, and family-oriented facilities. Several studies (Anderson & Langmeyer, 1982; Lehto et al., 2002; Ryan, 1995) in tourism have evaluated the category of mature travelers and young travelers and identified significant differences between these groups in terms of their travel style and travel characteristics. Thus, the results of other such studies indicated that mature travelers who do not have family obligations tend to travel more compared to those who are dealing with the growth of a child or the illness of an older family member, in addition this characteristic is also found for young travelers (Lehto et al., 2002). In addition, their spending behavior is obviously influenced by the disposable income that travelers have available to spend on a vacation (Ryan, 1995). More mature travelers, although they have higher incomes, do not always plan to spend a large budget on a trip, while young travelers can often spend a much larger budget on the experience of the place.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This research sought to highlight the behavioral trends of Romanian tourists in the contemporary era according to their demographic characteristics. The results indicate that there are two groups of travelers, young and mature, each with specific characteristics based on age, income, and education. Each of these categories expressed similar preferences such as the amenities they seek to have in accommodation (such as parking, quiet and green spaces, dining area, Wi-Fi) and how often they travel and with whom. However, there are also distinctive characteristics of the groups characterized by the type of tourism practiced, tourists' preference for travel form and the level of income available to spend on vacation.

Theoretical implications. The study fills a gap in Romanian literature regarding current tourist behavior and offers new perspectives on how demographic factors influence the preferences of Romanian travelers. This study can thus complement the specialized literature to understand the segmentation of the tourism market that can contribute to future research on travel behaviors both nationally and internationally.

Practical contributions. The practical implications of the study may be diverse and important. Thus, the results of the study allow marketing agencies to realize appropriate strategies for the development of tourism products and services in Romania. Understanding the preferences of young people traveling to Romania could help agencies and accommodation units understand the need to go digital and be present on social networks. Also, through this study, accommodation units in Romania can identify which facilities are preferred by both mature and young travelers, to adapt their strategy and accommodation units according to their expectations, such as the creation of parking spaces, wellness, family areas etc. In addition, the results can help even under-promoted areas in Romania, local agencies can get involved in making special offers for one of the identified groups to increase the local economy and encourage tourism.

Limits and future directions. During the research, the answers collected were limited to respondents from the online environment, so people from rural areas or older people who do not have access to the Internet did not have the opportunity to express their opinion on how and what are their preferences trip to Romania. Also, more complex variables such as cultural preferences or

psychological factors were not included in the study to better understand the behavior of the modern tourist. Thus, all these limits can be investigated in future research.

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