

WAYS TO ATTRACT THE MAIN SEGMENTS OF HEALTH TOURISTS FROM THE BIHOR COUNTY

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Abstract

Touristic seasonality influences economic operators in Romania , the Bihor county included, being therefore necessary and important to identify main customer segments of tourism consumers in the county and find ways for the extension of the touristic period to increase profitability.

Key words: *balneary and mountain tourism, seasonality, segmented market*

INTRODUCTION

Market segmentation is a process of division of tourists in several categories with specific needs and preferences constituting the touristic request for a specific product. A marketing strategy costumed for an identified subgroup of products represents dividing the mass of tourists into segments of consumers having the same tourist preferences, for each segment in part being taken separate actions¹.

The segmentation role implies a separate approach for certain groups of consumers in order to ensure the success of existing/potential tourist products². Identifying consumer segments for touristic products/destinations in Bihor county requires taking into account the touristic identity of the county, the natural environment and the types of attractions, motivational elements for actual or potential presence of tourists in the county, the place of touristic attractions in the touristic circuit, but also competition³.

Any segmentation must take into account a series of segmentation criteria, namely⁴:

¹ .<http://www.pagitur.ro/informatii/Bihor?t=county-5>, accesat la data de 01.06.2013

² http://www.turismbihor.info/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=30&Itemid=42, accesat la data de 24.04.2013

³ Camera de comerț și industrie Bihor, *Județul Bihor-Destinație turistică europeană*, Oradea, 2006

⁴ Anghelache, C. - *“România 2011 – Starea economică sub impactul crizei”*, Editura Economică, București, 2011

(A) *geographic criteria*: the region, the country or city tourists come from, size of the country/city of tourists' origin;

(B) *demographic criteria*: age, sex, type and size of family/household, religion etc.;

(C) *behavioral criteria*: looking for advantages, trips frequency, loyalty towards a particular destination;

(D) *psychographic criteria*: life style, personality etc.

Touristic request represents an important factor of segments of tourists who arrive in a specific touristic destination, being therefore important to analyze the seasonality of touristic demand⁵.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Market segmentation of health tourism in Bihor county can be done considering type of services, namely age⁶. Taking into account these target groups of health tourism, they can be classified in a matrix of 8 dominant categories, depending on the specific claims they advertise, as follows⁷:

1. *Young active people*: they opt for spending their holiday in active mode, with a lot of movement and sport. There are not closely attached to thermal waters or those having curative character, but still prefer locations providing swimming pools.

2. *Young people in search for entertainment*. They are not attracted by the presence of water; they can originate in young active people group, but their stay may be significantly extended by the presence of a nearby recreational bath. They are also loyal visitors of cities.

3. *Young people with health awareness*. With the increasing importance of health, this is a growing segment, but whose course is heading in particular to factors of preserving beauty, favoring instead of movement ways for rest and recreation, especially the group being mainly made up of young people without children.

4. *Middle age families*. On the occasion of family holidays, the nearby presence of an aquatic recreational center can be decisive in choosing the

⁵ Könyves Erika (coord.), *Plan de marketing și de comunicare*, studiu realizat de Camera de Comerț și Industrie a județului Hajdú-Bihar în cadrul proiectului intitulat: „Realizarea inovativă a unor pachete turistice comune în vederea dezvoltării turismului din județele Hajdú-Bihar și Bihor”, Debrecen-Oradea, 2011

⁶ <http://www.baile-felix.net>

⁷ Fetcu (Stoica) și alții (2010) – „*Evoluția serviciilor turistice în România*”, International Scientific Symposium, May 2010, ISBN 978-973-7631-71-8, pp. 24-31

destination; their stay could be extended by providing appropriate programs for even more generations.

5. *Middle aged individuals, willing to keep their health.* They are usually people who arrive without children, eager to rest and relax, who prefer quiet locations in particular, having an attractive landscape. With increasing free time, there is certainty of quantitative growth of this segment.

6. *Elderly, pointing toward maintaining health:* are people over 55 years old, healthy, youthful in spirit, motivated by keeping their physical appearance agreeable, a pleasant company, consistent relaxation and high-level services. Since this segment has also traveled a lot when in their youth, there is a tendency towards new destinations, taking also into account their appropriate expenditure⁸.

7. *People in need of rehabilitation after operations:* ill people of different ages, requiring post-operating rehabilitation or regeneration after accidents. Their ideal locations are the peaceful, less crowded ones.

8. *Persons willing to heal:* "traditional" customers of health tourism, i.e. those suffering from a disease whose improvement is expected to come from hydrotherapy, or other treatments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Balneary tourism in Bihor county is defined by the high touristic demand during the summer season, between June and August. The summer season may be extended to middle of September, due to favorable weather conditions (graph 1).

Seasonality of balneary tourism presents certain characteristics:

(A) season starts at the end of May and may last until the end of September;

(B) maximum profit is recorded during July and August;

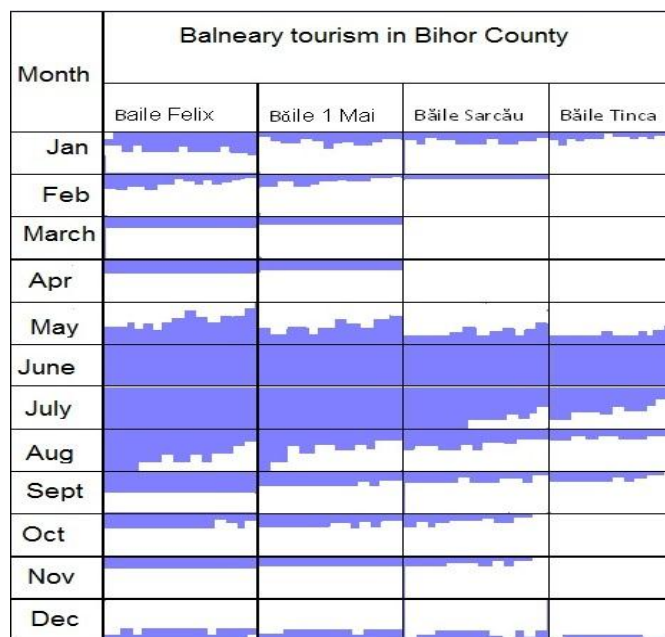
(C) services in balneary resorts consist of: accommodation, spa and wellness centers, aqua-parks, sport activities, riding facilities etc.;

(D) tourists purchase, in most cases, holiday packages via the Internet, directly from the owner, or through travel agencies.

⁸ .<http://www.ministerulculturismului.ro> 12 ianuarie 2012

Graph 1

Seasonality of balneary tourism in Bihor County



Mountain tourism in the Bihor county is defined through a maximum tourist demand registered during December-February, winter season being able to be extended up in the month of March, due to the ski slopes and favorable weather conditions. During the remaining months tourists can enjoy walking and hiking in a natural setting (Graph 2).

Seasonality of mountain tourism presents certain characteristics:

(A) season starts at the end of November and may last until March .

(B) maximum profit is recorded during December-February;

(C) services in balneary resorts consist of: accommodation, sport activities, ski schools etc.;

(D) tourists purchase, in most cases, holiday packages via the Internet, directly from the owner, or through travel agencies.

Graph 2

Seasonality of mountain tourism in Bihor county

Month	Mountain tourism in Bihor County		
	Stâna de Vale	Padis	Vârtoș
Jan			
Feb			
March			
Apr			
May			
June			
July			
Aug			
Sept			
Oct			
Nov			
Dec			

Periods at the beginning and at the end of the season, called the pre-season and post-season periods or intermediate season periods present certain features: lower rates and specific activities of social tourism.

The off-season period is defined by decreased activity or even cessation of touristic activities in the resort.

Seasonal variations are registered in all countries having touristic potential, therefore it affects economic agents directly or indirectly involved in travels and tourism industry by:

- more or less intense invasion of holidaymakers in the tourist areas;
- overloading rail, road, sea and air networks during periods of seasonal agglomeration of tourist traffic;
- shortage of housing in the seasonal units;
- tension between service requesters and the units providing tourist services;
- failure of public services that are not proportionate to the level and intensity of the demands during the peak period.

Factors that generate features of seasonal variations:

- a) increasing recreation necessities;
- b) travel opportunities through the volume and diversity of tourism;
- c) population income;

- d) duration and structure of leisure and its concentration during the months of July and August;
- e) objective factors.

CONCLUSIONS

The main ways of diminishing seasonality's effects are:

- expansion of peak season by offering rates facilities and attractive prices for travel during the pre and post season;
- enhancing concerns to increase the attractiveness of sightseeing during the extra-season;
- diversification of tourist offer during the domestic season, even extra-season, by offering stays combined with the use of other elements of attraction in nearby areas or other places of interest;
- launching and continuation of touristic advertising to promote tourism during the extra-season.
- identifying new types of sports and leisure activities, trips to the main attractions in the area

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