

Young people's motivations and preferences for sports tourism

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Published online: March 25, 2013

(Accepted for publication March 10, 2013)

DOI:10.7752/jpes.2013.01018;

Abstract:

In time, a change of focus has been observed – from the general interest tourism, in which the tourist's main interest in the decision making process is selecting a destination, to a specific interest tourism, in which the main criterion in selecting a destination is a particular interest related to his/her desired experiences and activities. The purpose of this article is to determine the extent to which Argeș county can be considered a tourism destination and a destination for sports tourism, starting from the evaluation of county of Argeș image, through motivation and preferences' study regarding the practiced/practicable activities within tourism.

Key words: sports tourism, motivation, preferences, segmentation.

Conceptual framework:

People's increasing desire for a higher quality of life and the need to counter-balance the negative effects and over-rational aspects of contemporary urban life represent, in Giddens's view (Giddens, 1999 apud. Trauer, 2006, p.184), the main factors determining the need for travel. In this context, a certain destination's selection by a certain consumer is realised through motivation, considering its potential as well (cultural, rural, sports etc.). Thus, marketing research studies and advanced motivation studies in tourism have contributed - efficiently using the obtained information - to the consolidation of certain forms of tourism, through the identification and fructification of new tendencies and activities within it.

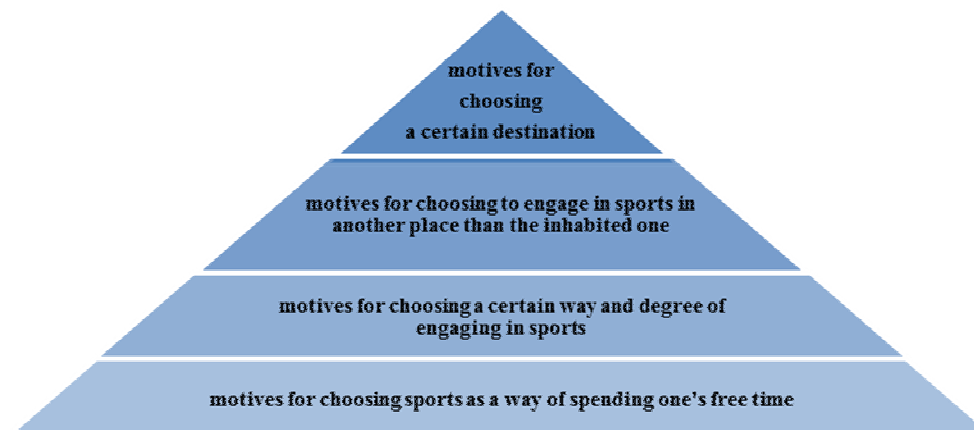
Until the start of the 2000s the concept of "sports" was approached coincidental or unintended in research studies on tourism and it was subsequently analyzed gradually within the scope of certain formal approaches with its own framework; these approaches refer mainly to the development of certain classifications and typologies in the realm of sports tourism. One of the first classifications pertains to Redmond (1991), who proposes four categories in the field of sports tourism (Redmond, 1991, apud. Hinch, Higham, 2001, p.51): holiday resorts and vacations, sports museums, sports festivals and sports facilities in national parks.

Although the sports component is the one that brings specificity to the field of tourism, what is emphasized in the writings of De Knop (Standeven, De Knop, 1999, apud. Hinch, Higham, 2001, p.47) is the interdependence between the two concepts of "tourism" and "sports", as the assumption according to which not only sports influence tourism, but tourism influences sports as well, is highlighted, both the latter and the former sharing the same resources, facilities and services which lead to the interdependent development of both. The importance of these two concepts is relative, being adjusted by the consumer. This relationship "sports-tourism" can be reduced to motivation, which underpins segmentation. Thus, there are people who travel in order to reach the goal of engaging in a certain sport and people who practice a certain sport as a secondary activity, this being the aftermath of the fact that they are already present in a certain destination for another reason, which is completely different, or contiguous to the one mentioned above. Hence follows the correlation between the tourist's motivations, the chosen form of tourism to spend one's free time and the two main development coordinates: space (the adequate destination, dependent on the existent resources) and time (the moment when the journey is undertaken). In terms of time and space, sports - defined by the weather conditions, the specific facilities and by the level of accessibility - can create new seasonal flows of tourists depending on the season specific to the practiced sport, thus modifying or standardizing the seasonal models of the destination. Sports tourism encompasses (Hinch, Higham, 2001, p.49) voyages limited in time which are focused on sports, therefore being characterized by sets of rules, competition and a ludic nature, all of the aforementioned being its fundamental characteristics.

Defined as an "inward feeling which mobilizes an organism in order to fulfill a certain goal" (Cătoi, Teodorescu, 2004, p.19), motivation represents a personal factor when choosing a destination, being one of the determinant processes of the consumer's behavior. Because sports tourism is a complex activity, based on a decision making process to match it, it is necessary to conduct an analysis of the elements / influences /

considerations which underlie the consumer's motivations: the motives for choosing a certain sport as a means of spending one's leisure time, the motives for choosing the way and degree of engagement in a sport activity, the motives for choosing to engage in a sport in a space which is different from the inhabited one and the motives for choosing a tourist destination as a setting for that specific sport (Diagram 1). These "levels of motivation" mutually condition each other and can be explained by a series of personal and social factors.

Diagram 1: The hierarchy of elements, which form the consumer's motivations for sports tourism



Preferences represent "a positive motivation expressed by the emotional compatibility towards a product" (Cătoi, Teodorescu, 2004, p.22), as they determine through the sports activities which they represent not just the level of the expected or desired experience, but other sets of secondary activities as well, which derive from the practices of those particular sports. In order to segment the sports tourism market the different typologies induced by the consumer's motives and preferences must be identified. From this point of view, Faulkner (1998) proposes a complex classification of sports tourism in which its dimensions (Hinch, Higham, 2001, p.49) are described in motivational, behavioral and competitive terms. It is advisable that these typologies respect the age, social class, risk level and authenticity criteria sought by the consumers. According to Ritchie and Adair (Ritchie, Adair, 2004, p.1971), individual participation in a certain sport is motivated by a combination of inherent factors (this refers to real involvement with its dynamic and pleasant side) and extrinsic factors (this refers to the rewards received by means of prizes and social recognition), these eventually tipping the balance in favor of the activities predominantly ludic or competitive. It is necessary that all these aspects be taken into consideration before designing the various sports products in tourism - formal or recreational.

Segmenting sports tourism is done first and foremost by taking into consideration the role the tourist plays in relation to it. An initial segmentation pertains to Pitts (Ritchie, Adair, 2004, p.1972) who distinguishes between two large categories in sports tourism from the point of view of marketing and management: sports tourism undergone as a passive participant and as an active participant with various incentives (for example, relaxing oneself, health, competitive spirit etc.), with different systems of drives and awards.

The active participants are those that practice activities by themselves (such as, for example, gymnastics, fitness, aerobic, sports games, running, swimming, skating, golf, tennis, ski etc.) as opposed to the passive ones who move through the help of other forces than their own (like in the case of massages, sauna, various treatments designed to keep the body in shape or remodel it etc.). Knowing the type of sports activities chosen by the tourist product consumer, and understanding the differences between active participants and passive ones, help the marketing specialist establish what type of tourist product is needed. After this classification, it is necessary to assess the strong and weak points of the main characteristics/resources, which give dimension, and at the same time uniqueness to the destination and through the help of which the latter positions itself in the consumer's mind (Stăncioiu, 2004, p.3).

Furthermore, Gammon and Robinson (Hinch, Higham, 2001, p.51) consider that it is necessary to distinguish between active and passive tourists when taking into consideration the level of engagement; other considered criteria are competitiveness, as there are tourists who consider sports as a primary activity in their journey, as a secondary one and even as an arbitrary one, and the consumers' engagement, as there are tourists who take into consideration or not the possibility to win.

Relying on the fact that tourists change their motivations and preferences, Brotherton and Himmetoglu (Brotherton, Himmetoglu, 1997, p.187) suggest a system of interests represented by a tourism consumer's cycle of life in which his motivations and preferences modify over time as a result of the influence his past experiences play, of his self-confidence, maturing, in the sense of choosing experiences with different levels of risk and adventure or in order to obtain social prestige and self-improvement. This lifecycle correlates sports tourism with other general forms of tourism in which the former is included, being at the same time an integrant part of health tourism and of recreational tourism. Framing sports tourism in the context of the aforementioned forms of

tourism offers a larger perspective of its roles and means of developing within the boundaries of today's society determined by primary and secondary motives which encourage new possibilities and directions (such as, for example, the rising importance of health, of the environment and of personal development etc.).

Operational framework:

The county of Argeș, situated in the catchment basin of the Upper Argeș and having as neighbours to the north the counties of Sibiu and Brașov, to the west Vâlcea, to the east Dâmbovița, and to the south Teleorman and Olt, distinguishes itself through rich landscapes, assorted with glacial and karst terrain and with important mountains. These elements lend it a favourable setting for practicing several forms of tourism (such as, for example, cultural, recreational, sports tourism etc.), as the consumers can practice especially mountain sports activities.

Emphasizing the motivations for practicing sports and the preferences for particular sports activities will have in this research study as an applied component the destination county of Argeș for which the opinions and the level of acquaintance with it of the respondents will be tested. The resources, which underpin the development of sports tourism in this area, but also the resources, which underpin other forms of tourism with which sports tourism may be correlated, are presented in the table below (*Table 1*).

Table 1: Natural and anthropic resources for the county of Argeș

Groups of mountains	Resources	Strong points	Weak points	Sports activities	Homologated tourist tracks
Făgăraș	<p><u>Natural resources:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the fauna and flora of the mountain - Valea Caprei (Argeșului) and its drainage area with an emphasis on Valea Vâlsanului and Buda <p><u>Anthropic resources:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the barrier lake Vidraru - The Transfăgărășan highway - the untouched roads placed on the main tributary streams (of the rivers) - the infrastructure of the tourist tracks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the most important mountain from Romania - the largest part of the chine is found in the county of Argeș - the richness and variety of the landscape in general, but especially of the glacial one - the diversity of the terrain, the alternation of altitudes from low ones to those above 2500 m - the altitude enables the mountain to attract different segments of the market - international recognition even from the 19th century (the Transylvanian Alps) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -exclusive vehicle access in the south area of the mountain - few modernized roads - when compared with the acreage the mountain area holds, the infrastructure proves to be poor from a qualitative and quantitative point of view (in terms of the number of tracks and lodging capacity, the tourist receiving structures) - the lack of infrastructure for winter sports addressed to a "special interest" market segment" - lack of infrastructure for recreational purposes (especially for the days when the weather is bad) -a lack of trained staff, especially of active tourism guides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trekking* (easy, intermediate, hard) - winter climbing (easy, intermediate, hard) - tour ski and freestyle - snowboarding - mountain biking* (easy and hard) - paragliding - canyoning - jeeps* -auto enduro* 	<p><u>19 tracks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - there are two tourist tracks that link Făgăraș to Piatra Craiului, and to Iezer Păpușa, more than half of them being directly linked to Valea Caprei – which is the busiest area - there are eight tourist tracks on the courses of the rivers Buda, Vâlsan and Râul Doamnei
Piatra Craiului	<p><u>Natural resources:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the fauna and flora of the mountain (including an endemism, Garofița Pietrei Craiului) <p><u>Anthropic resources:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - due to the small rural tourist destinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one of the most important national parks in Romania - a natural heritage with emphasis on large carnivores and endemic unique flora - the richest karst terrain in specific phenomena from the county - its touristic potential allows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exclusive vehicle access - restricted access on the two valleys, Dâmbovița and Dâmbovicioara - a tolerably developed tourist infrastructure when compared with the tourist potential of the park - an infrastructure for summer mountain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trekking* (easy, intermediate, hard) - winter climbing - tour ski, freestyle - snowboarding - mountain biking* 	<p><u>16 tracks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12 tracks start from Valea Dâmboviței, and Valea Dâmbovicioarei respectively, which thus become the most important entering centres in the mountain (in the county of Argeș)

	located at the foot of the mountain - the barrier lakes situated on the valley of the river Dâmbovița	for the gratification of several market segments, starting with beginner tourists and ending with mountain climbers	tourism/parks insufficiently developed -absent infrastructure for winter mountain tourism - a lack of trained staff, active tourism guides and administrators of tourist receiving structures		
Iezer-Păpusa	- the upper valley of the river Dâmbovița - the alpine area of the mountain - the barrier lakes from Pecineagu and Râușor	- the link with the Făgăraș mountains and the proximity with Piatra Craiului - glacial terrain, including glacial rivers - a relatively low track level of danger when comparing it with the one from Făgăraș Mountains and Piatra Craiului Mountains	- exclusive car access - few access possibilities - few tourist receiving structures which have lodging and alimentation functions and/or of low quality - lack of trained staff (active tourism guides)	- trekking* (easy, intermediate, hard) - <u>winter climbing</u> - tour ski - mountain biking* - gliding - jeeps - auto enduro*	- despite the existing potential and the trails present on the terrain, there is no homologated tourist track in the Romanian Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism's database (1.10.2012)
Leaota	<u>Natural resources</u>	- karst terrain-rock especially in canyons and caves in the Podu Dâmboviței area - the practicing of river rafting- (the only area from all the four mountains) - the link with Bucegi	- a less richer and diverse natural potential in the Alpine area - there is only one important access road and it is not modernized - the lack of specific mountain infrastructure - the lack of professional information - the lack of trained staff	- trekking* (easy, intermediate, hard) - tour ski and freestyle - snowboarding - mountain biking* - jeeps* - auto/ car enduro*	- despite the existing potential and the presence of trails on the terrain, there is no homologated tourist track in the Romanian Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism's database (1.10.2012)
<p><i>* there is need for physical and theoretical training</i></p> <p>All of the tracks have an intermediate or high level of difficulty. The time needed to cover them exceeds 3-4 hours and the difference between levels when making the journey exceeds 400-500 meters; in spite of all this at every level of the tracks there are easier areas to roam which allow even those with few experience cover them.</p> <p><u>County of Argeș – the basics</u></p> <p>Natural resources: two parks (with rich fauna and flora) and 26 natural reservations (mostly found in Rucăr and Dâmbovicioara)</p> <p>Resources for urban tourism: Pitești, Câmpulung, Curtea de Argeș, Rucăr</p> <p>Resources for rural tourism: 44 towns with mostly nature-related resources, especially in the mountain area</p> <p>Legislation: 35 homologated tracks in Făgăraș, Piatra Craiului and Iezer Papușa (out of which 19 can only be found in Făgăraș)</p>					

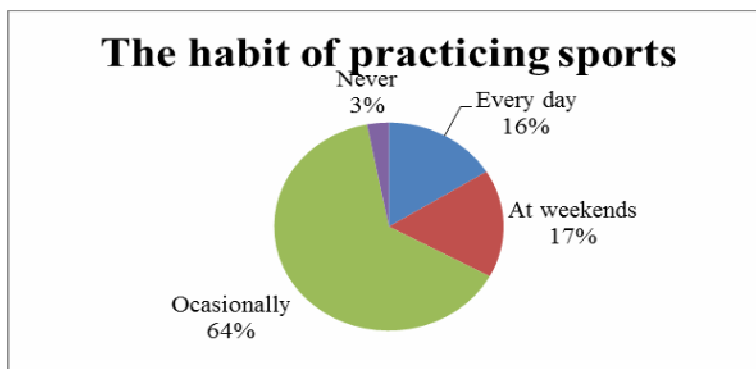
Materials and methods:

The quantitative research was conducted in the period September-October 2012 among a group of 328 young people, with ages ranging from 18 to 24 years old who were still undergoing university programs at that time, and it was designed to determine a number of sports typologies based on human temper. Sets of variables concerning motivations, favoured sports activities and practices were used, alongside their development conditions, temper and social reference, opinions with respect to sports tourism and its practicing, as well as the county of Argeș' positioning in relation to this form of tourism, the data being collected through the use of a questionnaire and then centralized and interpreted with the help of the logistics study program SPSS v.20.

Results:

With regard to the habit of practicing sports (*Figure 1*), only 3% of the respondents declared that they never practice sports. Those who practice sports often – every day, or those who reserve time for sports activities at the end of the week - have almost the same percentage: 16%, and 17% respectively, while the majority of people - 64% - practices sports only occasionally.

Figure 1: The habit of practicing sports



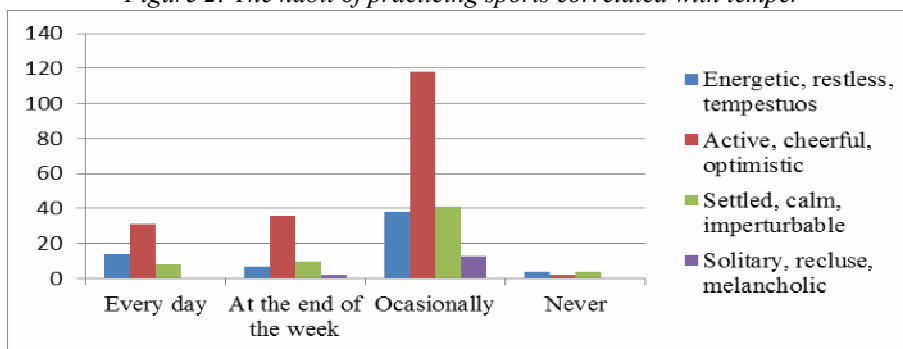
In order to study the respondents’ temper four answer variants have been created which have been correlated with the four major temper or humour typologies: choleric, phlegmatic, melancholic, and sanguine. The majority of the respondents consider themselves brisk, cheerful, optimistic in a proportion of 57%, whereas only 4,6% consider themselves to be reclusive, lonesome, melancholic. The energetic and calm ones can be found in the same proportion, 19,2% (*Table 2*).

Table 2: Frequency table for the variable “Temper”

Temper	Absolute frequencies	Percentage
Energetic, restless, tempestuous	63	19,2
Brisk, cheerful, optimistic	187	57
Dispassionate, calm, cool-headed	63	19,2
Reclusive, lonesome, melancholic	15	4,6
Overall	328	100

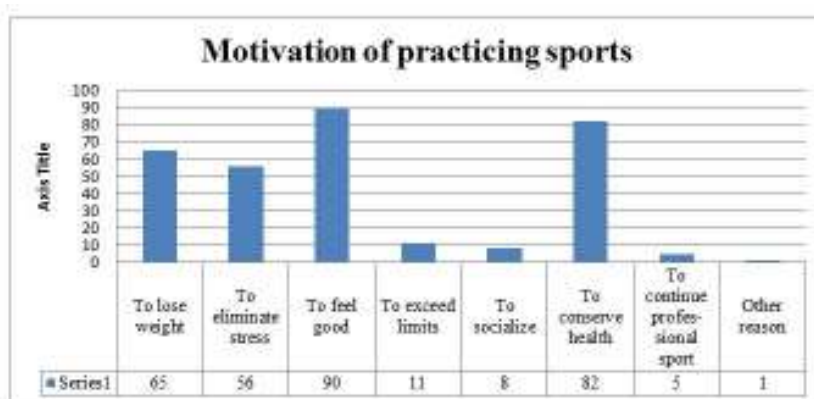
By correlating the habit of practicing sports with the respondents’ temper (*Figure 2*) it is observed that the majority of those that practice sports daily are active, cheerful and optimistic in a ratio of 60%. The smaller percentage of 26% of energetic, restless and tempestuous people who practice sports daily can be explained by the fact that the last two features are not always compatible with two important characteristics of sports: discipline and the constant character of physical and mental effort that it presupposes.

Figure 2: The habit of practicing sports correlated with temper



While studying the motivations to practice sports, it was found that the most common was the one stipulating that because of sports the respondents reach a state of mental well-being in a ratio of 57,3% (*Figure 3*). Another important incentive is that of maintaining oneself healthy. Apart from health and mental well-being, two concepts that are highly associated with other forms of tourism (such as, for example, health/medical tourism, hydrotherapy tourism etc.), stress relieving and losing weight were given as motives by 17,07% of the respondents, and 19,81% respectively. The less thought about motives were practicing performance sports, socializing and exceeding one’s limits, the last two motives being associated with the upper layers of Maslow’s pyramid. Thus, sports is viewed in a lesser manner from a competitive or social point of view or as a means for self-improvement, being chosen as a way of spending one’s free time mostly in order to relax and for the sake of a good health condition. Out of the 328 respondents, only 10 have never practiced sports before due to lack of time and, to the same extent, of motivation.

Figure 3: The motivation of practicing sports



In order to finish or to complete the temper profiles, the respondents' way of being was also studied in comparison with others (Table 3). The majority of people, 41,8%, can be subsumed to the category of sociable, enthusiastic, spontaneous people, followed by the category of the fast and pragmatic in a ratio of 26,8%. When correlating this variable with temper it becomes clear that 48,66% of the respondents that declared themselves to be lively are communicative, while 14,43% have team spirit. Therefore, to a large extent, the energetic ones have the tendency to be fast and communicative, whereas the quiet and the reclusive ones – pondered, organized, and wary. These traits entail to a large extent the frequent practicing of sports activities and their type.

Table 3: Frequency table for the variable "Way of being related to others"

One's way of being compared with others	Absolute frequencies	Percentage
Fast, pragmatic, with his/her mind set on obtaining results	88	26,8
Pondered, organized, cautious	61	18,6
Communicative, enthusiastic, spontaneous	137	41,8
Has team spirit, cooperates, mediates conflicts	42	12,8
Overall	328	100

Hereinafter, the types of sports activities practiced by the respondents were also studied (Table 4). As regards winter sports, the most practiced ones are sledding, 39,6%, and ice-skating, 33,8% of those that practice winter sports. Alpine skiing, a sport which is practiced in the county of Argeş as well, accounts for 20,8% of the respondents practicing winter sports who represent a target-segment for sports tourism in this area. Another type of winter sports taken up by them is snowboarding, 5,8%, which can also be practiced in the county of Argeş. As for summer sports, bicycling and "lawn tennis" are the most practiced activities, 41,3%, and 31,2% respectively of the people that practice summer sports. Fishing comes into an important position as well, with 12,4% of the respondents having taken it up. Athletics, jogging, trekking and rappelling make up for 5,5% of all the activities practiced by those who engage in summer sports. Among the sports that are not linked to a certain season, aerobic and swimming rank first, being practiced by 15,5%, and respectively 13,6% of the respondents. Among the lesser practiced activities we find horse riding, handball and martial arts.

Table 4: Frequency table for the variable "Type of sports activity"

The season in which the sport is practiced	Type of sports activity	Absolute frequency	Percentage
Winter	Ice-skating	52	33,8%
	Alpine skiing	32	20,8%
	Sledding	61	39,6%
	Another type of sports activity	9	5,8%
	Overall	-	100%
Summer	Rowing	10	4,6%
	Bicycling	90	41,3%
	"Lawn" tennis	68	31,2%
	Horse riding	11	5%
	Fishing	27	12,4%
	Another type of sports activity	12	5,5%
	Overall	-	100%
Regardless of season	Badminton	59	9,7%
	Basketball	52	8,5%
	Handball	38	6,2%
	Ping Pong	67	11%
	Volleyball	61	10%
	Martial arts	11	1,8%

	Gymnastics	67	11%
	Aerobic	95	15,5%
	Swimming	83	13,6%
	Football	55	9%
	Another type of sports activity	23	3,8%
	Overall	-	100%

The extent to which the respondents combine sports with travelling was eventually tested using the main axes, that of tourism and that of sports, as was the extent to which the county of Argeș is considered a tourism destination, and a sports tourism destination respectively (*Table 5*). Although sports tourism is practiced only in a small extent, by 2,61% of the respondents, the county of Argeș as a tourism destination and as a sports tourism destination score higher in percentages: 3,31% and 2,64% respectively. The standard calculated deviation amounts to small rates, which means that the given grades are almost the same as the average rate, with a low dispersal along the series. For all of the three variables the most common value is “3” which indicates an intermediate level, set at equal distance from the extremes. The average values of the median and of the module denote a lack in bias opinions, which is a sign of the absence of a correlation between the county of Argeș and tourism in general, and between it and sports tourism.

Table 5: The central tendency for the variables “The extent to which sports are combined with travelling”, “The extent to which the county of Argeș is considered a tourism destination”, “The extent to which the county of

Argeș is considered a destination for sports tourism”

Variable	Average	Module	Median	Q1	Q2	Q3	The standard deviation
The extent to which sports are combined with travelling	2,61	3	3	2	3	3	1,179
The extent to which the county of Argeș is considered a tourism destination	3,31	3	3	3	3	4	1,095
The extent to which the county of Argeș is considered a destination for sports tourism	2,64	3	3	2	3	3	1,054

Because they are measured on an interval scale, the level of correlation between the above variables can be highlighted. Hence, the Pearson coefficient was used for the variables “The extent to which the county of Argeș is considered a tourism destination” and “The extent to which the county of Argeș is considered a destination for sports tourism” (*Table 6*). The correlation between the two variables, although positive, is insignificant from a statistical point of view because the Pearson coefficient scores within the range of [0;0,2], indicating a very weak correlation. Hence, it may be inferred that the tourist profile of the county of Argeș is not linked to its sports profile, a sign that other forms of tourism are considered to be the most representative for the county of Argeș, and not sports tourism.

Table 6: The extent to which the following variables correlate with each other: “The extent to which the county of Argeș is considered a tourism destination”, and “The extent to which the county of Argeș is considered a destination for sports tourism”, and the correlation between the variables “The extent to which sports are combined with travelling” and “The extent to which the county of Argeș is considered a destination for sports tourism”

Pearson coefficient	The extent to which the county of Argeș is considered a tourism destination	The extent to which the county of Argeș is considered a destination for sports tourism
The extent to which the county of Argeș is considered a tourism destination	1	0,177** Level of significance: 0,001
The extent to which the county of Argeș is considered a destination for sports tourism	0,177** Level of significance: 0,001	1
** Significant correlation at a 0,01 level		
Pearson coefficient	The extent to which sports are combined with travelling	The extent to which the county of Argeș is considered a destination for sports tourism
The extent to which sports are combined with travelling	1	0,453** Level of significance: 0,000
The extent to which the county of Argeș is considered a destination for sports tourism	0,453** Level of significance: 0,000	1
** Significant correlation at a 0,01 level		

Concerning the combination between sports and travelling and the judging of the county of Argeș as a destination for sports tourism, a positive link may be observed with a reasonable correlation within the range of [0,4;0,6], which points to the fact that as respondents combine more travelling with sports, they consider to a larger extent the county of Argeș a destination for sports tourism (*Table 6*). This is strongly connected to the powerful turn towards the motivation of practicing sports and towards specializing on sports tourism when it comes to the degree of knowing the county of Argeș as being a destination for sports tourism.

Conclusions:

One main conclusion is that the county of Argeș is not strongly positioned as a tourism destination and as a sports tourism destination, scoring points, which indicate an intermediate degree of familiarization with it in relation to sports and tourism.

This result represents the starting point in evaluating the tourist image for sports tourism in the county of Argeș. The lack of familiarization with it or of associating it with sports tourism may be due to one of the essential problems of the county of Argeș, the lack of general infrastructure and of a specific infrastructure. The low level of familiarization with it is not necessarily brought about by the tourist receiving structures with lodging functions, but by the lack of facilities needed to this type of tourism. The lack of trained staff, especially of specialized tourist guides, is added to this.

Starting from the respondents' motivations of practicing sports (such as, for example, a general state of well-being, of health) and from their preferences for certain sports which fit the profile of the destination (such as, for example, Alpine skiing and snowboarding in the case of winter sports) refined tourism products can be created and developed, and thus, a tourism brand for a strong sports tourism which is consistent with the consumers' needs and wants may be constructed. In addition, the brand should be consistent with the European Commission initiative, according to which Pitești City (capital of county of Argeș) is „European city of sports for 2013”.

Limitations:

One of this research study's limitations is brought about by the representational quality of the sample, which was subjected to the pressure of a limited time allocated for the gathering of data; likewise, due to the lack of motivational and preferences studies in the realm of sports and sports tourism in the area of interest, a continuity of research in this field (having as case - study the county of Argeș) cannot be realised. Despite this, the present research can constitute a starting point for future studies.

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