

MANAGING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR. VISITOR SATISFACTION REGARDING THE TOURIST OFFER IN BERZASCA

Loredana Dinu¹, Gabriel Dinu^{1*}, Gheorghe Popovici¹, Jeanina Ciurea¹, Adela Popa²

¹ Babes-Bolyai University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
Traian Vuia Square, No. 1-4, Resita, Romania

² University of Craiova, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
A.I. Cuza Street, No. 13, Craiova, Romania

* Corresponding author. E-mail: gabriel.dinu@ubbcluj.ro

Abstract: In this paper we have tried to make an analysis of the operational and conceptual definitions of consumer satisfaction encountered in the specialized literature and the main objective is to identify the level of satisfaction of consumers with the touristic offer in Berzasca.

Keywords: management, research, customer satisfaction

1. Introduction

Customer satisfaction must become a culture, a lifestyle, not a "something extra". (Tony Blair).

Consumer satisfaction is of vital importance given that the number of organizations offering similar products and/or services at similar prices has seen an exponential increase since 1989, with an organization's only chance to face the competition depending entirely on its ability to win and maintain its customers. Consumers that are satisfied with a certain purchase will buy that product again while a dissatisfied consumer will show his resentment, file complaints, want to recover the money paid for that product and even negatively influence other buyers.

2. Theoretical Considerations

The concept of customer satisfaction represents an emotional degree of the users of some products or services regarding the experience they live in the whole process, from entering a commercial space or accessing an online store, to the actual use of products or services.

As stated by the concept of marketing, the purpose of an organization is to satisfy the needs and desires of consumers at a level that is superior to the competition and in conditions of profitability for the organization.

In literature there are a large number of initiatives and nuances in defining customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction.

The effective factors were identified through a review of the research literature and by surveying experts [1].

Thus, in 1965 Cardozo had a first attempt to define the concept of consumer satisfaction, which did not lead to the definition of this concept [2].

Oliver, in 1981, presented satisfaction as a post-consumption assessment containing both cognitive and affective elements. [3]

The opposite is true according to Tse and Wilton (1988), who define satisfaction as "the customer's response to the assessment made to the perceived disparity between his expectations (or other performance norms) and the actual performance of the product or service as recognized after consumption." [4] The model from would leave this definition being the model of not confirming expectations. The model would start from identifying three determinants of customer satisfaction / dissatisfaction, namely: expectations, perceptions and non-confirmation.

Others, such Howard and Sheth (1969), Tse and Wilton (1988), Westbrook and Reilly (1983), described this term as a response to an evaluation process. Authors like Fornell (1992), Hunt (1977), and Oliver (1981) defined satisfaction as an evaluation process.

Garbarino and Johnson (1999), or Giese and Cote (2000), offer perspectives that complement traditional visions of satisfaction. [5]

We can see that there is a dispute around the specific nature of the concept of satisfaction. Homburg and Stock (2001) consider satisfaction to be a mere cognitive result of the comparison between is and should. Others define satisfaction as a general attitude, based on a cognitive comparison and an affective component. [6]

Thus satisfaction was appreciated as an affective response (Halstead, Hartman and Schmidt in 1994, [7] Cadotte, Woodruff and Jenkins in 1987, [8] Westbrook and Reilly in 1983), an overall evaluation (Fornell in 1992), a psychological state (Howard and Sheth in 1969), a global evaluative judgment (Westbrook in 1987) or an evaluative response (Day in 1984).

As cognitive responses, Bolton and Drew in 1991, Howard and Sheth in 1969, and Tse and Wilton in 1988 all valued satisfaction.

Expectations are formed before the purchase of the product / service and are a standard against which performance is compared. Comparing them with perceived performance results the confirmation (when perceived performance corresponds exactly to expectations) or non-confirmation (when there are discrepancies between expectations and performance). Confirmation and positive non-confirmation of expectations lead to consumer satisfaction, while negative non-confirmation leads to dissatisfaction. The importance of measuring the degree of customer satisfaction of any company lies in the possibility of creating the competitive advantage that helps the firm to differentiate itself from the other companies existing on the market.

Oliver observed that while satisfaction is a complicated and multifaceted construct, it is important to pursue it as a central idea in the variety of responses made to various consumer events in order to prevent term ambiguity. [9]

- Satisfaction and attitude

Because both notions refer to a reaction to the appraisal of a product, satisfaction and attitude are strongly related, according to Latour and Peat. [10]

The nature of the assessment itself is another area of confusion. Three elements make up attitude: cognitive, emotional, and conative elements. Additionally, there are cognitive and emotive components to satisfaction.

Although the meaning of the two concepts seems relatively close, the literature has revealed three differences. First of all, satisfaction is related to consumer experiences, which is not necessarily the case with attitude. The second distinction is related to the process of formation. Satisfaction is based on the comparison between the previous expectation of the consumer and the actual performance of a product.

Conversely, attitude has nothing to do with comparative judgment.

-Satisfaction and perceived quality

Consumer impression of quality is referred to as perceived quality or subjective quality. According to Zeithaml, perceived quality is the consumer's judgment of an entity's greatness or all-around superiority. [11] This term highlights the parallels between perceived quality and enjoyment. The two terms are frequently used interchangeably in the literature, according to Ngobo (1997). Rust and Zahornik acknowledged that they frequently used the terms satisfaction and service quality nearly interchangeably. [12]

The first key difference is that whereas perceived service quality is contingent on user experiences, pleasure is experiential. The second difference is that perceived quality is founded on characteristics that can be collectively designated as pertinent and shared to any assessment specifically focused on product quality. On the other hand, perceived quality is simply a cognitive reaction. In contrast to perceived quality, which has few conceptual antecedents that are recognized, satisfaction is known to be influenced by cognitive and affective processes, according to Oliver. Finally, according to Oliver, perceived quality is a long-term phenomenon while satisfaction is particular to transactions. [9]

- Quality and perceived value

Only a few research looks at the difference between satisfaction and perceived value, likely because perceived value is a much more recent notion than perceived attitude and quality. However, the way value is now defined could be mistaken for satisfaction. The definition of value perceived by the customer is the overall consumer evaluation of a product's usefulness based on perceptions of what is given and received.

3. Method

One of the biggest challenges of managing a company is consumer satisfaction. The quality of the products offered along with consumer satisfaction are key factors in the battle to maintain customers.

Taking as hypothesis the premise that consumer satisfaction is absolutely necessary for the successful development of any business, in this paper I proposed to offer a starting point in an area of great interest.

In order to carry out an effective study it is necessary first of all a programming of the research, with the establishment of the necessary steps and resources in order to optimally carry out the research and to obtain the most important information needed for the decision process [13].

Research, on a scientific basis, requires a serious accumulation of information from a sustained research activity.

The theoretical aspects were completed by a research project aimed to highlight the first condition of satisfaction studies is multidimensional measurement. The experience of consumption has been decomposed into component dimensions and varying levels of intensity of the positive or negative reaction to each dimension [14].

The study was carried out with the help of a direct quantitative research, by applying a questionnaire regarding the measurement of consumers' satisfaction with the touristic offer in Berzasca locality.

The questionnaire was conducted after analysing the specialized literature in the field and establishing a number of objectives and hypotheses.

This questionnaire was structured in three sections dealing with issues related to the following problems:

- measurement of consumer satisfaction with the researched product;
- future (programmed) consumer behaviour;
- socio-demographic and economic characteristics of consumers.

The main objective of the survey-based study was to identify the determining attributes or dimensions of consumer satisfaction with the studied product. These main objectives were, of course, correlated with the socio-demographic and economic characteristics of consumers, in order to form a clearer picture of the motivational factors that intervene.

The research tool developed specifically to clearly capture both the expectations of consumers and their perceptions of the analysed area, and following the statistical determinations, the most compact form of the research instrument was reached. Thus, 120 people participated in the research, resulting in the selection of 110 valid answers.

The period of application of the questionnaire was short-lived, which was applied at the beginning of August, for a period of 2 weeks.

According to the method of data collection, the information collection tool has been developed, i.e. a questionnaire consisting of 9 content questions, as well as 4 identification questions.

4. Results

The information, as collected after the questionnaire, was centralized and the interpretation of the data obtained will be presented following this study. The interpretation of the results will be presented highlighting the most important aspects and trends for the purpose proposed by percentage representations of the results.

The analysis of the results of the study was made for each question included in the questionnaire, highlighting, in each case, the determining trend in consumer behaviour.

When asked about visiting the Danube Gorge area, Berzasca locality, 76,36% of the respondents stated that they have visited the area in the last 3 years, at the opposite pole being only 23,64% from the respondents (Fig. 1).

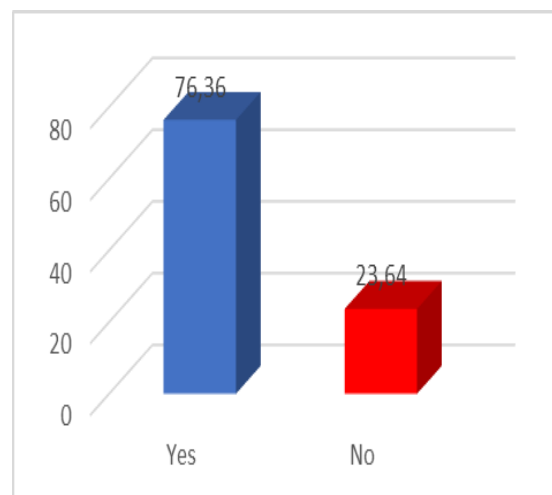


Fig. 1. Tourists who had/had not visited the Danube Gorge area in the last 3 years

Regarding the frequency of visiting the area, 50,92% of respondents visited the area 1-3 times a year, followed by those who arrived in the area more than 3 times a year (10,91%), and at the opposite pole 6,36% among the respondents who never visited the analysed area (Fig. 2).

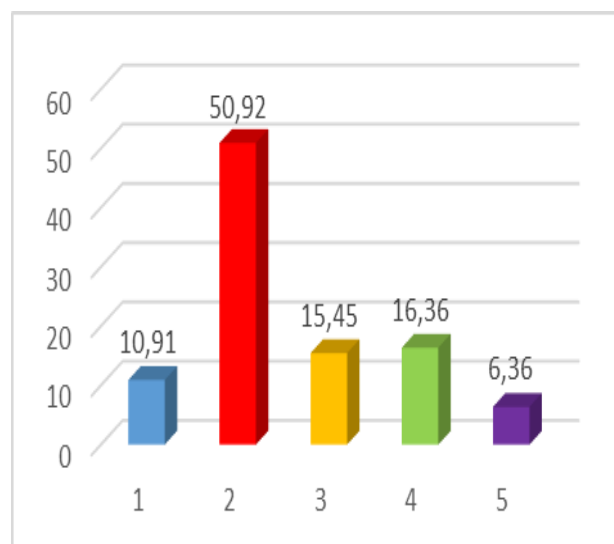


Fig. 2. Frequency of visiting the area

Regarding the tools used to inform for choosing the area as a holiday destination, 56,36% of those surveyed used the reports of friends / relatives in order to choose the area as a tourist destination, followed by

those who obtained information about the Danube Gorge area from the websites of travel agencies with online sales, and at the opposite pole with only 13,64% being the ones who obtained the necessary information from the tourist information centers (Fig. 3).

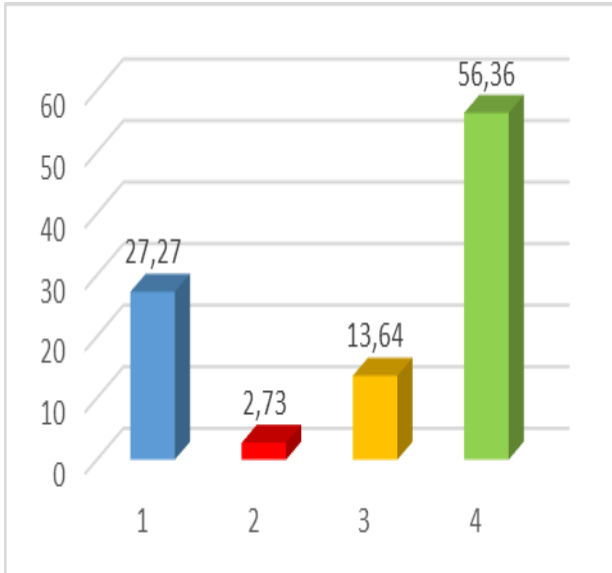


Fig. 3. The tools used to inform people about the Danube Gorge area

Among the main travel motivations of the interviewed persons were: participation in various events, fishing, visits to relatives, friends, visiting certain tourist attractions, recreation, rest and relaxation, hiking, enduro and last but not least boat / boat rides.

As a preferred tourist accommodation structure, it was the hotel (69,09%), followed by the pension (19,09%) and the rooms for rent (11,82%) (Fig. 4).

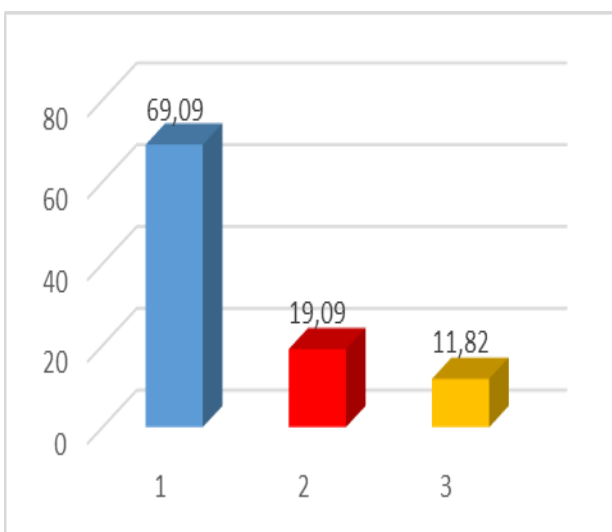


Fig. 4. Preferred tourist accommodation structure

Regarding the degree of satisfaction with the touristic services offered by the reception structures in the analysed area, 73,64% of the respondents said they were very satisfied with the ambience and cleanliness of the accommodation spaces, the diversity of the menus offered, but also with the behaviour of the staff employed. Very few 10,91 % respondents were dissatisfied with the number of parking spaces provided by the reception facilities (Fig. 5).

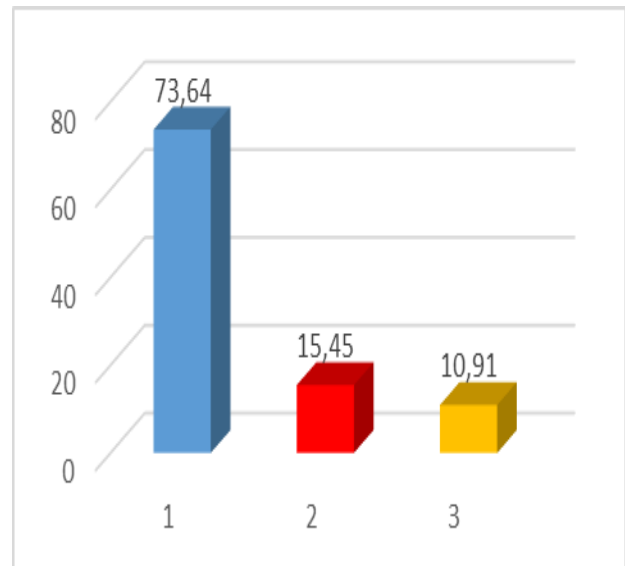


Fig. 5. The degree of satisfaction with the touristic services offered by the reception structures

82,73% of the people surveyed said they were very satisfied with the natural setting of the area, the existing facilities and the tourist routes, while 17,27% were dissatisfied with the quality of the roads (Fig. 6).

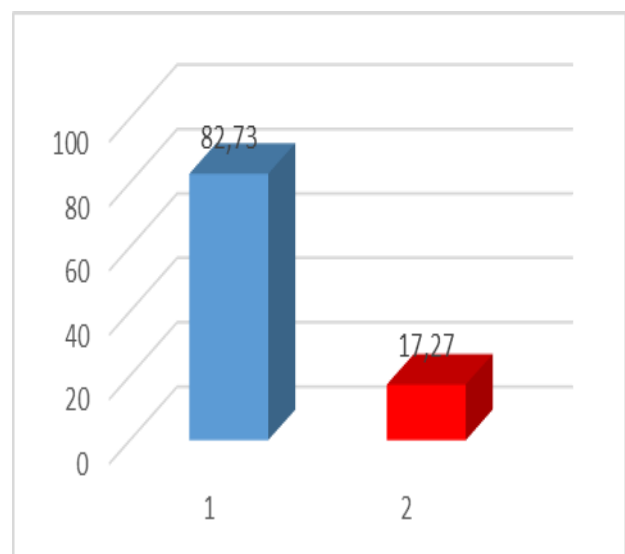


Fig. 6. The level of satisfaction / dissatisfaction of the tourists with the tourism infrastructure

Regarding the tariffs applied in the Danube Gorge area, 58,18% of the respondents considered that the prices are relatively high, while 33,64% considered that they are neither high nor low (Fig. 7).

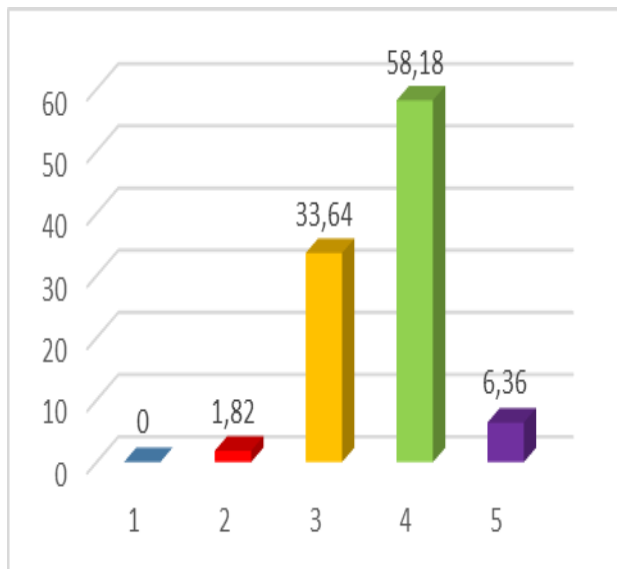


Fig. 7 The tariffs of the Danube Gorge area

As the payment method used, 60% of customers used cash, 14,55% bank card, and 25,45% holiday vouchers (Fig. 8).

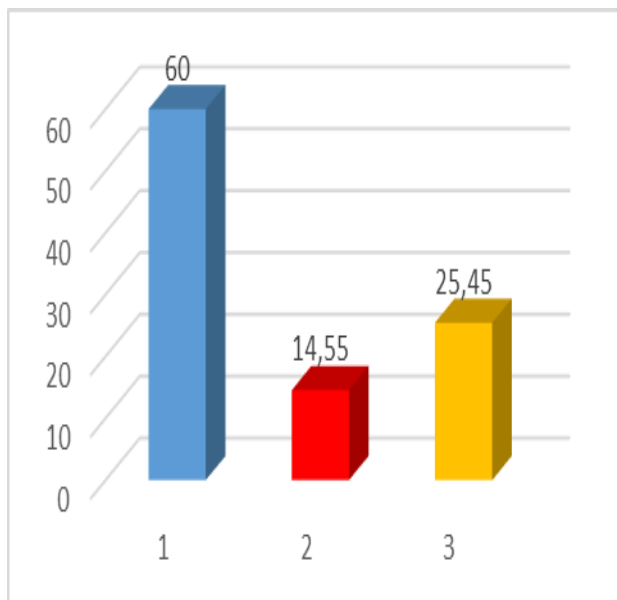


Fig. 8. Payment method used

Following the study, we noted that the main economic activity that can generate a sustainable development in Berzasca commune is tourism, an

activity in which any investment has a multiplier effect, generating related investments horizontally and, respectively, jobs and revenues to the local budget.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, satisfaction was clearly differentiated by attitude, perceived quality and perceived value. These differences justify the discriminatory validity of the concept of satisfaction.

In general, customers of services do not rely on a single source of information, but rather use a variety of sources based on their orientation (multichannel orientation), propensity for innovation, and perceived enjoyment of the purchasing experience. According to Konus et al., they look for information from many sources to save money, decrease risk, set performance expectations of service offers, and investigate alternative service providers (2008) [15].

In the past year, customer satisfaction has received significant research attention. Customer satisfaction is today the main criterion for evaluating a company's interaction with the market, a constant target of operating policies, a critical component of enhancing a company's reputation, as well as a fundamental principle used to govern operational procedures, for all businesses.

Unfortunately, the economic life of the commune still does not rise to the level of the existing urban endowments, there being a certain gap between the living conditions in the locality and the economic activity, a gap that appeared for various reasons – the phenomenon of labor migration that is registered at the level of the entire country, from the rural area to the urban area and to the country to other countries, more economically developed, then geographical arrangement relatively far from large urban centres, modernized national access routes, etc.

6. References

- [1] Shafiee, S., Ghatari, A.R., Hasanzadeh, A. et al.: "Developing a model for smart tourism destinations: an interpretive structural modelling approach". *Information Technology & Tourism* vol. 24, pp. 511–546, 2022.
- [2] Cardozo R.N.: "An experimental study of customer effort, expectation and satisfaction", *Journal of Marketing Research*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 244-249, 1965.
- [3] Oliver, R.L.: "Measurement and Evaluation of Satisfaction Processes in Retail Settings", *Journal of Retailing*, vol. 5, pp. 25-48, 1981 <http://psycnet.apa.org/psycinfo/1984-10995-001>
- [4] Tse, D.K. and Wilton, P.C.: "Models of Consumer Satisfaction Formation: An Extension.", *Journal of*

- Marketing Research, 25, pp. 204-212, 1988
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3172652>
- [5] Garbarino E., and Johnson M.S.: “The Different Roles of Satisfaction, Trust, and Commitment in Customer Relationships”, *Journal of Marketing Research*, vol. 63, no.2, pp. 70-87, 1999
- [6] Homburg C. Stock R. M.: “The link between salespeople’s job satisfaction and customer satisfaction in a business-to-business context: A dyadic analysis”, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 32, pp.144, 2004.
- [7] Halstead, D., Hartman, D., & Schmidt, S. L.: “Multiscore effects on the satisfaction formation process”, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 22(2), pp. 114–129, 1994. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092070394222002>
- [8] Cadotte, E. R., Woodruff, R. B., & Jenkins, R. L.: “Expectations and norms in models of consumer satisfaction”, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 24(3), pp. 305–314, 1987, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3151641>
- [9] Oliver, R.L.: “Whence Consumer Loyalty? *Journal of Marketing*”, 63, pp. 33-44, 1999
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1252099>
- [10] Latour S., Peat N.: “Conceptual and Methodological Issues in Consumer Satisfaction Research”, *Advances in Consumer Research*, 6(1), pp. 431-437, 1979.
- [11] Zeithaml, V. A.: “Consumer perceptions of price, quality, and value: A means-end model and synthesis of evidence”, *Journal of Marketing*, 52(3), pp. 2–22, 1988
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1251446>
- [12] Rust, R.T. and Zahorik, A.J.: “Customer Satisfaction, Customer Retention, and Market Share”, *Journal of Retailing*, 69, pp. 193-215, 1993.
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0022-4359\(93\)90003-2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0022-4359(93)90003-2)
- [13] Dinu G., Dinu L.: “Managing Electoral Behaviour. A Study On The Perception Of Resita Voters”, *Robotica & Management*, Vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 45-48, 2022.
- [14] Dinu G., Dinu L.: “A Study Regarding The Use Of E-Commerce By People From Resita”, *Management and Marketing Journal*, vol. 2, pp. 291-302, 2013.
- [15] Konus U., Verhoef P.C., Neslin S.A.: “Multichannel shopper segments and their covariates”, *Journal of Retailing*, 84 (4), pp. 398–413, 2008.

