

## **STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING THE TOURIST ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE VALEA JIULUI REGION**

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**ABSTRACT:** *In the contemporary period, the concerns for the most exact and complete definition of the tourist phenomenon has acquired an increasing importance. The scientific treatment of the tourist activity is also conditioned by the necessity of knowledge of its economic and social content, the mutations recorded continuously in the evolution of tourism requiring the permanent readjustment of the concepts with which it operates. The purpose of this research is to study the image of the Valea Jiului region among tourists in order to find a solution to increase the level of sales, the development of tourism and the highlighting of proposals to increase the attractiveness of the Valea Jiului region.*

**KEY WORDS:** *tourism, strategy, development, satisfaction of consumer, services.*

**JEL CLASSIFICATIONS:** *L83, Z32.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the contemporary period, the concerns for the most exact and complete definition of the tourist phenomenon have acquired an increasing importance. The scientific treatment of the tourist activity is also conditioned by the necessity of knowledge of its economic and social content, the mutations recorded continuously in the evolution of tourism requiring the permanent readjustment of the concepts with which it operates.

The tourism is an economic-social phenomenon specific to modern civilization, strongly anchored in the life of society and, as such, influenced by its evolution (Pantelescu-Marin, 2010).

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Addressing broad social segments and fully responding to their needs, the tourism stands out through a high dynamism, both at the national and international level. Also, due to its mass character and complex content, the tourism trains a vast social and human potential, with important implications on national and international relations.

The tourism includes a set of measures, means, applied to organize and conduct leisure trips or for other purposes, realised either through organizations, companies or specialized agencies, either on their own, for a limited period of time, and the adjacent industries that compete to satisfy tourist consumption needs (Niță, 2009).

For medium and poorly developed countries from an economic point of view, the tendency to develop the services sector with large potential reserves compared to developed countries is evident (Gavrea, 2014).

The tourism plays an important role in the economy and by generating new jobs, having, from this point of view, a major contribution to attracting surplus labour from other sectors, and, implicitly, at the alleviation of unemployment. The relationship between tourism and the use of labour force is manifested quantitatively and qualitatively, directly and indirectly (Ioncică, 2006).

Thus, the complexity of the tourist industry, the diversity of tastes and preferences of tourist consumers, the need to individualize vacations etc., on the one hand, and on the another, and the relatively possibilities of mechanization-automation of tourist operations and, as a result, the high consumption of live labour, on the other hand, it is reflected in the higher proportion of those employed in the field of tourism, compared to branches with close structure. At the same time, the development of tourism, materialized in the increase of the number of people, brings with it the qualitative increase of those involved in the organization and development of trips, in serving tourists (Tinard, 1994).

Establishing the importance of tourist services for the Valea Jiului region is a necessity in the context of the desire to capitalize and establish their value and economic hierarchy. The difficulty is given by different factors among which: the multitude of types of objectives that are relevant for tourism, the different degree of their knowledge and the role they have or can have in the development of the region, the accessibility and level of services provided etc.

Numerous elements that can be included in the tourism fund are identified as an objective, but with different possibilities of interest and degree of valorisation, and on the other hand with an infrastructure that is at the beginning of the rehabilitation in the main directions and with poor services in which the spirit of grabbing funds and no the full satisfaction of the tourist prevails, the more or less correct analysis of the problem of its tourist potential.

The tourism activity increases its value in the conditions of free time and the facility offered in the process of „movement” of the population inside, as well as outside, tourism has multiple responsibilities: ensuring the satisfaction of consumer requirements; adequate accommodation, prepared quality, refined cuisine; the conditions of ambience, leisure, adequate entertainment.

As a social problem, tourism can be viewed from several angles. The first can be that of its capacity to provide jobs, of adequate incomes for employees in the field.

The purpose of this research is to study the image of the Valea Jiului region among tourists in order to find a solution to increase the level of sales, the development of tourism and the highlighting of proposals to increase the attractiveness of the Valea Jiului region.

## **2. FORMULATION OF GENERAL HYPOTHESES AND STATISTICAL HYPOTHESES**

### ***General hypotheses***

- The majority of tourists have visited the Valea Jiului region more than 10 times.
- The majority of tourists are arriving in the Valea Jiului with their own car.
- The majority of tourists prefer to stay in guest houses.
- The majority of tourists appreciate the state of preservation of the tourist attractions as very good.
- The rates of accommodation services are considered high by the majority of tourists.
- The majority of tourists say that advertising influences the increase in the number of tourists in Valea Jiului.
- The majority of tourists are aged between 18-28.

### ***Statistical hypotheses***

H0: Over 70% of tourists consider that advertising influences the increase in the number of tourists in Valea Jiului.

H1: Less than 70% of tourists consider that advertising influences the increase in the number of tourists.

H0: Over 60% of tourists have visited the Valea Jiului region more than 10 times.

H1: Less than 60% of tourists have visited the Valea Jiului region more than 10 times.

H0: Over 70% of tourists consider that it is necessary to train the locals in the development of tourism.

H1: Less than 70% of tourists consider that it is necessary to train the locals in the development of tourism

H0: More than 30% of tourists say that the rates of tourist services in Valea Jiului are affordable.

H1: Less than 30% of tourists say that the rates of tourist services in Valea Jiului are affordable.

H0: More than 40% of tourists are accommodated in guest houses.

H1: Less than 40% of tourists are accommodated in guest houses.

H0: More than 60% of tourists are between 18-28 years old.

H1: Less than 60% of tourists are between 18-28 years old.

H0: More than 30% of tourists agree that the Valea Jiului region presents very few facilities that contribute to the development of sustainable tourism.

H1: Less than 30% of tourists agree that the Valea Jiului region presents very few facilities that contribute to the development of sustainable tourism.

***Research objectives.*** The main objective of the research is to identify the potential of the strategy to increase the tourist attractiveness of the Valea Jiului region.

### ***Secondary objectives:***

- ❖ Determining the type of accommodation preferred by tourists;

- ❖ Identification of promotion programs made in the region of Valea Jiului;
- ❖ Determining the states of conservation of tourist objectives;
- ❖ The influence of advertising on the number of tourists in the Valea Jiului region.

**Table 1. Research objectives**

Basic aspects	Researcher's question	The objective
Opinions of tourists regarding the importance of the quality of tourist services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the attitude of tourists towards public catering services?</li> <li>2. What is the attitude of tourists regarding accommodation services?</li> <li>3. What do you think about the tourist facilities in this area?</li> <li>4. What made you choose Valea Jiului?</li> </ol>	<p>Determining the attitude of tourists towards the quality of services in Valea Jiului.</p> <p>Recommendations regarding the improvement of the quality of services.</p> <p>Knowing the attitude of tourists regarding the tourist facilities</p> <p>Recommendations regarding the tourist facilities</p>
The attitude of tourists regarding the applied rates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To what extent are tourists satisfied with the rates of tourist services?</li> <li>2. Do you think that tourists are satisfied with the quality-price ratio?</li> <li>3. What do you think of the services offered in comparison to the other area?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identifying methods of changing rates to make tourists happy.</li> <li>2. Knowing the attitude of tourists regarding the quality-price ratio of tourists services.</li> <li>3. Knowing the attitude of tourists regarding the services provided to other areas of Valea Jiului.</li> </ol>
The characterization of tourists	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the age range of people that are coming to Valea Jiului?</li> <li>2. What is the percentage of those who have a higher income?</li> <li>3. To what extent does the profession of tourists influence the sale of tourist products?</li> <li>4. What percentage of tourists came with their own car?</li> <li>5. How do tourists consider that tourist services should be improved?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Determining the age range of people that come to Valea Jiului?</li> <li>2. Determining the percentage of those with a higher income.</li> <li>3. Knowing the extent to which the profession of tourists influences the sale of tourist product.</li> <li>4. Determining the percentage of those who came with their own car.</li> <li>5. Knowing the attitude of tourists regarding the improvement of tourist services.</li> </ol>
The time allocated to the promotion of tourist products	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What kind of promotion programs were made?</li> <li>2. What was the impact of the promotions on the tourists from Valea Jiului?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knowledge of the promotion programs that have been made.</li> <li>2. Knowing the impact of promotion on tourists.</li> </ol>
The locals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the opinion of the tourists regarding the training of locals in the field of tourism?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knowing the attitude of the locals regarding the improvement of tourist services.</li> <li>2. Knowing the attitude of tourists regarding training locals in the field of tourism.</li> </ol>
Forms of advertising of the tourist services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you consider that advertising influences the increase in the number of tourists in Valea Jiului?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Determining the extent to which advertising influences the increase in the number of tourists in Valea Jiului.</li> </ol>
Tourist objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How are the tourist objectives</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knowing the attitude of tourists</li> </ol>

	appreciated in the Valea Jiului? 2. How do tourists appreciate the state of conservations of the objectives from Valea Jiului?	regarding tourist destinations. 2. Knowing the attitude of tourists regarding the state of conservations of objectives.
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Source: Prepared by the author based on the data extracted from the questionnaire

### 3. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING SAMPLING

The questionnaire was designed in order to carry out research on the attractiveness and development possibilities of tourism in Valea Jiului.

The questionnaire is structured on the basic aspects correlated with the research objectives presented in table 1., containing a number of 24 items.

The sample represents a sub-community randomly extracted from the general community, from which information is taken in order to generalize the conclusions drawn from the investigation.

In establishing the sample size, statistical restrictions are taken into account, using the following calculation formula:

$$n = [z^2 \times p \times q] / E^2 \quad (1)$$

where:  $n$  – is the sample size;

$z^2$  – the square of the coefficient  $z$ , corresponding to the level of trust considered;

$p$  – estimation of percentages in case of success, or of those that say "YES";

$q = (1 - p)$  – estimation of percentages in case of failure, or of those that say "NO";

$E^2$  – the square of the admissible error.

If we do not have an information about  $p$ , then  $p = q = 50\%$ .

Then:  $E = \pm 5\%$  (the coefficient 0,05) for a confidence level of 95%;  $z = 1,96$

Then, establishing the sample under investigation, in case of Valea Jiului is:

$$n = [(1,96)^2 \times 50 \times 50] / 9 = 1.067 \text{ people}$$

However, we could not form a sample of 1.067 people and took a fixed size of 300 respondents.

$$E = \sqrt{\frac{z^2 * p * q}{n}} = \sqrt{\frac{1.96 * 50 * 50}{300}} = \sqrt{\frac{9604}{300}} = 5.65\% \quad \dots\dots\dots(2)$$

Confidence interval:

$$p \pm z \sqrt{\frac{p(100 - p)}{n}} = 0.5 \pm 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{0.5 * 0.5}{300}} = 0.5 \pm 0.02 \quad \dots\dots\dots(3)$$

In the case of the research undertaken in the Valea Jiului region, random sampling was used at the place of consumption of the services, which presupposes not knowing the probability of including the individuals of the community in the sample.

#### 4. THE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DATA

The research was carried out on a sample of 300 people, in the period of January - March 2022 in Valea Jiului micro-region and continued in the period of December 2022 – January 2023.

Data processing in the research was realized manually.

Verification of the hypotheses

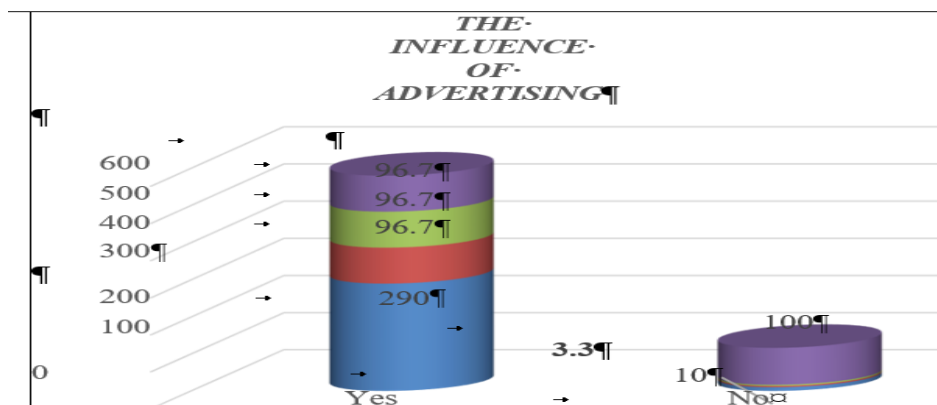
H0: Over 70% of tourists consider that advertising influences the increase in the number of tourists in the Valea Jiului region.

H1: Less than 70% of tourists consider that advertising influences the increase in the number of tourists in the Valea Jiului region.

**Table 2. Do you consider that advertising influences the increase in the number of tourists in the Valea Jiului region?**

		Frequency	Percentage	Validated percentage	The cumulative percentage
Valid	Yes	290	96,7	96,7	96,7
	No	10	3,3	3,3	100
	Total	300	100	100	

Source: Prepared by the author based on the data extracted from the questionnaire,



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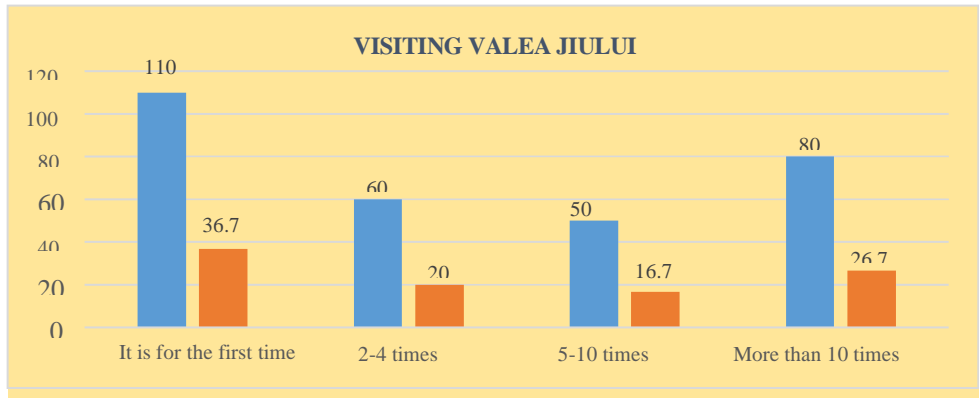
**Figure 1. The influence of advertising on the increase in the number of tourists from the Valea Jiului Region?**

The answer with the highest frequency is „Yes” – 96.7%, because the majority of tourists agree that advertising influences the increase in the number of tourists in

Valea Jiului. Only 3.3% of the tourists are saying that advertising does not influence the increase in the number of tourists in Valea Jiului. Therefore, the H0 is accepted, according to which more than 70% of tourists consider that advertising influences the increase in the number of tourists in Valea Jiului.

H0: Over 30% of tourists have visited the Valea Jiului region more than 10 times.

H1: Less than 30% of tourists have visited the Valea Jiului region more than 10 times.

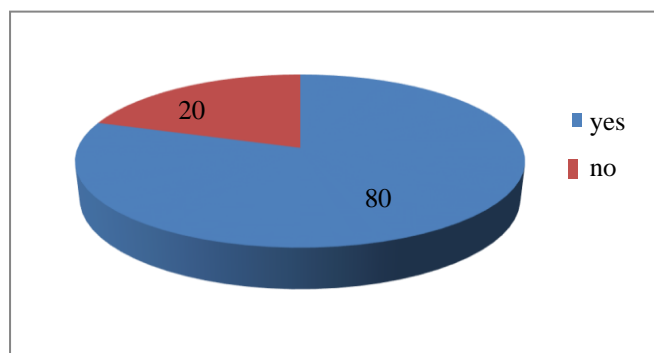


**Figure 2. In the last years, how many times have you visited the Valea Jiului region?**

The majority the of tourists, 36%, say that it is the first time they are visiting the Valea Jiului region. Only 26.7% of the tourists have visited the region more than 10 times, 20% 2-4 times and 16% 5-10 times. Therefore, hypothesis H1 is accepted according to which less than 30% of the tourists have visited the region more than 10 times.

H0: More than 70% of the tourists consider that it is necessary to train the locals in the development of tourism.

H1: Less than 70% of the tourists consider that it is necessary to train the locals in the development of tourism.

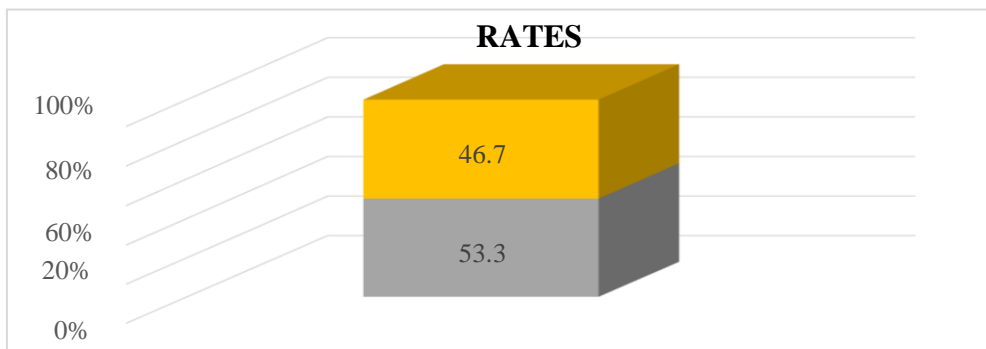


**Figure 3. Do you consider that it is necessary to train local people in tourism?**

The majority of the tourists (80%) are saying that it is necessary to train the locals in the development of tourism. It is observed that only 20% of them are considering that this training is not necessary. Therefore, the hypothesis H0 is accepted according to which more than 70% of the tourists are considering that it is necessary to train the locals in the development of the tourism.

H0: More than 30% of the tourists are saying that the rates of tourist services in Valea Jiului are affordable.

H1: Less than % of the tourists are saying that the rates of tourist services in Valea Jiului are affordable.

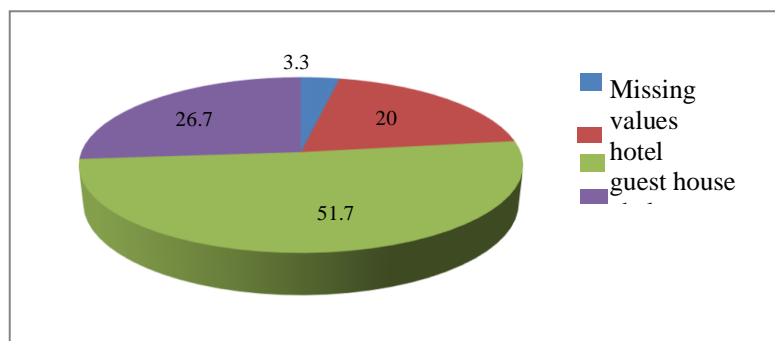


**Figure 4. The rates from Valea Jiului**

The table and the graph above show that 53.3% of the tourists are considering that the rates in Valea Jiului are affordable, and 46.7% are considering that the rates are high. We note that no tourist has answered that the rates are low. Therefore, the hypothesis H0 is accepted, according to which more than 30% of the tourists are saying that the rates of tourist services in Valea Jiului are affordable.

H0: More than 40% of the tourists are accommodated in guest houses.

H1: Less than 40% of the tourists are accommodated in guest houses.



**Figure 5. In what type of structure are you staying in?**

The answer with the highest frequency is „guest house” – 50%, followed by „chalet” - 26,7 %, with „hotel” in last place – having a percentage of only 20%, 3.3%



were missing values, because some tourists did not stay in the types of accommodation structure mentioned in the questionnaire. The results obtained for this question confirm the H0 hypothesis, according to which the majority of the tourists who are arriving in Valea Jiului are accommodated in guest houses.

H0: More than 60% of the tourists are between 18-28 years old.

H1: Less than 60% of the tourists are between 18-28 years old.

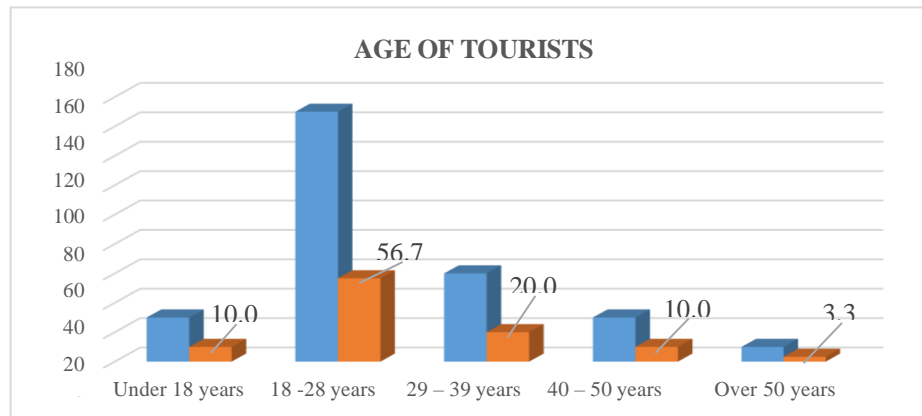
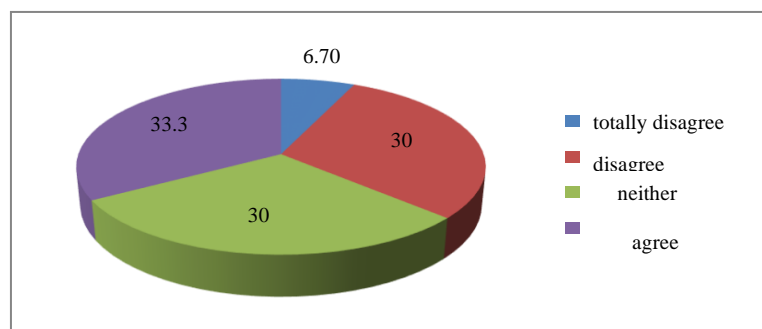


Figure 6. Age of respondents

The answer with the highest frequency is „18-28 years old” – 56.7%, because this is the sample of those who are coming to Valea Jiului to practice sports, mountain hikes or visiting tourist attractions. On the second place are those aged between 29-39 years – 20%, and on the equal third place are those aged between 40-50 and those under 18 - 10%.

H0: More than 30% of the tourists agree that the Valea Jiului region presents very few facilities that contribute to the development of a sustainable tourism.

H1: Less than 30% of the tourists agree that the Valea Jiului region presents very few facilities that contribute to the development of a sustainable tourism.



Source: Prepared by the author based on the data from the extracted questionnaire,

Figure 7. Valea Jiului presents very few facilities that contribute to the development of sustainable tourism

The table and graph above show that 33.3% of the tourists agree that the region presents very few facilities that contribute to the development of sustainable tourism, 30% - disagree, 6,7% - totally disagree and 30% are neither agreeing or disagreeing.

Therefore, the H0 hypothesis is accepted according to which more than 30% of the tourists agree that the Valea Jiului region presents very few facilities that contribute to the development of a sustainable tourism.

## 5. THE ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 2 VARIABLES

### Test $\chi^2$

#### *The link between the average length of stay and the type of accommodation structure*

H0: There is no difference between the average length of stay and the type of accommodation structure chosen.

H1: There is a difference between the average length of stay and the type of accommodation structure chosen

The level of significance  $\alpha = 0,05$

The table shows the relationship between the average length of stay and the type of accommodation structure.

**Table 3. What is the average length of your stay? In what type of structure are you staying in?**

What is the average length of your stay?			In what type of structure are you staying in?			Total
			hotel	Guest house	chalet	
What is the average length of your stay?		Calculus	10	0	0	10
	1 day	Expected value	2.1	5.2	2.8	10
	2 days	Calculus Expected value	0 4.1	20 10.3	0 5.5	20 20
	1 weekend	Calculus Expected value	30 41.4	110 103.4	60 55.2	200 200
	More weekends	Calculus Expected value	20 12.4	20 31	20 16.6	60 60
	Total	Calculus Expected value	60 60	150 150	80 80	290 290

$$\chi^2_{\text{calc}} = 70,24$$

$$\chi^2_{0,05; 4} = 15,50 \Rightarrow \chi^2_{\text{calc}} > \chi^2_{0,05; 4}$$

=> the null hypothesis is rejected and the hypothesis H1 is accepted, this means that there is a difference between men and women regarding the average length of stay and the type of accommodation structure chosen.

***The link between the attractiveness of the Valea Jiului region and the gender of the tourists***

H0: There is no difference between men and women regarding the perspective on the attractiveness of the region.

H1: There is a difference between men and women regarding the perspective on the attractiveness of the region.

The level of significance  $\alpha = 0,05$

The table shows the relationship between the attractiveness of the region and the gender of the tourists.

**Table 4. What impressed you the most about the area? Your gender?**

Item		Your gender			Total
		M	F	3	
What impressed you the most?	Calculus	10	30	10	50
	Expected value	26.7	21.7	1.7	50
The landscape	Calculus	100	80	0	180
	Expected value	96	78	6	180
The landmarks	Calculus	50	20	0	70
	Expected value	37.3	30.3	2.3	70
Total	Calculus	160	130	10	300
	Expected value	160	130	10	300

Source: Prepared by the author based on the data from the extracted questionnaire

$$\chi^2_{\text{calc}} = 71.65$$

$$\chi^2_{0,05; 4} = 15.50 \Rightarrow \chi^2_{\text{calc}} > \chi^2_{0,05; 4}$$

=> the null hypothesis H0 is rejected and the hypothesis H1 is accepted, this means that there is a difference between men and women regarding the perspective on the attractiveness of the Valea Jiului region.

### ***The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test***

The relationship between the influence of advertising on the increase in the number of tourists on the Valea Jiului region and the gender of the tourists.

H0: The maximum difference between the cumulative relative frequencies for men (f1) and for women (f2) is zero.

H1: The maximum difference between the cumulative relative frequencies for men (f1) and for women (f2) is different than zero.

The level of significance  $\alpha = 0,05$

For this test we are going to use the question n. 15 and the question n. 30.

$$D_{\text{calc}} = 0.27$$

$$D_{\text{teoretic}} = 1.36 \cdot \sqrt{\frac{n_1 + n_2}{n_1 \cdot n_2}} = 1.36 \cdot \sqrt{\frac{160 + 130}{160 \cdot 130}} = 0.11$$

$D_{\text{calc}} > D_{\text{teoretic}} \Rightarrow$  the hypothesis H0 is accepted, that means we can guarantee with a probability of 95% that there is no significant difference between the two genders regarding the opinion of the tourists regarding the influence of advertising on the increase in the number of the tourists.

Monthly income/person of tourists: less than 4.000 RON - 60%, between 4.000 - 6.000 RON - 30%, between 6.000 - 8.000 RON - 8%, more than 8.000 RON - 2%.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

All the research elements were analysed from an integrated and complex perspective, so as to highlight the relationships that exists between them. It is very important to carefully analyse the tourist market in relation to the types of attractions and activities that can be made available to tourists and other components of the tourist product.

The interpretation of the obtained results indicates the number and type of tourists that can be attracted to Valea Jiului, if the recommendations of the tourist plan are implemented, the improvements brought the attractions, services, transport and other infrastructure facilities.

Even if some aspects of the technical-material base still need to be modernized in the area, however, the opinions regarding the attribute are not exactly unfavourable.

If we take into account the tourist motivation, namely, that the majority of tourists arrive here for walks and to rest, motivation that includes a complex tourist attraction, it turns out that these opinions are justified and not based on excessive politeness. Improving the facilities of accommodation spaces and public catering spaces, they will contribute to the loyalty of the tourists to offer of the Valea Jiului area.

A last attribute that contributes to shaping the image of the Valea Jiului area is the price – the applied rates.

With minimal investments, the Valea Jiului region could diversify its tourist offer, in what concerns the tourist services. Commercial areas can be developed to become as interesting as possible for the tourists.

The tourism in Valea Jiului brings important economic benefits to the locals (employment, additional income, etc.) thanks to the income they receive from activities directly or indirectly related to the tourism.

A first proposal would be to adapt a diversification strategy that should include an aggressive advertising program, through a web page with links to all local authority websites, by creating a database containing travel agencies from Romania and by continuously providing information – calendar of events, product updates and other similar activities, placing advertisements in national and regional tourism publications and participating in tourism fair in Romania.

Proposals:

- Improvement of the tourist infrastructure in Valea Jiului; co-optation in a broad partnership and correlation of all initiatives regarding the present and future of tourism in Valea Jiului;
- Stimulating the circulation of the tourists, increasing the number of tourists, also direct and indirect income; increasing the influx of tourists in Valea Jiului through the development of different forms of tourism, with accent ... mountain tourism (climate, skiing, ecological), rural tourism and agritourism, business tourism; cultural tourism, historical, religious; recreation tourism; other forms of tourism (sports tourism, transit tourism, extreme tourism, etc.);
- Ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources and valorising ethno-cultural traditions; protecting, preserving and enriching the heritage;
- Diversifying and increasing the quality of services offered to the tourists; coordinating the quality efforts of numerous tourism developers, of public or private investors at all levels;
- Promotion of tourism projects with external financing; supporting the business environment – the source of opportunities for the development of local tourism. Attracting domestic and foreign, public and private investors; consulting all professional and civic partners in the field of tourism.

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